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AUTHOR

Clements, Ben and Bullivant, Stephen

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Why Younger Catholics Seem More Committed: Survivorship Bias and/or ‘Creative Minority’ Effects among British Catholics

BEN CLEMENTS

School of History, Politics and International Relations

University of Leicester, Leicester, UK

STEPHEN BULLIVANT

Benedict XVI Centre for Religion and Society

St Mary’s University, London, UK

School of Philosophy and Theology

University of Notre Dame, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

The normative value of, and the extent of popular engagement with, different forms of commitment differ across Christian religious traditions, but studies often show women and older people exhibiting greater religiosity in their behaviour and belief. Using a multi-dimensional approach to religious commitment, this study uses a new survey to provide an in-depth assessment of Catholics in Britain. It finds that younger cohorts show greater involvement in some aspects of commitment and that there is very limited evidence for gender differences. Family religious socialisation plays a key role in patterns of commitment relative to the weak impact of schooling. Two potential explanations for this counterintuitively positive ‘youth effect’ seen amongst British Catholics are offered: ‘survivor bias’ and a ‘creative minority’ effect. The study provides an important contribution to understanding how Catholics in Britain engage with their faith and mediate processes of secularisation.

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Keywords: *Religious commitment; Catholics; Britain; youth effect; socialisation.*

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Correspondence should be addressed to: Ben Clements, School of History, Politics and International Relations, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, United Kingdom, LE1 7RH. Email: bc101@leicester.ac.uk

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INTRODUCTION

Britain has long provided one of the ‘model case-studies’ of western (European) secularization, and recent data has done little to undermine this status. Over half of British adults identify as having ‘no religion’, and two-thirds say they ‘never’ attend religious services outside of such special occasions as baptisms, church weddings, or religious funerals (Voas and Bruce 2019) – events which are themselves significantly declining in popularity (Church of England 2020). With societal religious decline being primarily a generational process (Crockett and Voas 2006), it is no surprise that British young adults are typically less religiously ‘belonging’, ‘believing’, and ‘behaving’ than their parents or grandparents either are now or were at their age. Indeed, British young adults are among the least religious in Europe (Bullivant 2018).

Within this wider British landscape, the Catholic Church has suffered serious decline in recent decades. Roughly two-fifths of British cradle Catholics now identify as religious nones (Bullivant 2019); typical Sunday Mass attendance in England and Wales more than halved in the 35 years from 1984 (1.5 million) to 2019 (0.7 million) (Kinnear, forthcoming). Furthermore, the ‘greying’ nature of Catholic congregations – and indeed their clergy – is widely acknowledged within Church circles. While it is true that, compared to even worse decline within other Christian denominations, British Catholicism is faring *relatively* well, it is also true that the British Catholic community has disproportionately benefitted from immigration from (very much) more religious countries: even after Brexit, official statistics suggest that Polish nationals alone amount to around 1 million people living in the UK (Office for National Statistics 2021). Accordingly, there is no *a priori* reason to assume that Catholics are particularly bucking Britain’s overall downward religious trends.

And yet, this is not at all what new data seems to be showing. In this paper, we draw on data from a new nationally representative survey of British Catholics: one of very few

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dedicated surveys of ‘Britain’s largest minority’ (Sewell 2001) ever to be undertaken (see Hornsby-Smith and Lee 1979, which includes only England and Wales; Woodhead 2013a, 2013b). We present a multivariate analysis of factors affecting religious commitment, which allows us to extend existing research (much of which mostly based on US and/or Protestant-specific samples) to a new context. Among several notable results emerging from this analysis (touching on, *inter alia*, religious socialization and social network theory), we preemptively highlight one in particular: a counterintuitively positive ‘youth effect’ across a number of key indicators of religious commitment. In the main discussion section of this paper, we interrogate these findings in some detail, arguing for a combination of two separate (but related) explanations. The first is that our observed ‘youth effect’ is partly illusory, and due to the presence of a statistical phantom: ‘survivorship bias’. This issue, which has been well studied in spheres ranging from aeronautical safety to finance, has – to the best of our knowledge – has yet to be recognized as a potentially significant issue within the quantitative sociology of religion. The second is that, survivorship bias notwithstanding, there is indeed something *real* afoot among younger Catholics, and that this ‘creative minority effect’ is in fact a natural side-effect or by-product of ‘late secularization’ (cf. Bruce 2014, 2016).

MEASURING RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

Defining and measuring religious commitment and its constituent dimensions has been an important area of scholarly research in the sociology of religion (Glock and Stark 1965; Stark and Glock 1968; Legee and Kellstedt 1993). It has been recognised that the normative value of, and the extent of the laity’s engagement with, different forms of commitment can vary across religious traditions, such as between Catholics and Protestant denominations (Legee 1996). In Britain, Catholics represent an important but under-studied tradition for analysing religious commitment. Catholics account for around 7% of the British adult population,

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making them Britain's second-largest religious group, after Anglicans at 12% and with Muslims below them at 6% (Voas and Bruce 2019). But Catholicism is the dominant religious group in terms of total attendance at church services across Britain as a whole (Kinnear, forthcoming).

But while there has been important empirical research examining the nature, extent, antecedents, and attitudinal consequences of religious commitment amongst Catholics in the USA (Davidson et al. 1997; D'Antonio et al. 2013, 2007, 2001, 1996, 1989; Mockabee et al. 2001; Rinaman et al. 2009), in Britain there has been comparatively little recent investigation into religious commitment within the Catholic community (Clements 2016a; Woodhead 2013a, 2013b). Indeed, the last major wide-ranging academic investigation of the Catholic community (in England and Wales, not Britain as a whole) was conducted in late-1970s (Hornsby-Smith 1987; Hornsby-Smith and Turcan 1981; Hornsby-Smith et al. 1982; Hornsby-Smith and Lee 1979). This research, now over four decades old, demonstrated growing heterogeneity in Catholics' religious beliefs and practices (Hornsby-Smith 1987).

Given this situation, some pertinent observations made by Rinaman et al. (2009) in relation to scholarly research into Catholics in the USA are very much applicable to Catholics in Britain. Firstly, there has been a paucity of recent empirical research into the dimensions of religious commitment amongst Catholics in Britain (Rinaman et al. 2009:413). Secondly, 'understanding variation among Catholics (and measuring it well) is important because of the significant influence that religion and religiosity have on social and political attitudes and behaviours' (Rinaman et al. 2009:413). In other words, 'intra-group variation on key dimensions of religiosity matters' (Rinaman et al. 2009:427). Existing research has shown that British Catholics' views on social-moral issues are associated with measures of religious behaviour (Clements 2014a, 2014b). Assessing intra-group variation is even more important given that the British Catholic community exhibits a more pluralist fabric in relation to

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national origins and ethnicity, for both historical reasons, and given significant recent inflows of Catholic migrants from Eastern European and Asian countries (Bullivant, forthcoming).

