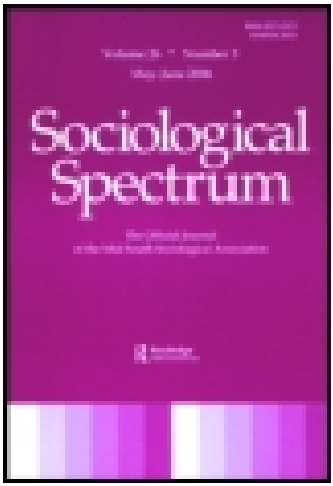

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MEASURING AGGREGATE RELIGIOSITY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1952-2005

J. Tobin Grant [a]

[a] Department of Political Science , Southern-Illinois University-Carbondale , Carbondale, Illinois, USA

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MEASURING AGGREGATE RELIGIOSITY IN THE UNITED STATES, 1952–2005

J. Tobin Grant

Department of Political Science, Southern-Illinois University–Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois, USA

I present a method for measuring aggregate religiosity. The method allows one to combine many indicators of religiosity, even if the indicators measure only a portion of religiosity, or if the indicators are not measured every year of the series. I demonstrate the method by measuring aggregate religiosity of the US population from 1952 through 2005. The results show the sharp rise in religiosity during the 1950s, the decline beginning in the 1960s, and the slower decline since the 1970s. I present evidence of content and convergent validity of this new index.

How religious is the public? How has this religiosity changed over time? We know much about the measurement of religiosity at the individual level, but our measurement—and thus understanding—of macrolevel religiosity is wanting. Better put, we have many measures of religiosity, but we lack a method of combining them into a coherent and valid measure of aggregate religiosity. We lack a unified measure of religiosity that would allow us to gauge changes in the religiosity of the U.S. population.

This article addresses the measurement of *aggregate religiosity*.[1] Sociologists and public commentators alike often discuss the religiosity of the public. We may describe societies as being more or less

[1]I use the term "religiosity" throughout the article to indicate the level of religious belief and behavior. This term encapsulates similar concepts of religious commitment, religious participation, and religious activity.

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Address correspondence to J. Tobin Grant, Department of Political Science, Southern-Illinois University–Carbondale, Carbondale, IL 62901-4501, USA. E-mail: grant@siu.edu

religious than others. For example, one might describe the United States population as being more religious than the population of Iceland. Likewise, one may also discuss societies increasing or decreasing in their levels of religiosity over time. The American public today may (or may not) be less religious than in previous eras. Many of the theories of religion, including secularization theories and theories of religious markets, have empirical implications that require a valid measure of aggregate religiosity in order to be tested. It is the aim of this article to provide such a measure.

Aggregate religiosity is a macrolevel variable that has many manifestations. There are many indicators that sociologists have used to chart religiosity: attendance at religious services, prayer and meditation, membership in churches and other religious organizations, religious beliefs and attitudes, and the subjective importance of religion. Rather than view these as different, we should test whether—in the aggregate—they indicate different aspects of the same latent variable of a population's religiosity. Taken together, different indicators provide information into the level of aggregate religiosity in society.

I provide a solution to this puzzle by estimating an Aggregate Religiosity Index (ARI). This is a summary measure of the religious beliefs, identifications, practices, and attitudes of a population. ARI is a unified measure of religiosity. Using a method for dynamic measurement (Stimson 1999), I am able to measure religiosity despite gaps in the various time series used to measure aspects of religiosity. The resulting measure includes macrolevel indicators of religiosity drawn from discussions in the extant literature of individual-level religiosity. This provides a new measure to describe the religiosity of the United States population and may be used to test some of the empirical implications of theories of religion.

