The Social Influence of Religious Congregations on Political Behavior

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Abstract

The main research question guiding this dissertation is “How does participation with a religious community shape Americans’ political behavior?” This research stems from the long-standing finding that Americans participate with local places of worship at a rate that far exceeds participation rates with any other type of group and my observation that there is no scholarly treatment of how adherents from religiously and geographically diverse congregations are influenced by their local worship community. I seek to fill this void by systematically measuring congregation-level norms regarding political participation and partisanship across religious traditions and denominations and by evaluating the extent to which these norms constrain congregants’ political behaviors, especially their levels of political participation and their vote choices.

Building on a social theory of religious influence, I propose that congregations foster norms about politics and that these norms generally shape congregants’ behavior. Furthermore, I theorize that social factors of embeddedness and surveillance moderate the extent to which congregants are constrained by these norms, the first operating primarily through norm internalization or conformity and the second leading to compliance or obeisance.

Using a combination of new and existing survey data, I demonstrate that congregations are diverse in terms of their political norms and that traditional schema of religious tradition and denomination do not differentiate congregations in terms of their political norms. I also show that congregants exhibit a high level of norm constraint, participating in politics when the congregation promotes participation and reporting vote choices that are consistent with the congregation’s partisan norm. Finally, I find that embeddedness predicts greater norm-consistent behavior, but surveillance generally does not. Nevertheless, there is one critical exception. Among congregants in right-leaning congregations, surveillance explains major differences in reported voting behavior: those congregants who say that others in their congregation will find out their political behavior are much more likely to comply with
their perception of the political norm. This finding is confirmed in survey experiments: when simply primed with their congregational affiliation, congregants who perceive their congregation to be politically conservative are much less likely to say that they supported Democratic candidates.
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Chapter 1

Why Congregations?

On the fourth Sunday of Lent, Rev. Dr. David A. Davis, senior pastor of the Nassau Presbyterian Church in Princeton, NJ, made an impassioned plea to his congregants that they not behave as the ancient Israelites, who asked the prophet Samuel to appoint an earthly king over them “so they could be like other nations.” He urged the local Presbyterians to instead distinguish themselves from the world by choosing the kingdom of God over “the kingdom of this earth.” Acknowledging the difficulty of choosing to live this kind of elevated life, or “life of faith,” Rev. Davis cautioned, “It isn’t all that easy. But nothing is made clearer by just elevating the religious rhetoric in the public square. . . You can’t make the whole challenge of life in the world go away by announcing that religion and politics don’t mix; that your prayer closet is for God and that the voting booth is about your own interests; or that what goes on in church, stays in the church; or wishing that the preacher would just stick to the gospel and leave ‘life out there’ out of it here” (Davis, 2011).

While Rev. Davis’s challenge to live a higher life is primarily a spiritual one, it is notable for its explicitly political content. By his account choosing the life of faith does not necessitate a withdrawal from public life. To the contrary, Rev. Davis argues that a life of faith requires a real and penetrating unification of religion and politics that extends to the voting booth as
well as the prayer closet. Not only should religion inform political behavior, but the church too, even the Sunday sermons, should be informed by the outside, political world.

Setting aside normative considerations about the desirability of mixing religion and politics, there is tremendous precedent in the study of American political behavior for thinking of religion as a powerful influence on political behaviors and attitudes. Early survey research identified important differences in political outcomes across a coarsely defined dichotomy: Protestants and Catholics (e.g., Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee, 1954). The categories have been refined repeatedly in the intervening decades, now accommodating separate categories for Mainline and Evangelical Protestants, African American Protestants, Latter-day Saints, and others (Woodberry et al., 2012); nevertheless, political science still relies on these coarse religious categories in order to account for differences in political behavior. This approach is a convenient way to conceive of religious influence, especially when working with data that includes few other religious measures. Furthermore, scholarship in this vein of research has enhanced our understanding of the political participation (Campbell, 2004, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995) and political attitudes of religious Americans (Driskell, Embry, and Lyon, 2008, Guth et al., 2006, Harris, 1999, Layman, 2001). Nevertheless, the categories-based approach generally ignores adherents’ relationship with their local congregation. As a result, we cannot truly understand how or the extent to which local worship communities matter to individual political behavior.

In contrast to our usual framework for understanding the influence of religion on politics, congregations are at the core of the American religious experience. For example, regularly-attending congregants of the Nassau Presbyterian church know Rev. Davis and they know one another. Theirs is a local religious community that holds weekly worship services, diverse adult education classes, and a range of social activities. By extension of this affiliation,

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1 The prevailing wisdom at the time actually called for a trichotomy, which included Jews as a third distinctive category (Herberg, 1955); nevertheless, since few Jewish respondents were represented in early survey research, the trichotomy was regularly reduced to a dichotomy.
congregants of Nassau Presbyterian are also members of the broader religious denomination to which the congregation pertains, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and of the Mainline Protestant religious tradition (Steensland et al., 2000). Nevertheless, I argue that these affiliations are potentially much less salient to congregants’ political behaviors.

An analogy to a related strand of research demonstrates why the neglect of local religious communities is potentially very problematic. Scholars have long shown that citizens’ political behavior is shaped by the social context of the place in which they live (e.g., Huckfeldt, 1986; Key, 1949; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet, 1948). Recent research confirms that citizens’ decision calculus pertaining to political participation and vote choices are a function of the characteristics of local communities, including ethnic composition (Cho, Gimpel, and Dyck, 2006; Barreto, Segura, and Woods, 2004) and dominant party identification (Karpowitz et al., 2011). Were scholars to conceive of citizens merely as residents of states or larger regions, much of the rich understanding of contextual effects would be lost because the nuance of place disappears at higher levels of aggregation. I similarly argue that we must study religious congregations in order to better understand religion’s social influence on political behavior.

Toward a theory of congregational influence

In a departure from most research on religion and politics, the central question of this dissertation is how are religious Americans shaped politically by the local religious community to which they belong. This research is motivated by the longstanding finding that Americans participate with local places of worship at a rate that far exceeds participation rates with any other type of voluntary association (Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995) and by my observation that there is no scholarly treatment of how adherents across a religiously and geographically diverse set of congregations are influenced by their local worship community.
My focus on congregations is consistent with the fact that Americans are not only a religious people, but a *churched* people. That is, Americans participate with a place of worship at an exceptionally high rate. Recent work by [Putnam and Campbell (2010)](#) finds that approximately two-thirds of Americans attend, at least infrequently, a local place of worship. The researchers note that this rate of participation is more than twice as high as the rate at which Americans participate with any other kind of voluntary association. Furthermore, this high rate of participation with a church or congregation is consistent with attendance estimates from the 1990s [Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995)](#), the 1980s, and the 1970s [Stark (1987)](#). [Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2014)](#) likewise contend that despite popular discourse about the decline of religion, especially organized religion, in America, church membership is as high now as in the 1950s.

Furthermore, conceiving of congregations as the locus of religion’s political influence builds on several important insights from the related field of sociology of religion. My theory grows out of early work by [White (1968)](#) and [Johnson and White (1967)](#), which argues that religious congregations foster norms about behavior and enforce said norms through social mechanisms. I additionally propose that congregations disseminate behavioral norms touching on political participation and ideology and that congregants are constrained by these norms. This view of congregations as an important reference group for congregants is consistent with the insights of [Ammerman and Farnsley (1997)](#), which shows congregations to be persistent and adaptive communities that develop their own identity.

I propose that congregational norms about politics have a direct relationship with congregants’ political behavior, but I further theorize that social factors of embeddedness and surveillance moderate the extent to which congregants are constrained by the group’s political norms. A norm can constrain behavior in at least two different ways: through conformity or norm adoption or through compliance or obeisance ([Cialdini and Goldstein (2004)](#) [Turner (1991)](#)). The first suggests that congregants behave in a manner consistent with the congre-
gation’s political norm because they value their membership with the group and choose to adopt the group’s standard as their own. On the other hand, a congregant that does not share the congregation’s political standard may sometimes conform to so as to avoid the social costs of norm defiance.

These routes to norm-consistent behavior rely on different mechanisms. The first is a function of social embeddedness and proximity to the group: congregants are most likely to conform to the group’s standards when they value membership with and feel a part of the group. This internalization brings about the intrinsic benefits of having acted in a norm-consistent way. The second route to norm-consistent behavior relies on extrinsic benefits. Specifically, congregants disinclined to conform to the congregation’s partisan norm may do so if social surveillance makes it very likely that social sanctions and disapproval would follow defiant behavior. The ensuing analyses draw on observational and experimental methods in order to disentangle these mechanisms.

Though I am not the first to consider the political significance of congregations to individual political behavior, the present work improves upon the existing literature in several ways. First, whereas existing studies are limited to a geographic region (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988; Gilbert 1991; Jelen 1992) or to a limited number of denominations (Djupe and Gilbert 2009), the theory that I advance generalizes across these distinctions. Second, this is one of the only works to consider how congregations shape the fundamental turnout and vote choice decisions[^2] and this is the only study to measure congregational norms as functionally independent of congregants’ own behaviors.

I seek to advance the cumulative knowledge of religion’s influence on political behavior by systematically measuring congregation-level norms regarding political participation and partisanship across religious traditions and denominations and by evaluating the extent to which these norms constrain congregants’ political behaviors, especially their levels of

[^2]: The other work to engage these questions is Gilbert (1991), which employs the South Bend Study of the early 1980s. As such, it is limited in scope by the geographic boundaries of the data.
political participation and their vote choices. I bring to bear on these topics a combination of new and existing survey data, including survey experiments, which seeks to paint a succinct but generalizable portrait of how religious Americans are influenced in their political decision-making by the local worship community with which they affiliate.

**Outline of the dissertation**

The central aim of this project is to better understand how congregational political influences operate across location and religious denomination. The second chapter expounds this argument. I review the extant literature on religion and politics in the American context, devoting significant discussion to the evolution of religion and politics research from the beginning of mass survey work through the present day. I argue that the modal method of studying religion and politics, a reliance on broad denominational and religious categories, shunts attention away from congregations, the membership groups that are most salient to religious Americans’ political behaviors. I further argue that norms about politics reside at the congregation level and that these norms constrain the political behavior of individual congregants. Finally, drawing on insights from social psychology I develop a theory of how the constraint of church-based political norms is moderated by social factors of embeddedness and surveillance.

The third chapter seeks to establish the necessary premise of my theory of religious influence, that congregations have norms about political participation and political ideology. I leverage two existing nationally-representative datasets, the National Congregations Study and the U.S. Congregational Life Survey, to explore the prevalence and nature of congregation-based political norms. The datasets are well-suited to this enterprise because they employ the congregation as their unit of analysis. Furthermore, they allow me to consider two kinds of congregation-level political norms: norms that pertain to political participation and norms about political ideology or partisanship. I show that there is significant
variation in congregation-based political norms across denominations and religious traditions, but more still within denominations and traditions. Finally, I show that these norms are truly congregation-specific phenomena and that such norms are not merely a function of congregational composition or of variables that commonly predict political outcomes.

Having established the diversity of congregational norms about politics, the fourth chapter then estimates the relationship between participatory norms and congregants’ political participation. I test theories about norm constraint and the moderating effects of social embeddedness and surveillance through analysis of the full dataset of the 2001 U.S. Congregation Life Survey, a national sample of more than 300,000 congregants from more than 2,000 congregations. I find strong evidence for the constraining relationship of congregational norm to political participation and for the moderating role of social embeddedness, which heightens the constraint of such norms. The data do not, however, support the hypotheses regarding social surveillance. I supplement these analyses with additional tests that employ data from an original national survey of religious Americans, the Community Life Survey, an original survey of more than 1,100 religious Americans. These data confirm the findings from the larger dataset and further demonstrate that the observed relationships are robust to the inclusion of individual party identification, which is not included in the U.S. Congregation Life Survey data.

