

Religious Right, Religious Left, Both, or Neither? Understanding Religio-Political Identification

ANGELA F. MCCARTHY
*Department of Political Science
University of Florida*

LAURA R. OLSON
*Department of Political Science
Clemson University*

JAMES C. GARAND 
*Department of Political Science
Louisiana State University*

In this article we analyze the effects of religious, political, socioeconomic, and demographic variables on religious Americans' propensity to identify with religio-political movements. Using data from the 2013 Economic Values Survey collected by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), we sort nonsecular Americans into four categories: religious right, religious left, both religious right and religious left, or neither religious right nor the religious left. We estimate a multinomial logit model in which we depict religio-political identification as a function of religious affiliation, worship attendance, religious embeddedness, religious convictions, political attitudes, and socioeconomic and demographic controls. We find that a wide range of religious, political, and socioeconomic/demographic variables affect individuals' identification with the religious right and/or religious left. Our empirical results also permit us to analyze the seeming paradox of identifying with both the religious right and the religious left. We find that individuals who identify with both movements come from the ranks of the highly religious, those who believe that being moral requires one to believe in God, Tea Party supporters, strong partisans, those with lower education and income, older individuals, and blacks and Hispanics.

Keywords: *religious right, religious left, religio-political identification.*

INTRODUCTION

Mountains of evidence continue to pile up documenting elite- and mass-level political polarization in the United States. The American people are said to be divided into two seemingly irreconcilable silos that scarcely interact with each another (Pew Research Center 2014) and do not care to do so (Pew Research Center 2017). It has become a trope that progressives in cities, the coasts, and university towns—overwhelmingly supporters of former President Barack Obama—embrace diversity and look askance at conservatives in Middle America. Meanwhile, these very conservatives, who tend to live in rural areas or suburbs (Pew Research Center 2014), decry social change and profoundly distrust cosmopolitan elites (e.g., Bishop 2009; Wuthnow 2018). The causes and effects of this polarization appear not just in public opinion (e.g., Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; but see Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2010) and the voting booth (e.g., Abramowitz 2010) but also in media consumption (Baum and Groeling 2008; Nie et al. 2010), on social media (Conover et al. 2011), and in Congress (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal

Acknowledgments: An earlier version of this article was presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, January 15–17, 2015. We are indebted to Robert Jones of the Public Religion Research Institute for sharing the survey data used in this article, as well as to Quin Monson and anonymous reviewers for useful feedback. We are grateful to the editor of this journal for assistance in guiding the article through the editorial process. We remain responsible for any interpretations or errors.

Correspondence should be addressed to James C. Garand, Emogene Pliner Distinguished Professor, Department of Political Science, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA 70803–5433. Email: pogara@lsu.edu

2016; Poole and Rosenthal 1984, 2007; Layman, Carsey, and Horowitz 2006). The two-silo dichotomy may not be so straightforward, however (Baldassarri and Bearman 2007; Baldassarri and Gelman 2008); not everyone opts in to one silo or the other. What distinguishes people who take clear sides in the polarized American political arena from those who do not? Might there be individuals who identify with *both* or *neither* silos?

Religion ranks among the more powerful forces driving American political polarization, sitting alongside social media, class distinctions, racial tensions, and other factors (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Haidt 2012; Layman 2001). As Wuthnow observes about religion's deep cultural significance in conservative rural communities: "Religion is part of the moral warp and woof of where they live [It] plays an important role in holding the community together, whether in preaching and potlucks or conducting weddings and funerals. It supports the family values that people hold dear and tells them that they should care for their neighbors" (2018:139). And cultural significance usually evolves into political significance. Indeed, evidence shows that over several decades, the most religious Americans in the aggregate have come to view themselves as politically conservative; the Republican Party has been able to count on the votes of evangelical Protestants (especially) and of the most pious Christians in other traditions (Green 2007; Smidt et al. 2010). Meanwhile, the growing number of secular people in the United States—now roughly a quarter of the population, according to Pew Research Center (2015)—are much more liberal than the median American voter (Jones 2016). Survey data also show that the American public views the Republican Party as substantially "friendlier to religion" than the Democratic Party (Pew Research Center 2016). In this context, religion reveals its ability to play a "tribal" role in helping people determine which social groups are friends and which are foes (see Haidt 2012).

Politically speaking, there are indeed two identifiable religio-political tribes in the United States today: the religious right and the (much smaller and less well organized) religious left. The religious right champions the preservation of traditional moral values and has focused primarily on social issues, including abortion and sexuality. The religious left arguably has deeper roots in American history even though it is much less powerful than the religious right is today. The religious right has been a significant presence in American politics since the late 1970s (Wilcox 1992; Wilcox and Robinson 2010), whereas the religious left can trace its (albeit punctuated) history back for at least a century. Religious advocacy for justice and economic assistance for the poor and disadvantaged emerged within mainline Protestantism during the early 20th century under the auspices of the social gospel movement (Evans 2004). The Catholic worker movement's justice-oriented priorities (Zwick and Zwick 2005), rooted in Catholic social teaching (Massaro 2016), dovetailed with those of the social gospel movement even though Protestant-Catholic tensions prevented much cooperation between these two progressive impulses. Later, progressive black clergy joined with white advocates from across the religious spectrum in the civil rights movement (Findlay 1993; Morris 1984). Even though the religious left today is a shadow of its former self, it still wields some measure of political clout under certain circumstances (Olson 2011). The religious right, however, has the capacity to shape electoral outcomes from local school boards to the presidency (Deckman 2004; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2010).

Aptly, scholars have paid a great deal of attention to many aspects of religion's influence in American politics (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2003, 2008; Green 2007; Guth 2009; Jelen 2009; Pearson-Merkowitz and Gimpel 2009; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2008, 2010; Smith 2013; Wilcox and Forelmy 2009; Wilcox and Robinson 2010; Wilson 2009). However, one matter that has drawn somewhat less attention in the literature on religion and politics is the question of how political and religious beliefs integrate themselves (but see, e.g., Jelen 1991; Layman 2001; Wilcox 1990), especially regarding when and why people on the ground decide to align themselves with broad-based movements like the religious right or religious left. The standard assumption continues to derive from Hunter's (1991) "culture wars" formulation, which matches the conventional wisdom about religion and political polarization: devoutly Christian Americans are conservative, while more nominal Christians, adherents of minority religious traditions, and

the religiously unaffiliated are progressive. For decades now, political observers and scholars have paid a great deal of attention to the religious right, reaffirming the connection between doctrinal orthodoxy and political conservatism (Layman 1997; Wilcox 1992). Less scholarly attention has been paid to the religious left, although religion-and-politics scholars do recognize that some Americans connect political liberalism with progressive religious convictions (Olson 2007, 2011). Regardless of whether this religious right/religious left dichotomy is accurate, an unchallenged assumption underlying the distinction between the religious right and religious left is that many Americans *do* in fact *systematically* connect their political attitudes with their religious convictions. People who say they identify with the religious right or the religious left typically are expected to exhibit distinct—and polarized—patterns of voting behavior and political attitudes. Research on the minimal extent to which Americans exhibit ideological constraint (Converse 1964; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996; Fiorina, Abrams, and Pope 2010) makes us doubt this assumption, unless association with one or another religio-political movement is more a matter of setting symbolic in-group/out-group boundaries than it is a conscious decision.

Although scholars have explored the *effects* of identification with the religious right or religious left on political behavior and attitudes (Olson 2011; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Wilcox and Robinson 2010), less is known about the *determinants* of identification with the religious right or the religious left. At first glance, this question would seem to have an easy answer, since logically we would expect adherents of the religious right to connect conservative political ideology with their conservative religious convictions and those on the religious left to connect liberal political ideology with their more liberal religious convictions. However, we contend that this characterization of religio-political identification is hardly so straightforward. There may be greater nuance involved in the process by which individuals identify with the religious right or religious left. Specifically, we posit that there are varying degrees of identification with (1) the religious right, (2) the religious left, (3) *both* the religious right *and* the religious left, or (4) *neither* the religious right *nor* the religious left. Understanding just who affiliates with both or neither of these movements illuminates the fact that the entire U.S. population is not as politically polarized as some observers would contend on religious and political grounds.

