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Why Worry about Evolution? Boundaries, Practices, and Moral Salience in Sunni and Evangelical High Schools

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Abstract

Previous work on conservative Protestant creationism fails to account for other creationists who are much less morally invested in opposition to evolution, raising the sociological question: What causes issues' moral salience? Through ethnographic fieldwork in four creationist high schools in the New York City area (two Sunni Muslim and two conservative Protestant), I argue that evolution is more important to the Christian schools because it is dissonant with their key practices and boundaries. The theory of evolution is salient for American Evangelicals because it is dissonant with reading the Bible literally, which is both their key practice and key boundary. For American Muslims, the key practice is prayer, and the key boundary is gender performance, neither of which is dissonant with evolution. These cases provide evidence for a theory of moral salience that is more cultural and micro-level than the typical political and macro-level studies of issues' political salience.

Keywords

morality, salience, practices, boundaries, religion

It is relatively common knowledge that many Conservative Protestants[1]—in both the United States (Evans 2011; Pew Forum 2008; Zigerell 2012) and other countries (Numbers 2006)—do not believe in evolution and consider it a problem worth worrying about (Stephens and Giberson 2011). They claim that evolution is bad science, it has destructive effects on society, and it undermines a person's ability to believe in a powerful God and experience a meaningful universe (e.g., Colson and Pearcey 1999; Lisle 2009).[2] I knew as much when I started my year and a half of fieldwork in two Sunni Muslim[3] and two Conservative Protestant high schools in the New York City area. What I did not realize was that many

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Muslims in the United States (Pew Forum 2008), England (Thomas 2012), and some predominantly Muslim countries (Edis 2008; Hameed 2010) also do not believe in evolution.[4]

When I learned this, in the counselor's office of a Muslim school where I worked, I leaned into the doorway and asked the counselor, Latifa,[5] again: "Really? You don't believe in evolution?"[6] Latifa looked at her friend, a teacher sitting in the office with her: "That we came from monkeys, right? We don't believe that, do we?" "No," said her friend, shaking her head. Latifa looked back at me: "No, we don't believe that." What I came to realize, as this anecdote might indicate, is that U.S. Muslims simply do not make a big deal out of this disbelief. The theory of evolution was much more morally salient for the Christian schools where I worked than it was for the Muslim ones.

In this article, I explain why and how creationism mattered so much to certain communities rather than others, and I develop a theory of moral salience that can explain why and how certain issues are considered more worthy of moral concern. In contrast to political scientists' focus on *political* and *macro-level* processes of "problem recognition, generation of policy proposals, and political events" when examining issues such as salience, evolution, and life cycles (Kingdon 1995:18; see also Mahon and Waddock 1992), I suggest a *cultural*[7] and *meso-level* mechanism. I argue that in a cultural sociological context, salience can best be understood as a profound emotional connection to a particular issue that makes the issue worth more of an individual's or community's time, energy, and attention than other similar issues, in the same way that on a more macro and political level, an issue could engage political actors' time and energy (Carmines and Stimson 1986). Political scientists and political sociologists are obviously more interested in *political* salience and have a more macro-level focus (Carmines and Wagner 2006); they typically explain an issue's salience in reference to political actors' use of resonant frames (Druckman 2004; Steensland 2008), the definition of issues by existing political institutions (Baumgartner and Jones 1993), mass media (Kellstedt 2003), and party cues between elite and masses (Adams 1997). The salience I account for is not necessarily political (i.e., the activation of government resources and energy) but rather moral (i.e., the activation of individuals' or communities' implicit sensibility about how they ought to live). The two are obviously interrelated, but they are far from identical.

Ideas are not issues by default. The definition of the word *issue* is almost always implicit and unacknowledged, but it can generally be defined as a collection of various ideas and commitments that could be (although is not necessarily) a topic or problem worthy of discussion, debate, and potential solution. Issues are often contested in the public square, for example, abortion (Adams 1997), global warming (Wood and Vedlitz 2007), and creationism (Moran 2012). Political scientists have sought to determine why certain issues take on greater political salience than others, and here I seek a similar explanation for issues' moral salience. I argue that an issue will become morally salient to the degree that it is dissonant (or, potentially, resonant) with the key practices and sites of boundary contestation within a community. Ideas matter a great deal in this account, but every individual and community has access to many, often contradictory ideas: Issues that become important are not necessarily the ones that conflict with important ideas or beliefs but rather are the ones that challenge key boundaries and practices that are central to an individual's or community's identity.

Unlike the vast majority of studies of issues, the unit of analysis here is not the nation or the public square but rather four school communities. As such, I can provide a more meso-level and cultural analysis of issue salience. In making this argument, I build on a growing body of work (e.g., Berzonsky 2010; Kahan 2013) that shows how cognition regarding issues related to identity often has little to do with more or better information. However,

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these discussions are almost always about whether an individual changes his or her mind in light of new information; this work rarely examines the interactional processes through which salience is determined. In contrast, instead of asking whether respondents change their mind about a subject, I ask whether respondents believe an issue is worthy of more concern than other issues.

A complete answer to the question of why Conservative Protestants worry more about evolution than do Sunni Muslims in the United States would require an extensive historical component, especially regarding why and how particular boundaries and practices became "key": I nod at these historical differences, but my larger goal is to present an ethnographic and theoretical account of how and why moral salience is maintained over time by showing the interactions of boundaries, practices, and issues. In so doing, my argument adds to theories of culture and cognition (DiMaggio 1997) and builds on recent theories of religion (Riesebrodt 2010; Taves 2011) that emphasize practices over beliefs.

BOUNDARIES, PRACTICES, AND MORAL SALIENCE

Boundaries

By *boundaries*, I refer to the social (Lamont and Molnar 2002) characteristics that distinguish us individually or collectively from those to whom we are in some sense near, whether physically or descriptively. People or communities might have endless differences from others, but they will have far fewer "boundaries." And they will have even fewer of what I call *key boundaries*—boundaries that are especially meaningful as a source of identity. Many boundaries are only slightly conscious: They become a habituated cognitive scheme that preconsciously structures perceptions of and interactions with others. They are also simultaneously a source of distinction and status within a social field (Bourdieu [1980] 1990, 1996) and a source of social identity and moral worth (Lamont 1994).

Boundary work involves a continual interplay between habit, reflexivity, and social context. As Tavory (2009) suggests, boundaries are often sustained through embodied habits that resemble a Bourdieusian *habitus* (Bourdieu [1980] 1990). When these habitual schemas are challenged by novel situations—as they often are in everyday interactions—a reflexive element enters (Dewey [1922] 2002), forcing a form of reflexivity within institutional constraints, network location, and available resources (Lichterman 2008; Wimmer 2013). One of these constraints is a binary form of identity work: Constantly mapping the many possible differences from your group (Gieryn 1999; Lichterman 2008) can be exhausting and unsettling, so individuals and groups often rely on binary schema (Alexander 2008; Gieryn 1983; Kahneman 2003; Tavory 2009), a particularly common strategy for groups that identify as a minority (Tawa, Suyemoto, and Tauriac 2012).

The communities I studied wanted to bound themselves off from the rest of the world, but they also wanted to be part of it. They sought a "distinction with engagement" (Smith 1998) through habituated ways of identifying themselves in relation to the outside world, making particular issues more or less salient given an issue's relative dissonance with those boundaries. For the Conservative Protestants and Muslims I studied, differentiating themselves from the broader U.S. public through, respectively, their practices of reading the Bible literally and gender performance were extremely important. What is important for my argument, however, is that these particular sites of boundary contestation were rooted in a habituated, embodied, and strategic sense of identity without being *necessarily* political. As such, alongside key practices, these boundaries form the basis in determining the relative moral salience of certain issues.