The fifth chapter applies the theory of congregational norms to the domain of vote choice. I evaluate the extent to which congregants are constrained by their congregation’s ideological or partisan norm as they cast a vote for president. This chapter employs data from two original data collection projects: a regional exit poll conducted in Mercer County, NJ in conjunction with the 2012 presidential election and the Community Life Survey. Both datasets provide support for the direct hypothesis of norm constraint: controlling for individual partisanship and other predictors of vote choice, congregants are more likely to vote for the candidate that they believe to be preferred by their congregation. This finding holds
for Republicans and Democrats and is stronger still for political independents. I also find support for the moderator hypotheses. Social embeddedness moderates the constraint of congregational norms in perceived Romney- and Obama-leaning churches in both datasets. The findings for social surveillance, however, are more nuanced: those in perceived Romney-leaning congregations are generally more constrained by the congregational norm when the congregation engages in social surveillance, but for those in Obama-leaning congregations, social surveillance only seems to matter to the frequent attenders. In order to better understand the extent to which such social considerations constrain religious voters, I also present results from a priming experiment designed to raise the salience of socially relevant religious considerations. The pattern of experimental results is similar to the observational results regarding social surveillance: the external stimulus seems to constrain reports of vote choice, but only for congregants in right-leaning churches.

Finally, the concluding chapter synthesizes the foregoing theoretical claims and empirical evidence. I discuss how my findings compare to those in the extant religions and politics literature and I make recommendation for how to best incorporate my conclusions about the political significance of congregations into a literature which has systematically ignored local places of worship. Finally, I propose additional avenues of research that I believe will enhance our understanding of religion’s social influence on political behavior.
Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theory

The nexus of religion and political behavior is of critical interest to political observers because Americans remain a highly religious people and because so many facets of individuals’ political behavior are shaped by religion. In this chapter I briefly review the reasons for studying religion with relation to politics and I offer an overview of the evolution of research on religion and political behavior from the advent of large-scale survey research through the present. I point to the major deficiencies in this literature, most notably its persistent neglect of congregation-level influences. I review previous research on religious congregations as a source of political influence, noting the literature’s many shortcomings. Building on this foundation I set forth a theory of congregational influence on political behavior and draw from this theory several testable hypotheses about religion’s social influence on congregants’ political behavior.

The ubiquity and political significance of religion

Religious association in America is very high in both relative and absolute terms. Cross-national comparisons that make use of the World Values Study demonstrate that Americans’ level of religious involvement is high relative to other nations. This is especially true com-
pared to other non-Muslim countries and compared to other OECD member countries, which have similarly advanced economies (Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2014). Recent research by the Pew Research center affirms that though the number of Americans who are religiously unaffiliated is on the rise (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2012b), the religiously unaffiliated remain a small percentage of the population compared to other advanced democracies like France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Japan, and South Korea (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2012a).

Religious affiliation in the United States is also consistently high in absolute terms. Putnam and Campbell (2010) find that approximately two-thirds of respondents in the large, national Faith Matters Survey were involved with a regular place of worship during the previous 12 months. Only half as many respondents were involved in a youth, parent, or school-support organization and many fewer respondents were involved in unions, professional groups, service organizations, and so forth. This high rate of religious association is nearly identical to levels reported by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), using representative survey data from 1990, and by Stark (1987), using church membership data from 1980 and 1971. Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2014) leverage several pieces of similar evidence to argue that despite popular discourse to the contrary, church membership is as high today as it was in 1950.

A careful understanding of religion’s relationship to political behavior is critical to political science not just because religious affiliation is very common, but because several decades of scholarly research consistently demonstrates that religion, understood broadly, is an important predictor of individual political behavior. For example, high caliber scholarship clearly demonstrates that religion is an important determinant of political participation, including voter turnout (Campbell, 2004; Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1978; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). Religious commitments also inform some of the most contentious public policy

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1See also Finke and Stark (2005).
debates, including attitudes regarding same-sex marriage and LGBT rights (Campbell and Monson 2008; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006). Finally, religion regularly intersects with partisan politics in important ways, influencing presidential approval (Olson and Warber 2008) and vote choices (Olson and Green 2006).

Having established that religious affiliation is widespread in America and that religious influence is relevant to a broad domain of political outcomes, I turn my attention to an overview of how scholars conceive of and evaluate the relationship between Americans’ religious commitments and their political behavior.

Background on religion and political behavior

Early studies of American political behavior relied heavily on dichotomous or trichotomous measures of religious affiliation. Foundational works in the social sciences, especially seminal research emanating from scholars at Columbia University, set the precedent of considering political differences across the broad categories of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948). The critical distinction was then between Catholics, a largely left-leaning, Democratic block, and Protestants, who generally favored the Republicans. Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954), studying voters in Elmira, NY, and Lenski (1963), studying voters in Detroit, found that most adherents voted for the party commonly associated with their religious group. Though the dichotomy between left-leaning Catholics and right-leaning Protestants seems blunt by today’s standards, it is consistent with the standard practices of the time, which were grounded in prevailing sociological theory that deemed Protestants, Catholics, and Jews distinct ethnoreligious communities with unique immigration and assimilation experiences (Herberg 1955).

\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{Herberg, 1955}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \cite{Campbell et al., 1960}}\]
Political science had little more to say about religion’s influence on politics until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when the rise of religious conservatism could no longer be ignored as a political force. Kellstedt, co-editor of a volume aptly-named *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, unequivocally affirmed, “Religion matters. It matters politically” (Leege and Kellstedt 1993). The contributors to *Rediscovering* contended that the traditional scheme of religious classifications must be refined so as to distinguish between Mainline and Evangelical Protestants and they were instrumental in getting the American National Election Studies, the premier survey initiative in American political science, to adopt additional religious affiliation questions in order to facilitate this distinction. Steensland et al. (2000) further systematized the recommendations of *Rediscovering* and added the category of Black Protestants to the classification scheme, which the authors named RELTRAD and promoted by sharing syntax to sort religious denomination codes generated by the ANES into RELTRAD categories. The RELTRAD approach has become quite popular in social science research and has been subject to further refinement: the most recent iteration of this research, Woodberry et al. (2012), added a category for Latter-day Saints or Mormons.

A more nuanced approach recognizes that affiliation with a denomination or religious tradition is just one of several dimensions of religion that may matter to behavioral outcomes. Leege et al. (2002) and Smidt, Kellstedt, and Guth (2009) argue that political behaviors are best explained by three Bs of religion: religious behavior, belonging, and belief. Religious belonging refers to affiliation with some religious tradition and religious belief refers to one’s preference for traditional, centrist, or modernist beliefs. The remaining B, religious behavior, refers to one’s religious practices. For instance, Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) see religious attendance as an especially important predictor of political participation, but Putnam and Campbell (2010) place greater emphasis on prayer, noting several political differences between Americans who pray and those who do not.
The three Bs approach is more compelling than religious tradition alone because it incorporates more dimensions of religion. Furthermore, the additional dimensions of religious behavior and belief increase the explanatory power of religion. For example, Olson and Warber (2008) show that religious beliefs predict presidential approval much more strongly than does religious affiliation. Driskell, Embry, and Lyon (2008) similarly finds that beliefs outperform belonging in terms of predicting certain kinds of political participation. Nevertheless, the three Bs approach, like the religious traditions approach, still has at its core the same scheme of religious affiliation.

Steensland et al. (2000) argue that the categories employed in the religious traditions and three Bs approach, like the earlier trichotomy of Protestant, Catholic, and Jew (Herberg 1955), are meaningful distinctions informed by historical and doctrinal differences. Nevertheless, there are several drawbacks in using a categories-based approach to study the political significance of religion. For instance, history and doctrine may not be the differences that matter to political outcomes. Chaves (2010) warns against drawing inferences about individual behavior based on religious doctrine because doctrines and behaviors are regularly incongruent. This incongruence between doctrines and behaviors complicates any attempts to order the multitude of American churches into any meaningful set of categories.

A second drawback is that the classification scheme may presume differences where they do not exist. In the intervening period between the early studies of religion and the resurgence of religion and politics research in the 1990s, the American religious landscape changed dramatically. Putnam and Campbell (2010) refer to the period as containing a shock, the liberal tidal wave of the 1960s, and an aftershock, a renewed commitment to religious conservatism in the 1970s and 1980s. Wuthnow (1988) explains that the intervening period saw a restructuring of American religion, which rendered old sectarian divides between denominations much less important. According to Wuthnow the more critical difference following this restructuring is between religious liberals and conservatives, both of which are found within
and across the various religious categories. The beliefs dimension included in the three Bs approach begins to account for Wuthnow’s critique of category-based research of religious influence; nevertheless, much research in religion and politics, especially general political behavior research in which religion is a secondary consideration, continues to use religious traditions without a concern for the distribution of theological traditionalists, centrists, and modernists within these traditions.

Finally, a reliance on denominational categories seems especially counterproductive because it shunts attention away from the lower, more proximate level of religious affiliation: local congregations. If we take seriously the claim of Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) that the act of attending a church somehow makes citizens better equipped to engage in politics, then we ought to take greater care to understand how congregations differ from one another as political environments. Djupe and Gilbert (2009) criticize Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, and other similar research for relegating the inner workings of congregations to a “black box,” that is rarely observed or even considered.

This third deficiency in the predominant mode of studying religion’s influence is the starting point for the present work. I am primarily interested in how religious Americans are constrained in their political behavior by their association with a local place of worship. My goal is to generate a theory of religious influence which takes seriously that religious congregations are the level at which most Americans experience religion. Finally, I strive to overcome the other deficiencies common in religion and politics research by testing this theory with diverse samples and improved measures of congregational forces.

The case for congregation-level political norms

Long before Chaves (2010) argued that research on religion is hampered by a misplaced assumption of congruence between beliefs and behaviors, White (1968) proposed that religious influence is not a function of theology, but of group dynamics. According to White,
religion matters to individual behavior only insofar as religious people belong to a religious group that has relevant norms and standards. Furthermore, in order for norms to constrain behavior they must be enforced through social mechanisms. In this paradigm religion influences individuals’ preferences and behavior because people value complying with local, congregational norms and want to avoid the sanctions that may accompany noncompliance.

This model emphasizes the role of local congregation as the source of religious influence. (Johnson and White 1967) argue that generalizing to the denomination level introduces error because congregations within a denomination may differ from one another. This focus on congregations is also consistent with Ammerman and Farnsley (1997), which employs an ethnography of congregations to demonstrate that they are persistent and adaptive communities that develop their own identity.

Building on this theoretical foundation of social influence, I argue that religious congregations sometimes foster norms relevant to political behavior. Furthermore, I follow Johnson and White as well as Ammerman and Farnsley in conceiving of these political norms as congregation-specific phenomena. Given my interests in the most basic outcomes of political behavior, I posit that congregational norms constrain congregants’ political behavior, including their political participation and vote choices. Finally, given the social nature of norm constraint, I expect that the relationship between norm and behavior will be uneven within congregations, with some congregants being more or less subject to the congregation’s political norms.

A group contextual approach to the study of religion in politics is consistent with several strands of political science literature. For instance, in his classic work on collective action, Olson (1965) proposes that small groups are successful at mobilization because they are better suited to practice surveillance and to award selective benefits. (Iannaccone 1994) argues that churches generally meet these criteria and that some churches are especially adept at surveillance and selective provision of goods.
This approach is also consistent with a growing literature regarding community context and political behavior. Much of this work spawns from experimental research by Gerber, Green, and Larimer (2008), which experimentally manipulated community-based social surveillance by sending to registered voters postcards detailing their neighborhood’s past voter turnout and promising to send an updated turnout history after the next election. Differences in turnout rates following the intervention demonstrate that voter turnout is sensitive to social pressures regarding neighborhood standards. Subsequent research following this pattern similarly finds that social context and pressures matter to political behavior (e.g., Davenport, 2010; Panagopoulos, 2011).

