

A Mighty Fortress: The Social and Economic Foundations of the American Megachurch
Movement

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One of the most significant phenomena in the Protestant church over the past two decades is the development and growth of the “megachurch.” While these drastically out-sized congregations are a relatively new aspect of religious life in the United States, these very large and often very wealthy churches¹ are already having a profound impact on the way in which Americans worship.²

In his pathbreaking work on the megachurch movement, Scott Thumma (1996) has argued that megachurches are largely non-denominational. Thus, lacking a denominational hierarchy, megachurches have a high level of independence. Although two-thirds of megachurches claim a denominational affiliation, the significance of this affiliation and their attachment to the denomination is often minimal (Hartford Institute for Religion Research 2003). This is particularly true for black churches (which historically have a high level of independence) (Tucker-Worgs 2002).

These churches are also in an especially good position to tailor social service programs to the particular needs of their local communities, and they can take advantage of funding opportunities made available by governmental agencies more effectively and efficiently than their denominational counterparts. Black megachurches are particularly likely to take advantage of these opportunities for social service provision, since there is evidence of a direct relationship between membership and wealth and economic development activity (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). The megachurch movement has not only had a significant impact on the American religious scene; it is also changing the character and extent of social service delivery.³

The increasing prominence—and independence—of megachurches and the megachurch movement has, somewhat surprisingly, not lead to a large body of literature on their doctrinal characteristics, growth patterns, organizational structures or behavior. And, given the historical and ongoing importance of religion to politics, particularly with regard to policy development and election campaigns, the megachurch phenomenon has attracted scant attention from scholars.⁴ Indeed, there is little, if any, research on the economic and/or political implications of the growth of the megachurch movement. We are in the process of addressing this intellectual lacunae. The first stage in our study of the megachurch movement is an examination of the geographic and demographic foundations of megachurch growth and development. More specifically, we ask the following questions:

1. In what types of economic environments to megachurches locate and thrive?
2. What types of racial/ethnic environments tend to be popular locations for megachurches?
3. Do megachurches tend to be more prevalent in communities with older (younger) populations?
4. Do megachurches tend to serve relatively well-educated populations or relatively poorly-educated populations?
5. Are certain geographic factors (level of urbanization and proximity to major highways) associated with the prevalence of megachurches?

As we address these questions, we are sensitive to the possibility that all megachurches are not alike. In particular, we examine the possibility that the demographic and geographic foundations of black and white megachurches are distinct. For example,

certain racial/ethnic environments may foster the development of black, but not white, megachurches. Similarly, black megachurches and white megachurches may tend to locate in distinct geographic areas. Though the potential distinctiveness of these two types of megachurch communities is often obscured (or ignored), we consider this an open research question. In this paper, we focus on the megachurch movement in Maryland. In the subsequent sections of this paper, we provide the background for our project, discuss some of the most important theoretical issues related to the growth and siting of megachurches (both black and white), and present some results from an analysis of the location and size of Maryland's white and black campuses. This area of inquiry still lacks a detailed examination of the factors associated with megachurch location (Eisland 1997), so while our study is limited to Maryland, it is an important first effort to understand the demographic and geographic foundations of this prominent and emerging religious movement. We also discuss the implications of our findings for understanding megachurch growth and its political and economic community impact and the implications for our own (and others') future work on megachurches and their role(s) in the modern American polity.

Defining "megachurch"

Because the megachurch phenomenon is such a recent occurrence, there is still no universally-accepted definition of the concept. Nevertheless, an increasingly large group of scholars have coalesced around a number of factors or characteristics which set these large churches—the megachurches—apart from their usually smaller counterparts.

The most obvious defining characteristic is size. While there is some disagreement about the cut-off point, 2000 or more attendees (sum of all services) per Sunday is becoming an increasingly accepted standard (see Tucker-Worgs 2002; Thumma 1996). Note that this is not a membership standard. Megachurches may have attendance figures that dwarf their membership numbers, and, given the nondenominational, or multi-denominational, character of many of them, this should not be surprising. In some cases, membership—in a conventional sense—may not be a particularly important descriptor for megachurches.