We began to formulate this contention when we noticed a finding in a survey in which a discernible share of respondents claimed to identify with *both* the religious right and the religious left. In an age of political polarization, when citizens understand more clearly than ever how ideology and party identification correlate (Fiorina, Adams, and Pope 2010; Layman and Carsey 2002) and that there is a political division between “religious people” and seculars (Putnam and Campbell 2010), it initially strained credulity for us to think that some sizable share of Americans might identify with *both* sides (the religious right and the religious left). Determining who these individuals are is an empirical question that might help shed light on which Americans do *not* fall into one of the silos of polarization, and why. We know that some Americans are not especially interested in or well informed about politics (e.g., Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996), but we contend that such individuals are more likely to be in the “neither” category than to affiliate with both the religious right and the religious left. It is certainly possible that identification with both religio-political movements might be a simple case of misinformation and/or low political engagement, since politically sophisticated people are more capable of sorting themselves into political “teams” (Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2016). Affiliating with neither movement rather straightforwardly indicates an inability or unwillingness to claim either mantle. However, could identifying with both movements indicate a multifaceted and rational political calculus?

In this article, we explore the determinants of religio-political categorization among self-identified religious (mostly Christian) Americans. Specifically, we consider several political, religious, socioeconomic, and demographic attributes that predict the religio-political categories (religious right, religious left, both, or neither) with which they identify. We are interested in the relative effects of religious variables (on the one hand) and political variables (on the other) in

shaping these identifications; thus, we consider whether individuals' religious participation and religious beliefs take precedence over ideology and other political variables in shaping how they connect their religious and political identities.

We utilize data from the 2013 Economic Values Survey, collected by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), to develop and test a model that explores the ways in which religious and political variables combine to shape religio-political identification. This data set is unique because it includes responses to separate survey questions that ask respondents about their identification with the religious right *and* their identification with the religious left—unprimed by any definitions or other context—which permits us to create a four-fold scale of religio-political identification. We use this nominal scale as the dependent variable in a multinomial logistic regression model to estimate the effects of political, religious, socioeconomic, and demographic attributes on religio-political orientation.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In the contemporary United States, religion influences not just partisanship, ideology, and voter turnout, but also which public policy issues religious individuals prioritize and where they stand on such issues (e.g., Layman 2001; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2010). In previous studies (Kellstedt and Green 1993; Kellstedt and Smidt 1991; Green 2007; Smidt et al. 2010) scholars have emphasized the political relevance of three “Bs”: religious belonging (affiliation),¹ behaving (type and frequency of participation), and believing (nature and orthodoxy of beliefs). “Behaving” and “believing” may be analyzed together under the rubric of religiosity (Green 2007).

“Belonging” alone has great mass-level political consequence.² Kellstedt (1989) demonstrates that the 1980s saw a steady movement of evangelical Protestants into the Republican Party; this trend has been documented repeatedly by scholars over the past several decades (e.g., Layman 2001; Smidt et al. 2010). This relationship adheres in large part because religious affiliation shapes religious beliefs, which in turn find political expression through vote choice and policy preferences (e.g., Kellstedt and Green 1993; Layman 2001; Putnam and Campbell 2010).

Scholars also have provided compelling evidence of a connection between various components of religiosity and political orientations. The most observant and devout voters across affiliation categories tend to be conservative and Republican, whereas nominally religious and secular Americans are more likely to be liberal Democrats (Green 2007; Kellstedt and Smidt 1991; Layman 2001; Miller and Wattenberg 1984; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2010; Wilcox 1992). There is evidence that the effect of religious beliefs and religious affiliation on political behavior is strongest for individuals who are most involved in religious activities (e.g., Green 2007). Because they tend to be deeply embedded in religious social networks, those who participate the most in the activities of a religious congregation are more likely to be politically influenced by religious doctrine than those who do not participate frequently in congregational life (Djupe and Gilbert 2008). In turn, religiosity influences vote choice (Green 2007; Kellstedt 1989; Kellstedt and Green 1993; Miller and Shanks 1996; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2010).

¹ It should be noted that religious affiliation is *not* the same as identification with the religious right or the religious left. The former is strictly a measure of affiliation (even nominally) with a specific religious tradition, such as the United Methodist Church, the Southern Baptist Convention, the Catholic Church, or Reform Judaism. Identification with the religious right or religious left, on the other hand, is a religio-political affiliation with one (or both) of the primary manifestations of organized religion attempting to affect politics in the United States.

² Religious affiliation does not necessarily stay the same throughout the life course, but because we are using cross-sectional data, we are less concerned about this potential constraint.

Moreover, Layman (1997, 2001) argues that the influence of doctrinal conservatism on partisanship and vote choice has grown stronger over time; as mass-level polarization has advanced, the most religiously committed Americans have fallen in line by increasingly voting Republican. Likewise, Hirschl and colleagues (2012) argue that the effect of religious identity on vote choice increased substantially from 1980 to 2008.³

Divergent views on issues presumably would drive at least some Americans to identify with the religious right or religious left. Recent research extensively addresses the relationships between religious variables and public opinion about morality policies, including abortion, gay rights, end-of-life issues, gambling, sex education, and capital punishment (e.g., Koopman 2009; Gaines and Garand, 2010; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006). Studies also exist on the intersection between religion and economic concerns (e.g., McCarthy et al. 2016; Wilson 1999, 2009). For decades, social reforms to assist the poor have been motivated in part by religious teachings (Evans 2004; Bartkowski and Regis 2003; Trattner 1999). In general, Jews and black Protestants take progressive approaches to economic and social justice questions, whereas Catholics and mainline Protestants are divided on such issues and evangelical Protestants are conservative (Smidt 2001; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007; Wilson 2009). However, according to Wilson (2009), by the middle of the 20th century mainline Protestant elites, the historical wellspring of the religious left, were leading the way in economic progressivism (see also Steensland 2002). Black Protestants and mainline Protestants are significantly more supportive of “people on welfare” than are evangelical Protestants, and mainline Protestants are less likely to differentiate their evaluations of “people on welfare” and “the poor” than are members of other Protestant traditions (Wilson 1999). McCarthy and colleagues (2016) find that identifying with the religious right and believing the role of religion is to preserve traditional beliefs are both negatively related to government policies designed to alleviate income inequality, whereas the belief that Jesus’ teachings promote a just society is positively related to support for redistributive policies.

Religion-inspired social movements have a long history in the United States. The civil rights movement is the clearest example of religious Americans agitating successfully for social change. More recently, in the late 1970s the Moral Majority and other religious interest groups mobilized conservative white evangelicals, which gave rise to the religious right (Wilcox 1992). When these groups helped Ronald Reagan win the presidency in 1980, the confluence of religion and politics (particularly within social movements and electoral campaigns) began to attract the attention of scholars (see Wilcox and Fortelny 2009).

Why has there been an apparent increase in religio-political thinking among American voters in recent decades? The leading assumption is that three broad social factors combine to create a hospitable environment for the marriage between religious and political attitudes: (1) clergy and other religious leaders take stands on political issues (Djupe and Gilbert 2003), (2) politicians often connect their positions on issues to their religious commitments (Albertson 2015; Domke and Coe 2010; Putnam and Campbell 2010), and (3) the media increasingly covers the religio-political underpinnings of elites’ policy positions (Domke and Coe 2010). Under these circumstances, the public grows ever more capable of identifying the *joint* political and religious foundations of various issue positions.

Who are the individuals who say they affiliate with the religious right or religious left? Can we predict identification with these groups with equal accuracy? While it is nearly a given, for example, that many evangelical Protestants affiliate with the religious right, Olson (2007) argues that it is difficult to determine who might identify with the religious left because the category spans many groups of people who are not politically unified. And what of individuals who affiliate with neither the religious right or religious left—or (most bafflingly) both?

³This trend held in 2016, when exit polls showed that 81 percent of evangelical Protestants voted for Donald Trump—a high-water mark in their generation-long embrace of Republican presidential candidates.

THEORETICAL ARGUMENT AND HYPOTHESES

We assume that identification with the religious right and/or the religious left is tied to individuals' political and religious beliefs for several reasons. First, individuals who identify solely with the religious right or religious left should report political views consistent with their chosen designation (right or left). Second, identification with the religious right or religious left carries religious implications. Religious affiliation should drive identification; evangelical Protestants should be especially likely to say they belong to the religious right, while some mainline Protestants, Catholics, and Jews should be drawn to the religious left. Moreover, we contend that the depth of one's religious commitment matters. We expect individuals who identify with the religious right or the religious left to participate more frequently in religious life and thus be aware of what these religio-political identifications mean. Third, identification with the religious right or religious left should be associated with certain religious convictions. For instance, the belief that Jesus calls Christians to the active promotion of a just society would seem to be a hallmark of identification with the religious left (McCarthy et al. 2016).

The possibility that some individuals might identify *simultaneously* with both the religious right *and* the religious left has not been anticipated in the scholarly literature. Most scholars have assumed that party identification and ideology are unidimensional, but there has been speculation that at least some Americans show signs of identifying with both the Democratic and Republican parties (Weisberg 1980, 1983). Likewise, scholars might assume that individuals who identify with the religious right and those who identify with the religious left are opposites, with only the vague "religious" label in common. However, some individuals might rationally support both the religious right and religious left. True, such people might simply be confused, but it could be that they genuinely and sincerely hold to some of the tenets of the religious right *and* some tenets of the religious left. For instance, individuals who are pro-life (a position associated with the religious right) might also hold liberal positions on poverty, redistribution, and the death penalty. Indeed, such a combination of views would be highly consistent with Catholic social teaching (Massaro 2016).