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Practices

The word *practices* is notoriously vague (Camic 1986; Schatzki 1996; Turner 1994). Here, I define practices more narrowly than, say, MacIntyre (1984). Whereas MacIntyre provides medicine as an example of a practice, the kinds of practices I am interested in are more like a physical exam for a general practitioner or the examination of X-rays for a radiologist. They are specific, habituated, and bodily. Thus, I am not interested in religion as a practice but rather very specific sorts of religious practices, not just prayer or reading, but specific kinds of prayer and reading.

In this sense, practices form an important complement to boundaries: Both allow individuals and organizations to maintain a coherent identity through time and across space, and both thus present important points of entry through which issues can become morally salient. Gauging the cause of an issue's moral salience requires more than looking at how that issue interacts with key boundaries; we must also examine how an issue interacts with key practices.

Like other practice theorists, I locate practices at the border of the conscious and unconscious: Playing basketball, for example, may involve conscious thought (e.g., how to defend against a particular opponent), but many aspects of the practice do not enter the theater of a skilled player's consciousness (e.g., the mechanics of a jump shot). The same is true for artists (Bourdieu 1996) and many of the actions people do every day (Schatzki 1996). In my cases, the practices of prayer for Muslims and reading the Bible literally for Christians are consciously performed and considered, but the actions contained within them *and the importance provided them* are habituated and largely unconscious.

If careful studies of boundaries emphasize how groups differentiate themselves from others and why those differences are important, careful studies of practices accomplish the reverse: They show the centrality of key behaviors that root actors' orienting commitments and relations in materiality. Just as with boundaries, certain practices are much more important for a particular community's or individual's identity; I call these key practices. Determining which practices (or boundaries) are key is obviously complicated (Ortner 1973). For example, my Muslim interviewees mentioned prayer more often and set up communal prayer more regularly than the Protestants, yet the Protestant respondents stressed the importance of private prayer, which many did throughout the day. Like boundaries, practices can become key for a variety of reasons, many of them relatively path dependent, but what are most important for my cases are practices that helped maintain a community's narrative sense of self (MacIntyre 1984; Taylor 1989). Frequency, however, cannot by itself be a gauge of whether a practice is key: What is important are "practices that anchor constitutive rules" (Swidler 2001:90), "[playing] a crucial role as repeated ritual confirmations that something is indeed what it is" (Swidler 2001:98).

As with boundaries, particular beliefs might well influence the repetition of a particular practice: Indeed, beliefs can be understood as practices themselves (Strand and Lizardo 2015). However, it is the practices (and boundaries) that moor these ideas, and it is the interaction with these practices and boundaries that make certain external issues salient.

Causing Moral Salience

I argue that a major cause of an issue's moral salience (and the cause I found in the cases presented here) is dissonance or resonance with key practices and boundaries. *Salience* is fundamentally a quality of attention, emotional energy, and time, making it distinct from dissonance and resonance. All three are rooted in emotional energy (McDonnell 2014), but

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salience is the quality through which that emotion is expressed in time and attention, whereas resonance and dissonance are the actual processes through which congruence or difference occur and which actors experience emotionally. Indeed, as I describe the terms, an issue cannot be resonant or dissonant with a community or individual precisely because communities and individuals are so multifaceted: Issues can be resonant or dissonant only with key practices and key boundaries, which then move up one level to the individual or community, for whom an issue can be salient (but not resonant or dissonant). Salience is a cognitive process at the individual or community level that entails attention and emotional energy; resonance and dissonance are interactive processes at the boundaries and practices level. How an issue interacts with key boundaries and practices causes rather than defines an issue's salience. The salience I describe here is a *moral* salience because its implications are more related to how individuals and communities order their lives toward a particular vision of the good rather than how they seek to mobilize government action or common resources.

Resonance occurs when an issue supports both the implicit cognitive foundations and the explicit rules and content of a key practice or boundary. Dissonance occurs when an issue challenges those explicit rules and content alongside cognitive foundations. Neutrality is when an issue is neither resonant nor dissonant. I argue that evolution is salient for my Christian field sites and not my Muslim field sites because evolution was dissonant with Christian key practices (reading the Bible literally) and boundaries (also reading the Bible literally) and neutral with Muslim key practices (prayer) and boundaries (gender performance).

Theoretical discussions of the word *salience* are generally confined to the social-psychological study of identity salience over time (Stryker and Burke 2000) or political scientists' study of how political actors can manipulate salience (Dellis 2009) and how issues' salience can affect political actors' relative success (Edwards, Mitchell, and Welch 1995). Although political scientists do not often use the word *salience*, studies of how issues become important are an ongoing conversation; this work is nearly always at a macro level, examining how issues lead to government attention and resource mobilization rather than the moral concern I describe here (Carmines and Wagner 2006).

Sociological studies of resonance and dissonance come closer to the study of moral salience I call for. Benford and Snow (2000:620) argue a social movement's cultural frame will be successful partly due to the degree to which it resonates with its mobilization targets: Such resonance depends on the "credibility of the proffered frame and its relative salience." Yet *why* an issue might be salient is left unexamined, and Benford and Snow acknowledge salience as a relatively unexplored aspect of the literature. In a similar way, Glaeser (2011:25, 230–35) uses the term *resonance* to describe a "complex of validation" through which "understandings are rendered more credible by showing consistency with our existing knowledge, by answering our desires, and by being compatible with our values." Yet even though Glaeser's formation of the term *understanding* is rooted in practices and field interactions alongside cognitive processes, his study of resonance and its resultant salience is ultimately about how two understandings relate to each other rather than how an issue's relative salience can be explained by its interactions with key practices and boundaries.

Glaeser's (2011) concept of *negative resonance* is somewhat similar to other scholars' conceptions of dissonance. Perhaps most famously used within the concept of cognitive dissonance, dissonance is generally understood to be a negative experience that leads people to seek consistency (Festinger 1962). The study of cognitive dissonance looks at how people avoid dissonance; other work examines what dissonance does, such as Stark's (2011:27) Dewey-influenced study of how a "diversity of value-frames generates new combinations of the firm's resources." Dewey ([1922] 2002) argues that consciousness itself is the result of an individual's challenging of previous habits.

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Similar to how Dewey argues that irritants to particular habits create meaningful events and heightened consciousness, I theorize that dissonance with key practices and boundaries will make certain issues more salient than others. (It seems plausible that resonance also makes an idea salient, even if possibly less salient than dissonance. However, I have neither the data nor the space to explore that question). These boundaries and practices sometimes manifest in the same content (e.g., reading the Bible literally in the Protestant field sites), but they do not function in the same way socially or cognitively. Depending on the community, what actors repeatedly do and how they distinguish themselves from others might or might not be the same. Neither dissonance nor resonance is itself moral salience: They are its causes.