A METHOD FOR MEASURING AGGREGATE RELIGIOSITY

The question that remains unanswered (and often unasked) is how to combine various indicators of religiosity. One study will examine levels of belief in God; another will test the determinants of church attendance. Each uses a different indicator to measure part of the same theoretical concept. For recent decades, we have both evidence of religiosity declining (e.g., Hout and Fischer 2002; Presser and Stinson 1998) and of religiosity remaining stable (e.g., Greeley 1991; Iannaccone 1996; Stark 1999). Our lack of consensus continues is due, in part, to the multifaceted concept of religiosity; there are many indicators that tap various variants of religiosity (e.g., Glock 1959, 1962; Stark and Glock 1968; King and Hunt 1972). Religiosity

is social and includes group involvement such as formal membership of a religious group, attendance at worship or other corporate services, and identification with a religious group.[2] The concept of religiosity also includes the individual religious experience that is not bound to organized religion. In particular, these include prayer or meditation, saliency of religion, and personal experience with the divine or sacred. Each of these aspects of religiosity has many possible indicators, which together have the potential to measure the level of religiosity of the U.S. population.

I must emphasize that these indicators have the *potential* of manifesting aggregate religiosity. Studies of religiosity have used individual level data to measure individual religiosity. Such studies provide a foundation for the measurement of aggregate religiosity. Whether or not each of these aspects of religiosity is manifestation of the same phenomenon remains an open empirical question.

The absence of a unified measure of religiosity is understandable given the limitations of our indicators of religiosity. Unlike measures of demography or economy, there is no measure of religiosity that is consistently and reliably measured for the U.S. population. Indicators that are available for extended periods often focus on only one aspect of religiosity (e.g., membership). Scientific measurement of religiosity is still young. Measures are used, tested, and revised. Different survey instruments use alternative measures. Resource limitations lead to the exclusion of some religion items in surveys for some years but not others.

Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do to improve the quality of previous measures. We cannot go back in time to implement new measures or improve the consistency of our polls. The data is what it is. Our only option is to use an estimator that is able to draw information from the many measures of religiosity despite the problem of missing values. If we cannot do so, we will be left with many survey results and no meaningful way of drawing inferences to the religiosity of the population.

I begin by gathering data on religiosity. Data on religiosity may be inconsistent and messy, but it is still valuable. The goal is to gather information that may be used to estimate a time series of religiosity. The data, then, needs to be time series data. A survey question on religion, regardless of its validity, is useless if it was asked only once. Any indicator had to be measured repeatedly. This also meant that the measure had to be implemented the same way each year. We know from hundreds of studies of public opinion that question

[2]Throughout this article I use "church" as shorthand for any religious community or group.

wording on surveys matter. Even subtle changes such as the number of response options given or the inclusion of an explicit "don't know" response option can change the results of a survey. I combed through data archives including ICPSR (including the General Social Survey and the American National Election Study), the Roper Center, and Gallup's data archive to collect survey marginals. With one exception (the official membership rolls collected by the Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches [YACC]), I used aggregate survey results to construct the series.

Combining measures of religiosity is made difficult by the lack of annual measures of religiosity. One cannot, for example, use principle components analysis to extract a religiosity factor due to the inconsistency of the data. For example, the General Social Survey (GSS) religiosity measures have not been included in each year's survey. Most importantly for the study of religious dynamics, some indicators are not available prior to the 1970s. Again, the GSS provides a wealth of measures, but these cannot be used prior to 1972. The missing values problem is not trivial. Due to the absence of the GSS, the 1950s and 1960s have only a few measures per year. These are drawn from the National Election Study (NES), Gallup polls, and the YACC. Yet, even in recent years, there are missing values. This is due, in part, to advances in the study of public opinion and the changing of question wording and coding of answers. With such data, it is impossible to use principle components analysis. Another solution must be used.

To overcome both the problem of different measures and the problem of missing data, I utilize a method provided by Stimson (1999). In the original application, Stimson's algorithm was used to combine hundreds of survey marginals on public policy issues into a single series. This series, labeled Policy Mood, measures the common movement in public policy opinion toward more liberal (or conservative) policy. As with the measurement of religiosity, the measurement of public policy mood combined many individual series that were asked with varying degrees of regularity, resulting in many missing values. Also, like religiosity, mood draws information from measures that could—and should—be studied as distinct concepts even though, at the macro level, they are indications of a common latent variable. Stimson's algorithm is appropriate for the study of religiosity because it allows one to measure a latent variable that has multiple indicators that may not be available for the entire span of time being measured.[3]

[3]The program used is W-CALC. It is available from James Stimson's website at http://www.unc.edu/~jstimson/resource.html.