"Belonging": Religious Affiliation

According to the Pew Research Center (2015), just under half of all Americans consider themselves either evangelical Protestant (25.4 percent) or Roman Catholic (20.8 percent). Smaller percentages of Americans also identify as mainline Protestant (14.7 percent), black Protestant (6.5 percent), Jewish (1.9 percent), Mormon (1.6 percent), adherents of other religions (5.9 percent), and religiously unaffiliated (22.8 percent). Among the unaffiliated, 3.1 percent are atheist, 4.0 percent are agnostic, and 15.8 percent are "nothing in particular." While there is great variation within each of these "belonging" categories, there are also modal views within each group that relate to beliefs about right and wrong regarding a wide range of issues. Hence, we consider the degree to which there are differences among religious affiliations in terms of identification with the religious right, religious left, both, or neither. Specifically:

H1: Religio-political identification differs on the basis of religious affiliation.

Given the longstanding association between evangelicals and the religious right, we also hypothesize:

H1a: Evangelicals are more likely to identify with the religious right than affiliates of other religious traditions.

“Behaving”: Religious Participation and Embeddedness

Different religious traditions require different forms and frequency of religious practice. For example, some religions require worship attendance once a week, whereas others expect bi-weekly or even daily attendance or prayer. Naturally, worship attendance and other forms of religious participation vary from person to person. Some individuals choose to attend services every day, volunteer in their houses of worship, and otherwise be involved in religious life, while others may partake only during holidays, for rites of passage, or not at all. In studies of U.S. Christians, the best single measure of frequency of religious participation is how often one attends services (Green 2007). Therefore, we estimate the effects of frequency of worship attendance in our models.

Individuals also differ in terms of the broader importance religion plays in their lives. Individuals within the same religious tradition vary in how important religion is in their day-to-day lives, and this difference has political implications (Wuthnow 1988). For instance, among individuals who identify as being Catholic, there are some who attend Mass every day and for whom Catholic teaching informs how they live their lives, while there are other self-identified Catholics who never attend Mass and for whom their religious faith is not important. In short, frequent worship attendees are more politically conservative than those who do not attend (Green 2007).

In trying to understand the role of religion in shaping individuals’ religio-political identities, it is essential to consider the effects of what we will call religious *embeddedness*. The more individuals participate in religious activities, the more they may be said to be embedded in politically relevant religious social networks (Djupe and Gilbert 2008; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). Likewise, there is variation in the degree to which individuals claim a strong relationship with God and say they are guided by the religious teachings of their faith traditions. Individuals for whom religion is important, who are guided by the religious teaching of their faiths, and who have a strong relationship with God arguably are deeply embedded in religion. Scholars typically treat religious importance, relationship with God, and guidance by religious teachings as “believing” variables. However, we see these three components of religious commitment as distinct from *substantive* religious convictions. Instead, we contend that they are more properly conceived of as measures of how highly individuals *prioritize* religion in their self-identities (see Curtis and Olson 2019).

Are individuals who attend worship services—and are otherwise embedded in religious life—more likely to identify with the religious left, religious right, both, or neither? We expect that those who are most religiously embedded will be more likely to entwine their political and religious beliefs by identifying with the religious right, religious left, or quite possibly both. Those who are regular participants in worship services, for whom religion is an important part of day-to-day life, and who adhere closely to religious teachings are likely to be sufficiently embedded in their faith lives to draw connections between their religious faiths and how they “should” think about politics. Hence, we hypothesize:

H2a: Individuals who participate most frequently in religious life are more likely to identify with the religious right, the religious left, or religious both.

H2b: Individuals who are deeply embedded in religion are more likely to identify with the religious right, the religious left, or religious both.

“Believing”: Religious Convictions

In addition to the possible influences of religious affiliation and participation on individuals’ identification with the religious left, religious right, both, or neither, we contend that “believing,” or the specific nature of one’s convictions about God, morality, and related matters, may also

contribute to religio-political identification. Religious convictions may also manifest in political contexts, as when individuals oppose abortion or advocate for economic justice on the basis of particular religious teachings. Other individuals may see religion as a private matter that should be kept out of the political arena; such individuals likely perceive little or no connection between the religious and the political in their own lives.

We consider several dimensions of substantive religious “believing” that might contribute to identification with the religious left, religious right, both, or neither. These factors include the convictions that (1) being religious means “doing the right thing,” (2) religion should be kept private, (3) morality requires a belief in God, (4) traditional religious beliefs should be upheld and preserved, and (5) through His teachings, Jesus promoted a just society to help the poor. We propose that when taken together, these beliefs help explain religio-political identification.

With that said, not all of these beliefs should be expected equally to predispose individuals to identify with the religious left, religious right, both, or neither. For instance, a belief that Jesus promotes a just society to help the poor (as opposed to the view that His teachings require Christians to provide private charity) should point Christians toward the religious left, while more rigidly moralistic religious views (i.e., one must believe in God to be moral, traditional religious beliefs should be preserved, religion is not a private matter but should be practiced in public) should be associated with religious right identification. Specifically, we hypothesize:

H3a: Believing that Jesus promoted a just society to help the poor (as opposed to the view that Jesus’ teachings require Christians to provide private charity) is positively related to identification with the religious left and negatively related to identification with the religious right.

H3b: Believing that to be a moral person, one must believe in God, is positively related to identification with the religious right and negatively related to identification with the religious left.

H3c: Believing that religion is a private matter that should be kept out of public debates about social and political issues is positively related to identification with the religious left and negatively associated with identification with the religious right.

H3d: Believing that churches should preserve traditional beliefs and practices is positively associated with identification with the religious right and negatively related to identification with the religious left.

H3e: Believing that being a religious person means living a good life and doing the right thing (as opposed to having faith and the right beliefs) is positively related to identification with the religious left and negatively associated with identification with the religious right.

Political Orientations

Of course, the degree to which individuals connect their political and religious views to create a religio-political orientation does not depend solely on religious affiliation, participation, embeddedness, or convictions. Political attitudes are important as well. Specifically, identifying with the religious right (left) is likely to require that individuals perceive themselves on the right (left) side of the ideological spectrum in the first place. Holding a firm ideological position on the left or right of the political spectrum should be a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for identifying with the religious left or right. Put another way, all or most members of the religious right are likely to be religious and conservative, though being religious and conservative does not *necessarily* mean that a given individual will identify with the religious right.

We contend that there are at least three political variables that affect identification with the religious right or religious left. First, and most importantly, individuals’ political ideology should be related to their religio-political identification. Simply put, those who identify with the religious

right are likely to come from the ranks of political conservatives, while those who identify with the religious left should primarily be political liberals. Second, party identification is a major organizing concept for individuals' political views and hence should be related to individuals' religio-political self-identification. Republicans should be more likely to sort themselves into the religious right, and Democrats should be more likely to sort themselves into the religious left. Finally, at the time when the PRRI survey was fielded, the Tea Party movement in the United States had significant implications for the connection between politics and religion (Deckman 2016). We expect Tea Party supporters to be more likely to map themselves into the religious right; however, nonsupporters of the Tea Party are a diverse group who should not necessarily be expected to identify with the religious left.

Specifically, we hypothesize:

H4a: Conservatives are more likely to identify with the religious right, while liberals are more likely to identify with the religious left.

H4b: Republicans are more likely to identify with the religious right, while Democrats are more likely to identify with the religious left.

H4c: Tea Party supporters are more likely to identify with the religious right.

DATA

We use data from the 2013 Economic Values Survey to analyze the influence of religious affiliation, religious participation, religious embeddedness, religious convictions, political attitudes, and control variables on the degree to which individuals identify with the religious left, religious right, *both* (i.e., *both* the religious left and religious right), or *neither* (i.e., neither the religious right nor the religious left). The Economic Values Survey was conducted by the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) from May 30, 2013, to June 16, 2013, with a total sample consisting of 2,002 adults 18 years and older. This data set includes a rich set of variables relating to religion, including religious affiliation, frequency of worship attendance, and questions about religious beliefs and moral attitudes, as well as traditional political and demographic variables. Our sample is limited to religious respondents, so those who identify themselves as atheist, agnostic, or otherwise nonreligious are dropped from the estimation sample. Our final total sample of religious respondents is $N = 1,588$, though our analyses include fewer observations because of missing data for some of our independent variables.⁴

Dependent Variable: Religio-Political Identification

The PRRI Economic Values Survey includes two items that measure respondents' identification with the religious right or religious left:

- Do you consider yourself part of the religious right or conservative Christian movement or not?
- Do you consider yourself part of the religious left or progressive religious movement or not?