Our study is also limited to churches that provide extensive programs for those who attend their services and, potentially, for members of the larger local community. In her study of black megachurches, Tucker-Worgs (2002) notes that what Lyle Schaller (1992) refers to as the “full service” church in *The Seven-Day-a-Week Church* is the prototype for the megachurch. While it would not be correct to say that these churches never close their doors, there are a variety of church activities occurring on their grounds and in their buildings every day of the week.

Finally, megachurches must have a permanent physical presence in their local communities. Churches, however large, that do not have continuous (seven-day-a-week) control over their Sunday meeting place and its adjacent facilities, are not, at least according to our criteria, megachurches. We are interested in examining the characteristics of those large churches that are in a comparable position to significantly affect the quality of life in a specific local community. Churches that do not have their own facilities are in a very different position *vis a vis* the community than churches with a physical home (and operations center).

Political Significance of the Megachurch phenomenon

Over the past two decades, megachurches have been the engine of growth for mainline protestant denominations and their more conservative evangelical and fundamental counterparts. This is true both for denominations that are predominantly white and those that are predominantly black. So, to the extent that protestant denominations play an important political role in our society, megachurches will have an increasingly important impact on the character of that role.

The growth of megachurches comes at a time when other forms of community activity and mobilization are on the decline (see Putnam 2000, for example). In his pathbreaking work, Robert Putnam chronicles the decline of voluntarism and the community organizations that long characterized American society and American politics. As Tocqueville noted in the 1830s:

Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition are forever forming associations. There are not only commercial and industrial associations in which all take part, but others of a thousand different types—religious, moral, serious, futile, very general and very limited, immensely large and very minute (Tocqueville 1969, 513-514).

While the vitality of the voluntary community has been taken for granted by previous generations, the recent past has evidenced a decline in these types of associations—groups ranging from garden clubs to bowling leagues to churches. To the extent that the associational skills and capabilities (or “social capital”) developed through participation

in these voluntary organizations are necessary for effective governance, the ebbing of American voluntarism has significant negative ramifications for the American polity.

The dissolution of voluntary organizations is clearly manifest in the mainline Protestant denominations (need figures on this). According to Putnam:

. . . the general pattern is clear: The 1960s witnessed a significant drop in reported weekly churchgoing--from roughly 48 percent in the late 1950s to roughly 41 percent in the early 1970s. Since then, it has stagnated or (according to some surveys) declined still further. Meanwhile, data from the General Social Survey show a modest decline in membership in all "church-related groups" over the last 20 years. It would seem, then, that net participation by Americans, both in religious services and in church-related groups, has declined modestly (by perhaps a sixth) since the 1960s (1995, p.69).

The growth of megachurches (and megachurch participation) may foster participation in other social organizations, political participation, and social activism (e.g., Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988; 1990). And their growth may stem the tide of slow membership decline in the mainline Protestant denominations. In the context of both a significant secular and religious civic activity decline, the growth of megachurch congregations is particularly striking. In a recent study of black megachurches, Tamelyn Tucker-Worgs found that nearly all black megachurch congregations are relatively new (post-1980) and that fewer than ten percent of these congregations have experienced membership loss over a recent five-year period. So, while participation in other types of community or civic activities is decreasing (including participation in smaller

congregations) megachurches are bolstering their membership bases and becoming an increasingly important part of the religious and social landscape in America.⁵

Recent research indicates that megachurches—particularly black megachurches—play an active political role in their local communities. They initiate or participate in a wide variety of community development activities. Black megachurches often create community development corporations (CDCs) to coordinate their community development activities (Tucker-Worgs 2002). These community development activities may range from housing assistance, to various types of commercial development (e.g. job training and/or small business programs and support), to the provision of a variety of social services (e.g. child care, food/meal distribution, clothing centers, etc.) (Tucker-Worgs 2002).

This community development role is only likely to be enhanced by the supportive current political environment. As the economy continues to lag (particularly in the major urban areas) and in the wake of the establishment of the Office of Faith-based Initiatives, there is both the need for increased community service provision and at least some increase in the governmental support for the private provision of these services. Though the membership of some megachurches—particularly those with a predominantly African American membership—may not be especially supportive of President Bush, this does not appear to prevent them from applying for various types of funding through the faith-based initiatives program which he established (Tucker-Worgs 2002).