Much of the work on resonance is in reference to framing (Benford and Snow 2000), and while I focus here on the issues themselves, it should go without saying that all issues are perceived via a particular frame, and these frames can readily change. As is clear in my data, my respondents were more or less troubled by evolution in our conversations depending on how I described the issue. Yet I am not examining moral salience at the level of these particular encounters but rather at the level of the communities themselves. For these four schools, the strategic and ongoing contemporary framing of evolution from outside parties mattered less than its current and largely agreed on understanding as central to the modern, secular study of biology and a general consensus that all life (including humanity) was created without the explicit work of God. Any issue can be framed in any number of ways, and these Muslim and Christian schools framed evolution quite differently, the latter as an issue of intense moral urgency that threatened the possibility of a meaningful existence and the former as a foolish distraction from an atheistic world. The dominant framing of an issue matters in this account, but more important is how the issue (with its implicit framing) aligns with a community's key practices and boundaries, which will give the issue greater or lesser salience.

Bridging Boundaries and Practices to Determine Salience

Bringing boundaries and practices together bridges two important literatures in contemporary sociology and helps us understand how identity is simultaneously *habituated* and *interactive.* The relationship between practices and boundaries is dialectic and interactional: Practices establish the habituated selves through which boundaries make sense, just as boundaries help those selves determine which practices are central and why. Practices and boundaries are themselves supported by certain ideas (e.g., the Protestant belief that a relationship with the Bible is important or the Muslim insistence that gender ought to be performed in certain ways), yet these ideas are generally implicit, functioning as habituated, practiced beliefs (Strand and Lizardo 2015). In addition, people and groups often have many conflicting ideas (DiMaggio 1997; Swidler 2003), making practices and boundaries an important location through which to determine why and how certain issues come to matter. This approach allows sociologists to ask why various communities hold certain beliefs and spend an inordinate amount of time defending them while they leave other equally contentious beliefs unattended in the background.

CASES AND METHODS

The Schools

This article is based on a year and a half of ethnographic fieldwork (January 2011 to July 2012) using "abductive" inquiry (Timmermans and Tavory 2012) in two Sunni Muslim and two Conservative Protestant high schools in the New York City area. I conducted approximately 50

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field visits at the Muslim and urban Al Amal, 70 field visits at the Christian and suburban Good Tree, and around 25 visits each to the Muslim and suburban Al Haqq and the Christian and urban Apostles. Despite each school requiring knowledge of evolution in its biology classes for state or advanced placement standardized exams, they were all institutionally committed to creationism. I encountered a minority who believed in macro-evolution (evolution between "kinds") at the Muslim schools, but even fewer were open to the idea at the Christian sites. Almost no one at any of the schools believed in human evolution.

Basis of Comparison

Comparison of these two religious groups is important for three reasons: the focus on individual autonomy among Sunnis and Conservative Protestants, the subcultural identity of both groups in the United States, and the ambivalence if not outright hostility many in these communities feel toward Darwinian evolution. The categories of American Conservative Protestants and Sunni Muslims provide a tenable comparison because within the U.S. context, both are more or less coherent religious subcultures that seek to reproduce themselves through the maintenance of key practices and beliefs (Bartkowski and Read 2003). Because both have ambivalent relationships with the larger U.S. society, they have created more or less coherent boundaries differentiating those like them and those different from them. Rather than a universal argument about Conservative Protestants and Sunnis (or worse, Christians and Muslims), the comparison is tenable in two specific historically and geographically demarcated religious subcultures within the United States. As important and constitutive as these boundaries and practices are within these communities, they are nonetheless historically and geographically contingent.

By examining the schools as discrete organizations with specific practices, pedagogies, commitments, and compromises, I treat schools as formal organizations (Bidwell 2001) and more or less coherent moral communities (Pascoe 2007) with communal traditions they seek to maintain through distinct practices and boundaries. Studies of religious education (Peshkin 1986; Rose 1988; Wagner 1990; Zine 2008) are particularly astute at showing how subcultural communities' schools seek to construct and contest boundaries with the outside world, sometimes attempting a greater alignment with the nation, sometimes looking for deeper separation. Schools are often noted for their "loose coupling" (Weick 1976), but religious schools are noteworthy for tightly coupling the practices and commitments that are central to their mission.

During the calendar year of 2011, until October, I spent about two days a week at the Good Tree Christian Academy and two days a week at Al Amal School; in the spring semester of 2012, I spent about two days a week each at Al Haqq Academy and the Apostles School while continuing to interview students and faculty at Good Tree. Field visits ranged from 3 to 12 hours at a school, with an average of around 5 hours. I was involved in each school community in as much of a capacity as I could, teaching SAT courses at Al Amal and Good Tree; giving guest lectures and speeches at Al Amal, Al Haqq, and Apostles; and helping students at each school with school work and college applications. At three of the schools, I had complete access to students, faculty, and staff; at Al Haqq, I was asked not to explicitly engage students but only to observe (although I could interact with adult staff as much as I wished and was given permission to interview students). I gave a questionnaire to the students at Good Tree and conducted formal (tape-recorded) and informal (not tape-recorded) interviews with faculty, staff, parents, and students at each school, although almost all of the data here are drawn from fieldwork.

Teachers at all four schools had to be members of their respective religious traditions. Both Christian schools featured a wide diversity of Christian identities (e.g., Pentecostal,

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Assembly of God, Methodist, Baptist, and Missionary Alliance), although the majority—in keeping with trends in the Conservative Protestant community—simply referred to themselves as Christian (Smith 2005). Good Tree's student body was mostly middle class and predominantly white, with a large population of African American, West Indian, Latino, and Asian American students. More low-income and urban than Good Tree, Apostles had a minority of white students and a fairly even mix of African American, Latino, and Asian American students. At Good Tree, students had to sign a form committing to Evangelical Christianity. Apostles admitted students of any faith, although the majority were Christian.

The Muslim schools did not explicitly claim to be Sunni, but the overwhelming majority of students, faculty, and staff identified as such. I encountered no non-Muslims except occasional consultants or part-time workers. Both schools—reflecting the Muslim community in the United States—were dominated by immigrants and immigrants' children. The vast majority of the students were born in the United States, but many of their parents were born overseas, usually somewhere in the Middle East or South Asia. The student body at Al Haqq was much more wealthy and suburban than students at Al Amal. Neither school received funds from other countries or international organizations. Students at the Muslim schools were part of broad international networks, and many visited family in predominantly Muslim countries during breaks, but they always identified as American and Muslim more than, for example, Palestinian or Pakistani (Abdo 2006).

Because I had access to students only at school, school events, and locations near the school, I made sure I was not simply observing a performance that happens in that context alone. I asked students and faculty in casual conversation about their life outside of school, and I participated in (and often just overheard) conversations about individuals' own beliefs and (in-school and out-of-school) behavior as well as their positive and negative judgments of other community members. What I found was consistently a difference of degree, not kind.

CENTRAL PRACTICES: SCRIPTURE AND PRAYER

In his study of converts to Islam, Winchester (2008:1755) writes, "religious practices [especially *salat*] created a new *moral habitus*—that is, a thoroughly embodied and practical form of moral subjectivity." This focus on practices as a means of developing and maintaining a certain moral habitus has become increasingly important in recent, more practice-oriented studies of religion and in the neo-Aristotelian insistence on the role of habituated action in developing moral identity (MacIntyre 1984; Mahmood 2005; Tavory 2011). For the Conservative Protestant students and faculty, that central practice was the literal reading of scripture, and for the Muslim respondents, it was salat.