Our study builds on both seminal studies of the dimensions of religious commitment and existing research into British Catholicism, which recognizes the heterogenous nature of this community. We present an analysis that assesses the antecedent factors of religious commitment, using data from a new, nationally-representative survey of self-identifying Catholics. This in-depth study builds on and significantly extends the scope of recent studies of Catholics' religious behaviour (Bullivant 2019; Clements 2016a, 2016b; Woodhead 2013a, 2013b). It marks a major advance in scholarship on how Catholics engage with and express their faith, advancing understanding of how 'large-scale secularising trends have been (and are being) mediated differently within different British Christian groupings' (Bullivant 2016: 195).

DATA AND METHOD

Our survey of Catholics (aged 18 and over) living in Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) was administered online by the survey research organisation Savanta ComRes. Savanta ComRes is a member of the British Polling Council. For its online surveys, it has proprietary panels in the UK and USA, each comprising several hundred thousand active members. Research in the USA has used online surveys for surveying the Catholic community (D'Antonio et al. 2013) and recent research in Britain has used online surveys to research minority religious populations, including Catholics (Clements 2016a, 2014a, 2014b; Woodhead 2013a, 2013b) and Jews (Barclay et al. 2019).

The fieldwork was undertaken between 21st October and 7th November 2019. Catholic respondents were identified by use of a standard screening question, as used in other research (D'Antonio et al. 2013:155), to ensure only individuals who currently identified as Catholic

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were sampled. The wording (taken from the long-running British Social Attitudes (BSA) survey question on religious affiliation) was as follows: ‘Do you regard yourself as belonging to any particular religion? If yes, which?’. The interview was immediately terminated for those respondents who self-identified with another religion or who did not self-identify with any religion. The total n for the survey sample was 1,823. Post-fieldwork, the sample was weighted to make it nationally representative of Catholic adults in Britain (in terms of age, sex, and region; calibrated according to Catholic subsamples in pooled data from recent waves of the BSA survey series).

Dependent Variables

The analysis uses Leege and Kellstedt’s classification of religious commitment (1993:292, Figure 14.1). We use indicators from the new survey of British Catholics which tap four of the five dimensions from the classification – church involvement, private devotionism, salience and belief (but excluding affiliation, given our sample all self-identified as Catholic). Leege and Kellstedt noted that this classification ‘spells out the core dimensions of religious commitment and a minimalist set of measures to tap each of these dimensions’ (1993:292). The strategy of analysing each dimension separately – and looking at multiple indicators within each dimension – rather than constructing a composite index of religious commitment allows us to capture the complexity of how Catholics engage with their faith. As Stark and Glock observed:

When we say someone is religious, we can mean many different things. Church membership, belief in religious doctrines, an ethical way of life, attendance at worship services and many other acts, outlooks and conditions can all denote piety and commitment to religion ... However, simply because a person is religious in one of these ways is not guarantee that he will be religious in others. (1968:11)

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The dimensions, indicators and question wordings from the new survey are detailed in Table 1, showing the close correspondence with Leege and Kellstedt's multi-dimensional framework. In total, eight indicators of religious commitment from the new survey are used, two per dimension. For church involvement, as well as asking about frequency of attendance at Mass (*1a* in the Leege and Kellstedt classification), we examine frequency of receiving Holy Communion (which was asked of the large share of the sample – 66.0% – who said that they attended Mass), which for Catholics can be seen as an indicator of other activity within the church (*1b*, in the Leege and Kellstedt classification). For private devotionism, we use two indicators. As well as frequency of prayer – the indicator (2) provided by Leege and Kellstedt (1993) for this dimension – we also assess the frequency of going to confession with a Catholic priest (Sacrament of Reconciliation). For salience, we look at two ways of tapping how important faith is in respondents' (indicator 3 in Leege and Kellstedt's classification (1993)). Firstly, a scale measuring how personally important the Catholic Church is (adapted from D'Antonio et al. 2013) and, secondly, a more general sense of how religious they are. For belief, Leege and Kellstedt (1993) listed two indicators. We look at belief in God (*4a* in the Leege and Kellstedt classification – belief in the supernatural) and also belief in a composite index of other Christian and specifically Catholic doctrines (which includes *4b*, in the Leege and Kellstedt classification, belief in the afterlife).

[Table 1 about here]

Following the approach of previous research looking at the factors shaping multiple indicators of religious commitment (Conway and Spryut 2018), the dependent variables were all standardised – recoded as 0 to 1 scales – to enable comparison. For each of the models, we use OLS regression to examine the impact of the independent variables for

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each of eight indicators of religious commitment. The full distributions for the religious indicators used as the dependent variables are given in the online Appendix.

Independent Variables

The analysis uses a wide range of independent variables to assess the factors associated with British Catholics' religious commitment. The independent variables can be divided into two broad groups: socio-demographic characteristics and aspects of religious socialisation.

Socio-Demographic Variables

Gender was coded as 1 for women and 0 for men. *Age group* was divided into six dummy variables for different cohorts (18-24 years old, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64 and 65 and older). Those aged 65 and over are the omitted reference category. *Country of birth* captures whether a respondent was born in the United Kingdom (England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland; scored as 1) or in another country (scored as 0). *Ethnic group* distinguishes between those in a white ethnic group (scored as 1) and those belonging to a mixed or non-white ethnic group (scored as 0). *Marital status* distinguishes between those respondents in a valid marriage approved by the Catholic Church (scored as 1) and those in all other circumstances (scored as 0: in a marriage not approved as such or in some other relationship status, such as being in a relationship but not married, single, divorced, or widowed). *Children in household* classifies respondents on the basis of whether they had any children in their household (scored as 1) or none (scored as 0). *Education* was measured by a dummy variable, scored as 1 if holding a degree-level or higher qualification and 0 for lower-level qualifications or having no qualifications. *Housing tenure* was classified as a series of dummy variables, based on whether a respondent lived in the private rental sector, the public rental sector, or was an owner-occupier (which forms the omitted reference category). *Nation* differentiates between

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respondents living in (i) Scotland (scored as 1) or (ii) England and Wales (scored as 0), which are governed by separate national bishops' conferences. *Catholic friends* captures how many of each respondent's five closest friends are Catholic (ranging from none through to five).