Both variables are measured as binary variables. Individuals are classified as part of the *religious right* if they answer "yes" to the first question but not to the second, whereas individuals

⁴A summary description of the variables used in this study, along with the descriptive statistics for these variables, may be found in Appendix Tables A1 and A2, respectively. We also include in Appendix Table A3 the mean and standard deviations for our independent variables, calculated for each of the four values on our dependent variable. In Appendix 10, we describe the pattern of missing data and discuss the implications of missing data for our model estimates.

are classified as part of the *religious left* if they answer “yes” to the second question but not to the first. Further, respondents are classified as *religious neither* if they respond “no” to both questions. A sizeable number of respondents ($n = 155$, or 9.8 percent of religious respondents) identify themselves as part of the religious right *and* religious left; we designate these respondents as *religious both*.

We measure religio-political identification by employing a nominal dependent variable consisting of four outcomes. The variable is coded 0 for those individuals who are affiliated with a religious tradition but do not consider themselves a member of either the religious left or religious right, 1 for those who identify with the religious left, 2 for those who identify with the religious right, and 3 for those who identify with *both* the religious left and the religious right. Because the dependent variable is nominal (nonorderable discrete), we estimate a multinomial logistic regression model to identify the independent variables that distinguish individuals who identify with each of the four categories. The neither group is our baseline category, so all of our multinomial logit estimates compare the probability that individuals are in a given group (left, right, or both) in comparison to the probability that they are in the baseline category.

Independent Variables

Religious Affiliation

We include in our model a number of religion variables that represent individuals' affiliation with a denomination or religious tradition. Drawing upon the coding scheme developed by Steensland and colleagues (2000), we divide religious affiliation into five groups: (1) mainline Protestants; (2) black Protestants; (3) evangelical Protestants; (4) Roman Catholics; and (5) other faiths. The black Protestant variable is coded 1 for black respondents who identify themselves as Protestant and 0 for other respondents. The evangelical Protestant variable is coded 1 for non-black individuals who identify as Protestant and report that they are “born again,” and 0 otherwise. The mainline Protestant variable is coded 1 for nonblack respondents who are Protestant but not “born again,” and 0 for other respondents. The variable for Roman Catholics is coded 1 for those who identify themselves as Roman Catholic and 0 otherwise. The excluded (contrast) category is comprised of members of other religious faiths, including those who are “other Christian,” Mormon, Orthodox, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Unitarian, or “something else.”

Religious Participation and Embeddedness

In addition to measures of religious affiliation, we include several variables that capture frequency and intensity of one's religious commitment. First, worship *attendance*—the best measure of extent of religious participation among Christians (Green 2007)—measures how often individuals report attending a religious service; this variable ranges from 0 (i.e., respondent never attends religious services) to 5 (i.e., respondent reports attending religious services more than once a week). We posit that those who attend services more often will be more likely to connect their political attitudes to a religio-political identity.

Second, we create a *religious embeddedness* scale that incorporates three items: (1) the importance of religion in the respondent's life, (2) scriptural orthodoxy in one's view of the Holy Book or Bible; and (3) perception of a personal God with whom one can have a relationship. The “importance of religion” item is coded on a four-point scale, ranging from 0 (i.e., “religion is not important in my life”) to 3 (“religion is the most important thing in my life”). The Holy Book variable is coded 2 for respondents who believe that the Bible (or other Holy Book) is the word of God, 1 for those who believe that the Bible or other Holy Book is the word of God but should not to be taken literally, and 0 for those who say that it is not the word of God but written by men. Finally, the personal relationship with God variable is coded 2 for people who perceive that they can have a personal relationship with God, 1 for those who see God as an impersonal

force, and 0 for those who do not believe in God. We combine these three variables into a single scale using a principal components factor analysis (eigenvalue = 2.167 with .722 of variance explained). The correlations among these variables and the resulting factor is at least $r = .843$, so we are confident using this combined measure as a coherent scale.

Religious Convictions

We also include in our models a set of variables representing religious beliefs that might shape identification with the religious right and religious left. These variables include: (1) the belief that being religious means living a good life and doing the right thing, as opposed to the belief that being religious means having faith and believing the right things; (2) the belief that religion is a private matter that should be kept out of public debates; (3) the belief that morality requires a belief in God; (4) the belief that churches should preserve traditional beliefs rather than adopting modern beliefs and practices; and (5) the belief that Jesus' teachings promoted a just society to address the concerns of the poor rather than promoting private charity.

The first variable, religious acts, ranges from 0 to 4, where 4 represents strongly believing that being religious means living a good life and doing the right thing, and 0 indicates strongly believing that being religious equates to having faith and the right beliefs. The second variable, belief that religion is a private matter, asks whether religion should play a role in public debates about social and political issues. This variable is coded 3 for those who strongly agree that religion should be a *private* matter and 0 for those who strongly disagree. The third variable, belief that morality requires a belief in God, is coded 3 for respondents who strongly agree with this assertion and 0 for those who strongly disagree. Fourth, attitudes about whether organized religion should preserve traditional beliefs or be more flexible in its beliefs and practice is coded 2 for respondents who want organized religion to preserve traditional beliefs and practices, 1 for those who believe in adjusting traditional beliefs and practices in light of new circumstances, and 0 for those respondents who want organized religion to adopt modern beliefs and practices. Finally, we include a variable that gauges individuals' interpretations of Jesus' teachings about the poor: (1) Christians have an obligation to help the poor through charitable acts, or (2) Christians have an obligation to help the poor by creating a just society. This variable is coded on a five-point scale, ranging from 0 (for respondents who believe strongly that Jesus meant private acts of charity) to 4 (for respondents who believe strongly that Jesus meant an obligation to create a just society).

Political Orientations

It is essential to include political variables in our model alongside the array of religious variables. First, we include a measure of political ideology, ranging from 0 (strong liberal) to 4 (strong conservative); as noted above, we expect this variable to be positively related to identification with the religious right and negatively related to identification with the religious left. Second, we include a measure of party identification, coded as a five-point scale ranging from 0 (strong Democrat) to 4 (strong Republican). Finally, we include a dichotomous variable identifying Tea Party supporters (1 = supporter, 0 = not a supporter).

Control Variables: Socioeconomic and Demographic Attributes

We also include a set of relevant socioeconomic and demographic variables as controls in our model. These variables include: (1) education, measured on an eight-point scale, ranging from 0 (less than high school) to 7 (postbaccalaureate degree); (2) family income, measured as a seven-point scale, ranging from 0 (respondent earns less than \$30,000 per year) to 6 (respondent earns more than \$200,000 per year); (3) self-reported social class, measured on a five-point scale ranging from 0 (lower class) to 4 (upper class); (4) gender, coded 1 for women and 0 for men; (5) age, measured in years; and (6) dichotomous variables for racial/ethnic groups, including

blacks, Hispanics, Asians, mixed race, and other race, and coded 1 for individuals with a specific racial/ethnic identification and 0 otherwise; whites are the excluded (contrast) category.

Although these socioeconomic and demographic measures are included in our model primarily as control variables, we are particularly interested in the possible substantive effects of education on identification with both the religious left and religious right. One possibility is that individuals say that they identify with both the religious right and the religious left out of confusion about the meaning of these terms; if so, we would expect to observe a strong negative effect of education on the likelihood that respondents would be in the both category. A weak or null effect would seem to belie that interpretation.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

In Table 1 we present the results from our multinomial logit model, which we use to estimate the effects of our independent variables on propensity to identify with the religious left, religious right, both, or neither. The neither category is the baseline category, so all multinomial logit coefficients represent the effect of the independent variables on identification with each successive category in contrast to being in the baseline (neither) category. In Appendix Table A4 we report predicted probabilities for each of the four religio-political groups based on high and low values on each independent variable.⁵

Religious Affiliation

We begin our analysis by examining the relationship between religious affiliation and identification with the religious left, religious right, both, and neither. As one can readily see in Table 1, only one of our religious affiliation variables has an effect on individuals' religio-political identification; evangelical Protestants ($b = .713$, $z = 2.18$) are almost .10 more likely (.223 to .129) to identify with the religious right than individuals in the "other faith" category. None of the other coefficients achieves conventional levels of statistical significance, which shows that religious affiliation alone does not do a good job of differentiating individuals in terms of their religio-political identities.⁶

Religious Participation and Embeddedness

We also consider the effects of worship attendance and religious embeddedness on individuals' religio-political identifications. As shown in Table 1, the results for these variables are somewhat mixed. Worship attendance has a positive effect on identification with the religious

⁵The predicted probabilities in Appendix Table A4 are calculated separately for the minimum and maximum values of each independent variable, holding the other independent variables constant at their means (for nondichotomous variables). We set the values of the dichotomous religious affiliation and race variables equal to 0, except for the religious affiliation or race variable for which predicted probabilities are being estimated. This provides estimates of relative effects for each of our independent variables.