Explaining Megachurch Growth and Development

In this first look at our data, we focus on those demographic and contextual factors that are associated with the siting and growth of megachurch campuses and the differences between the factors that are associated with the development of black and white congregations. The factors that lead an individual or group of individuals to build a church in a particular area are not necessarily the same as those factors that lead to the growth of that church over time. However, the nature of the megachurch movement makes it difficult to distinguish effectively between factors associated with the siting of a church and factors associated with church growth. Churches become megachurches in a variety of ways. Some relatively old congregations grew large over many years; while others grew large very quickly. Some new congregations grew large very quickly. Some large congregations become megachurches literally over night when they move from temporary accommodations to permanent buildings. These dynamics can be found in both black and white churches. So, while distinguishing between siting factors and development factors would be methodologically preferable, the nature of the phenomenon makes this difficult (if not impossible). We are left, then, with identifying those factors associated with the presence of a megachurch (or several megachurches). We will discuss the plausible causal dynamics suggested by this information, but we leave more rigorous evaluation of these causal explanations to future research.

The two most widely cited characteristics of megachurch locations focus on region and level of urbanization and suburbanization. Both Thumma (1996) and Tucker-Worgs (2002) note that megachurches—white and black—tend to be found in the Mid-Atlantic (e.g. Maryland and Washington) and Sunbelt areas (the South and the

Southwest). Well over seventy percent of all megachurches are found in the Southeast and the West (compared with six percent in the Northeast) (Hartford Institute for Religious Research 2003), and the urban areas with the largest concentration of megachurches—Atlanta, Houston, Los Angeles and Orlando—are in the Sunbelt region (Hartford Institute for Religious Research 2003).

Megachurches, particularly white megachurches, tend to be suburban—or “exurban”—phenomena (Eisland 1997 and Vaughn 1993). Truly rural areas would obviously have some difficulty generating any significant number of 2000+ congregant churches.⁶ Urban areas, on the other hand, have undergone significant population losses at exactly the time that the megachurch movement has thrived. Given these inconsistent population trends, it is not difficult to see why urban areas would not be focal points, themselves, for megachurch growth. In addition, because of the expanse of land needed for their huge campus facilities, a suburban location is far more desirable than one located in a central city area.

Nevertheless, the extent to which black and white megachurches are suburban organizations has not been fully examined. Tucker-Worgs (2002) argues that black megachurches are much more likely to be in urban areas than in the suburbs, but she also notes that they tend to be on the urban periphery (though maybe not quite suburban), draw significant portions of their congregations from the suburbs, and are most common in urban areas near large black suburban populations. This contrasts with Eisland’s megachurch case study (about an *exurban* black church 30 minutes from Atlanta) and her general characterization of the black megachurch movement. We examine the extent to

which the level of urbanization is positively or negatively associated with the likelihood of having a megachurch established in a particular area.

--Racial/Ethnic Context

All else equal, we would expect the number of black megachurches in a locale to be positively related to the proportion of African Americans in the area population. Recent research clearly indicates that the racial/ethnic composition of church congregations reflect the racial/ethnic compositions of the neighborhoods where the churches are situated; according to Dudley and Roozen, “congregations’ participants represent a mirror image of the racial composition of the zip codes in which their congregations are located” (2001:12). There is some reason to think, however, that megachurches may differ from their smaller counterparts in this respect. Research on megachurches indicates that congregants often commute a nontrivial distance to worship (see Tucker-Worgs 2002), so the correlation between megachurch racial/ethnic demographics and local area racial/ethnic demographics may be somewhat less than the correlation for smaller churches. Still, we do expect to find a significant relationship. Moreover, given the audience size upon which these churches depend, and the likelihood that some proportion of their congregants will commute a fair distance, we would expect megachurches to situate their campuses on or proximate to major arterial highways. We have also included Hispanic context in our models to evaluate the extent to which black and white megachurches draw a diverse congregation and to examine the extent to which the size of this heavily Catholic population dampens the likelihood of the development of a megachurch in a particular area.