Religious Socialisation Variables

We use variables to capture the effects of past religious socialisation processes, that occurred in the family environment and within schooling at primary and secondary level. A dummy variable – *Upbringing* – measures whether each respondent was raised from birth within the Catholic faith (scored as 1) or whether they converted at some stage (scored as 0). *Schooling* is measured as series of dummy variables to capture the role of the Catholic Church in education at primary (ages 4 to 11) and secondary levels (ages 11 through to finishing mandatory schooling), as variation in schooling provision may affect the views of Catholics (D'Antonio et al. 2013, 2007, 2001). The sample was divided according to whether respondents attended Catholic schools only, had mixed provision (combination of Catholic and non-Catholic schooling) or attended non-Catholic schools only. The group that solely attended Catholic schools forms the omitted reference category. Previous research has shown how Catholic schools in Britain have been an important part of the maintenance of the community's distinctive subculture, integral to religious socialisation and the transmission and reinforcement of communal identity and heritage (Hornsby-Smith 1987: 185).

The potential impact of family socialisation is captured by combining information on the religious affiliation and attendance of each respondent's mother and father. Variables were constructed separately for each parent (*Mother's religion* and *Father's religion*) and were scored as 1 if they were Catholic *and* generally attended Mass on a weekly basis (based on the respondent's recall) and scored 0 for all other sets of circumstances. Finally, to assess the further impact of religious socialisation when growing up, a variable (*Mass attendance*

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aged 11-12) classified each respondent by their attendance pattern when they were young. Those who recalled attending on a weekly basis or more often were scored as 1 and those who recalled attending less often or not at all were scored as 0.

RESULTS

Tables 2-5 reports the results of the OLS regressions models for each of the eight indicators, which are grouped by dimension of religious commitment. Table 2 shows the results for the indicators for church involvement, Table 3 for private devotionalism, Table 4 for salience and Table 5 for belief. This section discusses in turn the results for socio-demographic factors and religious socialisation factors.

Socio-Demographic Factors

Taken together, the results across the four dimensions and eight indicators of religious commitment appear to provide little evidence for a sustained gender gap – that is, the presence of higher religiosity amongst women than men. Differences emerge for only two of the eight indicators. The only statistically significant difference supporting ‘gender gap’ expectations is manifested in Catholic women being more likely to pray regularly than men. But Catholic men were more likely to attend confession than women, pulling in the opposite direction to the usual basis of gendered participation in religious activity (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012; Voas et al. 2013). This provides mixed results for the two activities categorised as private devotionalism. Net of other explanatory factors, it does not appear to be the case that Catholics’ religious engagement is ‘gendered’ to a significant extent, as has been shown in other research concerning the general population in Britain (Voas and Bruce 2019: 15) and on a cross-national basis (Trzebiatowska and Bruce 2012; Voas et al. 2013). However, it is critical to note here that women are significantly more likely than are men to identify as

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Catholic in the first place: that is, the British Catholic population is composed of 63% women to 37% men. It is true that women are slightly more likely than are men to say that they were brought up Catholic, by a ratio of roughly 11 to 9 – an effect that has been observed in both British and US data (Bullivant 2019: 42). Speculatively, this is perhaps because baby girls are indeed more likely to be raised religiously than are boys – see Voas and McAndrew 2012 – and/or because women are more susceptible to interpreting a religiously ambiguous upbringing as being ‘religious’ over ‘nonreligious’. However, this effect is observed in both British and American data (Bullivant 2019:42). The greater part of the gender skew, however, is the result of differential levels of disaffiliation between the sexes – i.e., men being far more likely than are women to no longer identify as Catholic, despite having been brought up as one. So while it is indeed the case that, among self-identifying Catholics, there is little difference between the sexes in terms of commitment, it is also true that there is a prior gender divide ‘baked in’ to the data at the level of who (still) affiliates as Catholic in the first place. This is, we note, precisely a product of the aforementioned ‘survivorship bias’, discussed in more detail below.

Statistically significant differences based on age group were found in six of the eight indicators of religious commitment, the exceptions being prayer and belief in God. In each case, there was a broadly similar pattern, with Catholics aged 65 and older (the reference category) being less likely to show religious commitment relative to (a varying set) of younger age groups. Net of other factors, within Britain older Catholics do not exhibit greater religiosity compared to their younger co-religionists. This is another intriguing finding which differs from established insights in the literature and from earlier research into Catholics in England – which found frequent attendance was more prevalent amongst older people (Hornsby-Smith 1987:45). Indeed (as noted in the Introduction), it differs from a good deal of

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received wisdom about ‘generationally declining’ religion in Britain and elsewhere (the USA by no means excluded: Voas and Chaves 2016; Brauer 2018).

The separate variables capturing ethnic group and country of origin show differing patterns of associations with religious commitment, highlighting the value of assessing both of these aspects of Catholics’ socio-demographic circumstances. This is important given the already-noted inflows into the British Catholic community from countries in Eastern Europe and Asia. Having been born within the UK (compared to being born outside) was statistically significant and positively related to religious commitment in six of the eight indicators, but there was no effect for either indicator from the belief dimension. Belonging to a white ethnic group (compared to belonging to a mixed or non-white ethnic group) is statistically significant and negatively related to most indicators of religious commitment, with the exceptions of Holy Communion and general sense of religiousness. Being in an approved Catholic marriage (compared to all other forms of relationship status) is positively related to religious commitment and statistically significant across all indicators. There are no statistically significant differences based on whether Catholics live in England and Wales or in Scotland (each governed by their own Catholic bishops’ conference). Having children in the household had limited effects, having a statistically significant impact and being positively related to Mass attendance and going to confession.

Differences in socio-economic situation have an impact on religious commitment. For education, having a degree or a higher qualification (Masters or PhD) is statistically significant and positively related to religious commitment in five out of eight indicators (but not for communion, general religiosity, or belief in God). For housing tenure, often used as a proxy for socio-economic circumstances with homeownership thought to reflect a more economically secure situation or greater affluence, living in public rental sector accommodation (compared to being an owner-occupier) is positively related and statistically

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significant for several indicators of religious commitment (but not for Mass attendance, Holy Communion, or belief in God). But there were no statistically significant differences between those living in the private rental sector and owner-occupiers.

Having more co-religionists in one's social network is positively related to religious commitment and statistically significant for all indicators. We should acknowledge the potential reciprocal links which could operate here. Having more co-religionists in one's close friendship network could itself be influenced by frequent involvement in communal activity – not least through attending Mass itself. We will have more to say on this point, below.

[Tables 2 to 5 about here]

Religious Socialisation Factors

British Catholics' religious commitment is also clearly influenced by factors relating to processes of religious socialisation. Being raised as a Catholic, as opposed to converting at some stage in one's life, is statistically significant and negatively related to all indicators of religious commitment. This perhaps provides some substance to the well-worn adage about the 'zeal of the convert', evident on the part of those who join Catholicism from another faith tradition or from being unaffiliated. When comparing the impact of schooling and parental religion, it appears that experience of educational settings has a very limited impact. There are no statistically significant differences between Catholics who had mixed education provision and those who attended Catholic schools only (the reference category). There are, however, two statistically significant differences between those who did not have any Catholic schooling and those who only attended Catholic schools, but the effects work in different directions: negatively related for communion and positively related for belief in

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God. In contrast, the variables measuring, respectively, whether a respondent's mother and father were Catholic and attended Mass weekly are both positively related and statistically significant for all eight indicators of religious commitment, showing their reinforcing effects within the family environment. The role of religious socialisation processes is augmented by the results from the variable capturing respondents' attendance patterns aged 11-12. This shows that having attended Mass weekly is statistically significant and positively related to commitment for nearly all indicators (with the sole exception of belief in God). A core route through which Catholic children participate in and affirm their faith has an impact on several different facets of religious commitment in adulthood. Overall, processes of family socialisation seem much more consequential for religious commitment in adulthood than do the varied experiences of Catholic religious schooling.