While the details of the methodology are given in Appendix to Stimson (1999), I provide a brief explication of the methodology as it applies in the measurement of religiosity.

Because the indicators may be measured on different scales, the first step is to rescale each measure so that all of the measures use the same scale. This is done by setting all of the indicators at time t to an arbitrary value. For example, each of the indicators with a measurement in 2005 is set to a value of 100. The next step is to compare measures in the previous time period to this value. This is done by calculating the ratio of each indicator in $t-1$ with the value at t. For each dyadic comparison, the ratio would be:

$$100 \times \left(\frac{\text{Indicator}_{t-k}}{\text{Indicator}_{t}}\right). \tag{1}$$

To illustrate, I use the example of church membership as measured by Gallup surveys in 2005 and 2004. In 2005, Gallup estimates that 63.65 percent of Americans were church members. In 2004, the estimate was 62.86 percent. The algorithm would estimate the following values for this indicator in 2004 and 2005:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Gallup Member}_{2005} &= 100 \times \left(\frac{63.65}{63.65}\right) = 100.00 \\ \text{Gallup Member}_{2004} &= 100 \times \left(\frac{62.86}{63.65}\right) = 98.76 \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

The process is repeated for each indicator with values in both years. Next, a comparison between the values at 2004 and 2003 are estimated. Rather than use the arbitrary value of 100, the ratio between 2004 and 2005 is used to compare with the indicators for 2003. The process repeats recursively until there is an estimate a relative indicator for each year. The estimate of religiosity is then able to be calculated for each year using the following:

$$\text{Religiosity}_{t} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \sum_{j=1}^{t} \frac{Indicator_{ij}}{Indicator_{ib}} * Meric_{b}}{n} \tag{3}$$

where

I = 1, n is all available indicators for period t

J = 1, t is all available dyadic comparisons for indicator i

b is the base period for the recursive metric generation

$Metric_b$ is the value of the metric for period b (initially set at the arbitrary value of 100 in the algorithm).

This is essentially the average of each rescaled relative indicator. For each year, religiosity is an estimate based on the available indicators that have been rescaled so that they are on the same scale. The result is an estimate of religiosity that incorporates seventeen different indicators of the latent variable. Moreover, this estimate is available for the entire span of 1952 through 2005 despite the missing values that make tracking isolated indicators problematic.

I illustrate the basics of this methodology as it would apply to four series from 1972 through 2002. These series were chosen because of their duration, aspect of religiosity, and familiarity to sociologists. Three are survey results from the GSS: identification with a religion (the inverse of having "no religion"), church attendance, and intolerance toward an antireligion college professor. The fourth series is Gallup's measure of identification with a religion. Because this example is intended for illustration purposes, I leave the rationale and details of each item until the next section.

Figures 1 through 3 illustrate how the algorithm estimates a unified series. In Figure 1, each series has a value in 2002. The algorithm would begin by setting each series to an arbitrary value of 100 for this year. A ratio of the original values in 2001 to the 2002 is then calculated. This ratio is multiplied by 100, the metric in 2002.

