

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Kids, You Make the Choice: Religious and Secular Socialization among Marginal Affiliates and Nonreligious Individuals

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What approaches do parents or those who plan to have children employ to socialize their children about religious or secular identification, beliefs, and practices? In what ways do primary and secondary socialization agents interact in this process? How might cultural narratives shape or be shaped by primary and secondary socialization activities? I address these questions by drawing on sixty interviews with two groups of Canadians – those who identify with a Christian group but limit attendance to religious holidays and rites of passage (marginal affiliates), and those who do not identify with any religion and never attend religious services (nonreligious individuals). I found that marginal affiliates did or planned to expose their children to religious belief and practice, while nonreligious individuals were inclined to defer to their children. However, marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals jointly maintained that children should have choice in this matter. Parents did not or planned not to impose religious or secular views on children. Further, one's upbringing informed parental socialization strategies and tactics that were largely informed by prevailing Canadian cultural narratives.

Introduction

Sociological research consistently has showed that socialization in the home is the best predictor of future religiosity (see e.g., Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Collins-Mayo & Dandelion, 2010; Dillon & Wink, 2007; Dudley, 1999; Myers, 1996; Penner, Harder, Anderson, Désorcy, & Hiemstra, 2011; Sherkat, 2003; Sherkat & Wilson, 1995). Given the surge in nonreligious individuals – those who say they have no religion – with each successive generation across many modern Western nations (Bibby, 2011; Crockett & Voas, 2006; Kosmin & Keysar, 2007, 2008; Norris & Inglehart, 2011; Sherkat, 2014; Voas, 2009; Wilkins-Laflamme, 2014), a handful of scholars have given attention to faith transmission, or the lack thereof, from nonreligious individuals to their children (Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Manning, 2013, 2015; Merino, 2012; Zuckerman, 2012). One of the clearest findings is that, in general, nonreligious individuals beget nonreligious individuals. Less known are the mechanisms, processes, and narratives that nonreligious individuals use with their children regarding religious or secular identification, belief, or practice. This subject is absent altogether in the literature on religion in Canada. In addition, comparative research is sparse when considering heterogeneity among relatively irreligious individuals.

In this article I draw on interviews with thirty marginal religious affiliates (those who identify with a Christian

group and attend religious services primarily for religious holidays or rites of passage) and thirty nonreligious individuals (those who do not identify with any religion and never attend religious services) in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. What past, current, or anticipated approaches, narratives, and mechanisms do parents or those who plan to have children employ to socialize their children about religious or secular identification, beliefs, and practices? Did or do they plan to actively encourage or discourage their children to adopt an explicitly religious or secular worldview? Did or do parents intend to remain neutral? In what ways do primary and secondary socialization agents interact in this process? How might cultural narratives shape or be shaped by primary and secondary socialization activities? How are marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals similar or dissimilar in their approaches? As I asked and addressed these questions I intentionally used the term “religion” rather than Christianity, even though part of this sample is made up of individuals with a Christian affinity. My reason is because nonreligious individuals do not identify with any particular religion and I, therefore, do not want to preclude those in my sample who might consider exposing their children to a religion other than Christianity.

To situate the data and findings from my interviews, I first summarize Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann's (1966) theory of socialization and Donileen Loseke's (2007) work on identity as cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal narratives. I follow this with an overview of the socialization literature that anchors my results and analysis. After summarizing my methodology,

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I turn to my interview data. I show that marginal affiliates generally had or planned to expose their children to religious belief and practice, while nonreligious individuals were inclined to defer to their children regarding religious or secular perspectives. At the same time, marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals jointly maintained that children should have choice in this matter; as a result, parents did not impose religious or secular views on children. Further, one's upbringing informed parental socialization strategies and tactics that were largely informed by prevailing Canadian cultural narratives.

Socialization

Berger and Luckmann (1966) defined socialization as "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it" (p.130). Socialization is an ongoing process informed by primary and secondary mechanisms. Primary socialization refers to a child's first socialization experiences in their family. Parents filter through and pass on an array of attitudes and behaviors to their children. This process is informed by one's social location based on characteristics such as race, socioeconomic status, or religion, and social scripts on socialization content and timing. Secondary socialization involves institutions like schools, the media, religious organizations, or the government who socialize individuals into other arenas of the outside world. In these settings, individuals recognize, perhaps for the first time, that not every person, family, or social institution views the world the same way. When primary and secondary groups conflict in their reality-defining narratives – a common occurrence in societies with a complex division of labor and higher levels of pluralism (also see Durkheim, 1973) – individuals must parse through competing worldviews. People are aided in this process by significant others whose worldviews they tend to favor.

Berger and Luckmann's contributions are helpful to a point, but they do not fully account for the broad cultural norms and values that help to shape primary and secondary socialization mechanisms. Here is where Donileen Loseke's (2007) work on cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal narrative identity is useful. Loseke contends that macro-level cultural narrative identity, or generally agreed upon social norms, narratives, and symbolic codes that bind a group of people, exists in a dynamic interaction with micro-level personal narrative identity, or a person's sense of self; each narrative identity informs the other. Meso-level narratives such as institutional (e.g. policy or law) and organizational (e.g. groups that help individuals to shape their identity, such as primary and secondary socialization agents) ones are important for legitimating, complicating, or simplifying the interaction between different narrative identities. These narratives contribute in turn to how individuals develop and cement their personal narrative identity. The relationship between the cultural, organizational, and personal levels are particularly relevant to this study insofar as Canadian cultural narratives on religion or secularity interface with primary and secondary socialization narratives (i.e. organizational

narrative identity), and individual approaches to religious or secular socialization.

Related to the interests in this article, what are the mechanisms that parents or those who anticipate having children – as primary socialization agents – use to define and maintain reality for their children? What role do secondary mechanisms play for how parents lay the framework for their child's approach to religion? What are the cultural narratives that shape and are shaped by marginal affiliates' and nonreligious individuals' approaches to religious or secular socialization? Research in this area is in its infancy, yet a few studies in the United States on nonreligious individuals began to move us toward some answers (Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Manning, 2013, 2015; Merino, 2012; Zuckerman, 2012). Parental approaches include zero exposure to religion, some points of contact with religion in the home, anti-religious training, moral and ethical socialization, and outsourcing religious instruction. Still, despite agreement that less religious individuals are heterogeneous (see Baker & Smith, 2009; Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Hout & Fischer, 2002; Kosmin & Keysar, 2006; Lim, MacGregor, & Putnam, 2010; Manning, 2013, 2015; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008; Voas & Day, 2010), little is known about how this heterogeneity may affect the socialization process. The present research study helps us to compare socialization approaches among and between marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals, groups that have more in common on various religiosity indicators when compared with weekly churchgoers (see Bibby, 2011; Bowen, 2004; Thiessen, 2015), yet remain distinct and heterogeneous among less religious groups in society. Furthermore, this study advances our sociological understanding of religious and secular socialization between less religious populations in Canada, and provides helpful comparative data to examine how and why socialization mechanisms and narratives in Canada are similar or different than in the United States. Berger and Luckmann's work on socialization and Loseke's material on narrative identity are useful theoretical and conceptual frameworks for comparing marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals in Canada where this topic is still under examined.