Overall, the findings show a variegated picture of consistency and inconsistency across the wide range of explanatory factors assessed. An overview of variable performance across OLS models is given in Table 6, showing whether each variable coefficient attained statistical significance (at $p < .05$ or lower) and the direction of the association with each indicator of religious commitment. There is a wide-ranging set of factors that have a statistically significant impact in a consistent direction in more than half of the models (5-8 occurrences). These factors include country of birth, ethnic group, being in an approved Catholic marriage, educational attainment, the extent of having Catholic friends, being raised as Catholic, mother's religion, father's religion, and Mass attendance aged 11-12. Their impact generalises across most or all of these different forms of religious commitment.

[Table 6 about here]

DISCUSSION

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The existing scholarly literature investigating causes and correlates of religious commitment is, while admittedly varied, largely built upon studies of Protestant or American (if not, as very often, *both*) milieux. This is no bad thing in itself. But it does mean that studies of factors influencing various dimensions of belonging, believing, behaving, and/or bonding in different contexts potentially have a dual value: as studies of valid and interesting areas in their own right, *but also* as helping to ‘test out’ overarching theories within the sociology of religion. In this section, therefore, we firstly wish to comment, albeit quite briefly, on one area of contemporary scholarship to which we feel this British Catholic data contributes: childhood religious socialization (religious practice during upbringing, parental religiosity, religious schooling). In the second part of this section, we turn to a fuller discussion of the most striking result to emerge from the survey: the fact that, all other things being equal, younger Catholics seem to be getting *more* committed when compared to older cohorts. Offering a plausible explanation of this result is, we believe, important in itself. We also hope to show, however, that this explanation is feasibly important for properly interpreting religious statistics, and thus properly understanding the religious landscape, in other secularized/ing contexts.

Religious Socialization

That more religious families tend, on average, to produce more religious adults (and vice versa) is well-established in both common sense and the empirical literature. While the mechanisms of such religious socialization are undoubtedly complex and mutually interacting, there exists a significant body of evidence identifying certain key variables (Sherkat 2003; Hardy and Longo 2021). One such is having two parents of the same religious affiliation (‘religious homogamy’), to the extent that one prominent scholar has suggested as a general principle, at least in European contexts, that ‘Religiously heterogamous unions are

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usually religiously sterile' (Voas 2003:94; see also Bengtson et al. 2013:113-29). There is, of course, a large body of sociological scholarship affirming that worldviews are strongest when they can be taken for granted, not least through being universally shared among one's significant others (Berger [1967] 1990). Since parents traditionally function as a child's first, foundational 'significant others', this is arguably a pre-eminent example of the general rule. Religiously homogamous parents also tend to mean relatively religiously homogamous extended families, and perhaps even wider social worlds – neighbourhoods, friendship groups – too. The growing normalcy of 'mixed marriages', especially after the Second World War, has moreover been identified as a particular driver of both secularization-in-general (Voas 2003; Bruce and Glendinning 2010), and more specifically the generational weakening of Catholic belief, practice, and identity (Hornsby-Smith 1987:90–102; Hornsby-Smith et al. 1987; Bullivant 2019:116-19) .

Shared parental religious affiliation is rarely, in itself, sufficient for successful transmission. Rather, regular religious practice during childhood and/or adolescence emerges from multiple studies to be *the* critical predictor. This applies both to the individual's own practice (often measured with a question asking how often the respondent attended religious services at a given age), and the practice of his or her parents, ideally measured individually (e.g., Bader and Desmond 2006; Storm and Voas 2012; Bengtson et al. 2013; Voas and Storm 2021). Most recently, the power of practice has been especially highlighted by scholars interrogating the importance of so-called Credibility Enhancing Displays (CREDs) – that is to say, 'costly' actions which cohere with distinctive truth-claims, but which would be irrational if the person performing them did not really believe in them (Henrich 2009; Lanman 2012). The core idea here is that parents who merely profess a particular religious identity or worldview, without 'backing it up' with relevant actions (e.g., such as, say, the 'costly' outlay of time, effort, and expense to attend church regularly), are unlikely to pass it on to their

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children. CRED theory has been employed to explicate the weakening of Catholicism in Britain and America (Bullivant 2019), and Ireland (Turpin 2020), and particularly to the widespread failure of a primarily cultural Catholic identity, not backed up by regular church attendance or other forms of devotional practice, to the next generation. This work also relates to ongoing debates concerning British religion, not least whether ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie 1994) is a sustainable form of religiosity, able to transmit to succeeding generations, or else is (or rather, by now, *was*) a transitional generational staging post on route to ‘neither believing nor belonging’ (Voas and Crockett 2005).

In light of all this, our results add (further) strong empirical support to the influence of familial religious practice in predicting adult religious commitment. Furthermore, while previous studies have typically focused on a small number of adult religious outcomes, our study found independent positive effects from i) own religious practice, ii) mother’s Catholic identity and practice, and iii) father’s Catholic identity and practice across a range of eight aspects of religious commitment across four dimensions, and with only a single exception (own practice aged 11 or 12 and belief in God). Ours is one of very few Catholic-specific empirical tests of the role of parental religiosity, or CRED exposure in childhood more generally, despite the heavy emphasis on the *family* as ‘the domestic church’ within Catholic doctrine and pastoral theorizing (cf. Bourg 2002).

By contrast, our findings suggest that attending Catholic schools has little to no *independent* influence over adult religiosity. This might seem surprising, given the considerable resources the Church devotes to supporting its network of around 2,600 primary and secondary schools across Britain. Furthermore, one might *prima facie* assume that the cumulative hours of Catholic-inflected religious education, Masses, prayer, sacramental preparation, and indeed interaction and friendship with other Catholic peers would amount to a notable boost to religious socialization, over and above what is (or is not) received within

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the family environment. However, this seems not to be the case. While there exists a significant, but mixed, literature on the specifically religious effectiveness of Catholic schooling in the USA (e.g., Perl and Gray 2007; D’Antonio et al. 2013:58-9), it is unclear how well this might map onto the British situation, given the very different church-state set-up between the two countries (i.e., the vast majority of British Catholic schools are part of what Americans would think of as the “public” – i.e., free, and largely state-funded – schools system). Perhaps of more direct, if dated, relevance here is Hornsby-Smith’s lukewarm assessment in 1987 that ‘Catholic schools [in England and Wales] have been marginally successful in the sense that survey evidence shows a positive (albeit very small) relationship between the amount of Catholic schooling and subsequent adult religious behaviour’ (1987:174, referring to Hornsby-Smith and Lee 1979). Our own research suggests that these ‘albeit very small’ effects may now have dried up completely.