⁶The relationship between religious affiliation and religio-political identification is no doubt reduced to nonsignificance by our inclusion of a wide range of independent variables, some of which are strongly related both to religious affiliation and to the dependent variable. In Appendix Table A5 we present multinomial logit estimates for a model that includes only the religious affiliation variables; in this case the excluded (contrast) group is evangelical Protestants. We find that black Protestants are more likely than evangelicals to identify with the religious left, whereas mainline Protestants, Catholics, and those of other faiths are less likely to identify with the religious right. Interestingly, mainline Protestants and adherents of other faiths are less likely to identify with the religious both, but black Protestants are more likely than evangelicals to identify jointly with both the religious left and religious right. Of course, these effects largely disappear in the face of a full model that includes other independent variables.

Table 1: Multinomial logit estimates for models of religious ideological orientation

| Variable | Religious Left | | Religious Right | | Religious Both | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------------|----------|
| | <i>b</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>b</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>b</i> | <i>z</i> |
| Religion variables | | | | | | |
| Mainline Protestant | -.109 | -.25 | .274 | .76 | -.530 | -.71 |
| Black Protestant | -.378 | -.57 | .832 | 1.29 | .460 | .85 |
| Evangelical Protestant | .260 | .52 | .713 | 2.18* | .822 | 1.44 |
| Catholic | -.479 | -1.11 | .368 | 1.10 | .742 | 1.33 |
| Worship attendance | .221 | 1.98* | .267 | 3.34*** | .166 | 1.54 |
| Religious embeddedness scale | .389 | 1.66* | .322 | 1.63 | 1.034 | 3.34*** |
| Religious acts | .314 | 3.58*** | -.031 | -.61 | .077 | 1.14 |
| Religious private | .030 | .20 | -.214 | -2.56** | -.166 | -1.48 |
| God moral | .056 | .37 | .285 | 2.83** | .557 | 3.46*** |
| Preserve traditional beliefs | -.056 | -.27 | .020 | .13 | -.370 | -1.88* |
| Jesus promotes just society | .203 | 2.58** | -.039 | -.74 | .061 | .92 |
| Political attitude variables | | | | | | |
| Partisan identification | -.424 | -3.37*** | .154 | 2.38* | -.075 | -.83 |
| Liberal-conservative ideology | -1.165 | -7.07*** | .647 | 5.10*** | .118 | .82 |
| Tea Party supporter | .652 | .94 | 1.156 | 4.77*** | 1.268 | 3.58*** |

(continued)

Table 1 Continued

| Variable | Religious Left | | Religious Right | | Religious Both | |
|--|----------------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------------|-----------|
| | <i>b</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>b</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>b</i> | <i>z</i> |
| Socioeconomic/demographic variables | | | | | | |
| Education | .181 | 2.33*** | .056 | 1.00 | -.160 | -2.05* |
| Family income | -.032 | -.32 | -.067 | -.95 | -.189 | -1.91* |
| Social class | -.021 | -.12 | -.072 | -.55 | .032 | .19 |
| Gender | -.241 | -.81 | -.166 | -.92 | -.327 | -1.34 |
| Age | .002 | .28 | .013 | 2.29* | .013 | 1.70* |
| Black | .628 | 1.08 | .628 | 1.09 | 1.244 | 2.21* |
| Hispanic | -.589 | -1.08 | .067 | .17 | .767 | 2.11* |
| Asian | -.026 | -.03 | -.128 | -.12 | .583 | .58 |
| Mixed race | .758 | .79 | -.331 | -.56 | -15.618 | -29.30*** |
| Other race | .298 | .31 | -.242 | -.41 | -.218 | -.37 |
| <i>N</i> | 1093 | | | | | |
| Pseudo <i>R</i> ² | .274 | | | | | |
| Likelihood ratio χ^2 | 643.00 | | | | | |
| Prob χ^2 | .0000 | | | | | |
| % Predicted accurately | .680 | | | | | |
| Proportional reduction in error (PRE) | .217 | | | | | |

Note: The base outcome group is those religious individuals who did not identify with a religious ideological orientation, but considered themselves religious. The *z* scores used for testing hypotheses are calculated based on robust standard errors.

Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Economic Values Survey (2013).

****p* < .001; ***p* < .01; **p* < .05.

left ($b = .223, z = 1.98$) and (particularly) the religious right ($b = .267, z = 3.34$), but the effect of worship attendance on identification with the religious both is positive but not statistically significant ($b = .166, z = 1.54$). As one can see in Appendix Table A4, moving from the lowest to highest values on worship attendance increases identification with the religious right by .172 (from .092 to .264). Clearly, worship attendance moves individuals from the religious neither category toward the religious left and (especially) the religious right categories.

Moreover, we find that religious embeddedness increases the likelihood that individuals identify with the religious left ($b = .389, z = 1.66$) and particularly the religious both ($b = 1.034, z = 3.34$), but the effect of embeddedness on identification with the religious right barely misses statistical significance ($b = .322, z = 1.63$). As shown in Appendix Figure A1 and Appendix Table A4, moving from the least embedded to the most embedded decreases the probability of being in the religious neither group by .210 (from .892 to .681) but increases the probability of identifying with the religious left by a modest .02 (from .011 to .031), the religious right by .115 (from .094 to .209), and the religious both by .076 (from .003 to .079). Essentially, embeddedness significantly increases the likelihood that individuals will identify with the religious left and jointly with both the religious right and religious left.

Taken as a whole, these results show that worship attendance and depth of religious embeddedness are important factors in moving individuals toward groups characterized by their religio-political ideology. Highly religious individuals will identify with one of these groups, suggesting that people who attend worship services frequently and/or are otherwise deeply religiously embedded are more likely to link religion and politics in the form of a joint religious *and* political identification.

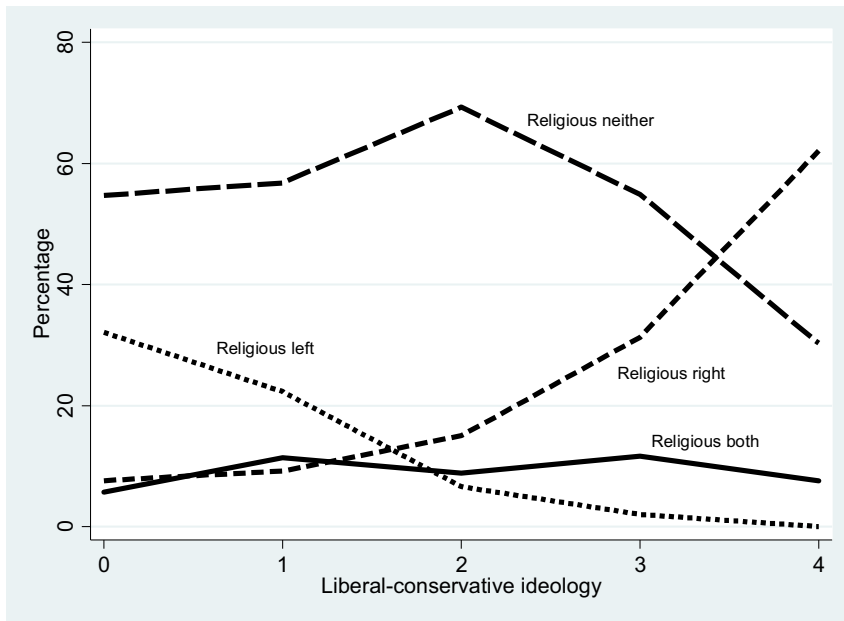
Religious Convictions

There are religious factors other than religious affiliation and religious participation that might contribute to religio-political identification. We speculate that specific religious beliefs may be associated with political beliefs. Indeed, each of our five religious belief variables has at least one coefficient that is in the expected direction and reaches conventional levels of statistical significance, signifying at least a partial relationship between religious convictions and religio-political identifications. First, we find that what individuals think that “being religious” means has an effect on identification with the religious left, though not with the religious right or religious both. People who think that being religious means “living a good life and doing the right thing” are much more likely to identify with the religious left than those who believe that being religious is about “having faith and the right beliefs” ($b = .314, z = 3.58$); the effect of moving from the lowest to highest value on this variable is modest (a .032 increase, from .013 to .043), but prioritizing actions over faith and beliefs nevertheless nudges individuals toward the religious left.