Methods

This article emerges from a larger exploratory set of ninety interviews with active religious affiliates (those who identify with a Christian group and attend religious services nearly every week), marginal affiliates, and nonreligious individuals. My central question was what explains higher and lower levels of religious involvement. Part of the answer centered on faith transmission in the home. With growing academic interest in nonreligious individuals and the possible implications for future religiosity, my focus is on interviews with thirty marginal affiliates and thirty nonreligious individuals who, though distinct, are growing populations in Canada (Bibby, 2011).

Sampling began when Reginald Bibby, a well-known Canadian sociologist of religion, contacted 160 people in the Calgary area who participated in his 2005 national survey, soliciting their interest in an interview with me for

this study. Those open to an interview (nine in total) then contacted me directly. Despite the initial help offered by Reginald Bibby, it was difficult to secure individuals for an interview, especially among those with few if any ties to religious organizations. This fact is not unusual for interview or exploratory research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Watters & Biernacki, 1989). For this reason I relied upon students, colleagues, friends, and family members to generate a targeted snowball sample by referring people they knew who met the desired criteria. In turn interviewees referred others to participate. Aside from the time and cost effectiveness of this approach, the personal connection that interviewees had with others was a valuable bridge to recruit participants. To avoid skewed or biased data due to snowball sampling, I closely monitored participant referrals according to age, gender, and religious affiliation. The result is a fairly balanced sample along demographic lines (see **Appendix A**).

Two demographic limitations are evident in this sample. First, I did not include interview questions about the gender of the interviewee, and thus relied upon the following to infer gender: (a) my observations of each interviewee; (b) gender-specific language that individuals used when referring potential interviewees for this study; and (c) the absence of any reference to agender or transgender self-identification, for example, that one might expect to arise in an interview of this kind. Some might contest this approach to assigning gender in light of changing understandings of gender, a point worth considering in future research as methodological approaches to gender change and evolve in the sociological study of religion. Second, this is a predominantly Caucasian sample. Exploring this topic with an ethnically diverse sample could yield some helpful insights, particularly since the literature to date is sparse on the connection between ethnicity and religious or secular socialization among marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals.

Interviews lasted approximately one hour on average, spanning 24 to 100 minutes long (see **Appendix B** for interview questions). Along with taking detailed field notes, I digitally recorded and transcribed all interviews. Throughout the interview process I oscillated between data collection and analysis, utilizing NVivo, a qualitative software resource, to help sort and analyze the data. In the “first cycle” (Saldaña, 2009) or “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) phase I identified and tabulated dominant themes in line with key concepts, theories, and data in the existing literature. In subsequent coding cycles I built on grounded theory (Charmaz, 2004; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to code and re-code interview transcripts based on emerging themes. “Analytic memos” were helpful to connect the data to the literature, hypothesize about relationships between data, and compare cases demographically. This process resulted in a final phase of “focused coding” (Charmaz, 2004) where I confirmed and accounted for themes detailed at the outset of the study as well as new themes to arise in the data.

Although I interviewed sixty marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals in total (thirty in each group), my results preclude four marginal affiliates and six

nonreligious individuals who had no plans for children. Of the remaining twenty-six marginal affiliates, nine did not have children but they planned to in the future. Nine additional interviewees had children living at home, while ten had adult children (including two in their second marriage with younger children living at home). Thirteen had a spouse who valued Christian socialization like them, and four were married to someone who did not. From the twenty-four nonreligious individuals that either had or planned to have children, eight did not have children yet they anticipated children in their future, ten had children living at home, and nine had adult children. Twelve nonreligious individuals were married to nonreligious individuals who shared their approach to socialization, and five were married to someone who attended church regularly but who differed in how best to raise their children. My reason for presenting results on those who had children alongside those who planned to have children is because their past, present, or anticipated future socialization approaches aligned with one another for the most part. Where this is not the case I single out how and why these groups were different.

Results

Reinforcing previous research, marginal affiliate and nonreligious interviewees adopted heterogeneous approaches to religious belief or practice (see Baker & Smith, 2009; Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Bibby, 2011; Hout & Fischer, 2002; Kosmin & Keysar, 2006; Lim, MacGregor, & Putnam, 2010; Manning, 2013, 2015; Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2008; Voas & Day, 2010). Some perceived their identification as marginal affiliates or nonreligious individuals as ascribed statuses handed down since birth, while for others they were self-chosen achieved statuses. Interviewees varied in the importance that they attached to their marginal affiliate or nonreligious status. Their level of belief in a god or supernatural being also varied from theists to agnostics to atheists. Some believed in miracles or the afterlife, while others prayed or read a religious text occasionally. Marginal affiliates were more likely to believe or behave in these conventional religious ways when compared with nonreligious individuals. One of the contributions that the following research makes to the existing literature is a direct comparison between marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals, a diverse group within a less religious contingent of the population when compared with those who attend religious services weekly (see Bibby, 2011; Bowen, 2004; Thiessen, 2015).

My task was to uncover the religious or secular approaches that these two groups used when raising children, paying attention to points of similarity and difference based on this heterogeneity. For instance, should we anticipate nonreligious individuals to actively encourage a secular orientation among their children when compared with marginal affiliates? Might marginal affiliates encourage their children to also hold on to some semblance of religious identification, belief, or practice? I explored these questions with the inference, as highlighted earlier, that parents tend to raise children within their own religious or secular framework.

Interviewee approaches to socialization varied in two ways based on the aforementioned variations: between marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals, and between nonreligious individuals who had no religious upbringing or were married to nonreligious individuals versus those who had a religious upbringing or were married to someone who identified with a religion. I organized my results around the most substantive set of differences – between marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals.

Marginal Affiliates

Religious Instruction

Manning (2013) notes that some unaffiliated parents outsource religious instruction to religious groups or religious schools, while others provide some form of religious instruction within the home. Marginal affiliates are not, by definition, “unaffiliated,” however in many ways they resembled some of the unaffiliated within Manning’s study because they adopted some conventional religious beliefs and engaged, at least nominally, in some religious practices and rituals.