Youth Effect: Survivorship Bias?

Our above-reported finding that being in one of the three youngest age groups (i.e., 18-24, 25-34, 35-44) is associated, net of other factors, with more frequent Mass attendance, going to Confession, and doctrinal orthodoxy presents a significant puzzle. Were this present only in the youngest cohort, one might comfortably explain it as a kind of ‘hangover’ from family religiosity – i.e., of emerging adults who have largely *not yet* shed the religious norms of their parents. However, this could not plausibly extend to *emerged* adults in their 25-34s and 35-44s. What then could explain the data? We wish here to outline two explanatory hypotheses, both of which we believe are contributing to the observed results.

The first is, paradoxically, a simple (though statistically subtle) side-effect of long-term Catholic decline. Past decades have seen a rapid normalization of ‘no religion’ in Britain (Voas and McAndrew 2012; Lee 2015; Woodhead 2016). Along with it, there has been a

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growing propensity for those brought up Catholics to identify as ‘nones’ in adulthood. Whereas previously, even non-believing, non-practising cradle Catholics would often retain a strong sense of ‘tribal’, ‘ethnic’ or ‘cultural’ identity (Hornsby-Smith 2004), the stickiness of Catholicism has, for various reasons, demonstrably declined for those born in recent decades. One recent estimate, drawing on pooled British Social Attitudes data, showed that 48% of those born between 1985 and 1998 (i.e., equating to the 18-24 and 25-34 cohorts in the current data) were now ‘nones’, compared to 36% of those born between 1945 to 1964 – which was itself a significant rise on the preceding decades’ cradle Catholics (Bullivant 2019:43, figure 2.3).

Differential rates of disaffiliation among different age-groups of those raised Catholic arguably explains a great deal of our observed youth effect. The reason for this is simple. In the younger age cohorts, the more weakly believing and practising are notably more likely simply to stop identifying as Catholic. Hence they remove themselves from the pool of people who get counted as Catholic in surveys, and therefore no longer ‘dilute’ the mean religious commitment of those retaining a Catholic identity. In the older cohorts, contrarily, the lapsed are much more likely to keep on ticking the Catholic box, thereby lowering the average among Catholics of their age.

This is, in fact, a simple instance of a statistical chimera known as survivorship (or, as originally, survival) bias. The classic example of this comes from the American mathematician Abraham Wald’s analysis of bullet holes on returning US bombers in the Second World War (Wald [1943] 1980; for a non-technical explanation, see Ellenberg 2014:3-10). Very basically, it was observed that damaged planes were disproportionately hit in certain places – prompting calls that *these* areas be reinforced with additional armour. Wald’s insight, however, was in realizing that the *sample* of bullet-hit bombers being studied was, of necessity, composed of those that *survived being hit*. This in-built selection bias thus

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completely skewed the data: effectively removing all the planes hit in the *actually* most vulnerable spots (and thus precisely those places most needing reinforcement) from the analysis.

Survivorship bias has been recognized as skewing data in many spheres – e.g., in inflating analyses of the average past performance of investment funds (since those that lost money went bankrupt, and thus remove themselves from the data; see Taleb 2007: chap. 8) – but not yet explicitly as a serious issue for the interpretation of religious statistics (though see Perl and Gray 2007). This is especially so in places with high rates of ‘nonversion’ – i.e., of people brought up religiously who later identify as ‘nones’ – as in much of Europe, and increasingly in the USA, Canada, and elsewhere. Furthermore, it must be particularly pronounced in contexts where a significant segment of the population is shifting (either directly by nonversions, and/or indirectly due to generational replacement) from being weakly, nominally, or ‘fuzzily’ (cf. Voas 2009) religious, to being more straightforwardly nonreligious – as has been an ongoing process in Britain, Canada, and the USA (Wilkins-LaFlamme 2016, 2017; Scheitle et al. 2018).

Youth Effect: ‘Creative Minority’ Effect?

Given the extent, and generational differentiation, of Catholic disaffiliation, we are confident that survivorship bias accounts for the majority of our observed youth effect. We do not, however, think that is likely to be the full story. That is, we (a) believe it is both *a priori* plausible that a small but significant portion of younger Catholics are indeed becoming appreciably more committed; and (b) that there is solid *a posteriori* evidence for thinking that this is indeed the case.

The *a priori* case is, to a significant degree, *also* a subtle corollary of Catholic decline – albeit, in this case, a ‘real’ effect rather than a statistical phantom. In the first place, the

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dissipation of an overarching Catholic subculture, and the normalization of ‘no religion’, mean that younger adults who nevertheless (still) identify as Catholic have increasingly to ‘own’ it. To be a twenty- or thirty-something British Catholic, especially a practising and believing one, is to swim against the prevailing cultural currents. At one level, this is simply a by-product of secularization’s natural selection: the religious who remain must, *ipso facto*, be more invested, or else they wouldn’t remain. But it’s more than this. Because it means that the other such Catholics they meet – perhaps at a university Catholic Society, or by gravitating to a particular church or movement, and/or by falling in with a certain crowd on social media – are also, necessarily, among the more-committed themselves. This in turn produces a subcultural dynamic of ‘embattled and thriving’ (cf. Smith 1998) mutual validation and reinforcement, encouraging members to go increasingly *all in* with their Catholicism, not merely by the standards of the wider culture, but by those of other (predominantly older) practising Catholics too. In this specific area, we adopt the shorthand term *creative minority* effect, a phrase owing its ultimate inspiration to Arnold Toynbee (e.g., 1934:163), but which has gained currency in Catholic circles thanks to its use by Pope Benedict XVI (see Brumfield 2020).

The basic social mechanisms of such ‘group polarization’ have been studied and tested in a wide range of other contexts (e.g., Sunstein 2009). While this tendency of close-knit groups of likeminded individuals to ‘go to extremes’ has attracted most attention in relation to problem areas such as political polarization (Klein 2020) and religious or other forms of radicalization (Ebner 2019; Bates 2020), it also applies much widely. Fandom communities are a good example of how close-knit, niche interest groups can mutually normalize ‘extreme’, culturally weird, and often high cost (in terms of time, effort, and/or money) behaviours (see, e.g., Jamison 2013; Edwards et al. 2019). Religious groups are certainly no exception to this. Being actively, determinedly, or otherwise ‘too’ religious is

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indeed now culturally weird within much of British society, especially among young adults, with one eminent commentator referring of the ‘alien nature of the carriers of religion’ (Bruce 2014:13). Accordingly, recent studies of other (i.e., non-Catholic) religious young adults comment on their awareness of being countercultural, their close-knit social networks, and their high (and often seemingly increasing) levels of believing, behaving, and belonging (Strhan 2010 and Guest et al. 2013 on Evangelicals; see Husain 2021).