--Economic Context

The economic context in which a megachurch exists is one of the most significant determinants of the social service impact the church delivers in its local area. Churches in wealthy neighborhoods are not likely to have a significant impact on the living situations or personal circumstances of local residents, in terms of the services that they, themselves provide. Churches in more modest neighborhoods have far greater potential to have a significant impact on their local communities' social service delivery structure. On the other hand, positioning a large, heavily utilized multi-function campus in any area is likely to increase automobile traffic substantially. In addition, it is likely to stimulate additional commercial development in the immediate area. These consequences will produce greater demand for local police and other emergency services, without a comparable tax revenue stream, as religious facilities are nontaxable. This mix would likely encourage megachurches to situate in relatively affluent areas rather than more modest ones, where there might be some local resistance to their presence.⁷

These are not trivial concerns. If the location of megachurches is largely driven by the affluence of the local population, then social service provision may suffer. From a social services policy standpoint, it might be preferable if megachurches were sited in areas with significant need for services but drew congregants from more affluent geographic areas in the larger community. Finally, it should be noted that we expect economic context—and age, gender and family structure context—to have comparable impacts on both black and white megachurches.

--Age

Among the services provided by virtually all megachurches is a preschool, and most also have an elementary/middle school on their campus. In addition, some have constructed a high school, and they all conduct active youth ministries. One of their primary target audiences, then, is young people, and families with children, and they have deployed an extensive youth-oriented infrastructure. To further facilitate the growth of this relatively young demographic, we would expect to see megachurches sited in those areas with relatively large young populations, both those under 18 and those from 19-35.

We also expect the siting and development of megachurches to be positively associated with the percentage of the population over 65 in a particular area.

Megachurches often provide a variety of services and facilities for this growing demographic cluster—from Elderhostel programs to retirement communities—in an effort to draw from the aging babyboomer cohort. The fact that the non-infirm elderly are more likely to attend church than their significantly younger neighbors makes them an even more desirable group of potential congregants. We expect these factors to play into the siting and development of both black and white megachurches.

--Gender

Regardless of the male-dominated character of church leadership—particularly of conservative protestant churches which most megachurches are—the overwhelming majority of congregants—and the individuals who are most responsible for the day-to-day activities of the church—are women (Dudley and Roozen 2001). Interestingly enough, however, congregation size is positively related to male participation; according

to Dudley and Roozen, “Size of congregation matters when it comes to gender—the larger the congregation, the more male it is” (2001:13).

Even though megachurch congregations tend to have a higher proportion of men than smaller congregations, women still form the bulk of most congregations. As women are more likely to attend church than men, we would expect to see a positive relationship between the proportion of women in a local area and the probability of one or more megachurches developing in that area.

--Education

It is possible that the education level of the local population has some impact on the likelihood that a megachurch is located near by. We know that large churches tend to have the most highly educated leadership (Dudley and Roozen 2001), so it may be that educated leadership tends to draw a more educated congregation. Similarly, those with college degrees are overrepresented in religious congregations, so, again, we would expect education to be positively associated with the likelihood that one or more megachurches is in an area.

Data and Methods

We identified 26 (7 predominantly white, 19 predominantly African American) megachurches in the State of Maryland, utilizing the online database provided by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research⁸ and double-checking with information from churches’ individual webpages. This also allowed us to determine the predominant racial composition of each congregation.⁹ Moreover, having street addresses allowed us to

locate each campus on a zip code map of the state and place each one within its neighborhood demographic context. Although they are not as small as census tracts, zip codes are small and compact and are far superior to county distribution for comparison purposes. Indeed, the 26 megachurches are fairly tightly arrayed in only four county jurisdictions (Prince George's County, Montgomery County, Baltimore County, and Baltimore City, which has county status) out of a total of 24 across the state. By contrast, Maryland has 430 zip codes, sixteen of which are home to at least one megachurch campus. The U.S. Census reports a wealth of demographic data by zip code, and we drew from the 2000 census of population.¹⁰

This gives us an extensive demographic dataset for the State of Maryland, broken into geographically small units. We are interested in understanding the choice of locating in a particular neighborhood, and zip code-level data give us a degree of leverage on this issue that would be absent at higher levels of aggregation. Our two dependent variables (white or black church is present) are binomials (0, 1) – a zip code neighborhood either does or does not host a megachurch. We reasoned further that, given the size of operation and the drawing power of each institution, it makes sense that a megachurch is a significant presence within its own zip code and those most proximate to it. Thus, we assigned a value of 1 to all neighborhoods contiguous to each target. In addition, using census-provided demographics as predictors, we included eight variables in a binomial regression logit model: %urban (pcturban), %black (pctblack), %hispanic (pcthispp), % over the age of 65 (pctover65), % who completed a bachelor's degree (pctbache), % with a graduate or professional degree (pctgradp), median family income (medianfa), and median home value (medianhv).