In this study, twenty marginal affiliates either did or planned to expose their children to religious belief and practice via church attendance, rites of passage, religious education, or religious instruction within the home. Larry was an Anglican in his late fifties. He said, “We used to go when the children were younger because . . . It’s sort of a moral . . . just give them an anchor.” Alexandra, a Roman Catholic in her forties, recalled her upbringing when raising her children in the following way: “Catholic school I wanted them to attend . . . to have a little . . . background in the faith . . . you had to have been baptized to get into a Catholic school . . . I wanted them to learn the things that I learned as a kid . . . in the church.” Brian, in his fifties, said that he sent his children to a Catholic school and took them to church “because of your Catholic upbringing and your parents.” Jasmyne was affiliated with Lutheranism. She had two young children and talked with them about belief in God, belief in the afterlife, and the meaning of religious holidays:

I wanna bring my kids up in a little bit of religious context . . . I want to be able to teach them about Noah’s ark . . . about Jesus, and they understand the underlyings of Christmas. And I wanna be able to teach them Easter, but in a gentle, relaxed way that’s not going to church every Sunday. But that they understand that maybe there’s this higher power.

Of the twenty marginal affiliates just discussed, nine planned to have children. Seven of those nine wanted to provide religious instruction through a combination of mechanisms that included church attendance and rites of passage, and in some cases, a faith-based school. Bradley indicated, “Once I have a kid . . . I’ll probably go [to church] just so the kid has something to influence him . . . the same reason I think my parents did it. . . it’s probably the right thing to do.” Cameron was a Roman Catholic who

planned to baptize his children because “I feel as though it’s the right thing to do. You still have to have some guiding lights . . . Even though we don’t practice it hardcore, it is something.” Jasmyne planned to baptize her children “because I was baptized . . . into the Kingdom of God, and whether they pursue churching for the rest of their lives . . . I’ve protected them from the beginning . . . and then they can choose what they wanna do later on in life.” Laura was a Roman Catholic in her early thirties. She planned to send her children to a Catholic school because “the teachings in religion and stuff in the Catholic school system are fundamental in developing morals and values . . . they offer insight and hope.” When I asked Laura how important her Roman Catholic identification was, she reflected, “Important enough that if I have children I want them to be Roman Catholic . . . or be baptized to have the option . . . But I’d want them to have the option . . . and the choice . . . I don’t think anything should be forced on them.”

The interview excerpts illustrated how these marginal affiliates were impacted by their upbringing, citing tradition, family, and morality as motivations to extend religious instruction to their children. Secondary socialization agents were integral too, at the discretion of parents, as marginal affiliates turned to their church or religious schools to instill values that they believed could aid their child’s moral compass. But as interviewees passed religious affiliation, attitudes, and behaviors on to their children, another pervasive value shined through: giving choice to their children.

Giving Choice

Another approach that some unaffiliated parents take with their children, according to Christel Manning (2013), is “nonprovision.” This tactic entails that parents neither encourage nor discourage a particular religious or secular worldview. Marginal affiliates did not take this hands-off approach with their children, at least not at the outset. However among those who brought their children to church regularly, nearly half gave their teenagers choice over continued religious involvement. In most cases children embraced the opportunity to drop church attendance altogether, and often times so too did their parents. Jackson identified as a Roman Catholic and was in his sixties. He stated:

We took them to church with us all the time until . . . their teens, and then they . . . just decided to do their own thing . . . you can’t force anybody to do anything that they don’t want to do. Once they’re of age and they want to make up their own minds . . . but I tell them, “Remember what your heritage is and what you come from.”

Genevieve, who was in her sixties and tied to the United Church of Canada, reflected, “When my kids became teenagers . . . you can’t force a teenager to do anything . . . they quit going to church.” William recalled, “We got tired of fighting the kids to go to church.” Hubert remembered, “They didn’t want to go. It was hard to get them to go without a big argument . . . so I gave up on that.”

Inherent in narratives like these is a sentiment that Jasmyne expressed, that parents can help to educate their children about religion but ultimately it is about “letting them have the choice.” Bart, who planned to have children in the future, claimed, “I don’t think I would deviate a whole lot from how my parents did . . . it’s still their own choice as to what religion . . . I can point them in one direction and tell them what my beliefs are . . . If they wanna go really hardcore religious then good on them. If they don’t, then I’m not gonna push them necessarily that way.”

Choice was also demonstrated with six marginal affiliates who avoided or planned to sidestep overt religious or secular socialization altogether. Instead they would encourage their children to choose worldviews for themselves. For some this was a direct reaction against how their parents forced them to regularly attend religious services. Jocelyn stated, “The way that I would do it would just be a little bit different than my parents . . . the judgmental, hammering it down someone’s throat, isn’t something that I would want to have my children experience.” Peter observed, “You see kids that are dragged to the more formal church, the Catholic Church or whatever . . . they’re not there . . . because they want to be . . . that part of attendance of a church or a religion . . . just bothers me.” Jonathan was from a conservative Protestant tradition and did not have the same concerns as Jocelyn or Peter, but said that when he has kids, “I would just let them figure it out on their own. Whatever they wanna believe or don’t wanna believe . . . would be fine with me . . . if they wanted to go to church with grandma, I’d be okay with that. I wouldn’t want my mother taking them every single week cause . . . I’d want them to figure it out on their own.”

To summarize, some marginal affiliates that I interviewed either did or planned to give choice to their children because that was how they were raised, while others did or planned to give choice to their children as a rejection of how their parents socialized them. Nonreligious individuals, who I turn to next, were even more committed to giving their children choice over religious or secular identity, attitudes, and behaviours.

Nonreligious Individuals

Deferring to Children

Phil Zuckerman’s (2012) research on apostates and Christel Manning’s (2013) investigation of the unaffiliated in the United States both point toward some parents taking a “no exposure” or “nonprovision” approach to religious or secular socialization. Such tactics were overwhelmingly present among my nonreligious interviewees. Most, whether they already had children or they planned to have children, did not intentionally socialize their children with any particular religious or secular attitudes or behaviors. They were not overtly anti-religious nor did they seek to transfer a decidedly atheist, agnostic, or secular worldview. Instead they deferred to their children to take up religious or secular belief and practice as they saw fit.