While the full *a posteriori* case among young Catholics specifically would require a much more extensive treatment, we note here that a growing religious ‘conservatism’ (in terms of doctrinal orthodoxy, more rigorous practice, and – in some, though by no means all – liturgical and devotional traditionalism) among younger, committed Catholics has been noted in several countries that have witnessed a significant waning of cultural Catholicism in recent decades. (e.g., Carroll 2004; Dugan 2018). This general trend will certainly be familiar to those acquainted with active Catholic young adults in Britain, not least within university Catholic chaplaincies or the small but thriving ecosystem of youth-oriented groups and movements (e.g., Jesus Youth, Sehion UK, Youth 2000, Faith Movement, Evangelium). While the full extent of this has yet to be documented in the scholarly literature (though one of us is currently overseeing a research project with precisely that task in mind), though a small number of recent studies testify to some aspects of it (Bullivant 2016b; van Duyvenbode 2018). A renewed emphasis on distinctively Catholic devotions and identity markers – such as praying the Rosary – has, for instance, been noted among British converts to Catholicism (Longhurst 2022). Vocations, while not booming, have also noticeably rallied in recent years – with those to women’s religious congregations, in particular, seeing a marked uptick since the turn of the millennium: ‘Women Becoming Nuns Hits 25-Year High’, as a BBC headline put it in 2015.

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It is perhaps worth stressing that we do not see this doubling-down by a (relatively) small minority of younger religious adherents as constituting a *counterexample* to societal secularization, as instances of localized religious ‘trend-bucking’ are sometimes framed as being (cf. Bruce 2013). Rather, for the reasons outlined above, we see this creative minority effect as being both side-effect and by-product of secularization itself.

CONCLUSION

The empirical insights and theoretical contributions from this paper should provide much food for thought for scholars of Catholic populations and the institutional church in Britain and other countries. Catholics currently constitute Britain’s largest Christian denomination in terms of actual attendance at weekly services (see Clements and Bullivant, *forthcoming*). As the proportion of self-identifying Anglicans in the British population continues its generational decline over the coming decades – in 2018, Anglicans accounted for just 1% of 18-24 year-olds, 3% of 25-34 year-olds, and 4% of 35-44 year-olds (Voas and Bruce 2019:6) – the Catholic claim to both being, and being seen as, Britain’s modal Christian group will grow even stronger. Hitherto, studies of British Christianity – and thus of British religion as a whole – have, with good reason, focused primarily on the Anglican church(es). Key items from this literature have, moreover, played a (deservedly) significant role in depicting ‘religion in western Europe’ to the wider sociological world. Serious empirical attention to how British Catholicism is faring against the backdrop of late-secularization will, we hope, help shed new, and in several ways complicating, light on one of the field’s ‘classic case studies’.

Relatedly, we note again the likelihood of our two explanations to this paper’s central ‘puzzle’ – i.e., of younger British Catholics seeming to be more committed than older ones – having much wider geographical and denomination-specific applications. As noted above,

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any socio-religious contexts with significant rates of nonversion are ones where interpreters of religious statistics must be mindful of possible survivorship bias. Given how little noted this phenomenon has been previously, and how long-standing a feature of many countries significant levels of nonversion are, received sociological wisdom in certain areas may need to be, if not revised, then at least significantly qualified. That said, even where significant bias is indeed present in religious statistics, this need not be incompatible with a certain level of genuine resilience or revival. If our own interpretation of contemporary British Catholicism is correct, there are strong reasons for thinking that a real ‘creative minority effect’ will often accompany generational decline, as a kind of side-effect or by-product. (Of course, it also may mask the existence and/or extent of the decline itself, which makes survivorship bias even harder to notice.) Hence to return to the title of this paper: younger Catholics seem more committed both because a) those who *aren't* are, ipso facto, much more likely to stop showing up on surveys as Catholics; and b) because the ones who are left actually *are*.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The following supporting information is available for this article:

Appendix S1. Distribution of the indicators of religious commitment

Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article at wileyonlinelibrary.com.

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Table 1 Dimensions and indicators of Catholics' religious commitment

Dimension	Indicator	Question wording
Church involvement	Frequency of attendance at Mass	'Apart from such special occasions as weddings, funerals and baptisms, how often do you generally attend Catholic Mass?'
	Frequency of receiving Holy Communion (those who attend Mass)	'When you attend Catholic Mass, how often do you receive communion?'
Private devotionalism	Frequency of prayer	'People practise their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, how often, if at all, do you pray?'
	Frequency of going to Confession	'About how often, if at all, do you generally go to confession (Sacrament of Reconciliation) with a Catholic priest?'
Salience	Personal importance of the Catholic Church	'How important is the Catholic Church to you personally?'
	General religiousness	'On a scale from 0 to 10, with '0' being 'Not at all religious' and '10' being 'very religious', how religious or otherwise would you say you are?'
Belief	Belief in God	'Please indicate which of the following statements comes closest to expressing what you believe about God.'
	General religious beliefs	'Do you believe in ...': life after death; heaven; hell; purgatory; real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist; religious miracles; and the intercessory powers of the Saints

Note: Based on the framework set out in Leege and Kellstedt (1993).

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Table 2 OLS regressions of Catholics' religious commitment: Church involvement