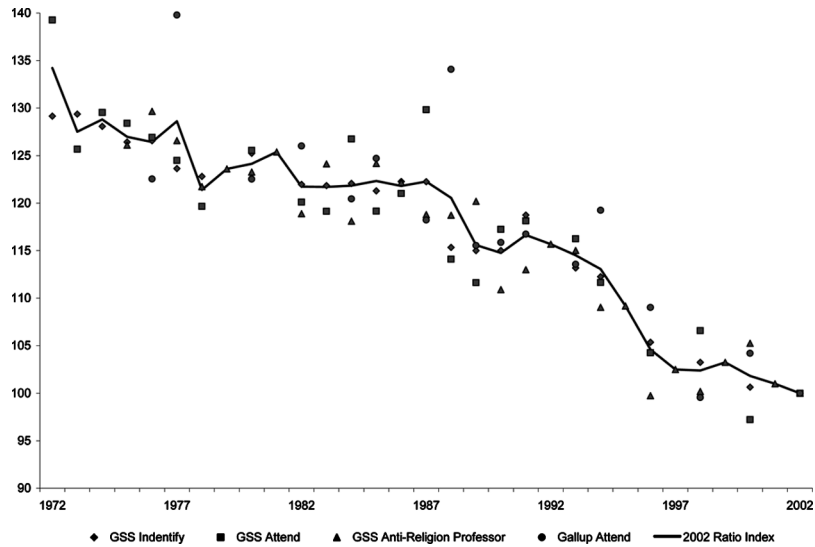

Figure 1. Examples of ratios to 2002 levels.

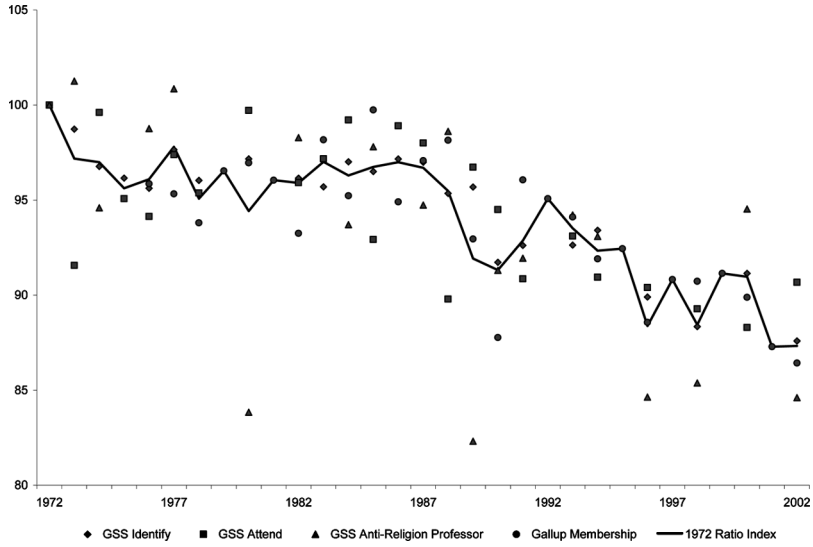

Figure 2. Examples of ratios to 1972 levels.

The average for 2001 is the level of religiosity for that year. This level becomes the metric to be used in the 2000 calculation. This continues for each year back to 1972. The solid line is the estimated religiosity value. As can be seen in Figure 1, the estimate of religiosity based on these four measures has declined since 1972, though there are periods of stability in the 1980s and 1990s. Figure 2 shows the result of estimating the algorithm starting in 1972 and moving forward. The estimation is the same, except that the comparison is made by estimating the ratio of the current year to the previous year and multiplying by the metric of the previous year. The process is repeated moving forward in time. This forward instead of backward movement through the series results in a different value for the series, but the overall pattern is similar. The two series have a correlation of 0.94. Figure 3 shows the final series. This is the average of the backward series (i.e., starting with 2002) and forward series (i.e., starting in 1972).[4]

[4]The 2002-based series has a 0.97 correlation with the final series. The 1972-based measure has a 0.96 correlation with the final series. The three GSS items were highly correlated with the final index (0.85, 0.92, and 0.96 correlations). The relationship with the Gallup series was weaker, with an estimated correlation of 0.65.