When I asked Melanie how she would raise her two children, she responded: “The way that I was. Where no religion is ever not talked about, but nothing is forced on

them.” David was single and in his early twenties. When he thought ahead to children he reflected, “I would like to see less indoctrination . . . I would try to keep it more open . . . let them decide for themselves.” Jennifer was also single and in her thirties. She planned to raise her children, “Probably along the same lines that my parents did . . . it’ll definitely be an open door . . . if there’s something that they want to . . . educate themselves in . . . if they want to go to church with their friends . . . then that’s totally fine. But it’s not something that I’ll instill in them, or . . . take them to church.” If Jennifer married someone who wanted their children to attend church, she would be fine with that, though she was quick to note, “I would make sure that it’s up to the kids as well, and . . . not forced to go.” Gary, who was in his fifties, recalled, “We didn’t shield them from it but we certainly didn’t promote it.” Brad was raised in the Lutheran church. He had not actively imposed any religious or secular perspectives on to his children: “If they choose to be religious, they’ll choose to be religious. Whether they’re Danish or Catholic or Christian . . . that’s going to be their choice . . . I’m not going to force them and I believe that no one should have to be forced into religion.”

Part of why nonreligious individuals deferred to their children was because many religions exist and they do not want to privilege any faith. Cory was raised in a devout Mormon home. He reflected:

They’re exposed through their grandparents. They’re both of different faiths. We encourage them to figure out what prayer is to them. And the emphasis is . . . Don’t be afraid to try and figure out what you’re feeling and where it comes from. Maybe you need to go and spend some time with your friends who live the Muslim faith . . . they’re exposed to it all the time anyways. I’m finding . . . Certainly way more than when I was a kid . . . their friends are all from different faiths. They’re very sensitive to it and with the political correctness . . . they’re different from us but they have the luxury to just happen to accept it and be more tolerant than definitely where we were raised . . . So they’re exposed to it and they’re encouraged to follow their hearts and souls.

As parents supported their children’s quests to explore different religions, they did not plan to provide the religious options mainly because they knew little about other religions. Jim, an agnostic in his thirties, stated, “I wouldn’t proactively tell them about all the religions because I don’t really know much about all the religions myself.” Clarissa, an atheist, would prefer that her children “know about all of the different choices and they do whatever . . . they see fit . . . [but] I don’t know if I would personally be able to do that, because that’s a lot of information and I don’t really know about it. But when they were old enough to . . . realize that . . . religion is out there, I would help them figure it out.”

Some interviewees went further than Jim and Clarissa, regretting that they did not educate their children on the

religious options available. Martin, who was in his sixties, was actively involved in the Anglican Church as a child, but gradually left his faith behind during his teen and young adult years. He said the following upon reflecting on faith transmission with his children:

[We] barely went to church, never got baptized, never got confirmed or anything like that . . . I feel guilty . . . I was quite glad that I got the religious education I did. To know the stories of the Bible . . . it's just knowledge . . . to help you figure out your religious understandings of things. And my kids don't have that . . . I didn't afford them that education . . . did I shortchange them on some religious education that helps them broaden their view and help them make decisions for themselves? . . . I should've made them take some religious studies courses . . . comparative religious studies . . . not just Anglican stuff . . . expose them to that and we let them make up their own minds.

Martin was not alone. Janet was in her fifties and attended Catholic mass regularly with her mom until she was sixteen when she was given the choice to continue attending. She did not raise her children with any religion, but expressed the following: "They're not even baptized, and that still bugs me . . . it's my mother . . . the way she brought us up . . . just her in the back of my head saying, 'Your kids should be baptized' . . . I do regret . . . not getting them baptized before she died cause I think she would've been really happy about that." She went on to say, "It's the . . . Catholic upbringing . . . you're not gonna get into the pearly gates if you're not baptized."

In the end, nonreligious individuals who deferred to their children were fine if their children were exposed to religion elsewhere (i.e. school or peers) or explored religion on their own. Parents were willing to dialogue with their children about religion too, should their children desire to, at least to the extent that a parent felt equipped to do so. And if parents did not feel comfortable to navigate their child's questions about religion, they would direct their children to extended family members who were more religious and capable of answering such questions.

This said, deferring to their children came with a caveat. Individuals like Mary would lament if her children became too religious that they pushed their religion on to Mary: "And all of a sudden they're pushing their beliefs on me, and it's like, well I never pushed mine on you, I gave you the choice, if you choose to do this, that's fine, that's awesome, that's great . . . scream it from the rooftops, but don't force your beliefs on me because I never forced mine on you." Mary's concern was not that her children might turn out too religious, but rather that they might push their beliefs on to her. In her mind, and several other nonreligious individuals with whom I spoke, pushing one's religion on to another went against a fundamental value to give people choice to believe and behave as they wished without others imposing their religious or secular beliefs on them.

Religious Exposure

Some nonreligious individuals in this study exposed their children to elements of Christian identification, belief, or practice, either because they were married to someone who belonged to a Christian group or they harkened back to aspects of their own religious upbringing. This smaller segment of nonreligious individuals were like marginal affiliates in some ways, who either provided some level of religious instruction in the home or who outsourced religious teaching to religious groups or schools. Lauren, who was in her sixties, was raised Anglican and married a Roman Catholic. Lauren's husband, aware that Lauren had no intent of becoming a Catholic, actively raised their children in the Roman Catholic tradition: "They've all been baptized in the Catholic Church . . . They all go to church on a regular basis . . . do an altar . . . servers in the church . . . we will have conversations about why I don't go to the church . . . I think to be brought up in a faith-based way . . . has always been more about how I live my life . . . and that's what I've always tried to instill with them."

Roman was an atheist in his forties. His wife was actively involved in a conservative Protestant congregation and she "takes the kids to Sunday School." I asked Roman if there was any tension with his wife over their different religious perspectives:

No . . . we kinda get each other . . . we just respect each other's boundaries. She doesn't try to convert me and I don't poo poo what she's doing. Before we got married, we agreed to raise our children religiously in her faith, and then try to keep that going as long as we can before they start asking uncomfortable questions about dad.

On how he and his wife will tackle their mixed-faith marriage with their children:

I think I'm gonna lie for quite some time . . . I already do . . . we don't wanna give them mixed messages. Mommy says this, daddy says that. We wanna provide a united front . . . There's nothing wrong with being religious, so let's do it. It teaches good core values and it gives you a support network and all that kind of good stuff. I have no problem. I just wish . . . I could be honest, but it gives them mixed messages . . . It is not important to me for them to believe what I believe. Whatever works for them is great . . . I don't think less of anybody that believes whatever they wanna believe.

Some nonreligious individuals baptized or confirmed their children, mainly because of their spouse's past or present religiosity, or in some cases even their own religious upbringing. Others, like Melissa, provided some Christian instruction in the home. She was raised with nominal exposure to a conservative Protestant group. She said she does not believe that religion is important but returning to her childhood roots, she would tell her children that "there's God, and when people die they go to Heaven." Melissa also planned to read "the Christmas

story . . . but I won't take them . . . to church." She added, "And if they needed any questions, they could just go to someone else."