	<i>Mass attendance</i>				<i>Holy Communion</i>			
	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	B	Std.	Beta	t
(Constant)	.13*	.05		2.87	.65*	.07		9.87
Gender (1=female)	-.01	.01	-.01	-5.50	.03	.02	.05	1.68
Age group: 18-24	.20*	.03	.17	6.56	.09*	.04	.08	2.05
Age group: 25-34	.12*	.03	.14	4.39	.04	.04	.05	1.12
Age group: 35-44	.06*	.03	.06	2.14	.05	.04	.06	1.36
Age group: 45-54	.00	.02	.01	.18	.07	.04	.08	1.93
Aged group: 55-64	-.02	.02	-.02	-.80	.03	.04	.03	.85
Country of birth (1=UK)	.08*	.02	.08	3.88	.08*	.03	.09	2.85
Ethnic group (1=belongs to White ethnic group)	-.07*	.02	-.06	-2.93	-.05	.03	-.05	-1.78
Marital status (1=approved Catholic marriage)	.12**	.02	.18	8.30	.07*	.02	.10	3.07
Children in household (1=yes)	.08*	.02	.11	4.45	.02	.02	.04	.98
Education (1=degree-level or higher qualification)	.06*	.01	.09	4.26	.02	.02	.02	.81
Housing tenure: Public sector rental	.02	.02	.03	1.30	.04	.03	.04	1.29
Housing tenure: Private sector rental	.01	.02	.02	.69	.02	.03	.02	.53
Nation (1=lives in Scotland)	.02	.02	.02	.75	-.04	.03	-.04	-1.28
Catholic friends	.04*	.00	.22	10.30	.01*	.01	.07	2.18
Upbringing (1=raised as Catholic)	-.24*	.03	-.18	- 8.05	-.25*	.04	-.19	-5.84
Schooling: Non-Catholic	.01	.02	.02	.70	-.13*	.03	-.16	-4.77
Schooling: Mixed provision	.02	.02	.03	1.13	-.02	.03	-.02	-.74
Mother's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.09*	.02	.14	5.64	.09*	.03	.12	3.57
Father's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.08*	.02	.12	5.40	.05*	.02	.07	2.01
Mass attendance aged 11-12 (1=weekly or more)	.12*	.02	.16	6.52	.07*	.03	.09	2.54
R Square		.36				.12		
Adjusted R Square		.35				.11		
Weighted N		1,635				1,139		

Note: *Statistically significant at $p < .05$ or lower. Omitted reference categories: Aged 65 and over; Housing tenure: owner-occupier; Schooling: Catholic only.

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Table 3 OLS regressions of Catholics' religious commitment: Private devotionism

	<i>Prayer</i>				<i>Going to confession</i>			
	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	B	Std. Error	Beta	t
(Constant)	.42*	.05		7.94	.13*	.05		2.96
Gender (1=female)	.04*	.02	.05	2.24	-.05*	.01	-.08	-3.93
Age group: 18-24	.06	.03	.05	1.79	.25*	.03	.22	8.50
Age group: 25-34	.03	.03	.03	.95	.16*	.03	.20	6.16
Age group: 35-44	.03	.03	.03	1.07	.11*	.03	.12	4.21
Age group: 45-54	.01	.03	.01	.39	.02	.02	.03	.96
Age group: 55-64	-.02	.02	-.02	-.83	.01	.02	.01	.27
Country of birth (1=UK)	.05*	.02	.05	2.09	.07*	.02	.07	3.41
Ethnic group (1=belongs to White ethnic group)	-.07*	.03	-.07	-2.80	-.05*	.02	-.05	-2.45
Marital status (1=approved Catholic marriage)	.07*	.02	.10	4.25	.08*	.01	.12	5.37
Children in household (1=yes)	-.02	.02	-.03	-1.09	.07*	.02	.11	4.21
Education (1=degree-level or higher qualification)	.06*	.02	.09	3.65	.03*	.01	.06	2.54
Housing tenure: Public sector rental	.04*	.02	.05	2.10	.04*	.02	.05	2.14
Housing tenure: Private sector rental	.01	.02	.01	.45	.03	.02	.03	1.34
Nation (1=lives in Scotland)	.00	.02	.00	.12	.00	.02	.00	-.15
Catholic friends	.03*	.00	.18	7.50	.04*	.00	.21	9.78
Upbringing (1=raised as Catholic)	-.22*	.03	-.16	-6.53	-.22*	.03	-.18	-7.81
Schooling: Non-Catholic	.04	.02	.04	1.65	-.02	.02	-.02	-.82
Schooling: Mixed provision	.02	.02	.03	1.21	.02	.02	.02	1.11
Mother's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.09*	.02	.13	4.61	.07*	.02	.12	4.68
Father's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.06*	.02	.08	3.22	.08*	.01	.13	5.67
Mass attendance aged 11-12 (1=weekly or more)	.13*	.02	.17	6.32	.08*	.02	.11	4.52
R Square			.17				.32	
Adjusted R Square			.16				.31	
Weighted N			1,720				1,720	

Note: *Statistically significant at $p < .05$ or lower. Omitted reference categories: Aged 65 and over; Housing tenure: owner-occupier; Schooling: Catholic only.

WHY YOUNGER CATHOLICS SEEM MORE COMMITTED

Table 4 OLS regressions of Catholics' religious commitment: Saliency

	<i>Personal importance of Catholic</i>				<i>General religiousness</i>			
	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	B	Std.	Beta	t
(Constant)	.28*	.05		5.94	.34*	.05		7.34
Gender (1=female)	-.02	.01	-.04	-1.58	.01	.01	.01	.51
Age group: 18-24	.10*	.03	.09	3.15	.06	.03	.06	1.94
Age group: 25-34	.03	.03	.04	1.14	.06*	.03	.09	2.29
Age group: 35-44	.03	.03	.04	1.25	.05	.03	.06	1.67
Age group: 45-54	-.01	.02	-.01	-.47	.03	.02	.05	1.52
Age group: 55-64	-.02	.02	-.02	-.77	-.03	.02	-.03	-1.13
Country of birth (1=UK)	.08*	.02	.09	3.97	.04*	.02	.05	1.98
Ethnic group (1=belongs to White ethnic group)	-.07*	.02	-.07	-3.21	-.01	.02	-.01	-.41
Marital status (1=approved Catholic marriage)	.09*	.02	.14	5.94	.07*	.02	.12	4.57
Children in household (1=yes)	.03	.02	.05	1.89	.02	.02	.03	1.16
Education (1=degree-level or higher qualification)	.05*	.01	.07	3.20	.02	.01	.03	1.24
Housing tenure: Public sector rental	.04*	.02	.05	2.23	.06*	.02	.08	3.13
Housing tenure: Private sector rental	.01	.02	.02	.63	.01	.02	.01	.40
Nation (1=lives in Scotland)	.00	.02	.00	-.04	.04	.02	.04	1.72
Catholic friends	.04*	.00	.27	11.65	.03*	.00	.22	8.80
Upbringing (1=raised as Catholic)	-.16*	.03	-.13	-5.38	-.14*	.03	-.12	-4.69
Schooling: Non-Catholic	.01	.02	.01	.34	.02	.02	.03	1.18
Schooling: Mixed provision	.02	.02	.03	1.34	.02	.02	.04	1.46
Mother's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.07*	.02	.11	3.98	.05*	.02	.09	3.12
Father's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.07*	.02	.11	4.44	.07*	.02	.12	4.46
Mass attendance aged 11-12 (1=weekly or more)	.06*	.02	.09	3.36	.03*	.02	.05	1.75
R Square			.23				.16	
Adjusted R Square			.22				.14	
Weighted N			1,678				1,588	

Note: *Statistically significant at $p < .05$ or lower. Omitted reference categories: Aged 65 and over; Housing tenure: owner-occupier; Schooling: Catholic only.