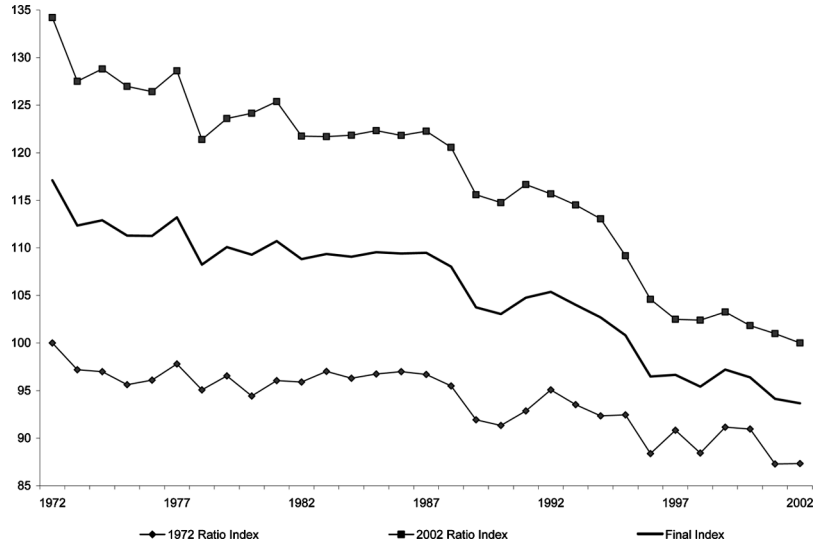

Figure 3. Example of averaging 1972 and 2002 ratios.

The general process using all 17 series follows the same logic as the estimation shown for these four example series.[5]

The Stimson algorithm does not estimate the standard errors of the measurements. This is problematic both for general scientific reasons (i.e., one should always report the uncertainty of measurements and inferences) and specific problems with the religiosity data. Because there are some years with relatively few data points, there is the potential for the estimate to vary more due to outliers. To overcome this, I estimate bootstrap standard errors. Rather than estimate ARI once, I estimate it seventeen times.[6] For each estimation, I removed one of the indicators. Each estimate, thus, varies based on which indicator was removed. I used the series to estimate the standard error of ARI for each year.

Figure 4 graphs the annual estimates of ARI along with their ninety-five percent confidence intervals. ARI allows us to measure

[5]In the example, I use a spreadsheet to calculate the values. For the seventeen series estimation, I use of the W-CALC program provided by James Stimson on his website. This estimation includes some technical differences from the example presented here, such as a weighting procedure based on sample size and an estimation of variance explained by the series. These are discussed in Stimson (1999), but they are irrelevant for this discussion.

[6]The estimate based on the average of the seventeen estimates and the single estimate based on all seventeen series together are correlated at a level greater than 0.990.

Figure 4. Aggregate Religiosity Index (ARI), 1952–2005. Figure shows ARI each year. Scores standardized to a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 10. Dotted lines show ninety-five percent confidence intervals based on bootstrapped standard errors. See text for description.

annual fluctuations in religiosity. The resulting measure shows that religiosity in the United States is dynamic; it has not continually decreased in response to the march of modernization, nor has it remained static. There has been an overall decline since the 1960s, but there have also been years of brief increases, times of sustained increases, and periods of minor changes. It also contradicts views of religiosity as more or less static that are based on comparisons of individual survey items since the decline of religiosity in the late 1960s. American population had a "revival" during the 1950s, a decline in aggregate religiosity during the late 1960s and 1970s, and a period of sustained religiosity during the 1980s. Current levels of religiosity are near the levels of the early 1950s, but the five decades in between has been a time of dynamic change. I discuss the validity of this index in the next two sections.

VALIDITY

As with any estimator, this methodology will produce a result even if it is not theoretically valid. Demonstrating validity is always difficult.

For ARI, I examine two types of validation. First, I explore content validity—does the measure reflect the theoretical concept? Second, I test for convergent validity. Currently, the literature lacks another measure of aggregate religiosity against which I can compare ARI. There are, however, extant measures that should be related to ARI. These include aggregate attitudes toward religion and contemporaneous reports on religiosity. Evidence of both content validity and convergent validity provide support for the validity of ARI as a measure of aggregate religiosity.

Content Validity

Theory may suggest that certain indicators be used, but it is an empirical question whether or not the indicators are manifestations of the same concept. To assess the content validity of the estimation, one may calculate the correlation between the original series and the estimated index. Recall that the index is estimated using ratios to previous (or subsequent) values, not the original values per se. If the original series (selected based on theory) are correlated with the final index, then the index has content validity. In this section I discuss the content of the ARI and the relationship between the indicators and the final series.