Results

From a cursory overview of the model estimates for black megachurch location and the model estimates for white megachurch location, it is relatively easy to draw two quick conclusions:

- (1) The model estimates are quite different. In fact, only percent black has a comparable and significant effect in both models.
- (2) Several demographic factors that are associated with the siting of white megachurches have no impact on the siting of black megachurches.

<<Table 1 about here>>

<<Table 2 about here>>¹¹

Beginning with the common factor that does appear to have a similar impact on the location of black and white megachurches, we see that the relative size of the black population at the zip code level is positively and significantly associated with likelihood that a zip code (or a geographically contiguous neighborhood) includes one or more megachurches. Somewhat surprisingly, the effect is slightly larger for white megachurches. Partial explanations for this effect may be that blacks are overrepresented in the overall megachurch population (Tucker-Worgs 2002), and that ostensibly white megachurches have significant numbers of black members.

In contrast to black context, Hispanic context tends to have differential effects on the location characteristics of black and white megachurches. While percent Hispanic is positively associated with the geographic location of white megachurches, it is strongly and negatively associated with the siting of black megachurches. This is, frankly,

unexpected. On further reflection, however, it is not a completely implausible finding. The key to understanding this result is in the differential impact of urbanization.

Urbanization is strongly related to the siting and development of black megachurches but is unrelated to the location of white megachurches. This is as expected; white megachurches are situated somewhat further distances from core population centers than their black counterparts. It is quite likely that the Hispanic populations located in suburban areas differ significantly from those residing in the more urban neighborhoods. Hispanics living in suburban areas are almost certainly wealthier and are, thus, less likely to be first-generation immigrants. Since they are less likely to be recent immigrants, they are more likely to speak English and less likely to have a strong attachment to the Catholic Church. So, Hispanics living in areas where black megachurches are most common are likely to be significantly less attracted to protestant churches than Hispanics living in areas where white megachurches are most common. The distinctive findings on this variable may also be partially a function of the greater diversity of white megachurch populations. In any event, this is a result that requires further investigation.

Aside from urbanization, black context and Hispanic context, none of the remaining variables is significantly related to the location patterns of black megachurches. Other, more parsimonious model specifications sometimes suggested that a percentage of the population with graduate degrees and median home value may be related to the location patterns of black megachurches, but these estimates are not sufficiently robust to have great confidence in them. Again, further examination is required.

The location and development patterns for white megachurches, on the other hand, are clearly influenced by a number of other demographic factors. First, we see that white megachurches are more likely to be found in wealthy neighborhoods than in poor ones. There is a highly significant, positive relationship between median family income and white megachurch development. We also see that the presence of a significant elderly (over 65) population fosters the development of white megachurches in an area. Conversely, though our under-18 variable is not included in this model, it was not significant in other model specifications. Although this is somewhat unexpected, the non-result may be at least partially attributed to the limitations of the age-related variables available in our dataset. To fully test what we might call the “young families” hypothesis, we would also need a variable for percentage of the population from 19-35. Unfortunately, this variable was not available in our dataset, but we hope to include it in subsequent analysis.

We also see that education levels play a role in the location patterns of white megachurches, though it is not quite the role we expected. While megachurches are more common in those areas with large college-educated populations, the relationship between the proportion of the population with graduate degrees and the siting and development of white megachurches is negative. As the population becomes extremely well-educated, one begins to see a drop-off in white megachurch development. Exactly why this is the case is unclear.

Finally, it is worth noting that the location patterns of both black and white megachurches correspond to the location of major roadways in the Baltimore-Washington metropolitan areas. See Figures 1 and 2.

<<Figure 1 about here>>

<<Figure 2 about here>>

The black megachurches in this urban area are nearly all in close proximity to a major highway. In Prince George's County, the black megachurches follow the 495 beltway, and in Baltimore City, they all are proximate to the 695 beltway that circles the city or one of the major north-south interstate highways (I83, I95, and I795) running through it. The white megachurches are not quite as closely tied to major area highways, but few are in zip codes that have no access to a major north-south highway or either the Baltimore or the Washington beltway. Highway proximity is important for megachurches (particularly black megachurches), and it shows in our graphics. Newly-formed churches are significantly more likely to have memberships that travel more than 15 minutes to participate in religious activities than do older churches, and in the case of black megachurches, more than half of the congregants travel at least 15 minutes to worship on Sunday morning (Tucker-Worgs 2002 and Hartford Institute For Religion Research. 2003).