A few interviewees outsourced religious instruction to churches or religious schools (see Manning, 2013). Patricia was in her thirties and had two children. She had no religious upbringing, though she married a Catholic who had not attended church for over twenty years, but who was adamant that their children attend a Catholic school. While initially resistant, concerned that her children would come home with questions about religion that she was ill-prepared to answer, Patricia came around to the idea: "What they teach there is more, love thy neighbor . . . do until one, you know, do unto you, and just being all about community, respect, dignity, professionalism, and . . . modesty . . . there's nothing more that I want for my children." In other words, Patricia and a few other non-religious individuals maintained that religious instruction could help their children in areas of morality, to treat others well and to positively contribute to society.

Mechanisms and Narratives for Socialization: Family and Morality

Berger and Luckmann (1966) distinguished between primary and secondary socialization mechanisms. They claimed that primary socialization sources were the most influential over how a person thought and behaved. Loseke's (2007) exposition on narrative identity extended the discussion to understand how cultural narratives influence primary and secondary socialization mechanisms (i.e., "organizational narratives," to use Loseke's language), which ultimately inform personal narratives. In the following I refer to the data presented thus far to unpack the varied ways that primary and secondary mechanisms shape marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals' past, present, or projected future handling of religious or secular socialization.

The first finding to emerge, reinforcing existing literature, is that family background plays an integral role over parental decisions regarding religious or secular socialization. Time and again marginal affiliates referenced their family background as a lead motivation for why they did or planned to take their children to church, baptize their children, send their children to a religious school, or provide religious instruction within the home. Janice, a marginal affiliate in her twenties, said she wants to pass the following on to her children: "The same that my parents gave to me . . . be a good person, and believe whatever you want to believe, and they won't judge me for being Catholic or whatever, and I would want my children to feel the same way." Similarly, some nonreligious individuals who had a religious upbringing or who are married to someone with a religious background also cited their childhood experiences as justification to expose their children to certain Christian beliefs or practices (also see Zuckerman, 2012). Mirroring one's upbringing extends to interviewees who did or will defer to their children on matters of religion too. Keeping in mind data presented earlier, such as Melanie who planned to raise her children "the way that I was. Where no religion is ever not talked

about, but nothing is forced on them," nonreligious individuals in this study recollected that their parents neither pushed nor avoided religion in the home, which influenced interviewees to take a similar approach with their children.

Family background also inversely influenced some interviewees to react against the way that they were raised. Some marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals like Jocelyn and Peter, whose reflections I summarized earlier, lamented how their parents or grandparents forced religion on them, which compelled interviewees to defer to their children on religious matters. Sarah, who was non-religious, recalled: "I remember going to church with my grandfather a lot. I hated Sunday school. I couldn't stand it. I thought it was really belittling and stupid . . . You'd arrive and then you're supposed to eat Rice Krispies with chopsticks, have a nap, and recite Bible verses that you were supposed to memorize that didn't make any sense to me. I couldn't see the point." She went on to single out her concerns about religious fundamentalism because followers were encouraged to "not ask, just obey." In turn Sarah maintained that "you can believe whatever you want but always to keep your mind open, asking questions." This was part of the reason for why Sarah did not impose religious belief or practice on her children.

The second key discovery was that parents framed their socialization approaches as moral narratives. Both marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals who provided some religious exposure to their children did so because they maintained that religion helps their children with ethical living. To build on earlier quotations, Margaret stated:

I wanted to raise responsible children who believed in social justice and kind and contributing members of society . . . It's important to be a good person, be a moral, ethical, social justice person . . . its always been important that we raise . . . girls that are strong and independent but also believe in social justice and have those kind of values about kindness and contributing to society . . . it's important that we have a society where we can raise children and have a family and be a good person and do community stuff instead of just being very individualistic . . . I care about what happens to the earth and . . . my community and my neighbours.

Margaret did not believe that religion was necessary to help children acquire these values, but it could be valuable for some, including her family. This was why she and others turned to secondary socialization agents such as churches and religious schools to help with moral instruction.

In a different way, interviewees who gave their children choice over religious or secular perspectives also thought about this tactic in moral terms. For these individuals providing freedom to explore different perspectives without judgement is a fundamental human and moral right. Roberta raised her children to be "independent, free, and self-thinking" and to live by "the morals that I've given

them . . . be honest and you treat people respectfully . . . take care of yourself and your family and your friends . . . if they made certain decisions, I would be proud if they made decisions based on honest and free information.” This perspective – that choice is a moral imperative – was particularly strong among interviewees who gave their children choice as a reaction against their own upbringing. Wendy, who came from an Anglican background, said she raised her children to “be inclusive in the world, my religion is no better or worse than your religion and you gain more . . . by being able to see what that religion has to offer. So sometimes I think . . . I’m not better than, but I feel like I’m benefitting from being a little more open to stuff, being able to be receptive to some stuff.” Pearl would only consider church attendance, “If I thought my kids could think on their own . . . I don’t want them to not be able to think on their own.”

The summative analysis in this section adds to current research by demonstrating the specific processes and narratives at work regarding religious or secular socialization, including similarities and differences across a heterogeneous groups of relatively irreligious individuals (when compared with those who attended religious services weekly). Moreover, this study yields the first ever Canadian data on this particular subject. To recapture the mechanisms and narratives that marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals used with their children, family upbringing was centrally important. Sometimes interviewees sought to reinforce the approach of their own parents, while others pursued the opposite socialization strategy to their parents. Morality was a critical framework that interviewees used for their socialization approaches. Those with a religious upbringing themselves or who were married to someone who was nominally or actively religious, believed that some degree of religious training could help their children with moral attitudes and behaviours. Perhaps less anticipated was the equation between giving children choice and morality – to provide choice was to do the “moral” thing whereas not giving choice was interpreted as immoral by some. I focus on this theme of choice in my final section – a narrative that is best understood against the backdrop of a Canadian context whereby choice is a culturally prized narrative over and against a multicultural and diverse religious and secular social climate.

Discussion

In her book, *Losing our Religion: How Unaffiliated Parents are Raising Their Children*, Christel Manning (2015) persuasively argued that unaffiliated parents, more so than those affiliated with a religion, were insistent that they provide “worldview choice” to their children (p. 138). Given the dearth of academic research on religious or secular socialization among unaffiliated populations, my findings provide important empirical data to reinforce Manning’s observation. In addition to demonstrating these findings in a Canadian context, my research also extends Manning’s findings by showing that those marginally affiliated with Christianity also desire worldview

choice. I focus my discussion of these results around the cultural narrative of choice, a narrative reinforced through primary and secondary mechanisms, and a social norm that individuals appropriate in their personal narratives.