How Scripture and Prayer Work

Unlike Conservative Protestants, who insist they are saved not by works but by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8–9), Sunni Muslims argue they are saved by works (provided one also has correct belief), with prayer being perhaps the most important. Besides providing salvation, prayer forgives sins, protects from Satan, separates the believer from the unbeliever, and is considered the first basis of God's judgment after death. A variety of forms of prayer are available to Muslims, but the most important is the salat (Katz 2013), which is to be performed five times a day. Salat consists of a brief series of ritual movements as well as recitations of important prayers and Qur'an passages. Both Muslim schools required all community members to "make salat" together each afternoon. Unlike the typical Conservative Protestant prayer of "just talking to God" (Luhrmann 2012), the salat is deeply formalized

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down to the smallest detail, making its intricacies much more complicated. It is extremely important to perform the salat exactly, and I observed discussions of the prayer's minutiae in Islamic studies classes at both schools.

The Muslim schools also took their scripture very seriously, and many students I interviewed at least claimed to read the Qur'an on their own. Both Muslim schools required the study and memorization of the Qur'an in Arabic as part of their curriculum.[8] The Qur'an—understood to be the literal words of God—is sacred, and the book as a physical object is worthy of much more protection that what Conservative Protestants accord Bibles (Malley 2004). However, the daily relationship I found to the Qur'an in these schools was, particularly for students who were less devout, somewhat removed. Students had a sense that it was good to know the Qur'an and it was obviously foundational, but it was not one of the five pillars like prayer. As one teacher at Al Haqq lamented to me, "Students here—how many Qur'ans have never been opened?"

Part of the explanation for why those Qur'ans stay on the shelf is the centrality of prayer. Sheikh Yusuf, a leader at Al Haqq, was responsible for overseeing religious instruction. I asked him how students should maintain Islam "in almost every aspect of their life" (as he put it earlier), and he responded with the importance of community and prayer, not mentioning regularly *reading* the Qur'an—even though, right before this moment in the conversation, he talked about the importance of making the words of the Qur'an relevant to every part of life. The Qur'an is a central *source* of truth, but reading it regularly is not itself a required *practice*, at least not to the same degree as prayer, which in his words "is to be looked at not just from a legalistic point of view, but as something I need, in the way I need food." In my fieldwork, I heard constant references to hadiths (the sayings of the Prophet) about the centrality of prayer and very few about the importance of the Qur'an.

The reverse was true at the Conservative Protestant schools: Prayer was obviously important, but scripture was the assurance of salvation. In the words of a speaker at Good Tree, "The first sign of conversion is God's word. Ask yourself that: Do I love the Bible? If you don't, it's probably because you're not a Christian." Many students talked about their "daily devos," or daily devotionals, which are guided prayers almost always rooted in a small scripture passage. Prayer was usually described as "just talking to God" about "whatever," but a significant element of that discourse was (or at least was expected to be) scriptural. As various people told me, prayer is talking to God, and scripture is God talking back. Many of the teachers at Good Tree called themselves "Biblical Christians," and the adjective *Biblical* was incredibly common at both Conservative Protestant schools. In contrast, I never heard the adjective *Qur'anic*. Prayer was discussed in religion class at both Muslim schools—especially why it is necessary and how to improve your concentration, or *khushu'* (Mahmood 2005)—but it was mentioned rarely at Apostles and not at all at Good Tree. For Christians, reading scripture is a constitutive practice that moves their tradition forward (Ammerman 1987). For Muslims, the same is true for prayer.

These communities have different relationships to scripture for multiple reasons. First, the Muslim "scriptures" are simply more diffuse than those of Christians, with countless sunnah, or actions and words (hadith) of the Prophet (and his companions) accompanying the Qur'an. However, the validity and right interpretation of sunnah and hadiths are much debated, making much of the "scripture" available to Muslims subject to considerable debate as to proper interpretation and even legitimacy (Musa 2008). Perhaps because of the complexity of these issues—and also due to a long tradition of respect for elite scholarship—lay Muslims are quite deferential to questions of Islamic expertise. Muslim students and teachers would often tell me they were not qualified to speak about a certain topic, a response I ran into much less often talking to Conservative Protestants.

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There is no ambiguity about the validity of the Qur'an and particular hadiths, but the meanings are left somewhat vague, and there is considerable room for debate about most things *except prayer*. In Islam, as a convert and U.S. history teacher at Al Amal told me, everything is permitted unless it is expressly forbidden, except for prayer, in which case everything is *required* unless it is expressly permitted. He used this distinction to teach the difference between strict and loose constructionism, telling me over lunch in the cafeteria, "Just like in America, the president is not the boss, the constitution is the boss." The problem then becomes how to figure out what the boss is saying. Salafist and Wahabbi Islamic sects are much more likely to think there is one easy to understand and literal interpretation, but the majority of Muslim respondents were more open to (some) ambiguity in their interpretation and more deferential to religious authorities for difficult questions as long as those questions were not about salat.

In contrast, the Conservative Protestant respondents—while agreeing that the boss is the "constitution" and not the "president"—were much more comfortable being their own agents of interpretation. Just as the Qur'an and Sunnah accomplish different tasks for different Muslim groups, the Bible works with different "textual ideologies" in different parts of Christianity (Bielo 2009). For various historical reasons (which I will discuss in the next section), the Conservative Protestants I worked with tended to think they could understand scripture's meaning more immediately and with less consultation than did the Muslim respondents.

To be clear, Conservative Protestants do not precisely mean it when they say the Bible is literal. The self-description of literalist is used more to distinguish themselves from modernists, who have completely given up on literalism, than as an accurate depiction. Being as literal *as possible* is what matters: Near the beginning of the year at Good Tree, one of the sophomore doctrine teachers noted that the Bible is "plain normal truth" and "when God communicates truth we want to take it—at least from our school's position—as literally as possibly." He promised his students that "after this class we will know what is true and what is not true." Alongside literalism, an individual's relationship to scripture was also important: Good Tree's senior Bible teacher described his class as an opportunity to learn to read the Bible *for yourself*, a skill that would prove increasingly necessary as students headed off to secular universities. Both Conservative Protestants and Muslims stressed the importance of communities of accountability and fellowship, but Muslims were much more concerned about communities of *interpretation*.

Scripture and Evolution

Some scholars argue that because of the diffuse nature of the Islamic creation account, "in the context of evolution, the Qur'an does not end up playing such a central role for Muslims as the Bible has done for fundamentalist Christians" (Hameed 2010:135). This might or might not be true on a global scale, but in the communities I studied, the Qur'an *did* matter as a means of opposing evolution, although through the mediating authority of trusted scholars. The central difference was less what the texts say than what the authorities say about the texts *and how to use them*. In this sense, the communal practices related to the scriptures matter more than what the scriptures say because it is only through the community's interpretation of those practices—how to do them, how to render them legitimate, and how to determine what is most pressing—that the texts gain any meaning. It is almost impossible to say what the Qur'an or Bible would look like outside of the communities of interpretation that describe their meaning, use, and value.

For example, I asked the principal at Al Amal what he thought about animal evolution, and he responded in no uncertain terms that he did not believe in it, using much the same

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argument as many Christian creationists: It is hard to find examples of such radical change in daily life.

> I think that Harun Yahya[9] got it right. If it happened once, why hasn't it happened again? . . . If you look at a bird, it looks the same to me as it did to my grandfather—it hasn't changed since when I was born to now when I am 45. . . . Even in Christian schools, they don't believe in Darwinism.

I asked him about state exams that required knowledge of evolution, and he nodded:

> When you teach it to students to study it, it's different from teaching them to believe it. It's like when you teach students about World War II . . . it doesn't affect them. It's just something they have to know.