In contrast to the neighborhood norms at the center of Gerber, Green, and Larimer’s study of neighborhoods, I argue that religious groups are better suited to influence the political behaviors of their members because religious people, especially to the extent that they are actively involved with their religious community, are likely to already be aware of their group’s political norms. Through peer-led adult education classes and small group discussions, worship services where clergy touch on the political, congregation-based political activities like voter registration campaigns, and through various other means, church-goers learn about the political norms that prevail in their religious community. This is not to say that every congregation or even that most congregations have norms about politics. I argue, however, that many congregations have political norms and that these norms are easily observed by congregants. As such, these norms influence the political behavior or congregants, all else equal.

Furthermore, there are at least two kinds of political norms that may arise within any group. A political norm can be partisan, favoring one political party or ideology over another, or it may pertain to the desirability of political participation more generally. Lazarsfeld and his Columbia colleagues were interested in the first kind of norm when they characterized the Catholic church in Delaware, OH and Elmira, NY as a left-leaning body (Berelson, Lazars-
Additionally, whether an ideological norm is present or absent a congregation may hold a participatory political norm. That is, a congregation may encourage political participation, either as a means to an ideological end or as an end unto itself. Voting is the most common form of political participation, but a congregation might encourage a range of participatory acts, including participation within a campaign or direct lobbying of elected officials.

Moderators of norm constraint

My theory of religious influence requires that congregational norms shape congregants’ political behavior, but I also expect that norms will not constrain all congregants equally. Some religious people value congregational membership and accompanying norms much more than others. The neighborhood pressures literature generally ignores this problem, making seemingly atheoretical assumptions about citizens’ relationship to “neighbors,” operationalized as registered voters on the same block (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008), or “community,” operationalized as people within the same precinct (Karpowitz et al. 2011). On the other hand, studies of religious influence make clear that group members vary in terms of their entrenchment in the group and that this variation has important consequences. For example, Cavendish, Welch, and Leege (1998) show that socially integrated Catholics report having more spiritual experiences and spend more time in personal devotion. Stroope (2012) similarly finds that congregants with more friends in their congregation have reliably higher levels of personal devotion and religious belief. Relevant to the present study of religious influence on political behavior, Lazarsfeld and colleagues proposed that the relationship of religion with party identification should vary by the length of time that each subject lived
in the community because length of residency proxies for strength of connection to the place of worship [Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954].

I generalize from these findings that social embeddedness, the extent to which a congregant is entrenched in the congregation, moderates the relationship between congregational political norm and behavior. I expect that socially embeddedness matters because embedded congregants value the group and their membership with it and are therefore more likely to conform to the norm. That is, congregants who are embedded are more likely to internalize the norm, adopting it as their own [Cialdini and Goldstein 2004; Turner 1991]. Nevertheless, there is another reason why embedded congregants may be constrained by the congregation’s norm: not only are socially embedded congregants more likely to internalize the group’s political norms, but they are also more susceptible to surveillance by other congregants at worship services, small group meetings, church activities, and even in the community setting outside of the official religious context.

While no previous study has directly considered the role of social surveillance in churches as it relates to politics, sociologists have identified congregation-based surveillance as a factor in some congregations. Iannaccone (1994), building on related research by Kelley (1977), sought to explain church growth and contraction. Borrowing from the familiar framework of Olson (1965), Iannaccone argued that strict churches remain strong because their various restrictions and high surveillance better screen out potential free riders. As a result, they are better equipped to provide the benefits of membership to only those congregants who pay the high costs of membership. In this view the concepts of strictness and surveillance are intimately intertwined: restrictions on behavior exist so that they can be surveyed and enforced. The question remains, however, whether congregation-based surveillance extends to congregants’ political behaviors.

3The Columbia researchers do not consider, however, the type of congregation or political norm of the congregation where newly-arrived residents previously worshiped.
Some preliminary evidence from political behavior research suggests that political behavior may be fair game for discussion among congregants. For example, Mutz (2006) shows that Americans turn to co-congregants as political discussion partners and that respondents are more politically similar to co-religionists than any other type of discussion partner. This high rate of agreement might make deviance from the congregation’s political norm especially costly. There is also evidence that political discussion is relatively common in churches, especially in church-based small groups. Independent analysis of the Citizen Participation Study (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995) reveals that among religious persons involved in church-based small groups, more than a quarter said that political discussions are on the agenda for the small group’s meeting and more than half of the same respondents said that they “chat” informally about politics at the group’s meetings. Related research on informal political discussion suggests that informal political discussion may be fairly explicit: Walsh (2004) and Harris-Lacewell (2004) show that everyday political talk engages real issues in a meaningful, sometimes emotional way. Gerber et al. (2012) further suggest that the boundaries of political discussion may be quite wide as a vast majority of American survey respondents say that they reveal their vote choices to others.

The preceding discussion raises the distinct possibility that congregants may be further constrained by congregational norms about politics because congregation-based surveillance makes deviation from the norm more costly. This is a different route to norm-consistent behavior. Rather than internalizing or adopting the norm, some group members comply with a norm that they do not personally accept in a display of obeisance (Mendelberg, 2001; Turner, 1991).

Mutz finds that co-congregants are infrequently named as discussion partners, but her estimate is likely deflated for two reasons. First, her population of interest is a national sample, so despite high levels of congregational affiliation in America, about one-third of respondents likely do not have a congregational affiliation. Second, her method of categorizing discussion partners uses mutually exclusive categories, so a co-congregants that is a co-worker, extended family member, or neighbor is potentially categorized with these other social groups.
Considering together the two routes to norm-consistent behavior, I expect that there is significant variation in terms of which congregants will display political behaviors consistent with their congregation’s norms about political participation and partisanship. For some congregants the relationship between norm and behavior is moderated by embeddedness within the congregation; these congregants value their congregational affiliation and adopt the congregation’s norms as their own. For others, however, their actions are influenced by the extent to which their political behavior is surveilled by co-congregants. These congregants have not internalized the group’s norm, but also do not want to be observed violating the standard.

A departure from previous research

The existing literature on religion and politics offers some preliminary support for this theory, at least for the general theory that congregants are constrained by congregation-level norms. [Wald, Owen, and Hill (1988)] show that the tendencies of congregations are strongly related to parishioners’ policy preferences. Analyzing surveys of congregants clustered in 21 Protestant churches in Florida, Wald and colleagues compare the predictive power of individual-level and congregation-level theological conservatism; they compute the latter as the average individual-level theological conservatism among all respondents within a congregation. The authors find that the latter does a better job than the former at predicting preferences for moral policy (see also [Wald, Owen, and Hill (1990)]. While informative regarding the importance of congregations, Wald and colleagues do not measure congregation-level political norms, but instead an aggregated theological orientation.

Building on Wald’s framework, subsequent research considers the constraint of congregation-level average political positions and individual-level attitudes. [Jelen (1992)] finds that among congregants in a cluster of Midwestern Protestant churches, congregation-level political tendencies, measured again as the aggregation of congregant-level responses,
are predictive of support for leaders of the religious right and warmth towards various minority groups. The most recent study of social or contextual effects of religion follows the same pattern. Djupe and Gilbert (2009) gathered data about two Mainline Protestant denominations through a sophisticated design that paired surveys of Episcopalian and ELCA Lutheran clergy with surveys of their congregants. In line with the previous contextual studies, the researchers find that aggregate congregation-level opinion on items like abortion and gay rights strongly correlates with congregant attitudes on the same subjects.

These studies are suggestive of the role of congregations in shaping citizens’ political preferences, but they do not address the most basic of political decisions, including turnout and vote choice. Gilbert (1993) begins to fill this void. Analyzing data from the well-known South Bend Study (Huckfeldt 1986), Gilbert considers the contextual influence of both neighborhood and congregation. He finds that congregation-level average partisanship and vote choice predict individual vote choice and to a lesser extent individual partisanship. This sort of evidence echoes the canonical research of Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee (1954); Lenski (1963), which first demonstrated that congregants tend to vote for the party associated with their faith. Gilbert offers some improvement on the very early work by allowing congregations to vary politically within denominations, but his measure of congregational partisanship remains problematic for other reasons.

In every previous study of the political influence of congregations, the authors operationalize the congregational political norm as the congregation-level mean of the variables of interest. That is, they leverage average vote choice and average partisanship as predictors of individual vote choice and partisanship. This strategy severely handicaps our understanding of the relationship between group and individual behavior. Manski (1993) argues that when a group-level average of the dependent variable is used as a predictor, the “reflection problem” renders the contextual effect unidentifiable.
The present work improves on previous studies of the social influence of congregations in several ways. First, this is the first study of congregational influences to employ data from national samples. Whereas previous studies focused narrowly on specific denominations (Djupe and Gilbert, 2009) or drew samples of congregations within a circumscribed region (Wald, Owen, and Hill, 1988; Jelen, 1992; Gilbert, 1993), the data I bring to bear on the study of congregational political norms overcomes these shortcomings by evaluating congregational norms in both national and regional samples and among a religiously diverse set of congregations, including congregations from all major religious traditions in the United States.

I diverge from the existing literature in another critical way by abandoning the conventional method of measuring congregational norms. I alternatively employ two previously unused measures of congregational norms: the judgments of congregational informants and congregants’ perceptions. I use the first in my analyses of existing U.S. Congregational Life Survey and National Congregations Study data, which asked a clergy person or some other congregational informant to make several estimates about the characteristics of a congregation, including its participatory and partisan political norms. In all original data I introduce congregants’ perceptions of church-level norms as a measure of congregational preferences. I demonstrate in Chapter 5 that across religious traditions, most congregants believe that their congregation has a partisan preference. By using these alternative measures of congregational norms, I sidestep the problems inherent in using individual-level responses as both predictor and outcome.

I add to the study of the social influence of religion on political behavior significant nuance regarding the forces that moderate norm constraint. I consider two routes to norm consistent behavior, conformity and compliance, and I use measures of social embeddedness and a new measure of church-based surveillance to estimate the relative importance of these moderating forces. Because social embeddedness leads to conformity and surveillance, I further consider
the intersection of embeddedness and surveillance so as to distinguish between embedded congregants who comply in the absence of surveillance and those that comply only when surveillance is present. This work is the first in religion and politics to devote such attention to surveillance.

Finally, I supplement my observational analyses with data from two survey experiments. Both experiments are designed to better distinguish between congregants who independently conform to their congregation’s partisan norm and those who are more apt to comply only when reminded to do so. The results of these experiments confirm especially observational findings regarding social surveillance.
Chapter 3

The Nature and Prevalence of Congregational Political Norms

Americans remain a religious people. Participation with a religious community is the most ubiquitous voluntary association in the United States and remains more than twice as common as any other type of group association (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Nevertheless, most research on religion and political behavior completely ignores congregations, focusing instead on broad categories of affiliation. While this vein of scholarship has shown religion to be an important determinant of many political behaviors, including issue attitudes and policy decisions (e.g., Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007; Campbell and Monson 2008; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006) and political participation (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995), it does not address the basic question of how religious Americans are constrained by the local religious community to which they belong.

This chapter takes seriously the critique of Djupe and Gilbert (2009), that the existing literature on religion and politics overlooks important political context at the congregation level. I seek to fill this void by describing the diversity of congregation-level political norms between and within religious traditions and denominations. This chapter considers the types...
of political norms that might exist and the ways in which these norms might be articulated and reinforced in religious congregations. Employing high quality data from two large national samples of congregations, I demonstrate significant diversity in ideological and participatory political norms. I show that there is more diversity within congregations of the same religious tradition than there is across traditions. The same is true of religious denominations. Taken together these results strongly suggest that scholars of religion and politics must carefully consider the local, political norms of religious Americans’ congregations in order to best understand how religion shapes political behaviors.