Several scholars note that choice in the home is symptomatic of cohort changes in late modern society where choice, independence, and tolerance are encouraged over obedience and loyalty (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Bibby, 2006; Collins-Mayo & Dandelion, 2010; Hervieu-Léger, 2006; Iyengar, 2011; Roof & McKinney, 1987; Schwartz, 2004). For my interviewees, children and parents alike incorporated choice narratives in family life. Children were given limitless choices from parents, including what they wore, what they ate, what extracurricular activities they participated in, and so forth. Choice over religion was merely an extension of this value for choice in the home. I found it interesting that most over the age of fifty-five in my sample of ninety interviews remarked that when they grew up they were never given the option to attend religious services with their families. In contrast those under the age of fifty-five, especially marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals, recalled that the option to attend religious services in their teen years facilitated their diminished involvement in a religious group. Clive, a marginal affiliate in the Lutheran tradition, captured the prevalence of choice well when considering children in the future:

I might even attend more if I became a father a few years down the road. I would want them to have what I have: The choice. To see that there is something out there . . . And this goes back to the way that I was raised. I look back and I know that helped me . . . look at society today. We have so many choices, and kids have even more choices. I wouldn’t force them into it.

Statements like this and others that I heard lend support to Durkheim’s (1973) predictions about increased diversity in societies with complex divisions of labour, and assertions in secularization theory (Berger, 1967; Bruce, 2011) that increased diversity would usher in heightened levels of tolerance, choice, and individualism throughout social life.

Canadians are similar to Americans in that choice is also highly valued. But some elements of Canadian life are unique, where distinct Canadian cultural narratives are taught and reinforced in primary and secondary socialization settings. Part of Canada’s cultural and self-narrative is rooted in historical and evolving social imaginaries of a broadly secular, liberal, multicultural, diverse, plural, inclusive, equal, and tolerant society (see Adams, 2006). Unlike in the United States where a strong and vocal contingency of social and religious conservatives have continuously resisted secular and liberal advances, the same cannot be said in Canada. There are smaller pockets of resistance in Canada to be sure, but by and large the liberal and secular narrative is the dominant one in Canada (see Thiessen, 2015). A major implication of this

cultural narrative for many of my interviewees is their unwillingness to impose religious or secular identities, attitudes, or behaviours on to children. In their minds, to impose a decidedly religious or secular worldview betrays the cultural belief that choice, freedom, individualism, tolerance, and inclusiveness are appropriate responses to a multicultural, diverse, and plural social context. In fact, recent research in Canada demonstrates that to impose religious or secular views on to another, even one's own children, is un-Canadian (Beaman, 2008; Beaman & Beyer, 2008; Beyer & Ramji, 2013; Bibby, 2006, 2011; Haskell, 2009; Lefebvre & Beaman, 2014; Reimer & Wilkinson, 2015; Thiessen, 2015). This is possibly why Mary, who we met earlier, was strongly averse to her children potentially converting to a religion and pushing that religion on to Mary. Canadians like Mary generally think that individuals are free to believe and behave as they wish, so long as they do not force those perspectives on to others through proselytization or politics. Religion is a private matter that should be kept out of public spheres – a view reinforced in media, political discourse, schools, and families. For example, many provincial public education settings handle religious diversity by muting religious groups from influencing school curriculum or using school space, for the sake of neutrality and not offending different religious or secular groups (Banack, 2014; Seljak, 2005). Unlike the United States, politicians in Canada are fearful to invoke their personal faith (especially evangelicals) in public policy because this could offend members of other religious groups or the secular sphere at large (Haskell, 2009; Ottawa Citizen, 2006). Religion is often ignored and shielded from immigration policy, healthcare discourse and policy, and various legal disputes, usually for the sake of respecting religious pluralism and the secular state (Beaman, 2008; Bramadat & Seljak, 2005; Lefebvre & Beaman, 2014; Lyon & Van Die, 2000). Efforts to reach a complete *laïcité* position in Quebec are well known too (Beyer & Ramji, 2013; Lefebvre & Beaman, 2014).

Within this cultural milieu it makes sense that marginal affiliates and nonreligious interviewees stressed the need for their children to have choice over religious or secular identification, to not push views on their children, and should their children “discover religion,” to not in turn force those views on their parents. It would appear that marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals would by and large consider their socialization efforts a success should their children grow up to similarly reinforce the values of choice and individualism outlined above.

Tying this back to Berger and Luckmann (1966) and Loseke's (2007) work, primary socialization mechanisms (i.e. family) are critical for how and why children approach religious or secular worldviews. Still, family is inextricably influenced by secondary socialization mechanisms and larger cultural narratives that in turn shape personal narratives. In short, both marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals desire to give their children choice over religious or secular worldviews, a desire that mirrors the prevailing Canadian cultural narratives outlined above. These narratives work in both directions

such that individual and organizational narratives reinforce prevailing cultural narratives on choice, religion, and secularity.

Conclusion

In this article I utilized Berger and Luckmann's theory of primary and secondary socialization, and Loseke's research on cultural, institutional, organizational, and personal identity narratives to explore the past, current, or anticipated approaches, narratives, and mechanisms that parents, or those who plan to have children, use with their children regarding religious or secular identification, perspectives, and behaviors. I offer several observations and potential ways forward based on this set of exploratory interviews.

First, different socialization approaches were preferred by marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals. Marginal affiliates were more likely than nonreligious individuals to provide religious exposure to their children via parental instruction and modelling in the home or secondary socialization agents such as churches or religious schools. Some nonreligious individuals did so as well, if they were raised in a religious tradition or they were married to someone who was affiliated with a religious organization. But the more common approach among nonreligious individuals in my sample was to defer to their children regarding a religious or secular identity and worldview. Thought of along a religious-secular continuum, while I argue elsewhere (Thiessen, 2015) that both marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals were closer to the secular end of the continuum when compared to those who attend religious services weekly, marginal affiliates were closer to the religious end of the spectrum than nonreligious individuals. This study suggests that the closer parents are to the secular end of the continuum, the more inclined they are to defer to their children.