Evolution might have been wrong, but it was not considered something to worry about. The students made similar distinctions. A group of girls at Al Amal drew a line at human evolution, but when I asked them about the evolution of animals, they looked at each other somewhat confused. One said to me, "I'm not sure—maybe we should ask Brother Abdullah. We're actually not sure about that." This lack of certainty extended to Al Amal's biology teacher, Ahmed. In the hall after one of his biology classes, I asked him about human evolution. "I draw the line between micro-evolution and macro-evolution," he said. I asked him why he did not talk that much in class about evolution's religious implications, and he responded,

> First, I just don't know about it, it's not my subject area. I mean, I'd like to learn more about it, but for now, I just don't know. . . . But also, I tell the students that there's just evidence we can easily see, something like a bacteria, where it's clearly evolving and getting more drug-resistant.

In some ways, Ahmed used the same strategies as Conservative Protestants: He used examples of micro-evolution (the diversity of the gene pool and changes within species and biological families) to create a pragmatic accommodation to the world at large, acknowledging the parts of evolution that do not contradict necessary belief. Yet it is hard to imagine a Conservative Protestant at either of these schools—particularly a biology teacher—claiming not to know what their religion teaches about evolution. For the Conservative Protestants, evolution was an issue of such profound moral salience that ignorance was unacceptable.

The two biology teachers at Al Haqq were much more insistent that macro-evolution was impossible: One took a week to show a Harun Yahya movie because, as she told me, "Yahya gives you all the scientific facts." When I asked what the school thought about evolution, she said it is "such a minor issue, it's not something that we're even entertaining." I asked if belief in evolution was *haram* (prohibited), and she paused: "You don't just throw out [the word] *haram*, that's why we have *makruh* [discouraged], but I've never even heard someone mention *makruh*." As was the case for Conservative Protestants, there was a concern that belief in evolution is related to atheism, but unlike for Conservative Protestants, that concern did not morph into a fear of conversion. When I asked the head Islamic studies teacher at Al Haqq, Sheikh Yusuf, what he thought about evolution, he paused, muttered a quick prayer, and gave a long explanation as to why it was dangerous and wrong. In a senior Islamic studies class, he told the students, "science helps us disprove evolution." In an interview, I asked him what he would think about evolution for all

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life except humans, and he scoffed, "This is just a theory, but there's an implicit thing in the Qur'an, that other creatures were created in that moment as well." Yet when I then asked what he would think about someone believing Allah had guided evolution, his whole expression changed. "Oh," he said, "this is fine, they're trying to accommodate the theory, and they are trying to be scientific, well they evolved, and God is the one who is behind the evolution." Sheikh Yusuf did not believe theistic evolution was possible, but when it was suggested, he was not threatened by the idea.

Even the most conservative of the Islamic studies teachers I encountered at the schools, Sheikh Abdullah, was not willing to call someone un-Islamic for believing in a theistic, non-human evolution. I asked a group of the Sheikh's students if they could understand Darwin together with Islam, to which he immediately responded that it was a good question and none of them should say they like Darwin. Yet one student immediately responded, "I think so. Like, it just makes sense—you look at what Darwin figured out with the finches"—for about two minutes, he proceeded to explain Darwin's discovery about finches in the Galapagos—"and that just makes sense. But it doesn't work for humans, because humans live together and live in packs—they don't leave their weak alone."

Other students chimed in, basically agreeing. Said, a confident boy sitting in the middle of the class, looked me in the eye: "We all say humans no, but animals, we don't know." He went on: "To be honest . . . I don't care about if animals evolved or not. It's just not something I think about a lot. Allah made the whole world and how he made it, I don't know." Several other boys nodded.

The teacher nodded as well: "Anything that Allah says [in the Qur'an], we say. No matter what the scientists say. They'll say something and later on they'll change their mind." He later told Hasan, "I will give you 10 lashings for what you are saying about Darwin." Hasan smiled nervously, and the other students laughed.[10]

Sheikh Abdullah did not tell Hasan that his belief was *haram* or that it would necessarily lead to atheism. The Sheikh was clearly frustrated by the belief, and as the students said they did not care about animal evolution, he looked surprised, even if he then nodded when Said insisted that all creation came from God. Perhaps more importantly, *I was the one who brought up the issue.* Evolution came up regularly during Bible and science classes at Good Tree and Apostles, but it only came up twice without me bringing it up at Al Haqq and never at Al Amal. Even in biology classes at the Muslim schools, the religious significance of evolution was usually glossed over and only cursorily acknowledged, if at all. I asked an Al Haqq teacher about this, and she said she tried to make the distinction by saying "scientists say" or "evolutionists say"; the Conservative Protestant biology teachers opted for less subtle strategies.

I thought I might have found a negative case for this argument when I started at Apostles. I was shocked to learn that the biology teacher, Joe, was a theistic evolutionist—that is, someone who believes that God guided evolution (usually also including human evolution). In his first year at Apostles, Joe liked that the school used a Kenneth Miller textbook (Miller is a famous molecular biologist and a Christian apologist for the reconciliation of science and religion), but he was nervous about teaching at a school committed to young Earth creationism.[11] Later in the year, Gabe, the principal's husband who had earlier been the biology teacher, was looking for something in the lab at the back of the classroom during one of Joe's biology units. Joe was worried he was being supervised because he had sent an email about wanting to show a video on theistic evolution. When I talked to Christians at both schools about theistic evolution, most were perplexed at the idea, and quite a few of the students had never heard of it. Evolution was almost always framed as creationists versus atheist evolutionists, with evolution nearly always understood as a proxy for atheism.

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In response to the email he sent, Joe was told that the school could not teach anything that went against the Bible. He was asked to show his biology class two creationist DVDs instead. Joe left the school at the end of that year. When I talked to the school's superintendent, he told me that when he asked Gabe to teach biology, he told him the most important thing he could do was ensure that all the children learned about creationism.

This concern about creationism extended to religion and history classes. At Good Tree, Adam Morgan's "Worldview" course prepared seniors to engage a world that is less friendly than their school community to "Bible-believing Christians." One day, he was talking to his students about the Cambrian explosion, a sudden change in the fossil record in which various life forms emerged, and which Conservative Protestants sometimes use as evidence of God's spontaneous creation. In response to a student's question about using 2 Peter 3:8 ("a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like a day") to accommodate an old Earth perspective, Adam explained why using a passage from one text as a primer to understand another is "just unwise" without evidence it was intended to be used that way. He then argued that there is no evidence the creation account was meant to be symbolic. His final point was the most crucial:

> If you can use that passage to reinterpret other passages, then you can do it with anything, so what's to stop me from using it with Jesus and to say that actually Jesus wasn't dead for three days, he was dead for 3,000 *years*. And that means He hasn't even risen yet! Who are you to stop me from doing that? . . . Do you understand the three responses? It's very dangerous.

The problem is not only that evolution goes against the Bible but that if it is true, evolution would render the way Conservative Protestants understand the Bible ridiculous. For an intellectual community that prides itself on the plain truth of the Bible and the priesthood of all believers, this threat is particularly grave. In a keynote address at the Good Tree graduation ceremony, the school's superintendent said that the Bible is "not a science textbook but everything it says about science is true." Near the beginning of the year, the freshman physical science teacher at Good Tree provided context for all the reasons why the Bible might be said to be in scientific error (e.g., claiming that the sun stopped in the sky) by arguing first, that God can do whatever he wants, and second, that many of these "errors" are actually scientifically intelligible. The fact that teachers generally struggled to explain the Bible scientifically rather than opting for the much easier explanation of inscrutability is a testament to the epistemic optimism of Conservative Protestants and an indication of the ironies of an easy Bible (Noll 1995). For the Muslim schools, the scriptures were complex texts subject to some debate; regularly interacting with the scriptures was a *recommended* practice, but it was not a *required* one. In contrast, for Conservative Protestants, the Bible is easy to understand, literally true, and must be continually experienced to keep their communal identity moving forward. This difference partially explains why the Conservative Protestant schools viewed the theory of evolution as more morally salient than did the Muslim schools.