Table 1 lists each of the indicators used to measure ARI, the number of years for which the indicator is used, and the absolute value of the correlation between the indicator and the overall index (the absolute value is listed because some of the indicators measure low religiosity, e.g., the proportion of the public having no religious identification). High correlations indicate that the index is a valid measure of the latent variable that includes the particular indicator.

As one should expect, most of the items are strongly correlated with ARI. The average correlation of the series to the final index is 0.74 ($p < 0.01$). Together with the individual correlations, one may adequately assess the content validity of ARI. Overall, the empirical analysis of content validity supports the theoretical expectations. ARI is an index that measures the level of religiosity of the U.S. population, drawing upon indicators of group involvement, individual involvement, beliefs, and attitudes toward religion.

For validation, however, it is more important to look at which indicators are more strongly correlated with the index. There does not appear to be any patterns to which indicators are highly correlated with ARI. There is no pattern based on the type of survey; for example, we do not see all of the GSS items with the highest (or lowest) correlations. The index is also strongly related to a variety of behaviors. Each of the most related items taps a different facet of religiosity—saliency, identification, membership, and attendance.

Table 1. Content of aggregate religiosity index (ARI)

Source	Indicator	Years	Correlation
GSS	Feel close to God	8	0.96
NES	Religious Identification (version 2)	14	0.93
YACC	Membership reported by denominations	49	0.93
Gallup	Attendance (version 2)	13	0.90
GSS	Religious Identification	25	0.87
Gallup	Church membership	31	0.82
GSS	Religious experience	5	0.80
NES	Religious Identification (version 1)	26	0.80
GSS	Attendance	25	0.74
GSS	Prayer	14	0.73
Gallup	Salience of religion	26	0.74
GSS	Membership	16	0.63
NES	Religion is a guide to life	11	0.59
NES	Salience of religion	11	0.58
NES	Attendance (version 1)	8	0.56
Gallup	Attendance (version 1)	41	0.49
NES	Attendance (version 2)	10	0.47

Note: "Years" is total of number of years, not the duration from first to final year. "Correlation" is absolute value of the correlation between indicator and ARI. This is used because of reverse coding of some items. See text for description of sources. Percent of variance explained is fifty-eight. The average correlation is 0.74.

There are some series that have a weak relationship with ARI. How one treats such series depends on one's view toward inductive research. A pure barefoot empirical approach to measurement would result in these items being excluded from the series. A low correlation would be interpreted as the indicator's lack of relationship with the composite measure. My approach is to keep items in the measure so long as they have a statistically significant correlation in the expected direction. This choice is made, in part, because the correlations should be interpreted with some caution given the low number of observations of some items. With such series, even a slight change in the estimate could result in a much different coefficient. A series lacking these measures is nearly the same as the series I estimate, which is to be expected since the excluded series have little relationship with ARI. Such an estimate excluding these series is more efficient, but has less content validity.

Convergent Validity

The validity of ARI as a measure of aggregate religiosity is supported by evidence of content validity, but one should also consider convergent validity as well. Convergent (or sometimes referred to

Table 2. Convergent-divergent validation with extant GSS items

	Correlation with ARI
Ban antireligion college teacher (colath)	0.85**
Ban antireligion speaker (spkath)	0.76**
Ban antireligion book from library (libath)	0.75**
Confidence in organized religion (conclerg)	0.50*

*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$.

as divergent) validity is the similarity of a measure to previously used measures of the same concept. Table 2 presents the correlation of four GSS items that are related to, but distinct from, religiosity. The first three are part of the tolerance battery in the GSS. Respondents are asked what they would allow a person who was "antireligion" to do. We would expect that as religiosity declines, we should also see less intolerance toward those who are "antireligion." Each of the three tolerance items are strongly correlated with ARI. The fourth measure is the level of confidence in organized religion. Confidence in religion is not a measure of religiosity, but one would expect it to be related to religiosity. ARI is positively correlated with confidence in organized religion. Together, these results provide evidence of convergent validity for ARI.