Second, though nonreligious individuals took the lead to avoid actively socializing their children with a decidedly religious or secular identity, marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals both wanted their children to decide these matters for themselves, and current and potential future parents resisted imposing any particular worldview on their children. Numerous quotations from marginal affiliate interviewees showcased that even though they may have exposed their children to Christian belief and practice, they were adamant that they wanted their children to ultimately choose if or how religious or secular they would be. The decision by many in my sample to give their teenage children choice over continued church participation was further evidence that marginal affiliates did not want to force religion on their children. Likewise, nonreligious individuals in this study repeatedly spoke of their support for open and critical thinking and investigation that, in their minds, meant not actively raising their children to be nonreligious individuals too. This last statement may surprise some, especially with the rise of organized pro-secular or anti-religious movements in the United States and Europe (see e.g., Niose, 2012;

Williamson & Yancey, 2013). There are likely individuals and groups in Canada who are sympathetic to these advances, though no data currently exists to know exactly how many. I suspect that the lack of appeal for nonreligious individuals in my sample to intentionally raise up more nonreligious individuals reflects the lack of polarization between the religious and secular in Canada. With few exceptions Canada is not rife with strong historical or political tensions in this regard, unlike the United States or Europe. Rather, deferring to children is part of what it means to be a nice, inclusive, tolerant Canadian, even in one's home.

Third, this study confirms the central finding of Bengtson, Putney, & Harris (2013) that family as a primary socialization agent significantly impacts religious and secular socialization tactics. However, this study extends and nuances our understanding of the multiple ways that family background shapes religious or secular socialization tactics, the particular narratives and motivations that parents employ with their children, and the important role that cultural context plays in parental approaches to socialization. Some in both marginal affiliate and nonreligious groups did or planned to repeat how their parents raised them, either to provide religious instruction or to defer to their children. Other marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals rebelled against their upbringing, defiantly giving their children choice in the face of religion that was forced on them as children. The valuable aspect to this discovery is the multiple layers of how family shapes different parental trajectories to socialization, including how morality is used to frame and legitimate these decisions. Additionally significant are the ways that Canadian cultural and organizational narratives serve as the backdrop to encourage and reinforce a dominant choice narrative among interviewees, and vice versa.

Many trajectories for further research remain, which I could not address in this study. Will marginal affiliates or nonreligious individuals, particularly those raised in a religious tradition, pursue greater levels of institutional religious life in the future? If so, will they remain actively involved in the short and long term? Several marginal affiliates in my study believed that they will, and studies elsewhere similarly reveal intentions among those who plan to have children (see e.g., Bahr, 1970; Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013; Bibby, 2002, 2004; Ingersoll-Dayton, Krause, & Morgan, 2002; McCullough, Brion, Enders, & Jain, 2005; Rauff, 1979; Roozen, 1980; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995; Wilson & Sherkat, 1994). Some longitudinal data that tracks people over the entire life course reveal that church involvement among returnees tends to diminish as their children grow older (Bahr, 1970; Ingersoll-Dayton, Krause, & Morgan, 2002; McCullough, Brion, Enders, & Jain, 2005; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995). Other data show that religiosity levels increase again near the end of one's life (Bengtson, Putney, & Harris, 2013). Still other research suggests that while there is ebb and flow to people's religiosity over the life course, "The default of most people's lives is to

continue being what they have been in the past" (Smith & Snell, 2009, p. 208). That is, if children and teens are not particularly religious, it is unlikely that they will take up increased levels of religiosity later in life (also see Crockett & Voas, 2006; Dillon & Wink, 2007; King-Hele, 2009; McCullough, Brion, Enders, & Jain, 2005; Voas & Crockett, 2005). I look forward to the opportunity to interview those in this study again over their life course to test some of these findings further.

Another gap in the literature pertains to moral and ethical socialization. Just because marginal affiliates and nonreligious individuals may not socialize their children to adopt religious or secular orientations in the world, this does not mean that they do not provide moral and ethical socialization. There are traces of socialization of this kind among my interviewees – to see open-mindedness and inclusivity and equality as moral values. Future research should give concerted attention to this area.

To conclude I return to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) definition of socialization: "the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of it" (p. 130). Christian Smith highlights in the documentary *Soul Searching: A Movie about Teenagers and God* (Eaton, 2007) that learning and acquiring religious belief and practice is akin to developing another language. Acquiring religious faith does not happen by accident, but rather from intentional exposure to religious attitudes and behaviours in various social spheres. Thinking of the majority of nonreligious individuals in my sample, and even marginal affiliates who eventually give their children choice over religious involvement, it seems that the absence of explicit socialization for or against a religious or secular orientation in the home is informed by cultural identity narratives. That is, a predominant Canadian cultural narrative, expressed implicitly and explicitly throughout Canadian social life, is that religion should remain in the private sphere, and this narrative is being embraced and passed on within the home. My data add credence to Berger and Luckmann's claim that primary socialization mechanisms are essential. But my data also raise the possibility that cultural narratives, alongside or even in place of specific religious or secular narratives, are driving the primary socialization narratives for these marginal affiliate and nonreligious interviewees, that in turn feedback to reinforce organizational and cultural narratives about choice, religion, and secularity.

Competing Interests

The author declares that they have no competing interests.

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Appendix A: Interviewee Demographics

	Marginals	Nonreligious	Total
Gender			
Female	15	17	32
Male	15	13	28
Age (years)			
18–34	10	11	21
35–54	13	11	24
55+	7	8	15
Highest Completed Education			
Less than High School	1	1	2
High School	2	2	4
Diploma/Certificate	6	8	14
Some College/University	6	2	8
Bachelor of Arts/Education	13	14	27
Master's	2	3	5
Current Marital Status			
Single	11	6	17
Common Law	0	2	2
Engaged	2	1	3
First Marriage	9	18	27
Second Marriage	3	1	4
Separated	0	1	1
Divorced	1	1	2
Widowed	4	0	4
Current (Past for Nonreligious) Denomination			
Roman Catholic	9	7	16
Mainline Protestant	9	10	19
Conservative Protestant	7	6	13
Non-denominational	5	0	5
Mormon	0	1	1
No religious upbringing for nonreligious	0	6	6

Appendix B: Interview Questions

- (1) How old are you?
- (2) What is your highest level of completed education?
- (3) What type of occupation are you currently involved in?
- (4) Are you married? If so, how long have you been married?
- (5) Do you have any children? If so, how many, and how old are they?
- (6) Tell me a bit about your upbringing:
 - a. Where did you grow up? Siblings? Parents' occupation?
 - b. Growing up, was your family affiliated with any religious group? If so, which group? If not, skip to questions g, h, and i?
 - c. How often did your family attend religious services?
 - d. Aside from religious services, what other religious activities, if any, were you involved in? What religious activities did you do at home?
 - e. Would you describe your family as religious? Explain.
 - f. Growing up, how much of a difference would you say religious beliefs and practices made on your family's life? Your life personally?
 - g. **(Not raised in a religious home)** Did your family ever talk about religion or spirituality? Was there any evidence of religious belief or practice in your home growing up?