Discussion and Conclusion

On first glance it would appear that the siting and development of white megachurches is subject to a more complex set of demographic and geographic conditions than black megachurches. Initially, we thought that the relative simplicity of the black megachurch model was a function of our use of aggregate indicators for the various demographic and geographic variables. In nearly all of the zip code areas in Maryland, whites are the predominant racial/ethnic group. The African American

population is heavily clustered in Baltimore City and Prince George's County neighborhoods. Thus, zip code-level income, age, and education demographics are likely to be most closely related to the white income, age, and education demographics in that area than black income, age, and education demographics. We hypothesized that the siting and development of black megachurches was a function of certain demographic characteristics of the black population, and that our aggregate measures did not simply insufficient to capture this dynamic. Somewhat surprisingly, the results from our analysis of the impact of black-only demographics on megachurch growth were identical to those from our aggregate analysis.¹² The siting and growth of black megachurches is predominantly a function of two factors: urbanization (and transportation patterns) and racial demographics. There is no evidence that income, education or age influences the location pattern of black megachurches. .

Given these results, policy implications of our findings—at least from the standpoint of optimizing social service provision by private organizations (such as these churches) are interesting and warrant closer attention. To the extent that churches center their social service and/or community development efforts in the community surrounding their worship facilities (a conventional strategy), these efforts are focused on communities that are not particularly underprivileged.¹³ There is no evidence that income factors influence the development patterns of black megachurches, and to the extent that income factors influence the development patterns of white megachurches, the relationship is positive—church siting and development is *positively* associated with income. To the extent we expected to find churches drawing relatively affluent members into areas of significant need, we were disappointed.

Though it is unlikely, it may be the case that megachurch social service and community development programs are not focused on the community in which the worship facilities are located (or in adjacent communities). It is possible that these churches focus their mission activities in more depressed areas that are a significant distance from the church. Indeed, the campuses are all located near major arterial highways that would accommodate robust outreach programs. Certainly, religious organizations have had mission programs designed for distant places almost as long as they have been in existence. We will also want to address the impact of past zoning restrictions and the enactment in 2000 of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA).¹⁴ Nevertheless, the types of community development activities megachurches participate in (particularly black megachurches) are those that appear to be designed for the local community. At the very least, our findings suggest that megachurch social service and community development activities—particularly the geographic locus of these activities—are programs that deserve a fuller examination. If these increasingly prominent churches are to be expected to replace (to some degree) government agencies in the social service realm, we need a much better understanding of the economic and political implications of this significant transformation of the existing policymaking environment. Our analysis has, admittedly, just scratched the surface of this set of issues.

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Table 1: Explaining the Geographic Development of Black Megachurches

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a)	PCTURBAN	.047	.016	9.145	1	.002	1.048
	PCTBLACK	.069	.011	36.744	1	.000	1.071
	PCTHISPP	-.147	.067	4.877	1	.027	.863
	PCTOVER65	.045	.034	1.760	1	.185	1.046
	PCTBACHE	.030	.065	.208	1	.648	1.030
	PCTGRADP	.079	.057	1.898	1	.168	1.082
	MEDIANFA	.000	.000	.027	1	.869	1.000
	MEDIANHV	.000	.000	1.429	1	.232	1.000
	Constant	-7.241	1.935	14.004	1	.000	.001

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: PCTURBAN, PCTBLACK, PCTHISPP, PCTOVER65, PCTBACHE, PCTGRADP, MEDIANFA, MEDIANHV.