The case for congregation-level political norms

Building on the theory outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter is interested primarily in the prevalence and nature of political norms within American congregations. Following White (1968), I propose that congregations foster norms about politics. Furthermore, there are at least two kinds of political norms that may arise within any group: ideological political norms, which favor one political party or ideology over another, and participatory political norms, which touch on the desirability of voting and other forms of political engagement. I briefly consider some of the many ways that these norms may take shape in a religious congregation.

Some scholars propose that small groups and adult education classes may be especially well-suited to the articulation and reification of political norms. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) suggest that participation with auxiliary church-based groups may relate to a broader sense of civic engagement. Within Episcopalian and Lutheran (ELCA) congregations, Djupe and Gilbert repeatedly demonstrate that there exist many opportunities to insert politics into congregational life. Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey (2009) show that church-based adult education classes are an important breeding ground of debate about various political topics. Djupe and Gilbert (2009) further argue that Episcopalian and Lutheran
congregants who participate in adult education classes on political issues are more likely to put their church-based skills to work in the realm of politics.

In addition to the role that adult education classes and small groups might play, clergy might also use sermons as a platform to engage the political. Though much of the literature on clergy cues pertains to the ideological nature of such cues (e.g., Hadden, 1969; Guth et al., 1997), there is evidence, especially in African American churches, that clergy explicitly encourage political participation (e.g., Harris, 1999). A sermon about a political topic may give better shape to a political norm, but we need not assume that clergy are the originators of political cues. Calfano (2009) finds that clergy are constrained significantly by the political beliefs and tastes of their congregation. To posit that clergy shape congregants’ political behavior ignores the reverse relationship, the possibility that the clergy are actually following the cues of opinion leaders within the congregation.

Congregations might also articulate a political norm through the provision of political services, such as voter registration drives, distributing voter guides, and so forth. Chaves (2004) demonstrates that different kinds of churches provide different kinds of political services, but collectively, 42% of American congregations provide some type of voter guide, invite an elected official or candidate to speak, or hold a class or event to discuss politics or register people to vote. These congregations take in an estimated 60% of American church attenders. (Beyerlein and Chaves, 2003) further model the provision of each kind of political service as a function of religious tradition and congregational characteristics. The general conclusion from this exercise is that there are “qualitative rather than quantitative differences in political activity across religious traditions.” That is, congregations in all religious

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1Lest we worry that clergy cues are the predominant source of congregational political norms, it is important to note that Putnam and Campbell (2010) see clergy cues as relatively rare. Excluding African American Protestants and Jews, fewer than one-third of respondents in any other religious tradition report that their clergy address social or political issues monthly or more. Furthermore, Brewer, Kersh, and Petersen (2003), relying on content analysis of actual sermons, find that most “political” messages may in fact be better understood as pertaining to social justice issues very generally and rarely touch on political issues as they are commonly conceived.
traditions are providing some kind of political services, but there are small differences across
the traditions in terms of which services they are most likely to provide.

Taken together this overview of politically relevant activities that occur in congregations
points to a major deficiency in our current understanding of religion and politics: we know
remarkably little about the nature and distribution of political norms in American congrega-
gations. Studies such as Djupe and Gilbert (2009) and Harris (1999) provide insight into
the political environments of congregations within a narrow set of congregations, such as
a single denomination or religious tradition, but few studies engage with American congrega-
gations more broadly. The exception is the research generated by Chaves and colleagues,
which draws on the large nationally-representative National Congregations Study; never-
theless, this research is still limited in several ways. Notably, Beyerlein and Chaves (2003)
model certain political service provisions, but they do not consider more general measures of
participatory or ideological political norms. Furthermore, they do not consider the variation
of congregation-level political variable within and across denomination or religious tradition.
The present work improves upon existing research by examining the distribution of ideolog-
ical and participatory political norms across large national datasets of congregations and by
taking up the question of how well our existing schema of religious categorization explain
the variation in political norms.

Data

One of the most obvious barriers to studying the political norms of local worship communi-
ties is that there does not exist a list or registry of religious congregations. To circumvent
this barrier researchers have either focused on a narrow geographic region (e.g., Wald, Owen,
and Hill 1988; Jelen 1992), which makes feasible a proper canvassing of places of worship,
or have collaborated with a specific denomination in order to obtain a list of affiliated con-
gregations (e.g., Djupe and Gilbert 2009). While these approaches sidestep the sampling
issue, they produce samples that do not necessarily generalize to America’s diverse religious landscape. A third approach to studying congregations makes a more earnest attempt at representativeness: Chaves et al. (1999) discuss the use of telephone book listings, especially Yellow Pages, as a framework for sampling churches and congregations. One such example is a large national study conducted by Independent Sector (Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1992). Nevertheless, this method is imperfect because telephone listings are incomplete and because churches absent from the Yellow Pages are systematically different from those that are included Chaves et al. (1999).

One method has proven superior in its ability to draw a nationally representative sample of religious congregations. Hypernetwork sampling, in the tradition of McPherson (1982) and Breiger (1974), leverages survey data collected at the individual level in order to learn about the groups to which individuals belong. According to Chaves et al. (1999), hypernetwork sampling is based on “the insight that organizations attached to a random sample of individuals constitute a random sample of organizations” (460). Hypernetwork sampling applied to the study of American congregations affords an opportunity to derive a sample of congregations that is simultaneously geographically and religiously diverse as well as nationally representative.

In the present work I draw on two recent initiatives that applied hypernetwork sampling to better study places of worship: the National Congregations Study and the U.S. Congregational Life Survey. Both studies leverage nationally representative surveys of Americans as a means of generating similarly representative lists or sampling frames of congregations. In the first round of sampling, researchers draw a nationally representative sample of Americans and ask respondents to nominate their congregation or place of worship. Researchers then identify the congregation, locate it, and invite a clergy person or other appointed informant to participate in a second-round survey of congregations. The resulting sample of congrega-
tions is thus representative of the population of congregations with which a representative sample of Americans affiliate.

This sampling method has many strengths, but it is not without its weaknesses. For instance, the representativeness of the sample is still sensitive to response rates, especially in the second round of data collection. If survey cooperation is low and non-random, the generated data may overrepresent certain kinds of congregations and underrepresent others. Nevertheless, if this were the case, researchers still know basic information from round one about the congregations that opt not to participate and can therefore weight final data to match the sampling frame generated in round one. Furthermore, [Chaves et al. (1999)] demonstrate that when taking into account non-response, the distribution of congregations across religious denominations and traditions is similar for congregations that participated in the National Congregations Study and those that did not. Another potential shortcoming is that the sampling method is biased toward larger congregations because worship communities with more congregants are more likely to be nominated in the first round. Nevertheless, this bias can be eliminated by weighting responses inversely proportional to congregation size [Chaves et al. (1999)].

**National Congregations Study**

The National Congregations Study, or NCS, is the first survey research project to employ hypernetwork sampling to generate a list of U.S. congregations. Both waves were fielded in conjunction with the revered General Social Survey, or GSS. In the first wave respondents to the 1998 GSS who said that they attended religious services at least once a year, two-thirds of all respondents, were asked to provide the name and location of their congregation [Chaves et al. (1999)]. NCS researchers located the nominated congregations and then conducted one-hour interviews with a congregational informant, most often a phone interview with a
member of the clergy or staff. The first wave of the NCS collected data from 1,236 of 1,605 nominated congregations.

A second wave of the NCS followed a similar design. This wave was primarily a fresh cross-section of newly nominated congregations with respondents to the 2006 GSS nominating their congregation and researchers then located the places of worship and interviewed a clergy or staff person or a lay leader. The interview was similar in length, about 45-60 minutes long. As in the first wave, the response rate was exceptionally high: 81% of nominated congregations participated, which generated a sample of 1,506 congregations (Chaves and Anderson, 2008). Data from the two cross-sections are remarkably similar to one another, so the waves are combined in most of the analysis that follows.

U.S. Congregational Life Survey

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey, or USCLS, collected a smaller random sample of congregations, but used a similar methodology as the NCS. Like the NCS, the first wave of USCLS data was based on GSS data. Respondents in the 2000 GSS sample were asked to name their specific congregation or place of worship. NORC researchers then verified the information for the congregation and in 2001 the religious research group U.S. Congregations, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church (PC-USA), invited the nominated congregations to participate in congregant and clergy surveys and to provide a congrega-

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4 Chaves et al. (1999) further offer that 92% of interviews were conducted by phone and 8% were conducted in-person. Additionally, about 75% of interviews were conducted with a clergy person, an additional 16% were conducted with a non-clergy staff person, and the remaining 9% were with a lay leader of the congregation.


4 Some congregations from the first wave were re-interviewed in the second wave, but the second wave is primarily a new cross-section. In the analysis which follow I use the provided weight W2, which takes into account congregations present in both waves, either because they were part of the panel or because they were renominated through the 2006 GSS.

5 Chaves and Anderson (2008) indicate that 78% of interviews were conducted with a clergy person, an additional 8% were conducted with a non-clergy staff member, and 14% were with a non-staff lay leaders.

6 The random sample is only one part of the USCLS data collection project. The USCLS also cooperated with several denominations to collect denomination-specific oversamples. The present analysis focuses only on the random sample data in order to make comparisons to the NCS data.
tional profile. All surveys were self-administered, paper-based surveys and the researchers requested to interview all adults in attendance at the sampled church. The response rate and sample size are more modest among the USCLS: 36% of nominated congregations returned self-administered surveys, resulting in 434 completed cases.\footnote{Additional explanation of the USCLS methodology is available from the investigators in their study report, Woolever and Bruce (2010).}

In 2008-2009 U.S. Congregations fielded a second wave of the Congregational Life Survey. Though smaller in size than the first wave, the second cross-sectional wave employed a similar methodology, but traded the GSS for a national sample drawn by Harris Interactive (Woolever and Bruce, 2010).\footnote{I use the investigators’ provided weight to account for duplicate congregations in the two waves.} In the analysis of the random sample congregations that follows I have pooled data from both waves in order to make better inferences about the prevalence and distribution of political norms in U.S. congregations.

## Measuring political norms

The NCS survey and the congregational profile component of the USCLS contain measures of congregation-level political ideology as well as congregations’ efforts to promote political participation. The ideological norm is measured on a both surveys in a straight-forward fashion. It asks, “Politically speaking, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, right in the middle, or more on the liberal side?”\footnote{Exact question wording and response options for all survey questions employed in this chapter are found in the Appendix.} This measure taps a descriptive ideological norm, the modal tendency of the congregation to lean to the politically conservative or liberal side. A congregation that leans to either side holds a norm of political ideology.

Of course, some congregations will also see themselves as politically “in the middle.” There are many potential reasons why a congregation may be in the middle: a congregation may have equal parts conservative and liberal membership, it may espouse a mix of liberal
and conservative political views, or it may be truly ap党isan, focusing exclusively on otherworldly concerns, thereby avoiding the political altogether. For the sake of this project, it is less important why a congregation does not foster a dominant political ideology. The more important point is that while some congregations are in the middle or do not have an ideological norm, others lean to left or right politically.

It is noteworthy that neither survey provided an explicit “don’t know” response for this question. Nevertheless, fewer than 5% of respondents in each sample declined to respond. This rate of item non-response is commensurate with non-response rates for other questions that require respondents to make a judgment about the general congregation.