Second, we find that the perception that religion is a private matter is negatively related to individuals’ identification with the religious right ($b = -.214, z = -2.56$), but not with the religious left or both. Holding the effects of other variables constant, this coefficient translates into an almost .10 decrease in the probability that individuals will be categorized as religious right as one moves from the lowest value (.250) to the highest value (.152) on this variable. Clearly, people who believe that religion is a private matter are significantly less likely to identify with the religious right and more likely to identify with the neither category.

Our results also show that believing that it is “necessary to believe in God in order to be moral and have good values” is strongly and positively related to identification with the religious right ($b = .285, z = 2.83$) and simultaneously with both the religious right *and* religious left ($b = .557, z = 3.46$), but not with identification with the religious left. Moving from the lowest to the highest value on this variable increases the probability that individuals will identify with the religious right by .110 (from .126 to .236) and with both the religious right and religious left

Figure 1
Religio-political identification, by liberal-conservative ideology
[Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]



Note: Liberal-conservative ideology ranges from 0 (strong liberal) to 4 (strong conservative).

Source: Public Religion Research Institute, Economic Values Survey (2013).

by .060 (from .019 to .079). Thus, identification with the religious right in some way—either by itself or in conjunction with co-identification with the religious left—is a function of the view that belief in God is necessary for individuals to be moral.

As expected, the belief that Jesus's teachings require working for a just society to help the poor (rather than merely creating an obligation for individuals to participate in acts of private charity) is significantly related to individuals' identification with the religious left ($b = .203$, $z = 2.58$). The effect is small but discernible; moving from the lowest to highest value on this variable increases the likelihood that individuals identify with the religious left by .023 (from .019 to .042). Although this is not a large increase, it does suggest that this belief about Jesus' teaching nudges individuals toward identification with the religious left, as it should. Finally, support for preserving traditional beliefs has a weak negative effect on the probability that individuals will identify with the religious both ($b = -.370$, $z = -1.88$). Those who contend that churches should support traditional beliefs (as opposed to adopt modern beliefs) are less likely to identify simultaneously with both the religious right and religious left, though the effect is quite modest.

Political Orientations

As noted above, religio-political identifications are not just about religion; there also should be a strong political component to these joint identifications. We would expect that individuals who identify with the religious left (right) will not only be religious but also liberal (conservative). Of course, being religious and liberal or religious and conservative does not necessarily mean that individuals will identify with the religious left and religious right, respectively. In Figure 1, we present the simple relationship between political ideology and the percentages of respondents who identify as religious right, religious left, both, and neither; these results are reported here

for Christian adherents only. Clearly, not everyone who is both religious and liberal actually identifies as a religious liberal, nor does everyone who is both religious and conservative identify as a religious conservative. A small number (fewer than 10 percent) of political liberals identify with the religious right, but among strong conservatives fully 62.1 percent identify with the religious right; this still leaves nearly 40 percent of individuals who are strongly conservative who do *not* identify with the religious right. There is an even greater drop-off in how religion and ideology translate into identification with the religious left. Only 34.8 percent of individuals who are strongly liberal, and just 22.4 percent of those who are weakly liberal, identify with the religious left. It would appear that the combination of religion and ideology drives individuals toward the religious right to a greater extent than it drives individuals toward the religious left. Conservative Christians are more likely to identify with the religious right than liberal Christians are to identify with the religious left. This finding is one indication of why it has been so difficult in recent years for any kind of organized religious left to gain political traction (see Olson 2011).

Figure 1 also illustrates how identification with religious both or religious neither is affected by political ideology. The neither category is the largest of the four categories, encompassing a majority of all ideological groups except for strong conservatives. However, the religious both category is rather evenly divided across strong liberals, weak liberals, moderates, weak conservatives, and strong conservatives. This finding indicates that those who place themselves in both the religious right and religious left categories are a mix of political liberals, conservatives, and moderates.⁷

What are the effects of political variables on religio-political identification? First, as Table 1 shows, the effects of liberal-conservative ideology are consistent with our expectations. Strong conservatives are considerably less likely to identify with the religious left ($b = -1.165$, $z = -7.07$) and significantly more likely to identify with the religious right ($b = .647$, $z = 5.10$). Controlling for the effects of other variables (see Appendix Figure A3), we find that moving from being a strong liberal to a strong conservative increases the probability that individuals will identify with the religious right by a hefty .370 (.034 to .404) and decreases the probability that individuals will identify with the religious left by .319 (.322 to .003), though the effect of identifying with both the religious left and religious right is neither statistically nor substantively significant. Second, the coefficient for partisan identification is negative and significant for the religious left and significant in the positive direction for the religious right. Thus, Republicans are less likely to identify with the religious left ($b = -.424$, $z = -3.37$) and more likely to identify with the religious right ($b = .154$, $z = 2.38$). Moving from being a strong Democrat to a strong Republican increases the probability of identification with the religious right by .103 (from .135 to .238) and reduces the probability of identification with the religious left by .051 (from .062 to .011). Party identification has no discernible influence on the probability of identifying simultaneously with both religious left and religious right.⁸

Our findings for the Tea Party supporter variable add another twist to the story. This variable has a significant effect on the propensity of individuals to identify with the religious right ($b =$

⁷In Appendix Figure A2 we present a similar line plot, generated only for the top third of respondents on the religious embeddedness scale. The pattern is very similar, though among the very religious the share of religious neither respondents decreases and the share of religious right and religious both increases. Among the very religious, the overall percentage of the religious right increases to 36.7 percent, and the religious right represents 72.5 percent of religious conservatives and 37.9 percent of moderate conservatives. Overall, one-third of very religious liberals identify with the religious left, though this percentage drops off quickly as one moves in the conservative direction. The total percentage of religious respondents in the religious both category grows to one in six (16.6 percent), but it is important to note that the relationship between ideology and religious both status remains very weak. If anything, a slightly higher share of highly religious liberals identify with both the religious left and religious right than is the case for highly religious conservatives.

⁸A more detailed discussion of the effects of political ideology and partisan identification is found in Appendix 6 and Appendix Tables 6.1 and 6.2.

1.156, $z = 4.77$) and religious both ($b = 1.268$, $z = 3.58$), but not the religious left ($b = .652$, $z = .94$). Tea Party supporters are .189 more likely (.352 to .163) to identify with the religious right and .053 (.091 to .038) more likely to identify with the religious both than similarly situated individuals who do not support the Tea Party. It appears that Tea Party support is strongly related to identification with the religious right and moderately related to identification with both the religious left and religious right.

Socioeconomic and Demographic Attributes

We find only modest evidence that socioeconomic and demographic attributes influence individuals' identification with the religious right, religious left, or both, with a handful of exceptions. First, the coefficient for education is positive and statistically significant ($b = .181$, $z = 2.33$) for the religious left, indicating that those with higher levels of educational attainment are more likely to identify with the religious left. Moreover, the coefficients for education ($b = -.160$, $z = -2.05$) and family income ($b = -.189$, $z = -1.91$) are negative and statistically significant for the religious both category, indicating that those with more education and higher incomes are less likely to jointly identify with the religious left and religious right. One might reasonably express the concern that simultaneous identification with both the religious right and religious left might represent some confusion on the part of survey respondents, and we expect that this confusion would be diminished for those with higher levels of education. Indeed, the coefficient for education is consistent with that interpretation, though its magnitude is relatively small. Moving from the lowest level of education to the highest results in a decline in the probability of identifying with both the religious left and religious right of .054 (from .078 to .024), suggesting only a moderate amount of support for this interpretation.

Second, we find that the coefficient for age is positive for the religious right ($b = .013$, $z = 2.29$) and for the religious both ($b = .013$, $z = 1.70$). Simply, older people are more likely to identify with the religious right or jointly with both the religious right and religious left. As shown in Appendix Figure A4, moving from the lowest to highest values on the age variable increases the probability of being in the religious right by .143 (from .125 to .268) and in the religious both by .0332 (from .029 to .062). Third, we find that our coefficients for black ($b = 1.244$, $z = 2.21$) and Hispanic respondents ($b = .767$, $z = 2.11$) are positive and statistically significant for the religious both category. Controlling for the effects of other variables in our model, blacks are significantly more likely to identify with the religious both than those in other racial/ethnic groups (.078, or .124 – .046). Hispanics are also somewhat more likely to identify simultaneously with both the religious right and religious left. Hispanics have a probability of identifying with the religious both of .094, compared with a probability for non-Hispanics of .046, which is a difference of .048. This effect is not a huge, but it is large enough to be both substantively discernible and statistically significant. Clearly, blacks and Hispanics are more likely to identify with both the religious left and religious right than are whites.⁹

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this article, we consider the determinants of individuals' religio-political identification with the religious right, religious left, both the religious right and religious left, and neither the religious right nor the religious left. These self-identifications tell us a great deal about how Americans connect their political and religious beliefs and may help us to predict elements

⁹We also observe a seemingly strong effect for the mixed-race group ($b = -15.618$, $z = -29.30$). This is due to the fact that there are no mixed-race respondents who identify simultaneously with the religious right and religious left.

of Americans' political behavior and attitudes about certain political issues.¹⁰ To explore the underpinnings of these religio-political identifications, we consider the effects of a variety of religious variables—affiliation, worship attendance, embeddedness, and convictions—alongside the effects of political ideology, partisanship, and support for the Tea Party. Our reasoning is simple: religio-political identification likely is shaped by both religious commitments and political orientations.