The GSS evidence does not provide us with a test of convergent validity for the decades when most of our understanding of aggregate religiosity was based on qualitative accounts and when indicators of religiosity were fewer. ARI reveals that from 1950 through the early 1960s, the U.S. population grew much more religious. From the mid-1960s through the 1970s, there was a dramatic turn and the level of religiosity declined. Is this consistent with the extant accounts of religiosity in the United States?

One of the most notable features of the index is the sharp rise in religiosity during the 1950s. This pattern fits with perceptions at the time by both sociologists and by those reporting in the popular press. During this time, the debate was not whether there was an increase in religiosity, but whether the so-called "religious revival" was a temporary change in commitment to religion following the war or a more permanent change in society. Sociologists such as Herberg (1955) and Argyle (1958) were well aware of this increase in aggregate religiosity. Herberg (1959) responds to Lipset's (1959) claim that current levels of religiosity were indicative of an interest in religion, not a revival per se, with an essay emphatically titled, "There is a Religious Revival!" Smith (1960) goes so far as to

compare the 1950s increase in religiosity with the Great Awakening and other religious revivals in American history. Even the titles of Ekhardt's (1958) *The Surge of Piety* and Marty's (1959) *The New Shape of American Religion* shows that there was an assumption that the reader would be aware and interested in the changes to American religion.

The popular press also reported this increase in religiosity. In 1950, Reinhold Neibuhr, writing a feature for the *New York Times*, discusses the question, "Is There a Revival of Religion?", with the answer being that it was too early to tell, but that the "devotees of major faiths have a right to hope and believe" that the revival will be real and long-lasting.[7] In 1955, *Life* magazine focused its attention on religion by devoting five issues to the "World's Great Religions," with an additional issue devoted to Christianity.[8] In 1955, the highly popular women's magazine, *McCall's*, interviewed religious and social leaders about the revival, asking whether it was a true "revival" or a temporary increase in religious activity.[9] In another forum in the National Council of Churches, *Outlook*, leaders including President Eisenhower, Adlai Stevenson, Senator Paul Douglas, Billy Graham (Evangelical Protestant evangelist), Dr. Norman Vincent Peale (religious author and publisher), Dr. Eugene Carson Blake (president of National Council of Churches), Dr. Listen Pope (Yale Divinity School), Dr. J. W. Behnken (president of Lutheran Church) and Nathan Pusey (President of Harvard University). Each concluded that the 1950s revival was real, though they sometimes disagreed over whether the revival was complete and how it should proceed.[10] The index validly measures this rise in religiosity.

A second striking pattern is the sharp decline in religiosity that began in the 1960s. From 1965 through at least 1975, the index shows a steady decline in religiosity. This decline, like the revival of the 1950s, was perceptible by those observing the religious scene at the time. Ahlstrom (1970) comments after the social changes between

[7]November 10, 1950.

[8]The perception of revival was not limited to Christianity. In sociology see Rudavsky (1960) and Glazer (1957). In the popular press, *Time* magazine reported on the "Kosher Revival." February 20, 1956.

[9]*Time* also featured an article on the "Kosher Revival," which highlights that the perceived revival was not limited to Christianity or Protestantism. For *McCall's* see June 1955 issue. The *McCall's* forum was originally cited in Andrew S. Finstuen, "The Prophet and the Evangelist: The public 'conversation' of Reinhold Niebuhr and Billy Graham." *Books and Culture.* July/August 2006.

[10]Summaries from *Outlook* may be found in an article in *Time* November 26, 1956 and in the *New York Times* October 21, 1956.

1960 and 1965, that "it was perfectly clear to any reasonably conscious American historian that the postwar revival had completely frittered out" (p. 2). An August 18, 1975 *New York Times* report on religion in New York City reported that Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish leaders "widely believe that since 1965, their institutions have lost both visibility and impact on public decisions" and that religious views were now assumed by religious leaders to be in the minority. During the decade following the religious revival of the 1950s and early 1960s came a drop in religiosity that was tangible to religious observers at the time, and is accurately measured with ARI.