In terms of participatory norms, the NCS survey and the congregational profile survey of the USCLS probed about many ways in which a congregation might foster political participation. The NCS probed about the provision of several services that promote political participation. Many of the questions are part of a battery of questions probing whether the congregation had in the previous 12 months held “any group or meetings or classes or events specifically focused on the following purposes or activities.” The battery is largely about non-political activities, but the political items include “to discuss politics,” “an effort to get people registered to vote,” “to organize or participate in a demonstration or march either in support of or opposition to some public issue or policy,” and “to organize or participate in efforts to lobby elected officials of any sort.” A separate question additionally asked if voter guides had been distributed in the congregation.\footnote{This question wording varies slightly across the survey waves. The 1998 survey asks, “Have voter guides ever been distributed to people through your congregation?” the 2006 versions asks, “Have voter guides been distributed through your congregation within the past 2 years.” Nevertheless, this slight variation in question wording does not produce appreciable differences in reports of having distributed a voter guide.} The USCLS survey took a similar form, but included fewer and less well-defined probes. The relevant questions asked whether in the last 12 months the church had provided “voter registration or voter education,” “community
organizing or neighborhood action groups,” and any “political or social justice activities (civil rights, human rights).”[^11]

Because some types of churches tend to specialize in one service over another (see Chaves [2004] and because I am more interested in a general participatory norm rather than the provision of individual political services, I operationalize the participatory norm of each congregation as an additive index of all relevant participation-promoting services[^12]. These activities may not perfectly capture a congregation’s participatory norm, but a congregation that provides one or more of these services reasonably values its members’ participation in politics[^13].

The prevalence of congregational political norms

Ideological norms

The first important finding regarding the political norms of American congregations is that a majority of congregations have a modal political ideology. Table 3.1 shows that among the more than 2,500 congregations in the NCS data, two-thirds are partisan, leaning toward the conservative or liberal side politically. Nevertheless, congregations are not evenly distributed across these poles: a majority are politically “more on the conservative side” and fewer than 10% are “more on the liberal side.” This is true also if the data are disaggregated into

[^11]: The present work is most interested in measures of participatory norms, which are generalized from these individual measures; nevertheless, I include at the end of this chapter Figures 3.11 and 3.12 which consider the rates at which congregations of different religious tradition provide each of these political services.

[^12]: Correlation between the separate items is modest, but factor analysis suggests that one underlying factor predicts the provision of all political services.

[^13]: Congregations that provide such services are directly encouraging political participation, so this measure of congregational participatory norms introduces little concern about false positives. Nevertheless, I am worried that this measure of a participatory norm contains false negatives. Because this list is far from exhaustive in terms of how a church may foster or encourage political participation, I may miscode some churches that hold political norms favoring participation because they do not provide any of these services.
waves. This general finding supports my claim that many American congregations foster a partisan political norm.

Table 3.1: Distribution of Congregational Political Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political ideology</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More on the liberal side</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the middle</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More on the conservative side</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>2,591</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: National Congregations Study data.

Nevertheless, not all congregations are political environments, at least in terms of political ideology. One-third of all congregations are politically “right in the middle,” which I regard as non-ideological. While being in the middle may be a political norm in a certain sense, the more important distinction is that while some congregations do not lean to the conservative or liberal side, a majority of all American congregations have a dominant tendency toward one political ideology over another.

Furthermore, the finding that most congregations espouse an ideological norm holds across all religious traditions. Figure 3.1 displays the distribution of congregation-level political ideology separately by major religious traditions. In every religious tradition, Catholic (n=619), Evangelical Protestant (n=918), Black Protestant (n=311), Mainline Protestant (n=610), Latter-day Saint (n=44), Jewish (n=43), and the catch-all Other (n=35), half or more of the congregations are either politically liberal or conservative. This is further evidence that many and diverse congregations have local norms pertaining to political ideology.

14 Across the many political measures employed in this study, the data are strikingly similar across the survey waves.
This trend notwithstanding, there are some differences across traditions that merit closer attention. For example, Evangelical Protestant and Latter-day Saint congregations stand out because majorities of each are politically conservative: 78% of Evangelical congregations and 77% of Latter-day Saint congregations lean to the right. Very few Latter-day Saint or Evangelical congregations are in the middle politically and fewer still are politically liberal. The only religious tradition that is analogously politically liberal is the Jewish tradition: 68% of Jewish congregations are “more on the liberal side.” Nevertheless, though most Jewish congregations are liberal, many others are in the middle politically, 17%, or on the conservative side, 16%.¹⁵ These distributions suggest that a randomly selected Latter-day Saint or Evangelical congregation is very likely politically conservative and that a randomly selected...

¹⁵This finding is very likely related to theological divisions within the Jewish tradition, but there is not a sufficient number of Jewish congregations in this or the U.S. Congregational Life Survey to differentiate between different types of Jewish congregations.
Jewish congregation is likely to be politically liberal; nevertheless, this sort of inference is much more problematic for the other religious traditions.

In contrast to Evangelicals, Latter-day Saints, and Jews, no other religious tradition has a dominant political ideology. Approximately half of Catholic and Black Protestant congregations say they are politically in the middle. That is, congregations in these two traditions are about equally likely to be politically ideological or not. About 50% of Catholic congregations or parishes are politically right in the middle, but almost as many, 44%, lean to the right and 6% of Catholic congregations lean to the left. Similarly 42% of Black Protestant congregations are right-leaning and an additional 9% lean to the left, with the remainder in the middle politically. Among Mainline Protestants and the loosely grouped other congregations, the distribution of political ideologies is more dispersed still. A plurality of Mainline congregations are right-leaning, but nearly as many are politically in the middle and still 11% of the more than 600 surveyed Mainline Protestant congregations are politically liberal. Given the wide distribution of congregational political ideology within these religious traditions, simply knowing a congregation’s religious tradition is not a reliable predictor of its political ideology, at least for these heterogeneous traditions.

Furthermore, religious tradition is not a very helpful concept in terms of identifying unique distributions of ideological norms. A cursory comparison of the distributions from Figure 3.1 suggests that the Mainline Protestant tradition looks similar in terms of political ideology to the Catholic and Black Protestant traditions and to the umbrella tradition of other congregations. Scaling congregational ideology from negative one to one, with liberal ideology scored as negative one and conservative political ideology scored as one, the average political ideology for all congregations in the NCS sample is 0.45, almost halfway between the

\[16\]

The low percentage of Black Protestant congregations classified as politically left suggests that informants likely conceived of political orientation relating to moral or social policies rather than economic policies. There are no additional questions to tease apart what the informants had in mind, but in Chapter 5, where norms are measured as congregants’ perception as to whether the congregation favors Barack Obama or Mitt Romney, many more Black Protestant congregations are deemed to favor the Democrat.
middle category and the politically conservative category. The standard deviation is 0.64, suggesting that the estimate is noisy. Nevertheless, the standard deviation within religious traditions is much larger than the standard deviation between the traditions, 0.59 compared to 0.39. This indicates that on average there is greater variability of political ideologies within a religious tradition than there is from one religious tradition to another.17

This finding about the ambiguity of religious tradition also holds for the more modestly-sized random sample of congregations in the USCLS. Although the sample is only large enough to estimate distributions of congregational political ideology for Mainline Protestants, Evangelical Protestants, Black Protestants, and Catholics, the characteristics of the smaller sample are similar. The mean ideology for congregations in all traditions is 0.34, again between categories of “in the middle” and “more on the conservative side.”18 This is also a noisy estimator, with a standard deviation of 0.69. Nevertheless, in line with the findings from the NCS data, there is much greater variability in political ideology within religious traditions than between religious traditions. The between traditions standard deviation, 0.24, is dwarfed by the within tradition standard deviation, 0.66.

If religious tradition is not particularly informative of the political ideology of local, religious communities, perhaps a more refined set of categories would do a better job at differentiating liberal and conservative congregations. This is the sort of logic employed by those who continue to refine the religious tradition categories (Woodberry et al., 2012). In order to anticipate this critique of the foregoing analyses, I further explore how congregations compare to one another across major religious denominations. Returning to the National Congregations Study, the sample is sufficiently large that I can compare the distribution

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17 The mean ideology and standard deviation is 0.37 and 0.60 for Catholic congregations, 0.75 and 0.49 for Evangelical congregations, 0.33 and 0.63 for Black Protestant congregations, 0.36 and 0.68 for Mainline congregations, 0.71 and 0.58 for Latter-day Saint congregations, -0.52 and 0.76 for Jewish congregations, and 0.16 and 0.73 for other congregations.

18 The sample average is slightly less politically conservative in the random sample of congregations in the USCLS, but this difference is likely driven by the larger number of Mainline Protestant congregations in the sample.
of congregational norms across 31 distinct denominational categories. Histograms for these denominations are presented in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2: Political Ideology by Denomination

Some of these denominations indeed look distinct in terms of political ideology. A large majority of congregations in such denominations as Southern Baptist (n=278), Lutheran-Missouri Synod (n=50), Assembly of God (n=46), Nazarene (n=18), and Christian and Missionary Alliance (n=13), as well as more loosely organized categories like other Lutheran

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19This denominational category includes the few Lutheran congregations that are neither ELCA or Missouri Synod Lutheran.
(n=19), other Presbyterian [20] (n=8), and various Churches of God [21] (n=23) lean politically to the right. Nevertheless, every one of these denominations belongs to the Evangelical tradition, which along with the Latter-day Saint tradition is the only other religious tradition that is distinctly conservative [22]. Very few denominations are predominantly left-leaning. Aside from Jewish congregations, which skew strongly liberal, the only other denomination to skew left is the Unitarian Universalist Association (n=16) [23].

The larger story in Figure 3.2 closely mirrors the finding regarding religious tradition: most non-Evangelical and non-Latter-day Saint religious denominations are heterogeneous in terms of political ideology. For example, United Methodists (n=241), ELCA Lutherans (n=109), Episcopalians (n=73), and several other Mainline denominations have congregations on both sides of the political ideology spectrum as well as many congregations in the middle. As a result religious denomination is not a reliable proxy for or indicator of congregation-level political ideology. Once again there is greater variability within religious denominations than there is across denominations: a standard deviation of 0.58 compared to a standard deviation 0.37. This gap in the source of variability is smaller than what we observe within and across religious traditions, suggesting that denominations are slightly better indicators of congregational political ideology; nevertheless, the more general finding is that the distribution of congregations across political ideologies is not well explained by religious tradition or denomination. This is to say that our standard models of religious in-

[20] This denominational category includes the few Presbyterian congregations that do not pertain to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) or Presbyterian Church in America.

[21] This denominational category includes the non-African American Churches of God, including mostly congregations pertaining to the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee) and a few independent Church of God congregations.

[22] An outlier in Figure 3.2 is the Reformed Church in America (n=6). Although a Mainline Protestant denomination, RCA congregations are predominately politically conservative. Nevertheless, this estimate is not terribly reliable as the Reformed Church in America is a small denomination and represented in these data by fewer than 10 congregations.

[23] While U-U congregations are coded above as belonging to the Mainline Protestant tradition, they are more aptly partitioned into a non-traditional theologically-liberal category. Nevertheless, since there are few U-U congregations in the present data I collapse them into the Mainline tradition, the nearest religious tradition, but isolate them for denominational analysis.
fluence, which rely heavily on fixed effects of religious tradition or denomination, are masking important within tradition and within denomination. Our estimates are therefore noisy and do not adequately account for congregation-level political norms.

**Participatory norms**

Unlike the political ideology of a congregation, there is not an analogous, single measure of a congregation’s norm regarding political participation. As outlined above, I employ as a measure of each congregation’s participatory political norm an index of services provided by the congregation that promote political participation. The National Congregations Study asked about five such services: activities related to political discussion, voter registration, marches and demonstrations, lobbying efforts, and distribution of voter guides. Figure 3.3 presents the rates at which congregations of each religious tradition provide these activities.

![Figure 3.3: Number of Political Provisions by Religious Tradition](image)

**Note:** National Congregations Study data
There are two general findings from Figure 3.3. First, only a minority of American congregations provide these types of services. Jews and Catholics stand out as the only religious traditions where most congregations have a norm strongly encouraging political participation: a majority of congregations in these traditions provide one or more political services. Nevertheless, in comparison to the prevalence of ideological political norms, which are common across all religious traditions, most congregations in most religious traditions do not provide any services explicitly connected to political participation. There may be false negatives in these estimates as the list of participation-promoting services is far from and exhaustive and there are other ways in which congregations can articulate a participatory norm; however, the current operationalization of participatory norms suggests that majorities of Evangelical Protestant, Black Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Latter-day Saint, and Other congregations do not actively foster a norm favoring political participation.