Indeed, we find that both sets of variables influence individuals' religio-political identifications. Among the religion variables, we find little evidence that religious affiliation matters. While there are some important differences in religio-political identification among religious affiliations, these differences largely disappear with the introduction of controls for other independent variables. The one exception is that evangelical Protestants are significantly more likely to identify with the religious right. This finding is consistent with the fact that the religious right has been strategic and successful in its appeals to evangelical Protestants since the late 1970s, while the religious left has been amorphous and poorly organized during roughly the same time period.

Instead, it is worship attendance and religious embeddedness that are more powerfully related to identification with the religious left, religious right, and both the religious right and religious left, with individuals who identify with neither the religious left nor religious right exhibiting the lowest levels of religious participation. Many individuals who prioritize religious participation (as measured here through worship attendance) voluntarily opt in to social networks that consist primarily of fellow believers, which embeds them even further into religious life than weekly attendance at services might suggest. After all, people who attend services frequently form friendships with their fellow worshipers, enhancing the social psychological significance of religion in their everyday lives. We know that the friendships that develop out of this social contact have political significance (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). In addition, embeddedness in religious life implies greater familiarity with the specific doctrines of one's faith tradition, which should make it easier to understand the differences between the religious right and the religious left.

We also find evidence that religious convictions help shape religio-political identification. Individuals are significantly more likely to identify with the religious left if they perceive that being religious means "living a good life and doing the right thing" and if they believe that Jesus' teachings about the poor create an obligation to work for social justice. This finding suggests that despite its recent lack of political visibility, the religious left continues to convey its social justice orientation to a small but receptive audience. However, identification with the religious right is associated with disagreeing with the assertion that religion is a private matter and with the belief that to be moral, individuals must believe in God. This result is a reflection of the religious right's long-term success in changing once-skeptical evangelical minds about the importance of being active in politics. It also indicates that the uniformity we might expect to find in *moral* and political conservatism does obtain. The assertion that belief in God is necessary for a person to be moral is also associated with individuals identifying simultaneously with both the religious left and religious right. This finding illuminates one challenge the religious left faces: on its own, it struggles to attract adherents who are concerned with living a moral life.

¹⁰Indeed, we show how religio-political identification has an effect on various political attitudes, both without (Appendix Table A7) and with (Appendix Table A8) statistical controls for various religious, political, and demographic variables. In our simple (bivariate) models without statistical controls (Appendix Table A7), 38 of 48 coefficients for our religio-political variables (across 16 dependent variables) achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. This is reduced to 23 of 48 coefficients in multivariate models that include a full set of statistical control (Appendix Table A8), but even here at least one religio-political identification variable has an effect on the dependent variable in 14 of 16 models. These variables "matter" for how Americans think about politics and policy. The effects will be explored more fully in future research.

Politics also matters. Not surprisingly, conservatives and Republicans are more likely to identify with the religious right, and liberals and Democrats are more likely to identify with the religious left, though by no means do all ideologues and all partisans sort themselves into the expected religio-political category. The lack of uniformity between political orientation and religio-political identification illustrates the fact that despite the presence of two clear-cut political silos in the United States today, politically relevant commitments at the individual level are often subtle. Moreover, Tea Party support is positively associated with identification with the religious right and with joint identification with both the religious left and religious right. It is not surprising to find support for the religious right among Tea Party supporters, but the willingness of some of these individuals to identify with both the religious right and the religious left suggests variation even within a movement marked by rather uniform political beliefs.

Finally, we find that socioeconomic and demographic variables have only mixed effects on identification with either the religious right or the religious left. Education, however, has a modest positive effect on identification with the religious left, and education and family income have modest negative effects on identification with the religious both category. It makes abundant sense that education would mitigate against identification with the both category, which on its face is a contradiction. We also find that blacks and Hispanics are significantly more likely to identify with the religious both group as well, and older Americans are more likely to identify with the religious right and religious both. The results regarding race and ethnicity may be interpreted in the context of the religious distinctiveness of nonwhite Americans. Black Protestants are morally conservative, but social justice concerns tied to the African-American experience tend to prevail in black politics (Smith 2013). Likewise, many Hispanic Americans (especially those who are evangelical Protestants) espouse morally and religiously conservative attitudes, but in many instances are drawn to progressive politics due to concerns about immigration policy and related issues (Kelly and Morgan 2008).

Where do we go from here? First, we remain intrigued by the fact that there is a sizeable number of Americans who identify simultaneously with both the religious right and the religious left. This observation comes as some surprise, since one might expect the religious right and religious left to be opposites. Based on our analysis we have the beginnings of a profile of these individuals. They are highly religious and active in their faith lives and hold the belief that being a moral person requires a belief in God. Some are Tea Party supporters, and some are black or Hispanic. They have somewhat lower levels of education and income. Much more research is needed to understand who these religious-both individuals are, how they behave in the political arena, and what they think about the relationship between politics and religion.

Second, the implications of these religio-political identification categories for political behavior and attitudes need some attention. Do these identifications influence how Americans think about political, economic, social, and religious issues that have direct connections to religious teachings? Do individuals in each of these groups differ from one another in terms of vote choice, voter turnout, and other aspects of political participation?

Finally, one might be tempted to think that religious right or religious left identification would merely be a simple function of political ideology and religious participation. After all, religious right identifiers are merely individuals who are both conservative and religious, whereas religious left identifiers are merely individuals who are both liberal and religious, correct? While there is a modicum of truth to this commonsense assertion, it hardly tells the whole story. There is clearly more going on here. Not all conservative religious people identify with the religious right, and not all liberal religious people identify with the religious left. There would appear to be a variety of other factors at work in sorting individuals into these religio-political identification groups. These questions should be the subject of future research.

REFERENCES

- Abramowitz, Alan I. 2010. The 2008 election: Polarization continues. In *Controversies in voting behavior*, 5th ed., edited by Richard G. Niemi, Herbert F. Weisberg, and David C. Kimball, pp. 297–308. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Abramowitz, Alan I. and Kyle L. Saunders. 2008. Is polarization a myth? *Journal of Politics* 70(2):542–55.
- Albertson, Bethany L. 2015. Dog whistle politics: Multivocal communication and religious appeals. *Political Behavior* 37(1):3–26.
- Baldassarri, Delia and Peter Bearman. 2007. Dynamics of political polarization. *American Sociological Review* 72:784–811.
- Baldassarri, Delia and Andrew Gelman. 2008. Partisans without constraint: Political polarization and trends in American public opinion. *American Journal of Sociology* 114(2):408–46.
- Bartkowski, John P. and Helen A. Regis. 2003. *Charitable choices: Religion, race, and poverty in the post-welfare era*. New York: New York University Press.
- Baum, Matthew A. and Tim Groeling. 2008. New media and the polarization of American political discourse. *Political Communication* 25(4):345–65.
- Bishop, Bill. 2009. *The big sort: Why the clustering of like-minded America is tearing us apart*. Boston: Mariner Books.
- Conover, Michael D., Jacob Ratkiewicz, Matthew R. Francisco, Bruno Goncalves, Alessandro Flammini, and Filippo Menczer. 2011. Political polarization on Twitter. Proceedings of the Fifth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media. Available at <<http://www.aaai.org/ocs/index.php/ICWSM/ICWSM11/paper/download/2847/3275>>.
- Converse, Philip E. 1964. The nature of belief systems in mass publics. In *Ideology and discontent*, edited by David E. Apter, pp. 206–61. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Curtis, K. Amber and Laura R. Olson. 2019. Religion and identity. In *Oxford research encyclopedia of politics and religion*, edited by Paul A. Djupe. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Deckman, Melissa. 2004. *School board battles: The Christian right in local politics*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- . 2016. *Tea party women: Mama grizzlies, grassroots leaders, and the changing face of the American right*. New York: New York University Press.
- Delli Carpini, Michael X. and Scott Keeter. 1996. *What Americans know about politics and why it matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Djupe, Paul A. and Christopher P. Gilbert. 2003. *The prophetic pulpit: Clergy, churches, and communities in American politics*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- . 2008. *The political influence of churches*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Domke, David and Kevin Coe. 2010. *The God strategy: How religion became a political weapon in America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Evans, Christopher H. 2004. *The kingdom is always but coming: A life of Walter Rauschenbusch*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Findlay, James F. Jr. 1993. *Church people in the struggle: The National Council of Churches and the black freedom movement, 1950–1970*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fiorina, Morris P., Samuel J. Abrams, and Jeremy C. Pope. 2010. *Culture war? The myth of a polarized America*, 3rd ed. New York: Longman.
- Gaines, N. Susan and James C. Garand. 2010. Morality, equality, or locality: Analyzing the determinants of support for same-sex marriage. *Political Research Quarterly* 63(3):553–67.
- Green, Donald, Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Shickler. 2002. *Partisan hearts and minds*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Green, John. 2007. *The faith factor: How religion influences the vote*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Guth, James L. 2009. Religion and American public opinion: Foreign policy issues. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, pp. 243–65. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haidt, Jonathan. 2012. *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. New York: Vintage.
- Hirschl, Thomas A., James G. Booth, Leland L. Glenna, and Brandt Q. Green. 2012. Politics, religion, and society: Is the United States experiencing a period of religious-political polarization? *Review of European Studies* 4(4):95–104.
- Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture wars: The struggle to define America*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Jelen, Ted G. 1991. *The political mobilization of religious beliefs*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- . 2009. Religion and American public opinion: Social issues. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, pp. 217–42. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Jones, Robert P. 2016. *The end of white Christian America*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Kellstedt, Lyman A. 1989. Evangelicals and political realignment. In *Contemporary evangelical political involvement: An analysis and assessment*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, pp. 99–117. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