SITES OF BOUNDARY CONTESTATIONS: SCRIPTURE AND GENDER PERFORMANCE

All four schools sought "distinction with engagement" (Smith 1998) from the secular United States: For the Sunni schools, that distinction was enacted primarily through gender performance; for the Conservative Protestant schools, it was found in Biblical literalism. Some might question whether the United States is a "secular" country, but people in all four schools

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saw a materialist lack of concern for religious commitments in the United States. Besides distinguishing themselves from the broader U.S. public, people in these schools also made moral distinctions within their own communities, arguing about who was a better or worse Muslim or Christian and why. This "cartography" (Gieryn 1999; Lichterman 2008) engaged various questions (e.g., "speaking in tongues" for Christians or support for Palestine for Muslims), but the most important differences were often related to the same issues that separated the communities from their primary antagonist, the secular United States: gender for Muslims and Biblical literalism for Christians.

Where Does Boundary Contestation Happen?

In the United States, Muslims and Conservative Protestants consider themselves literalists: Muslims believe the Qur'an is the literal word of God spoken to the Prophet Muhammad, and Conservative Protestants believe the Bible is the word of God brought into text by the books' various authors. However, they have different literalist *hermeneutics*, explained by extremely different histories. Muslims' literalism is tempered by a focus on the importance of tradition and according certain people more interpretive authority than others. For Conservative Protestants in the United States, especially after the Second Great Awakening in the early 1800s, the Bible is easy to understand and democratically available to every individual (Hatch 1989). This optimism about scripture's simple accessibility was buttressed by Scottish commonsense philosophy, which insisted that science and scripture were perfectly in sync (Noll 1995). It was not until the importation of higher criticism (and to a lesser extent, the theory of evolution) from Europe at the tail end of the 19th century that this confidence began to fall apart (Marsden 1980). It was the debate about higher criticism—more than evolution—that configured the landscape of U.S. Protestantism at the turn of the 20th century, establishing the conservative-modernist split that remains to this day.

The Scopes Trial was one of many key turning points at which evolution became a constitutive battle line in debates on the nature of scripture (Numbers 2006). Activists and intellectual leaders linked German higher criticism and the "European" theory of evolution to German aggression in World War I (Marsden 1980). As the century progressed, creationism became an increasingly important way for fundamentalists to distinguish themselves from secularists and religious liberals, especially given increased federal and state efforts to teach evolution in schools (Berkman and Plutzer 2010), the decreased importance of conservative religion in mainstream society (Marsden 1980), and the dramatic success of "flood geologists" who attempted explanations of the literal truth of the Bible's flood account (and the rest of the Bible's creation narrative) through geological evidence (Numbers 2006). Yet all of these efforts stem from the 19th-century marriage of a democratic understanding of the Bible's accessibility with an earnest optimism about scripture's relationship to science.

This optimism has important implications for the history and ongoing commitments of Conservative Protestant schools: The cause of their explosive growth in the mid–20th century is much debated, with some pointing to the sexual revolution (Irvine 2004) or desegregation (Carper and Layman 1997), but the post-Sputnink emphasis on rigorously enforced science education (including evolution) was important as well (Berkman and Plutzer 2010; Binder 2004; Rudolph 2002). Because schools are sites of learning and are required to teach science, the concern about creationism I describe here might be uniquely a function of Protestant schooling—other Conservative Protestant contexts might manifest different concerns. Yet as many scholars argue (e.g., Ammerman 1987), reading the Bible literally—with creationism often its most important element—is a constitutive practice and boundary site

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for Conservative Protestants as an entire community, making the importance of creationism in these schools more a product of field effects than a cause.

Muslims also believe in their scripture's literal truth and in their religion's compatibility with science, but unlike U.S. Conservative Protestants, they are not regularly accused of being stupid for their beliefs. In contrast, Conservative Protestants often face this criticism, making them more defensive and recalcitrant. Both groups—liberal Protestants and secularists on one side, creationist Conservative Protestants on the other—agree that evolution is an important content of their boundary contestation (Moran 2012). As the author of the Good Tree seniors' Worldview textbook writes, "Darwinism thus forms the linchpin to the fundamental debate between Christianity and naturalism in virtually every subject area" (Colson and Pearcey 1999:94).

Muslims, on the other hand, feel besieged by U.S. attitudes on gender. One teacher at Al Haqq asked the girls in his junior Islamic studies class if "parents really send their kids to have knowledge of Islam or is it just for them not to have boyfriends or girlfriends?" Several students answered, "It's both." The fact that many more girls than boys attended both Muslim schools points toward this demarcation. The hijab was literally a battle at the boundary at Al Amal: When you entered the school, the first thing you saw was a sign requiring "Proper Islamic Attire." The sign had a stick figure woman in a hijab and abaya, a modest full-body dress worn by women, somewhat similar to that worn by the Amish but much more fashionable. Female students at both schools wore abayas and hijabs; the majority felt this was important, but I met a substantial minority who admitted not wearing hijab at home—or at least wearing a looser one that showed some hair. I am not sure any wore abayas outside of school.

The causes of such rigid gender policing are complicated. A 1965 immigration law allowed a sharp increase of Arab and South Asian Muslim immigrants (GhaneaBassiri 2010), which significantly changed Muslim culture in the United States, even for African American Muslims who had been here for generations (Jackson 2005). Arriving amid the sexual upheavals of the 1960s, many Muslim Americans rapidly made female sexuality—particularly wearing of the hijab—an important boundary between their own identity and the rest of the United States (Ajrouch 2004; Karim 2009). This paralleled moves toward more conservative gender performance in many immigrant religious communities (Yang and Ebaugh 2001) and reflected a global shift toward more conservative Muslim understandings of gender practices and sexual performance—particularly women's dress and sex separation—than had existed at midcentury (Ahmed 2011). The more conservative rules on these practices are increasingly dominant, but their interpretation is diverse: Many of the Muslim students and teachers I worked with described the hijab as a feminist critique of the Western and secular objectification of women, a position repeatedly observed in studies of gender in Muslim communities (Ajrouch 2005; Haddad 2007; Karim 2009; Read and Bartkowski 2000). At both Muslim schools, parents and teachers told me how important it was to send their children somewhere with appropriate gender roles and the opportunity to pray.

To be clear, I often talked to Christian students about gender as well, and when I raised the issue, they had strong opinions on the potential dangers of feminism and the need for women to act in certain ways. Gender matters for Conservative Protestants (Gallagher 2003; Griffith 1997; Hoffman and Bartkowski 2008) and often in ways similar to Muslim concerns (Bartkowski and Read 2003). The difference was that, as with Muslims and evolution, I generally had to initiate these conversations. The fact that respondents rarely initiated gender conversations might be due to my being a man investigating what is generally a matter of female bodies. Yet, despite having *less* access to female students at my Muslim sites, I heard significantly *more* about issues of female gender in those two schools.