While pro-participatory political norms are much more rare than ideological norms, the second finding from Figure 3.3 is that some congregations in every religious tradition provide one, two, or more political services. Jewish and Catholic congregations are exceptional: 46% of Jewish congregations provide one political service and an additional 30% provide two or more services. Among Catholics, 28% provide one of the five services and an additional 25% of the congregations provide two or more of the political services. Black Protestant congregations do not trail far behind the Catholics: about 24% provide one political service and an additional 20% provide two or more services. Among Mainline and Evangelical Protestants, 16% and 19% provide one political service and 8% and 9% provide two or more services. Latter-day Saint congregations are the least likely to have a norm favoring political participation: 18% of congregations provide one political service and no congregation provides more than one political service. Nevertheless, for every other non-Latter-day Saint tradition, the distribution of participatory norms has a long right-tail, suggesting that some congregations in each category have a strong norm favoring political participation.
The question remains, however, whether religious tradition is a useful way to understand the distribution of congregational participatory norms. In comparison to relationship between religious tradition and ideological political norms, religious tradition is even less helpful in predicting a congregation’s provision of participation-promoting political services. Congregations within the same religious tradition vary widely in terms of the number of services that they provide. The standard deviation across religious traditions is 0.68, but the average standard deviation within religious traditions is almost twice as large, 1.21.

Data from the USCLS confirm the foregoing analysis. Although the nationally-representative sample of congregations from the USCLS distinguishes between four religious traditions, the standard deviation between traditions, 0.30, is much smaller than the average standard deviation within traditions, 0.88. Evidence from the two datasets provide strongly suggest that the religious traditions are more alike in terms of participatory political norms than they are different from one another.

Again anticipating the critique that the religious tradition categories used here, though standard in the literature, are too coarse, I look at the the participatory political norms of congregations in 31 denominational categories. Religious denomination does similarly poorly at explaining the variation in congregation-level political provisions. Though some denominations presented in 3.4 diverge from the trend, most denominations see half or more of their congregations providing no political services, but still have a long right tail, indicating that at least a few of the congregations in the denomination provide many of the participation-promoting services. As suggested by the foregoing analysis of religious traditions, several exceptions to this trend belong to the Evangelical Protestant tradition, including Seventh-day Adventist, Nazarene, and Church of Christ congregation. These congregations tend to provide just one political service, if they provide any at all; nevertheless, they are exceptional in this regard.
Figure 3.4: Number of Political Provisions by Denomination

The distributions in Figure 3.4 makes clear that on average, the denominations are not very distinct from one another in terms of how many political services are offered at the congregation level. The average standard deviation within religious denominations, 1.14, is nearly three times larger than the standard deviation between denominations, 0.44. This further demonstrates that important, local and political context of religious congregations is not adequately captured by even a very refined set of religious categories.
The nature of political norms

Given that congregational norms about politics have received little scholarly attention, we know less still about what factors make a congregation especially likely to favor a political ideology or to directly encourage political participation. Though the foregoing analysis suggests that religious tradition and religious denomination do poorly at predicting a congregation’s ideological or participatory political norm, the rich data of the NCS present many other predictors. In this section I consider other characteristics of religious congregations that may contribute to the political norms.

Only one existing study, Beyerlein and Chaves (2003), has directly engaged the question of what are the determinants of a congregation’s political norm. Using data from the first wave of the NCS, the authors modeled separately various political services that a congregation might provide as a function of religious tradition, religious culture, including theological orientation, and congregant, congregation, and clergy characteristics. Beyerlein and Chaves do not arrive at a common set of predictors for the political services, concluding that the various religious traditions seem to specialize in terms of the participation-promoting services that they provide. I draw on their work here, but try to generalize a set of variables that predict both political ideology and participatory norms.

I follow Beyerlein and Chaves in modeling congregational political norms as a function of congregational characteristics, including the social composition of the congregation and information about the clergy. The NCS asked informants to estimate the percentage of the congregation that has a college education, is poor, is rich, is older than 60 years old, is younger than 35, and so on. These basic demographic variables have been shown to correlate generally with political participation and ideology at the individual level (Wolfinger and Rosenstone, 1980). Furthermore, these are important variables in a resource model of

24 As will be shown to be very important, Beyerlein and Chaves (2003) do not distinguish between theologically liberal, conservative, and middle congregations; only between those that are theologically conservative and those that are not.
political participation, which proposes that citizens with greater resources like time and money are more likely to engage in politics (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). I include them here because it stands to reason that a congregation overwhelmingly comprised of some combination of these demographics is likely to exhibit the same patterns of political behavior as individuals of the same demographic combination.

The models of congregational politics include information about each congregation’s clergy. Though neither the NCS nor the USCLS include measures of clergy political messages or the political behavior of clergy, I incorporate two important clergy measures: clergy education and staff size. Drawing on a classic in clergy studies, Hadden (1969), clergy education might be especially important to the political norm of a congregation because higher education, especially in a seminary, may endow clergy with a greater interest in politics. Furthermore, an educated clergy has greater resources and should therefore be more inclined to participate in politics (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). I include in all models an indicator variable which delineates clergy who have earned a four-year degree or seminary degree from those who have not.\footnote{The NCS question about clergy education changed across the waves, so this is as refined a distinction as can be made in both waves.} I also include as a predictor of congregational politics the number of fulltime staff and clergy.\footnote{The NCS does not distinguish between fulltime staff and clergy.} Consistent with the religious economy model advanced by Finke and Stark (2005), which proposes that religious congregations compete with one another for adherents in a fashion similar to marketplace competition for consumers, a congregation with more fulltime staff and clergy should be able to provide greater political services.

There are several other congregation-level factors that might contribute to the congregation’s participatory or ideological norm. I include the congregation size, which is measured as the logged number of participating adults, because a larger congregation should be better equipped to provide political services. I include the logged age of the congregation for a...
similar reason; more established congregations may be better situated to promote political participation or a given political ideology.

I also include theological orientation, which the NCS measures by asking, “Theologically speaking, would this congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle?” This variable grows out of the work of Hunter (1991) and especially Wuthnow (1988), which demonstrates that sectarian divisions have largely faded in post-WWII America and that the most meaningful divide is now between theological liberals and conservatives, who distinguish themselves in terms of their preference for modernist or orthodox religious views. Although this thesis pertains originally to individuals, I include it in these models to determine whether a congregation’s theological orientation also determines its political norms. Simple bivariate analysis presented in Figures 3.5 demonstrates that theological orientation correlates with congregational political ideology. The standard deviation in congregational ideology between and within theologically liberal, conservative, and middle congregations is about 0.5, suggesting that there is as much variation within theologies as across them. Though an overwhelming majority of theologically conservative congregations are politically conservative, there is significant variation to be explained in terms of the political ideology theologically liberal congregations.

Theological orientation is much less correlated with congregational provision of political services. Figure 3.6 presents three very similar panels. Analysis of the distributions makes clear that theology does not determine a congregation’s participatory norm: the average number of political provisions across all theologies is 0.92; the between theologies standard deviation, 0.26, is dwarfed by the average within-theology deviation, 1.21.

The ensuing models of congregational political ideology and provision of political services also control for geographic region and religious tradition. Given the political distinctiveness of the American South over several generations, all models include an indicator variable that
identifies congregations located in the South. Finally, though the analysis above suggests that religious tradition is not a very useful concept for explaining variation in political norms at the congregation level, I include it as a control, and to determine if it has greater predictive power when controlling for related confounders. The baseline category for all analysis is Mainline Protestant congregations.

**Ideological norms**

I first evaluate which factors contribute to a congregation’s ideological norm. Because political ideology is a categorical variable with three distinct values, “liberal,” “in the middle,” and “conservative,” I employ a multinomial logistic regression model. While there is a natural ordering to these responses, I prefer the multinomial framework over an ordinal logistic

---

27 Using the full range of four geographic regions does not alter results.
model because I want to look separately at the factors that make a congregation more likely to be politically conservative or liberal. That is, I am interested in deviations from the middle category, which is the modal ideology for many denominations. I accordingly use the “in the middle” category as the baseline. A full table of coefficients is included in Table 3.4 at the end of this chapter. For ease of interpretation, I present in Table 3.2 the average marginal effects of derived from the multinomial logistic regression model, which I estimate using the margins postestimation command and dydx option in Stata 12. The predicted

\[^{28}\text{If I instead employ the ordered logistic regression model, results are generally similar, but I cannot detect asymmetries, those variables that push a congregation toward one end of the ideological spectrum, but not necessarily away from the other end of the ideological spectrum.}\]

\[^{29}\text{For a similar use of multinomial logistic regression modeling in political science, see}\ \text{Berinsky (2009), which uses MNL to predict deviation in a positive or negative direction from a given true value.}\]
outcome in the left-hand column is a liberal political ideology and the predicted outcome in the right-hand column is a conservative political ideology.  

The demographic composition of the congregation explains relatively little variation in congregation-level political ideology. Congregations with more college graduates are more likely to be liberal and less likely to be politically conservative, but these estimated effects are relatively small. A 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of congregants with a college education is associated with a 1 percentage point increase in the likelihood of the congregation being politically liberal and a 1-point decrease in the congregation being politically conservative. Congregations with more women, young people, and white people, are more likely to be politically conservative. As the proportion of congregants that are women increase by 10 percentage points, there is an estimated 2-point increase in the likelihood of a congregation being conservative. The relationship between proportion of young people and a conservative ideological norm is the same size and the relationship between race and conservatism is slightly smaller.

Clergy and staff also have little to do with the congregation’s political norm, although Hadden’s thesis about educated clergy and liberalism finds modest support. A well-educated head clergy is predictive of a liberal political ideology, but the marginal effect is only about 3 percentage points. Furthermore, clergy education does not make a congregation more or less conservative than the baseline category. Likewise, the number of fulltime clergy and staff does not predict either political ideology.

In contrast to other congregation-level predictors, theological orientation, produces a more clear pattern of political ideology. Figure 3.7 makes this point by graphing the marginal

---

30 The sample size in this analysis is diminished significantly by the presence of missing data, especially with regards to questions about the income and education levels of the congregation. In order to mitigate concerns about these missing data, I also estimated the model excluding the percentages of poor, rich, and college graduates. Results were nearly identical to those in Table 3.4. I also employed dummy-variable adjustment, replacing the missing values with the variable’s mean and including an indicator variable for missing values. This technique too produced very small differences from the model with pairwise deletion. These additional models are shown in Table 3.5 at the end of this chapter.
Table 3.2: Average Marginal Effects on Congregation Political Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregational composition</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent poor</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000, 0.001)</td>
<td>(-0.001, 0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent rich</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000, 0.001)</td>
<td>(-0.001, 0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent white</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000, 0.000)</td>
<td>(0.001, 0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent female</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.001, 0.000)</td>
<td>(0.001, 0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent college grad.</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000, 0.001)</td>
<td>(-0.002, 0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent older than 60</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.001, 0.000)</td>
<td>(-0.001, 0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent younger than 35</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>0.002</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(-0.001, 0.000)</td>
<td>(0.001, 0.003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theological orientation</td>
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<td>Liberal theology</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.385, 0.573)</td>
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<td>Conservative theology</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(-0.047, -0.005)</td>
<td>(0.381, 0.488)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy variables</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy college/seminary grad.</td>
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<td>-0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000, 0.051)</td>
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<td>Full time staff</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.006, 0.001)</td>
<td>(-0.002, 0.008)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cong. size and age</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logged number adults</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.010, 0.013)</td>
<td>(-0.033, 0.010)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logged cong. age</td>
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<td>-0.005</td>
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<td>Religious tradition</td>
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<td>Catholic</td>
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<td>-0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.028, 0.050)</td>
<td>(-0.145, 0.042)</td>
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<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.014, 0.038)</td>
<td>(0.017, 0.132)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.026, 0.078)</td>
<td>(-0.113, 0.093)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>0.159</td>
<td>0.078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.007, 0.311)</td>
<td>(-0.082, 0.237)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>0.247</td>
<td>-0.079</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.063, 0.431)</td>
<td>(-0.306, 0.147)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relig.</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>-0.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.063, 0.005)</td>
<td>(-0.57, -0.073)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.014</td>
<td>-0.031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(-0.035, 0.007)</td>
<td>(-0.069, 0.007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 1,888 1,888

Note: National Congregations Study data; values in parentheses represent 95% confidence intervals

The effect of theological orientation. Compared to congregations that are theologically “in the middle,” congregations that espouse a liberal theological orientation are much more likely to be politically liberal, an estimated difference of 48 percentage points, and less likely to be politically conservative, an estimated difference of 11 percentage points. On the other hand, congregations that are theologically conservative are about 43 percentage points more...
likely to be politically conservative but not reliably less likely than the baseline group, theological centrists, to be politically liberal. Importantly, these differences control for other congregational, clergy, and congregant characteristics, including religious tradition.