Table 2: Explaining the Geographic Development of White Megachurches

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1(a)	PCTURBAN	.002	.008	.056	1	.812	1.002
	PCTBLACK	.074	.013	32.568	1	.000	1.077
	PCTHISPP	.103	.033	9.457	1	.002	1.108
	PCTOVER65	.123	.033	13.756	1	.000	1.131
	PCTBACHE	.227	.054	18.040	1	.000	1.255
	PCTGRADP	-.100	.046	4.836	1	.028	.905
	MEDIANFA	.000	.000	6.865	1	.009	1.000
	MEDIANHV	.000	.000	.534	1	.465	1.000
	Constant	-12.463	1.828	46.503	1	.000	.000

a Variable(s) entered on step 1: PCTURBAN, PCTBLACK, PCTHISPP, PCTOVER65, PCTBACHE, PCTGRADP, MEDIANFA, MEDIANHV.

Endnotes

¹ Survey figures from 1999 indicate that megachurches average nearly \$5 million in receipts and almost \$4.5 million dollars in expenditures (Hartford Institute for Religion Research 2003).

² "Megachurches" are defined as Protestant churches with congregations of more than 2,000. They also provide a range of services beyond the traditional Sunday service, so they can involve active members' in some kind of participation nearly every day of the week. Although an accurate count is elusive, there are well over 600 megachurches across the country, occupying a vast quantity of land. To grow to a membership of 2,000, the churches do provide a broad array of services and they also require tracts of land big enough to accommodate an extensive campus. Indeed, the presence of a huge church facility in a community can lead to significant transportation, land use and environmental problems, and megachurch development plans have led to serious conflict with local governments. See, e.g., *Castle Hills First Baptist Church v. City of Castle Hills* (SA-01-CA-1149-HG, 37th Judicial Dist., Bexar County, Texas, 2003).

³ It is important to note, however, that megachurches are still a very small percentage of churches throughout the United States. Only six percent of all congregations have 1,000 members or more and the percentage of congregations with 2,000 members or more is quite a bit smaller (Dudley and Roozen 2001).

⁴ It is well established that religious organizations serve as sources of significant political cues and information, as an important behavioral influence on those who are thoroughly engaged (see, e.g., Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988; 1990).

⁵ The development of certain types of social capital within the megachurch community is not, according to some, an unalloyed good. Some characterizations of the megachurch movement view it as monolithic and doctrinally exclusive, and it is not clear to what extent the development of "internal" social capital will be transferable to the larger social and political community (see Putnam and Feldstein 2003).

⁶ Note that 2000 attendees is a lower limit. At least one church in our sample regularly draws more than 25,000 on Sunday morning.

⁷ For example, Ebenezer A.M.E., one of the larger churches in our sample with more than 10,000 members, was established in 1856 in Washington, DC. A very small congregation for more than 100 years, the church began to look for a place to expand in the 1980s. It now occupies a 33 acre campus in Fort

Washington, Maryland, with a 2600-seat sanctuary, and carries on a full range of ministries with meetings every day of the week. (See the church webpage at <http://www.ebenezerame.org>). A facility this large could not hope to find affordable space within a city. But the church leaders did not locate in a poverty-ridden zip code. Indeed, the median home value of the immediate area is about \$163k.

⁸ Hartford Institute for Religious Research, "Megachurch Database, Maryland," http://hrr.hartsem.edu/org/faith_megachurches_database_maryland.html (last updated, May 2003) (visited August 10, 2003).

⁹ Some required follow-up contacts with individual church representatives. In some cases, we had to make a judgment call, and we will verify with subsequent research. Because this research is preliminary, we decided to go ahead with the analysis based upon the information at hand.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder, Census 2000 Data Sets, available online at http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/DatasetMainPageServlet?_lang=en (updated May 2, 2002) (visited August 10, 2003).

¹¹ We also estimated these models with race-specific data (i.e. age of black population, percentage of black population with a college degree, etc.). There were no substantive differences between those results and the results presented here.

¹² Results available from the authors.

¹³ Note that we are not just referring to immediate community here. Zip codes are coded as having a megachurch if (1) a megachurch is located in the zip code or (2) a megachurch is located in an adjacent zip code. So, it is not only that megachurches are, on average, not located in relatively poor areas; they aren't located *near* relatively poor areas either.

¹⁴ 42 U.S.C. Sects. 2000cc *et seq.* The "Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act" is helping the groups win disputes over the location, size and design of churches and other religious-service facilities, as well as parking lots, schools, day care centers, homeless shelters, summer camp facilities, and the like. The law prohibits any zoning that "substantially burdens" religious exercise unless the government can demonstrate a "compelling interest" – a test that is nearly impossible for local governments to meet in most cases.