- h. (**Not raised in a religious home**) Were you ever exposed to religious belief and/or practice outside of your home, growing up (e.g., neighbors, school, or extended family)?
- i. (**Not raised in a religious home**) Would you describe yourself as religious growing up? If so, in what way? Explain.
- j. Thinking back to when you moved out of your family's place, what effect, if any, did that have on your religious journey? Did your interest in religion increase, decrease, or stay the same? Did your level of involvement in religious organizations increase, decrease, or remain the same?
- (7) Current Religiosity
- At present, are you affiliated with any religious group?
 - How often do you attend religious services?
 - (Skip for Religious Nones) Do you participate in any other activities associated with your religious group? If so, which activities, and how often are you involved?
 - How did you decide to affiliate with this group?
 - Could you indicate for me how important your religious affiliation is relative to other aspects of your life? Explain.
 - Have you ever seriously considered affiliating or getting involved with any other congregation, denomination, or religious group? Why or why not?
 - (Religious Nones) Tell me about any religious/spiritual beliefs that you hold as well as any religious/spiritual practices that you participate in.
 - Would you identify yourself as an atheist, agnostic, or theist? Do you believe in a supernatural power or deity?
 - Do you believe in the afterlife? If so, do you desire life after death? What do you think is required to obtain life after death?
 - Do you believe that you have meaning, purpose, and direction in life? If so, what is the source of that meaning and direction?
 - Do you associate with any particular thinker or set of readings or group that influences your approach to religion or spirituality? If so, do you agree and abide by all that they prescribe, or do you hold to some teachings and reject others?
 - If married, did you get married in a church and/or did you include any religious/spiritual elements in the service? If not married, do you plan to get married in a church and/or to include any religious/spiritual elements in the service? Do you plan to have your funeral in a church and/or to include any religious/spiritual elements in the service?
 - If you have children someday, how will you raise them? Will you give them a religious upbringing? Will you take/send them to church? Why/why not?
- vii. How much of a difference would you say your religious/spiritual beliefs and practices make to your life? If a great difference, in what way? If not much of a difference, why not? Explain.
- viii. How confident are you in the religious beliefs and practices that you adopt?
- h. (**Marginal Affiliates**)
- Overall, what, if any, beliefs and practices shape your life?
 - Do you believe in the afterlife? If so, do you desire life after death? What do you think is required to obtain life after death?
 - Thinking beyond your religious organization, what other religious activities, if any, do you do at home?
 - To what extent do you follow the religious teachings of your religious group? Do you agree and abide by all that they prescribe, or do you hold to some teachings and reject others? Probe for both beliefs and behaviours.
 - How much of a difference would you say your religious beliefs and practices make to your life? If a great difference, in what way? If not much of a difference, why not?
 - How confident are you in the religious beliefs and practices that you adopt?
- (8) Religious Costs and Rewards:
- (Skip for Religious Nones) Why do you attend religious services?
 - (Skip for Religious Nones) Do you think you gain something specific from attending religious services?
 - (Skip for Religious Nones) Do you think you gain anything in particular from your religious beliefs and practices outside of attendance at religious services? (If nothing, skip to question e).
 - (Religious Nones) Do you think you gain anything in particular by not being religious?
 - Keeping in mind some of these benefits, what are some of the sacrifices that you have made along the way? In other words, what are the "costs" associated with obtaining these benefits (Religious Nones – are there any "costs" for not belonging to a religious group or attending religious services regularly?)?
- (9) Dependable and Responsive God/Congregation:
- Do you have a sense that you can depend on God and/or another spiritual entity? If so, how? Can you provide an example? If not, why?
 - Do you believe that God and/or another spiritual entity is concerned about, and acts on behalf of humans? Explain.
 - To what extent do you feel that you belong to or identify with a particular congregation?

- If they do not feel connected to a congregation, ask: do you remember a time when you did feel like you belonged to or identified with a particular congregation? If the answer is still 'no,' skip to question 10.
- d. With this congregation in mind, do you have a sense that you can depend on others in the group, that others in the group could be relied upon in times of need? If so, how? Can you provide an example? If not, why?
 - e. Do you believe that your congregation is concerned about, and acts in the interests of its members? Explain.
- (10) Role of Others:
- a. Would you say that religious beliefs and practices are primarily up to the individual to develop and foster or should this occur in the context of other people? If shared with others, what sort of activities do you have in mind? How are these beliefs reflected in your religious journey?
 - b. How influential do you think religious groups should be in shaping people's religious beliefs and practices? How influential is your religious group in shaping your religious beliefs and practices? Religious Nones – if it hasn't come up already, probe to see if there is any guiding group or influential figures that shape their views on religion.
 - c. Of your closest friends, how many of them are from your local congregation? How many of them share the same religion as you?
- (11) Greater Involvement:
- a. There is some research that suggests that attendance at religious services is on the decline. Presuming for a moment that this is true, what do you think explains this? Marginal Affiliates: How would you explain your own level of participation?
 - b. (Marginal Affiliates) Some Canadians have suggested that they draw selective beliefs and practices from their religious tradition, even if they do not attend frequently. They indicate that they do not plan on changing religious traditions, but they will turn to religious groups for important religious holidays and rites of passages. How well does this describe you? What draws you to religious services on such occasions? What meaning and significance do you find in these activities?
 - c. (Marginal Affiliates and Religious Nones) Would you consider the possibility of being more involved in a religious group if you found it to be worthwhile for you or your family?
 - d. If participants are interested in greater involvement, what factors do you think would make greater participation more worthwhile? If participants are not interested in greater involvement, why not (and then skip to question (g))?
 - e. If religious groups received the responses that you have just provided and they adjusted their supply of religion to provide some of the things that you mention, how likely would you be to increase your level of participation?
 - f. For yourself (if they desire greater involvement), are there any efforts that you have made to find a suitable congregation to participate in, one that meets some of your criteria? If so, describe one of those instances.
 - g. (If has not come up yet) If you have children someday, how will you raise them? Will you give them a religious upbringing? Will you take/send them to church? Why/why not?
- (12) Overall, do you think that religion is a positive or a negative social force in society?
 - (13) Do you believe that people need religion in order to be moral or ethical beings?
 - (14) Are there other organizations, social activities, or volunteer initiatives that you dedicate your time to? If so, what does this commitment entail?
 - (15) How important are these involvements for you? Is there any correlation between these involvements and your religious involvements? Does your religious involvement influence the type or amount of time given to other activities, or would you be more involved in church activities if you were not involved in any of the above activities?

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