In summary, the evidence suggests that ARI is a valid measure of aggregate religiosity. First, ARI has content validity. The aggregate measure is correlated with each of its composite measures, and these correlations demonstrate that ARI is not a reflection of any one type of religiosity measure. There is a latent religiosity variable at the macro level that is manifest by levels of group involvement, personal involvement, beliefs, and attitudes toward religion. Second, ARI has convergent validity. The pattern of religiosity revealed in ARI over time is consistent with extant qualitative accounts in both sociology and the popular press. Together, these tests of validity provide strong evidence that ARI is a valid measure of aggregate religiosity.

DISCUSSION

Aggregate religiosity has been a subject of sociology since Durkheim, Weber, and Marx. To understand how aggregate religiosity changes, to make causal inferences, we first need a valid measure of aggregate religiosity. This article provides a method for estimating such a measure.

The results provide fresh insight into the dynamics of religiosity in the United States, and should assist sociologists studying the causes and the effects of religiosity. Few social scientists today were systematically studying religion six decades ago. Absent a measure such as ARI, we must qualitatively piece together patterns of religiosity indicators, many of which have been gathered inconsistently. With ARI, we are able to demonstrate the ebbs and flows of aggregate religiosity. The sharp rise during the 1950s is likely to be surprising to many, though it is consistent with qualitative accounts at the time. The decline since the mid-1960s has not been linear; there are times of relatively little change or years in which religiosity has increased for a short time. While the U.S. population is much less religious than it was at the start of the 1960s, it is about as religious as it was at the start of the 1950s.

The rise and decline of aggregate religiosity provides a new puzzle for the sociology of religion. Supply-side theory provides explanations for comparative differences across countries (or other spatial units). This theory may have more difficulty explaining changes over time. During this time there were some changes in the religious regulations (Finke and Iannaccone 1993), but, overall, religious policy promoted a free market during this time period. Better stated, there was not a sudden deregulation of the religious economy during the 1950s and a decline in competition since the 1960s. Or, if there were such changes in regulation or competition, it has not been demonstrated in the extant literature. There are other reasons that would cause demand to change, but these have not been tested. Whether and how easily theories of religiosity are able to explain changes in aggregate religiosity remains an open question.

The method is also capable to being used for other macrosociological measurements. The algorithm used to estimate ARI as originally developed in political science to measure broad changes in public opinion toward policy (Stimson 1999). Sociology has decades of data from the GSS, the census, and other data sets. As with religiosity, this data is often incomplete or has multiple indicators. The method used to estimate ARI may also be used to estimate other sociological concepts that have thus far remained unmeasured.

Measurement is necessary for the scientific study of society. It allows us to move beyond our perceptions and make meaningful comparisons. ARI provides descriptive inferences of changes of religiosity in the United States. It also lays the foundation for future research into the causes of aggregate religiosity and the effect of this religiosity on other parts of society.

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APPENDIX

Values for ARI

Year	ARI	Year	ARI
1952	95.46	1979	92.57
1953	96.87	1980	94.02
1954	101.76	1981	96.45
1955	104.70	1982	96.59
1956	109.22	1983	99.41
1957	105.88	1984	98.93
1958	113.21	1985	99.34
1959	116.57	1986	96.10
1960	114.73	1987	95.21
1961	114.16	1988	94.84
1962	113.80	1989	94.04
1963	115.51	1990	96.58
1964	115.63	1991	99.83
1965	117.69	1992	98.62
1966	113.79	1993	95.78
1967	112.21	1994	96.44
1968	112.27	1995	94.70
1969	111.90	1996	89.16
1970	109.59	1997	91.69
1971	107.92	1998	90.72
1972	106.27	1999	95.28
1973	103.93	2000	89.14
1974	103.30	2001	84.34
1975	100.25	2002	84.08
1976	101.04	2003	81.05
1977	98.72	2004	82.80
1978	95.21	2005	83.96