Figure 3.7: Predicted Political Ideology by Theological Orientation

![Predicted Political Ideology by Theological Orientation](image)

Note: National Congregations Study data; error bars represent 84% confidence intervals

Compared to these congregation-level factors, the inclusion of religious tradition variables does little to improve our estimates of political ideology. The marginal effects presented in 3.2 represent the predicted differences from the baseline, Mainline Protestant congregations and theologically middle congregations, respectively. Compared to the baseline group of Mainline Protestant congregations, few religious traditions are more or less likely to be politically conservative or liberal. All else equal, Evangelical and Latter-day Saint congregations are about 7 percentage points more likely to be politically conservative. The difference between Evangelical and Mainline Protestant congregations is significant at 99% confidence level and the difference between Latter-day Saint and Mainline congregations is statistically significant at the 90% confidence level. Jewish and Latter-day Saint congregation are 25 and 16
percentage points more likely to be politically liberal, all else equal. Both differences are significant at the 95% confidence level. Congregations in the catch-all Other category are less likely to be politically liberal or conservative, which is to say that relative to the baseline of Mainline Protestants, Other congregations are much more likely to be in the middle politically.

Figure 3.8: Predicted Political Ideology by Religious Tradition

![Graph showing predicted probabilities of being politically liberal and conservative by religious tradition.]

Note: National Congregations Study data; error bars represent 84% confidence intervals

The more general takeaway from Table 3.2 is that religious tradition, especially after controlling for other congregational, clergy, and congregant variables, is not a very informative predictor of a congregation’s political ideology. In order to make this point more clearly, I present in Figure 3.8 the predicted probabilities generated from the same multinomial lo-

---

31 It is somewhat counterintuitive that Latter-day Saints are more likely to be politically liberal and politically conservative compared to the baseline group of Mainline Protestant congregations. This is to say that controlling for all other variables in the multivariate model, Latter-day Saints are highly unlikely to be politically in the middle. The predicted likelihood of a Latter-day Saint congregation being politically in the middle is only 11%, but the likelihood of a Mainline congregation being politically in the middle, all else equal, is 35%.
gistic regression model. The bars represent the predicted probability that a congregation in each tradition is either politically liberal, the left panel, or politically conservative, the right panel, and control for all other variables in the model. The error bars represent 84% confidence intervals, which roughly correspond to a formal test of the hypothesis that each religious tradition is different from one another at the 95% confidence level (Bolsen and Thornton 2014; Payton, Greenstone, and Schenker 2003). As such, we can interpret instances where error bars do not overlap with one another as a difference that is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Especially in the left-hand panel, few comparisons meet this criterion. Most confidence intervals overlap. With the exception of Jewish and Latter-day Saint congregations, who are indistinct from one another, none of the other traditions are distinguishable in terms of how likely they are to be politically liberal. In the right-hand panel Evangelical congregations stand out as more likely than congregations of other traditions to be politically conservative, but there are few other statistically significant differences.

This pattern of findings confirms the foregoing bivariate analyses, demonstrating that even controlling for congregational composition and other congregational factors, religious tradition does not distinguish congregations in terms of their political ideology. Especially because the largest religious categories, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Evangelical Protestant, are not consistently different from one another, religious tradition is not an informative predictor of the political ideology which prevails in a given congregation. This finding is consistent with the central claim of Wuthnow (1988): religious tradition is simply not very distinguishing. Congregations differ from one another politically in ways that do not map clearly onto sectarian divides.

32I compute average predicted probabilities using the `margins` post-estimation command in Stata 12.
Participatory norms

In order to model the number of political services that a congregation provides, I use a Poisson regression framework, which accommodates a count dependent variable. Table 3.3 contains the estimated coefficient and average marginal effects for all variables contained in the Poisson model, including controls for theological orientation, religious tradition, and various clergy, congregant, and congregation characteristics.

Table 3.3 reveals that few variables pertaining to the social composition of the congregation have a statistically significant relationship to the congregation-level participatory norm. Congregations with more white congregants are less likely to provide political services: an increase of 10 percentage points in the proportion of the congregation that is white correlates with a relatively modest decrease of about 0.04 total political services. The relationship between education and the provision of political services is the same size, but is a positive relationship: a 10 point increase in the percentage of congregants with a college degree correlates with an increase of 0.05 political services.

Other congregation-level factors matter to a congregation’s provision of political services. Both congregational size and age are predictive of a greater participatory norm. It is difficult to interpret the marginal effect of a one-unit increase in the logged number of adult congregants or logged age, so I instead consider the differences in predicted number of political services moving from one standard deviation below the mean logged value of congregational size and age to one standard deviation above the mean logged value of each. For congregational size, the predicted number of political services provided by the congregation jumps from 0.54 to 1.13. This difference of nearly three-quarters of a political service is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. For congregational age, the predicted number

---

33 The mean of the dependent variable is 0.92 and the standard deviation is 1.22, which suggests modest overdispersion. I account for this overdispersion by also modeling the number of political services using a Negative Binomial Regression framework. Coefficient estimates are slightly larger in the Negative Binomial specification, but results are substantively very similar. Because the Poisson is the more generalizable model, I preserve those estimates.
Table 3.3: Poisson Model of Political Service Provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregational composition</th>
<th>Coefficient (Std. error)</th>
<th>Avg. marg. effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent poor</td>
<td>0.003 (0.001)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent rich</td>
<td>0.000 (0.002)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent white</td>
<td>-0.008*** (0.001)</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent female</td>
<td>-0.004* (0.002)</td>
<td>-0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent college grad.</td>
<td>0.009*** (0.002)</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent older than 60</td>
<td>-0.000 (0.002)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent younger than 35</td>
<td>0.000 (0.002)</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal theology</td>
<td>0.727*** (0.101)</td>
<td>0.457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative theology</td>
<td>0.284*** (0.080)</td>
<td>0.140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy college/seminary grad.</td>
<td>0.072 (0.080)</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full time staff</td>
<td>0.004 (0.004)</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged number adults</td>
<td>0.262*** (0.033)</td>
<td>0.146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logged cong. age</td>
<td>0.082** (0.035)</td>
<td>0.046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.583*** (0.129)</td>
<td>0.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>0.391*** (0.102)</td>
<td>0.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>0.581*** (0.153)</td>
<td>0.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>-0.493 (0.380)</td>
<td>-0.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>0.720*** (0.193)</td>
<td>0.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relig.</td>
<td>-1.238*** (0.477)</td>
<td>-0.277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.085 (0.067)</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 1,912

Note: National Congregations Study data; standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

of political number of political service increases 8 percentage points, a difference that is statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

The other congregation-level predictor to attain statistical significance is again theological orientation. All else equal, theologically liberal congregations are predicted to provide 0.46
more political services and theologically conservative congregations are predicted to provide 0.14 more political services. Both differences are statistically significant from the baseline, congregations in the middle with respect to theology. Figure 3.9 highlights that the predicted number of political services for theologically liberal and conservative congregations are also statistically different from one another.

On the other hand, Table 3.3 reveals that religious tradition again does poorly at distinguishing congregations from one another. Compared to the baseline category of Mainline Protestant congregations, congregations in most other religious traditions are more likely to provide political services. Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Black Protestant congregations are predicted to provide between 0.19 and 0.31 more political services. Jewish congregations are predicted to provide 0.41 more political services on average. While these differences are statistically different from the baseline category, Figure 3.10 highlights that the predicted number of political services across Catholic, Evangelical, Black Protestant, and Jewish congregations are not statistically different from one another. Again, this is evidence
that distinctions across religious traditions do not predict very well distinguish congregations from one another in terms of the participatory political norm.

**Conclusion**

Congregations are important and diverse political environments. Two-thirds of Americans participate with a religious congregation and two-thirds of these congregations have a norm regarding political ideology. Furthermore, among these politically ideological congregations, more than 50% of politically liberal congregations and 30% of politically conservative congregations are directly encouraging political participation.

Although congregations vary widely in terms of their political norms, most studies of religion and politics continue to ignore them, focusing instead on the more readily available religious tradition categories. Despite their ubiquity in the social scientific study of religion, religious traditions are not helpful in understanding how congregations differ from one another in terms of their participatory or ideological political norms. Within every major
religious tradition in the United States there are politically liberal and politically conserva-
tive congregations. Similarly there are congregations within each tradition that do not
have an obvious norm favoring political participation and congregations that explicitly en-
courage participation by providing one, two, or more political services, such as distributing
voter guides and providing forums to discuss politics. Even the largest religious traditions,
Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Evangelical Protestant, are not reliably distinguishable
from one another in terms of congregational political ideology or political service provisions.
Furthermore, I have demonstrated with respect to both types of political norms, there is
greater variation within religious traditions than there is across them.

Though the trend in social science research on religion is to further refine these categories
(see Woodberry et al. [2012]), a categorical approach is unlikely to resolve the ambiguity.
Even a more nuanced analysis that uses 31 denominational distinctions, an approach that is
only possible with a specialized dataset like the NCS, does not differentiate congregations’
political norms. As in the religious traditions analysis, I show that on average there is greater
variation in political norms within denominations than across them. Further distinctions by
denominational affiliation are neither practical nor especially likely to improve our predictions
of congregation-level politics. These findings are consistent with Wuthnow (1988), who
demonstrated that religious Americans are not well differentiated by denominational divides,
but here I have shown the same to be true for congregations.

