Research Statement

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I study the organizational dynamics of religious congregations, the interconnection between religion and inequality, the interplay between work and physical and emotional health, and the social dynamics of survey research. Along with historical and mixed-methods approaches, my research leverages advances in computational methods in the social sciences to more accurately model social processes.

In my dissertation, I explore the causes and consequences of a major trend in American religion–the concentration of people into very large churches. In a forthcoming article in *the Journal of Social History*, I challenge the perception of so-called megachurches as new and fleeting organizations. Additionally, I uncover that member participation declines with congregational size. Finally, in an article published in *Research in the Sociology of Work*, I demonstrate that church size is positively correlated with a congregation's socio-economic status composition. This has the important consequence that the concentration of people into very large churches may actually serve to increase economic stratification in the United States.

Other published research explores the theoretical connections between religion and inequality. In an article published in *the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, I argue that research on religion and inequality must carefully consider how multiple identity categories combine, overlap and intersect to impact consequential outcomes. In a Cambridge University Press volume, I use a mixed-methods approach to highlight the variable ways in which religion, gender and ethnicity interact to influence social inequality. Here, I find that Arab American women show the surprising pattern of high levels of religiosity and high levels of education, but very low employment.

My research in quantitative methodology covers broad territory. In an article in *Social Networks*, I uncover important methodological considerations when implementing name generator questions on web-based surveys and in panel designs. I find strong evidence of panel conditioning, even with waves spaced 2 years apart. This study presses researchers to consider how the visual display of web-questionnaires may exert a major influence on network characteristics.

Capitalizing on the gains offered by new statistical methods also motivates my research. For example, in an article in the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*, I develop a spatially and temporally conditioned hierarchical growth curve model of the effect of a government land-use policy on the price of farmland over a 35-year period. This article demonstrates the flexibility that Bayesian methods offer by modeling the response of land prices to environmental policy initiatives. I have also adapted Bayesian methods to a Heckman selection model to examine the correlates of charitable giving. Giving has a highly irregular distribution that even zero-inflated models cannot accommodate. In other research, I am using longitudinal structural equation modeling to explore the prospective relationships between depression and the precursors of cardio-vascular disease among clergy.

My future research will expand more deeply into the occupational determinants of health. I plan to study how emotional and religious resources buffer occupational stress; the ways in which professional networks impact health; and how institutional racism effects minorities in majority-white contexts. In another branch of my research, I will use the Health and Retirement Survey to study how religiosity changes over the life-course. I am especially interested in how these patterns might differ by race. In addition, I have begun preliminary discussions with an academic press to adapt my work on megachurches into a book. Methodologically, I will continue to utilize state-of-the-art statistical techniques to improve the inferential capacity of data.