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In contrast, at the Conservative Protestant schools, the threat that evolution would lead to nihilistic atheism was a litany I heard often, and for many it was the mark of Christian faith itself. The Bible was the point of contention for Conservative Protestant respondents, and evolution seemed to be the biggest concern. Good Tree's biology teacher began the year by introducing the school's Bob Jones University[12] biology textbook: "Obviously you will not find this in any public schools, and what's great about this book is that it has Bible verses and Biblical applications worked in. At a public school, you might just get evolution from a secular perspective and that's it." Throughout my time at both Christian schools, I regularly heard—especially from parents and faculty—that the freedom not to teach evolution was an important reason why these schools existed.

I asked some freshmen in Pastor Amable's class about a hypothetical Christian scientist who believed in evolution as we sat together in the cafeteria. "Then he's not a Christian," a few of them said at once. When Dr. Hawthorne, the senior Bible teacher at Good Tree, mentioned that a particular Christian college teaches theistic evolution, several students turned and looked at a girl planning to go to that college as though someone in her family had died. "Oh Bethany," a girl said, with deep concern in her voice. "It's okay," said Bethany, grinning nervously. "I just won't take biology."

Dr. Hawthorne immediately responded, "If you're saying theistic evolution is bad, you're missing the point." In an earlier one-on-one conversation, he had told me that the most important thing for him was that the world was the result of God's creation: "Now the mechanics of how the sun got there and how old it is, that's less important. But I have to be careful here. I'm in the minority." Even people more representative of the majority opinion—such as Pastor Amable—would generally not go so far as to call theistic evolution a "heaven or hell issue." Nonetheless, they still felt it was deeply wrong and corrosive inasmuch as it gives more space to a theory that is incompatible with the Bible and destructive of humanity's sacred understanding of itself. Evolution was one of the most important reasons why the Bible was worth fighting about.

Perhaps because it was located right in the middle of an urban area, Apostles faculty and staff were also concerned about other sites of contestation; they mentioned the perils of drugs, alcohol, and gang violence much more often than faculty at any of the other three schools. Yet the risk of losing the Bible was still the most terrifying thought of all, and the problem of evolution was a particularly insidious way such a process could start. As the freshman religion teacher, Pastor Amable, told them, "Guys, I'm sorry but Satan has used the evolution philosophy to deceive mankind. . . . He has given a big giant lie [that] you evolved from this primordial soup and now you are here today with absolutely no purpose in life."

Faculty at the Muslim schools displayed an equivalent sort of terror about not wearing the hijab. Students generally regarded the Islamic rules on gender as a positive source of protection and identity. Among students who said they did not wear the hijab outside of school, most told me they would like to eventually. A student at Al Amal asked me, "Ever seen that show *16 and Pregnant*? . . . I see that show and I think, thank God I'm a Muslim, I don't have to worry about things like that." Students had similar thoughts about separating genders, a practice strictly enforced at both Muslim schools. Even though some students wanted a little more interaction so they would not feel so nervous when they got to college, most girls and boys thought the separation was necessary; they often gave vivid "sixteen and pregnant" stories to explain what might happen otherwise.

What They Think about Us

The schools also thought quite differently about the other side of the boundary contestation, or how the rest of the United States felt about them. Their continual interactions with others

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outside their communities reinscribed the importance of sites of boundary contestation as constitutive parts of their identity. Muslim teachers and students often compared themselves to other minority groups and how they overcame prejudice. At the keynote address at Al Amal's graduation, a local professor said, "We have to do what the Italians, Irish, and African Americans all did before us, we have to challenge those stereotypes . . . for some people when you say Muslim, it means terrorist, and we have to challenge this." As a board member told the girls at the Al Haqq graduation, "When you go out there you need to compete in every field with your brothers. Marketing, medicine, and finance, whatever field you choose, you help to break the stereotype that Muslim women in any form are behind Muslim men."

This belief that all Muslims are terrorists—or at least sympathize with terrorists—was the other constant concern. I asked Latifa about feeling like she was part of America, and she told me, "After 9/11 it just was hard, it totally changed. It kind of segreg—." She did not finish the word and started again. "It isolated us . . . you have this fear in you that someone is going to think something about you or say something to you because they see the hijab or they know you're Muslim." Defending hijab became not only a means of defending Muslim gender relations but also a defense of Muslims' ability to live peacefully in U.S. society: The general public often seemed to equate the violence of Islamism with the "repression" of the hijab (Byng 2010). Students and teachers at the Muslim schools took the work of repairing Islam's image seriously: In many of my first conversations with them, respondents brought up stereotypes of Islam as sexist and violent. At both graduations I attended for the Muslim schools, speakers told the students it was up to them to correct negative stereotypes.

Whereas Muslims worried about being called sexist and violent, Christians feared being deemed ignorant and intolerant. As the sophomore doctrine teacher at Good Tree told his class, "The media just does a number on Christians and just makes us look like buffoons every chance they get." Teachers at both Christian schools were reflective about this: Adam, the senior history teacher at Good Tree, and Pastor Amable at Apostles both told their students they should not defend their faith to nonbelievers using the Bible. Adam said, "When a student comes up to you and asks you to explain the Biblical worldview, I will jump off the chapel if you defend it with Genesis 1:1." The students all laughed. In nearly all of my conversations about creationism at both Christian schools, it was extremely important for my interlocutors to prove evolution was wrong *scientifically* and not just *Biblically*. This move is common across the Conservative Protestant community, as seen in the popularity of the intelligent design movement (an allegedly nontheistic critique of evolution), and traces its roots to Scottish commonsense philosophy (Noll 1995).

In the conversation about jumping off the chapel, Adam was guiding students on how to defend their beliefs at the local state university. This fear about how students would stand up to scrutiny about their beliefs in the secular world was constant at Good Tree and was present at Apostles as well. Good Tree's superintendent told a version of the story starring his brother. After getting an atheist professor to acknowledge he was not Christian, his brother said, "The Bible is God's letter to the people of God. And that's what you get for reading someone else's mail!" The superintendent's audience laughed, and he finished his story with a moment of triumph: "[My brother] said, 'I can answer those questions if you give me equal time.' And then [the professor] never brought it up again."

Teachers at Good Tree regularly warned their students about just this sort of encounter. A student, Amy, who I kept up with after she left Good Tree, emailed me a few months after she graduated, telling me "the 'horror' stories Good Tree and youth groups told us about one day being in a classroom of 300 people and having your professor challenge God/Creation/Intelligent Design etc. did actually happen my second week in school." She recounted defending intelligent design (ID) to a professor who acted as if the theory were "something

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created by Hitler." She said she "politely corrected him" on some misconception about ID and "ended on the note that we'll agree to disagree." And yet:

> The thing that threw me is that weeks later while talking to my brother, who recently became a pastor, I found out that he doesn't even believe in Genesis literally. Like—I had heard this [theistic evolution] at Good Tree and didn't have a problem with it. I actually hate arguing with other Christians about little differences within Biblical beliefs . . . but my thoughts were always, "Jesus made blind people see and brought dead people back to life, God split oceans in two, I think they can handle creating a universe in 6 days." The church I was raised in basically taught that evolution was "evil," creation literally happened in 6 days, and that's what "good" Christians believed. I never fully bought into how narrow-minded that was, but there was definitely a part of me that—I don't know—appreciated the concreteness I found within knowing that was the "right" thing to believe I guess. Now I just don't know.