WHY YOUNGER CATHOLICS SEEM MORE COMMITTED

Table 5 OLS regressions of Catholics' religious commitment: Belief

	<i>Belief in God</i>				<i>Composite belief index</i>			
	Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients		Unstandardised coefficients		Standardised coefficients	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	B	Std.	Beta	t
(Constant)	.62*	.05		12.52	.59*	.04		14.08
Gender (1=female)	.04*	.01	.06	2.39	-.02	.01	-.04	-1.58
Age group: 18-24	.03	.03	.02	.79	.07*	.03	.08	2.68
Age group: 25-34	.03	.03	.04	.99	.10*	.02	.14	4.11
Age group: 35-44	.04	.03	.05	1.50	.07*	.02	.09	2.86
Age group: 45-54	.01	.02	.01	.44	.04*	.02	.06	1.96
Age group: 55-64	.03	.02	.03	1.21	-.01	.02	-.01	-.46
Country of birth (1=UK)	.01	.02	.01	.52	.02	.02	.02	.95
Ethnic group (1=belongs to White ethnic group)	-.07*	.02	-.07	-2.91	-.04*	.02	-.05	-2.14
Marital status (1=approved Catholic marriage)	.04*	.02	.07	2.68	.04*	.01	.07	2.96
Children in household (1=yes)	-.01	.02	-.01	-.36	.00	.02	.00	.11
Education (1=degree-level or higher qualification)	.01	.02	.02	.86	.03*	.01	.05	2.25
Housing tenure: Public sector rental	.01	.02	.02	.65	.04*	.02	.06	2.41
Housing tenure: Private sector rental	-.01	.02	-.02	-.66	.01	.02	.01	.29
Nation (1=lives in Scotland)	.04	.02	.05	1.87	.02	.02	.03	1.21
Catholic friends	.02*	.00	.15	6.01	.02*	.00	.17	7.20
Upbringing (1=raised as Catholic)	-.08*	.03	-.07	-2.66	-.18*	.03	-.17	-6.66
Schooling: Non-Catholic	.05*	.02	.07	2.55	-.02	.02	-.03	-1.11
Schooling: Mixed provision	.01	.02	.01	.33	.01	.02	.02	.94
Mother's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.07*	.02	.12	4.24	.04*	.02	.08	2.77
Father's religion (1=Catholic and attended Mass weekly or more)	.03*	.02	.05	1.98	.04*	.01	.08	3.20
Mass attendance aged 11-12 (1=weekly or more)	.03	.02	.04	1.39	.08*	.02	.13	4.77
R Square			.08				.15	
Adjusted R Square			.07				.14	
Weighted N			1,749				1,749	

Note: *Statistically significant at $p < .05$ or lower. Omitted reference categories: Aged 65 and over; Tenure: owner-occupier; Schooling: Catholic only.

WHY YOUNGER CATHOLICS SEEM MORE COMMITTED

Table 6 Summary of the performance of the independent variables across the OLS models

Variable	Church involvement		Private devotionalism		Salience		Belief	
	Mass attendance	Holy Communion	Prayer	Confession	Importance of Catholic church	General religiosity	Belief in God	Religious beliefs
<i>Socio-demographic factors</i>								
Gender			+	-			+	
Age group: 18-24	+	+		+	+			+
Age group: 25-34	+			+		+		+
Age group: 35-44	+			+				+
Age group: 45-54								+
Age group: 55-64								
Country of birth	+	+	+	+	+	+		
Ethnic group	-		-	-	-		-	-
Marital status	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Children in household	+			+				
Education	+		+	+	+			+
Housing tenure: Public sector rental			+	+	+	+		+
Housing tenure: Private sector rental								
Nation								
Catholic friends	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
<i>Religious socialisation factors</i>								
Upbringing (1=raised as Catholic)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Schooling: Non-Catholic		-					+	
Schooling: Mixed provision								
Mother's religion	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Father's religion	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Mass attendance aged 11-12	+	+	+	+	+	+		+

Note: Statistically significant results at $p < .05$ or lower: '+' indicates positive association with the indicator of religious commitment; '-' indicates negative association with the indicator of religious commitment.

WHY YOUNGER CATHOLICS SEEM MORE COMMITTED

Appendix S1. Distribution of indicators of religious commitment

Church involvement		Private devotionism				Salience					
<i>Attendance at Mass</i>		<i>Communion</i>		<i>Prayer</i>		<i>Confession</i>		<i>Importance of Catholic Church</i>		<i>General religiosity</i>	
Category	%	Category	%	Category	%	Category	%	Category	%	Category	%
Every day	3	Every time	47	Several times a day	11	Once a week or more often	4	The most important part of my life	8	0 - Not at all religious	8
Three to four times a week	3	Most of the time	22	Once a day	16	At least once a month	8	Among the most important parts of my life	17	1	6
Once a week	25	Some of the time	20	A few times a week	17	Several times a year	14	Quite an important part of my life	34	2	8
Every fortnight	5	Never	9	Once a week	7	Once a year	12	Among the least important parts of my life	16	3	8
Every month	5	Don't know	1	Once a month	3	Less than once a year	17	Not an important part of my life	21	4	6
Every two to three months	6			Occasionally	16	Never	43	Don't know	45	5	17
Once or twice a year	20			Rarely/ hardly ever	8	Don't know	2		6		10
Never	28			In times of crisis	9				7		14
Varies too much to say	6			Never	11				8		11
Don't know	1			Don't know	2				9		5
										10 - Very religious	6
										Don't know	2

WHY YOUNGER CATHOLICS SEEM MORE COMMITTED

Appendix S1. Distribution of indicators of religious commitment

Belief in God	%	Life after death	%	Heaven	%	Hell	%
I don't believe in God	4	Yes, definitely	31	Yes, definitely	37	Yes, definitely	23
I don't know whether there is a God and I don't believe there is any way to find out	11	Yes, probably	33	Yes, probably	32	Yes, probably	31
I don't believe in a personal God, but I do believe in a Higher Power of some kind	12	No, probably not	15	No, probably not	13	No, probably not	20
I find myself believing in God some of the time, but not at others	14	No, definitely not	9	No, definitely not	8	No, definitely not	15
While I have doubts, I feel that I do believe in God	28	Don't know	12	Don't know	9	Don't know	12
I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it	31						
		Real Presence of Christ's Body and Blood in the Eucharist	%	Religious miracles	%	The intercessory powers of the Saints	%
Yes, definitely	19	Yes, definitely	25	Yes, definitely	26	Yes, definitely	22
Yes, probably	27	Yes, probably	26	Yes, probably	34	Yes, probably	32
No, probably not	23	No, probably not	21	No, probably not	19	No, probably not	21
No, definitely not	14	No, definitely not	16	No, definitely not	11	No, definitely not	11
Don't know	17	Don't know	12	Don't know	10	Don't know	14