- Kellstedt, Lyman A. and John C. Green. 1993. Knowing God's many people: Denominational preference and political behavior. In *Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics*, edited by David C. Leege and Lyman A. Kellstedt, pp. 53–71. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Kellstedt, Lyman A. and Corwin E. Smidt. 1991. Measuring fundamentalism: An analysis of different operational strategies. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 30(3):259–78.
- Kelly, Nathan J. and Jana Morgan. 2008. Religious traditionalism and Latino politics in the United States. *American Politics Research* 36(2):236–63.
- Koopman, Douglas L. 2009. Religion and American public policy: Morality politics. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, pp. 546–72. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Layman, Geoffrey C. 1997. Religion and political behavior in the United States: The impact of beliefs, affiliations, and commitment from 1980 to 1994. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 61(2):288–316.
- . 2001. *The great divide: Religious and cultural conflict in American party politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Layman, Geoffrey C. and Thomas M. Carsey. 2002. Party polarization and “conflict extension” in the American electorate. *American Journal of Political Science* 46(4):786–802.
- Massaro, Thomas. 2016. *Living justice: Catholic social teaching in action*, 3rd ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- McCarthy, Angela Farizo, Nicholas T. Davis, James C. Garand, and Laura R. Olson. 2016. Religion and attitudes toward redistributive policies among Americans. *Political Research Quarterly* 69(1):121–33.
- McCarty, Nolan, Keith T. Poole, and Howard Rosenthal. 2016. *Polarized America: The dance of ideology and unequal riches*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Miller, Arthur H. and Martin P. Wattenberg. 1984. Politics from the pulpit: Religiosity and the 1980 elections. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 48(1B):301–17.
- Miller, Warren E. and J. Merrill Shanks. 1996. *The new American voter*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Morris, Aldon D. 1984. *The origins of the civil rights movement: Black communities organizing for change*. New York: Free Press.
- Nie, Norman H., Darwin W. Miller III, Saar Golde, Daniel M. Butler, and Kenneth Wineg. 2010. The World Wide Web and the U.S. political news market. *American Journal of Political Science* 54(2):428–39.
- Olson, Laura R. 2007. Whither the religious left? Religio-political progressivism in twenty-first century America. In *From pews to polling places: Faith and politics in the American religious mosaic*, edited by J. Matthew Wilson, pp. 53–80. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- . 2011. The religious left in contemporary American politics. *Politics, Religion and Ideology* 12(3):271–94.
- Olson, Laura R., Wendy Cadge, and James T. Harrison. 2006. Religion and public opinion about same-sex marriage. *Social Science Quarterly* 87(2):340–60.
- Pearson-Merkowitz, Shanna and James G. Gimpel. 2009. Religion and political socialization. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, pp. 164–90. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Pew Research Center. 2014. Political polarization in the American public. Available at <<http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>>.
- . 2015. America's changing religious landscape. Available at <<http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>>.
- . 2016. Religion in public life. Available at <<http://www.pewforum.org/2016/01/27/3-religion-in-public-life/>>.
- . 2017. Since Trump's election, increased attention to politics—Especially among women. Available at <<http://www.people-press.org/2017/07/20/since-trumps-election-increased-attention-to-politics-especially-among-women/>>.
- Poole, Keith T. and Howard Rosenthal. 1984. The polarization of American politics. *Journal of Politics* 46(4):1061–79.
- . 2007. *Ideology and Congress: A political economic history of roll call voting*. Piscataway, NJ: Transaction.
- Putnam, Robert D. and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Smidt, Corwin E. 2001. Religion and American public opinion. In *In God we trust? Religion and American public life*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, pp. 96–117. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
- Smidt, Corwin E., Kevin R. den Dulk, Bryan T. Froehle, James M. Penning, Stephen V. Monsma, and Douglas L. Koopman. 2010. *The disappearing God gap? Religion in the 2008 presidential election*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smidt, Corwin E., Kevin R. den Dulk, James M. Penning, Stephen V. Monsma, and Douglas L. Koopman. 2008. *Pews, prayers, and participation: Religion and civic responsibility in America*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Smith, R. Drew, ed. 2013. *From every mountainside: Black churches and the broad terrain of civil rights*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Stensland, Brian. 2002. The hydra and the swords: Social welfare and mainline advocacy, 1964–2000. In *The quiet hand of God: Faith-based activism and the public role of mainline Protestantism*, edited by Robert Wuthnow and John H. Evans, pp. 213–36. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Steensland, Brian, Lynn D. Robinson, W. Bradford Wilcox, Jerry Z. Park, Mark D. Regnerus, and Robert D. Woodberry. 2000. The measure of American religion: Toward improving the state of the art. *Social Forces* 79(1):291–318.
- Trattner, Walter I. 1999. *From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America*. New York: Free Press.
- Wald, Kenneth D. and Allison Calhoun-Brown. 2007. *Religion and politics in the United States*, 5th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Wald, Kenneth D. Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill Jr. 1988. Churches as political communities. *American Political Science Review* 82(2):531–48.
- Weisberg, Herbert F. 1980. A multidimensional conceptualization of party identification. *Political Behavior* 2(1):33–60.
- . 1983. A new scale of partisanship. *Political Behavior* 5(4):363–76.
- Wilcox, Clyde. 1990. Religion and politics among white evangelicals: The impact of religious variables on political attitudes. *Review of Religious Research* 32(1):27–42.
- . 1992. *God's warriors: The Christian right in twentieth-century America*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Wilcox, Clyde and Greg Fortelny. 2009. Religion and social movements. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, pp. 266–98. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wilcox, Clyde and Carin Robinson. 2010. *Onward Christian soldiers: The religious right in American politics*, 4th ed. Boulder, CO: Westview Press.
- Wilson, J. Matthew. 1999. “Blessed are the poor”: American Protestantism and attitudes toward poverty and welfare. *Southeastern Political Review* 27(3):421–37.
- . 2009. Religion and American public opinion: Economic issues. In *The Oxford handbook of religion and American politics*, edited by Corwin E. Smidt, Lyman A. Kellstedt, and James L. Guth, pp. 191–216. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1988. *The restructuring of American religion: Society and faith since World War II*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- . 2018. *The left behind: Decline and rage in rural America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Zwick, Mark and Louise Zwick. 2005. *The Catholic worker movement: Intellectual and spiritual origins*. New York: Paulist Press.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix Figure A1. Predicted probabilities for religio-political orientation as a function of religious embeddedness

Appendix Figure A2. Religio-political identification, by liberal-conservative ideology, respondents with high religious embeddedness only

Appendix Figure A3. Predicted probabilities for religio-political orientation as a function of liberal-conservative ideology

Appendix Figure A4. Predicted probabilities for religio-political orientation as a function of age

Appendix Table A1. Description of variables

Appendix Table A2. Descriptive statistics for independent variables

Appendix Table A3. Descriptive statistics for independent variables, by religio-political identification

Appendix Table A4. Predicted probabilities for highest and lowest values of independent variable

Appendix Table A5. Multinomial logit estimates for models of religious ideological orientation, with religious tradition variables only