Amy's email describes exactly why the staff at Good Tree were so worried. When I met Amy in one of my first days of fieldwork, she was already a bit of an outlier: She wore funky clothes, had a tattoo hidden beneath her uniform, and thought it was silly the school would not have a prom. Still, creationism was what people believed, and she believed it too, because she felt as though she had to. Running into the opposition for which she had been prepared did not cause a major problem. What challenged her was the idea that her religion could contain more than the community to which she belonged claimed it could. Paradoxically, entering specific sites of contestation was no big deal; it was the idea that this contestation was irrelevant that was challenging. For the Conservative Protestants with whom I worked, boundary contestation over scriptural literalism helped affirm the importance of their community's identity and their central practices; to insist on evolution was dissonant, and to deny that creationism even mattered was to ignore a fight that provided the community with a sense of purpose.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This article has empirical and theoretical implications that ought to be explored further. Along with developing a theory of moral salience by showing how an issue's salience is activated through interactions with key practices and boundaries, this work contributes to the study of cognition and the meso-level processes of resonance and dissonance. Empirically, I built on previous arguments (Toumey 1994) that creationists' differences with mainstream science are less about epistemological conflict than about ethical mistrust (Evans 2011).[13] These findings have important implications for how we understand the creationist rejection of "science" and, by extension, how we understand other groups who deny the reigning scientific consensus on issues like vaccinations and climate change. Science need not be an all-or-nothing deal; these data suggest that lay acceptance of scientific authority is much more pragmatic and situational. Careful studies of survey research find similar results. Roos (2014) shows that creationists have *knowledge* of science; they just disagree with certain elements of it. Similarly, Rughinis (2011) finds that agreement has less to do with scientific knowledge than with whether certain concepts are "animated." Instead of thinking of creationism (or by extension, the positing of a link between vaccinations and autism or the denial of global climate change) as a denial or ignorance of science, it might be more useful to think of it as a form of "motivated reasoning" (Kunda 1990), a motivation that comes from interactions with key practices and sites of boundary contestations.

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The theoretical implications of this argument extend beyond the denial of mainstream scientific consensus; it provides a means of explaining not just *agreement* with certain issues but also their relative *moral salience.* For example, why are more U.S. citizens not worried about climate change? On a less serious end of the spectrum, why are amateur linguists so bothered by use of the term *literally* to mean metaphorically (Gill 2013)? For climate change, the stakes could not be clearer, and yet besides the many who deny the problem, many others simply do not care enough to do much about it (Norgaard 2011; Wood and Vedlitz 2007). For people who worry about *literally*, the stakes are fairly small, yet these amateur linguists really care.

This theory also shifts the focus of typical discussions of issue salience, providing a cultural perspective rather than a political one, and looking at the meso-level processes of resonance and dissonance with key boundaries and practices rather than the more typical analysis of macro-level activities of mass media, party politics, and institutional change. In contrast to work that emphasizes the importance of an issue's interaction with other ideas or beliefs (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Hunter 1991; Wood and Vedlitz 2007), I show that an issue gains its moral salience less from its relationship to ideas and more from its interaction with practices and sites of boundary contestations. To be sure, these practices and boundaries are to some degree justified and motivated by ideas. Yet a community often has many reasons and countless more ideas: The ideas that count are the ones reinforced through practices and boundaries. This insight builds on repertoire theory (Swidler 2003) by showing how certain ideas within a repertoire gain salience and prominence.

Finally, this article contributes to theoretical discussions of practices and boundary work by showing how the discussions can work together and how both are relevant to the salience of particular issues and the sociology of ideas more broadly. Sociologists already acknowledge practices as important processes through which individuals and communities develop and maintain their identities and preserve their "tacit knowledge" (Polanyi [1966] 2009), yet I suggest that key practices can also explain the relative salience of issues and explicit knowledge claims. Similarly, boundary maintenance is not only an important mechanism through which individuals and communities establish difference; sociologists can also study boundary work as a means of understanding why certain issues are more salient than others. Most importantly, sociologists can *combine* the study of practices and boundaries to better understand individuals' and communities' commitments, providing a more robust explanation of what matters to people and why.

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NOTES

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1. The schools in my study referred to themselves as *Evangelical* or *Christian*. (Nobody uses the word *fundamentalist*; when I gave a survey at Good Tree, many students did not know what the word meant.) In some sense, these schools were fundamentalist in their strenuous insistence on creationism and sympathy

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with fundamentalist institutions like Bob Jones University and Answers in Genesis, but they were much more engaged in the world than a typical U.S. fundamentalist and sought "distinction with engagement" in the way Smith (1998) and Ammerman (1987) differentiate Evangelicals from fundamentalists. As such, I follow Woodberry and Smith (1998) in using the etic term *Conservative Protestants*.

2. Christian opposition to evolution is based on a literal reading of the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2.
3. I refer to the two schools as *Muslim* rather than *Sunni*, as this is what they call themselves and it is the standard self-designation in the United States.
4. Conservative Protestants and Sunni Muslims are heterogeneous communities with a variety of positions on evolution. Twenty-four percent of Evangelicals (a group that is not quite the same as Conservative Protestants [see Woodberry and Smith 1998; Woodberry et al. 2012]) and 45 percent of Muslims "agree that evolution is the best explanation for the origins of human life on Earth" (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life 2008).
5. The names of all individuals and schools have been changed. I am grateful to the communities of Al Amal, Al Haqq, Good Tree, and Apostles, whose kindness, hospitality, and openness made my work pleasant and possible.
6. Muslim opposition to evolution is based on a literal reading of the accounts of creation in the Qur'an: 6:2, 7:11–25; 7:54, 14:19, 15:26, 21:30, 22:47, 24:45, 32:7–8, 35:11, 41:11, 49:13, 50:15, 50:38, 51:47, 55:14, 71:13–17, and 82:8.
7. There is a growing interest in the sociology of morality as its own subfield (e.g., Tavory 2011), but I take it for granted that much of cultural sociology has been—either explicitly or implicitly—a sociology of morality, even if the diverse terms and framings of morality within cultural sociology are often incompatible with each other (Hitlin and Vaisey 2010).
8. Memorization of passages of the Qur'an was required at both schools—and at Al Amal it was a daily class—but various teachers, especially at Al Amal, complained to me that the focus was too much on memorization and not enough on interpretation (*tafsir*).
9. Harun Yahya is the pseudonym of Adnan Oktar, a controversial Turkish public figure, perhaps most famous outside of Turkey for his publications against evolution (for more information, see Riexinger 2008; Yahya 2009). Yayha is much more popular in Turkey and European Muslim communities, where Islamic creationism is somewhat more prominent (Edis 1999; Hameed 2008).
10. I heard similar jokes about hitting children at the Christian schools. While these jokes made me uncomfortable and clearly reflect some comfort with corporeal punishment, I found absolutely no indication of child abuse at any of the schools.
11. Young Earth creationism insists the Earth is no older than the years the Bible gives it (somewhere between 6,000 and 15,000) (Morris 2007). Biology textbooks at both Christian schools were young Earth, and most students and teachers at the schools were as well. Passages in the Qur'an also say the Earth was made in six days, but Muslims are generally much more comfortable thinking of those days as metaphorical.
12. Bob Jones is an extremely conservative Protestant university. Apostles staff told me they were going to start using Bob Jones biology textbooks the next school year.
13. Evans (2013) shows that Conservative Protestants are increasingly less confident in science (see also Gauchat 2012), yet the term is ideologically loaded, especially for Conservative Protestants. When my respondents had a negative reaction to *science*, they generally understood it to mean evolution or atheist science; they would often distinguish between "what (atheist) scientists say" and actual (God-affirming) science (Evans and Evans 2008).

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