In order to better understand how Americans are influenced by the congregation with
which they worship, I propose that we must study the political norms of congregations. In
the next two chapter I pursue this vein of research, demonstrating that congregation-level
ideological and participatory norms influence congregants’ political behavior.
Supplementary Figures and Tables for Chapter 3

Figure 3.11: Provision of Political Services by Religious Tradition

Note: National Congregations Study data
Figure 3.12: Provision of Political Activities by Religious Tradition

Note: U.S. Congregation Life Survey data
Table 3.4: Multinomial Logistic Regression Models of Congregation Political Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregational composition</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Percent poor</th>
<th>0.013**</th>
<th>0.001</th>
<th>(0.005)</th>
<th>(0.002)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent rich</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent white</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.009***</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent female</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>0.014***</td>
<td>(0.010)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent college grad.</td>
<td>0.011**</td>
<td>-0.007**</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent older than 60</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent younger than 35</td>
<td>-0.010</td>
<td>0.009***</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological orientation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Liberal theology</td>
<td>3.880***</td>
<td>0.550**</td>
<td>(0.334)</td>
<td>(0.275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conservative theology</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>2.096***</td>
<td>(0.387)</td>
<td>(0.136)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Clergy college/seminary grad.</td>
<td>0.629*</td>
<td>-0.119</td>
<td>(0.354)</td>
<td>(0.154)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Full time staff</td>
<td>-0.055</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>(0.046)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cong. size and age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Logged number adults</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>(0.159)</td>
<td>(0.071)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Logged cong. age</td>
<td>0.336**</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>(0.144)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tradition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
<td>(0.570)</td>
<td>(0.275)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>0.604</td>
<td>0.515***</td>
<td>(0.398)</td>
<td>(0.178)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.009</td>
<td>(0.703)</td>
<td>(0.312)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>3.571***</td>
<td>1.418*</td>
<td>(1.032)</td>
<td>(0.730)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>3.586***</td>
<td>0.428</td>
<td>(0.769)</td>
<td>(0.794)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other relig.</td>
<td>-1.522**</td>
<td>-1.836**</td>
<td>(0.683)</td>
<td>(0.760)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.490*</td>
<td>-0.255**</td>
<td>(0.294)</td>
<td>(0.128)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: National Congregation Study data; multinomial logistic regression coefficient estimates with standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

61
Table 3.5: Predicted Congregational Political Ideology (Additional Models)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregational composition</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Liberal</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent poor</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent rich</td>
<td>0.010</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent white</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.008***</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>0.009***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent female</td>
<td>0.016*</td>
<td>0.010**</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.011**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.009)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent college grad.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.015***</td>
<td>-0.006**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent older than 60</td>
<td>-0.011*</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>-0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent younger than 35</td>
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<td>0.012***</td>
<td>-0.011</td>
<td>0.011***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Liberal theology</td>
<td>3.824***</td>
<td>0.211</td>
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<td>(0.290)</td>
<td>(0.248)</td>
<td>(0.303)</td>
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<td>Conservative theology</td>
<td>0.709**</td>
<td>2.208***</td>
<td>0.769**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.315)</td>
<td>(0.125)</td>
<td>(0.322)</td>
<td>(0.126)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy variables</td>
<td>Clergy college/sem. grad.</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>-0.251*</td>
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<td>(0.285)</td>
<td>(0.139)</td>
<td>(0.299)</td>
<td>(0.142)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Full time staff</td>
<td>-0.098**</td>
<td>0.008</td>
<td>-0.095**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cong. size and age</td>
<td>Logged number adults</td>
<td>0.294**</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.123)</td>
<td>(0.063)</td>
<td>(0.140)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Logged cong. Age</td>
<td>0.181</td>
<td>0.081</td>
<td>0.225*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.116)</td>
<td>(0.060)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
<td>(0.061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tradition</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>0.182</td>
<td>-0.289</td>
<td>0.342</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(0.193)</td>
<td>(0.251)</td>
<td>(0.499)</td>
<td>(0.257)</td>
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<td>0.185</td>
<td>0.524***</td>
<td>0.263</td>
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<td>(0.358)</td>
<td>(0.164)</td>
<td>(0.372)</td>
<td>(0.167)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>1.022*</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>1.413**</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>(0.607)</td>
<td>(0.284)</td>
<td>(0.626)</td>
<td>(0.287)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LDS</td>
<td>1.888**</td>
<td>0.760</td>
<td>2.086**</td>
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<td>(0.545)</td>
<td>(0.892)</td>
<td>(0.559)</td>
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<td>Jewish</td>
<td>3.772***</td>
<td>0.205</td>
<td>3.390***</td>
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<td>(0.663)</td>
<td>(0.674)</td>
<td>(0.698)</td>
<td>(0.693)</td>
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<td>Other relig.</td>
<td>-0.548</td>
<td>-0.297</td>
<td>-0.756</td>
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<td>(0.554)</td>
<td>(0.457)</td>
<td>(0.573)</td>
<td>(0.469)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Region</td>
<td>South</td>
<td>-0.171</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.250)</td>
<td>(0.119)</td>
<td>(0.261)</td>
<td>(0.120)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjustments</td>
<td>Per. poor (MISSING)</td>
<td>-0.425</td>
<td>-0.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.445)</td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perc. rich (MISSING)</td>
<td>1.815***</td>
<td>0.388</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.483)</td>
<td>(0.273)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Perc. coll. grad. (MISSING)</td>
<td>-0.573</td>
<td>0.100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.509)</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 2,268 2,268 2,268 2,268

Note: National Congregation Study data; multinomial logistic regression coefficient estimates with standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Chapter 4

Congregational Influences on Political Participation

Political behavior research from the last six decades of large-N survey research provides consistent evidence that religion matters to political participation. Religious Americans, especially those that attend religious services often, are more likely to participate in politics, especially voting (Lenski 1963; Wuthnow 1999; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Furthermore, adherents of some religious traditions are more likely to vote than adherents of other religious traditions (Wielhouwer 2009). These persistent findings regarding the importance of religious tradition and religious attendance hint that participation with a religious community matters to political involvement; nevertheless, previous research on the relationship between religious affiliation and political participation has focused primarily on broad categories of religion, especially religious tradition, thereby ignoring the political significance of local religious communities to which religious Americans belong.

The present work contributes to the cumulative understanding of the political behavior of religious Americans by considering how congregation-level political norms shape political participation. As demonstrated in the Chapter 3, congregations vary widely in terms of
partisan and participatory political norms. Though politics are not typically a central focus of religious communities, Americans often learn about opportunities to get involved in politics through their congregation. Many congregations go so far as to directly promote political participation by registering people to vote, providing discussion groups and forums about politics and politically relevant social topics, organizing protests and demonstrations, and so forth. Chapter 3 shows that a majority of congregations do not engage in the kinds of activities that explicitly promote political participation, but some congregations in every religious tradition and denomination do. Furthermore, some congregations in each tradition specialize, providing two, three, or more services to promote political participation.

In this chapter I evaluate the relationship between these congregational activities, which I employ as a measure of a congregation’s participatory political norm, and the various political activities that a congregant may perform. I draw on two data sources, the U.S. Congregational Life Survey and an original, national survey of religious voters, in order to estimate the relationship between congregations’ participatory norms and the political participation of congregants. The structure of the USCLS data, with paired congregant surveys and congregational profile data, allows me to estimate the constraining role of an independently-measured participatory norm on congregants’ self-reported political participation. I complement these analyses with data from the Community Life Survey, an original survey, which measures congregants’ perceptions of the congregation’s participatory norm as well as their self-reported political participation.

The ensuing analysis demonstrates that congregants, especially those who are socially embedded in their congregation, are responsive to their congregation’s norm of political participation: when the church demonstrates a greater institutional commitment to political participation, congregants engage in more political acts. This relationship is stronger still among congregants that attend a church with an aggregate political leaning. Finally, following recent research regarding the importance of social surveillance to political partici-
pation, I evaluate the role of social surveillance in church-based political mobilization, using church strictness as a proxy for surveillance when there is no direct measure of surveillance. Generally speaking, strictness and surveillance do not moderate the relationship between participatory norm and political participation, although evidence from both datasets suggest that voter turnout may be sensitive to these social considerations.

Theory and hypotheses

There are pervasive differences in levels of political participation across and within religious traditions and denominations. Data from the American National Election Studies and the more specialized National Survey of Religion and Politics confirm that Jews, Mainline Protestants, and Catholics vote at much higher rates than Evangelicals, Black Protestants, agnostics, secular people, and those who don’t identify with any major religious tradition (Wielhouwer 2009). Furthermore, within each religious tradition, those that attend services regularly are more likely to vote than those who attend infrequently (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Wuthnow 1999). For example, ANES data reveal that in every presidential contest between 1992 and 2004 there is a turnout gap of about 20 percentage points between Evangelical Protestants that attend church regularly and those that do not (Wielhouwer 2009). Among other traditions the turnout gap between the frequent and infrequent attenders is not quite as wide, but rarely dips below 10 percentage points for any religious tradition in any given election. Nevertheless, these differences are generally about denominations or religious traditions, not about local congregations. The goal of the present work is to expand the framework of congregational influence to the realm of political participation.

Generalizing from the literature reviewed earlier in this dissertation, there are many ways in which congregations might articulate and reinforce political norms about political participation. Congregational political norms sometimes emanate from the clergy (e.g., Harris 1999), but the laity can also set the tone for the clergy (Calfano 2009). Furthermore,
democratic debate within adult education classes (Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey, 2009) and political recruitment through congregational networks may reify shared political standards (Djupe and Grant, 2001; Djupe, Sokhey, and Gilbert, 2007). Regardless of the forces that shape congregational political norms, the critical feature of religious-based political norms is that they vary at the local, congregational level. Chapter 3 demonstrates with regards to political participation, that many congregations across all denominations and religious traditions go so far as to provide political services that explicitly promote political participation. While a majority does not explicitly promote political services, there are congregations in every denomination and tradition that specialize, providing multiple political services.

I expect that all else equal, congregational norms pertaining to political participation will predict congregants’ propensity to engage in various political acts. That is, controlling for education, income, and other standard predictors of political participation, congregants whose congregation fosters a stronger norm of political participation will be more likely to participate in politics. Building on the theory laid out in Chapter 2 about social forces that moderate norm constraint, I propose that socially embedded congregants, those more entrenched in the congregation, will be more likely than their less embedded counterparts to conform to the participatory political norm. Also, given the importance of social surveillance to political participation (Gerber, Green, and Larimer, 2008) and the opportunities for surveillance that exist in a religious community, I hypothesize that surveillance at the congregation level will bring congregants into alignment with the congregational norm. That is, I expect that surveillance increases compliance with the congregational participatory norm. Finally, I further hypothesize that surveillance matters among the embedded, bringing those who have an opportunity to internalize the norm into greater compliance with the congregation’s norm about political participation.

Formally stated, the hypotheses which grow out of my theory of the social influence of congregations are as follows:
Hyp. 1 Controlling for standard predictors of political participation, those in congregations that espouse a norm favoring political participation will participate in politics at higher rates.

Hyp. 2 Social embeddedness moderates the constraint of a congregational norm such that the socially embedded congregants will be more sensitive to a congregation’s participatory norm.

Hyp. 3 Social surveillance also moderates the constraint of a congregational norm; surveilled congregants will more frequently comply with the congregation’s participatory norm.

Hyp. 4 Social surveillance further constrains congregants who are socially embedded, increasing the likelihood that they will comply with the participatory norm.

Data

One of the challenges of this project is that hypotheses regarding the constraint of congregational norms on the behavior of individual congregants require data about congregants and congregations. The former is much more common than the latter, but it is especially rare to encounter both types of data in the same study. The U.S. Congregational Life Survey is one source that contains data about congregants and congregations. The USCLS data are also well-suited for this project because they are derived from a very large national sample; nevertheless, the USCLS data have some important limitations, which I outline below. In order to compensate for these limitations I complement analyses of the USCLS data with analyses of an original, national dataset.
The USCLS data have been used infrequently in sociological and political science pursuits, but are well-suited to the present study. The USCLS has two major components: data from a nationally representative cross-section of churches and data from several denomination-specific over-samples. The nationally representative cross-section, was based on the 2000 General Social Survey. Respondents to the 2000 GSS were asked to name their specific congregation or place of worship. NORC researchers then verified the information for the congregation and in 2001 the research group U.S. Congregations, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and invited the same congregations to participate in congregant and clergy surveys and to provide a congregational profile. All surveys were self-administered, paper-based surveys and the researchers attempted to include in the congregant surveys all adults in attendance at the sampled church.

The nationally representative portion of the USCLS is relatively small, consisting of just over 400 congregations, but greatly supplemented by similarly clustered congregant, congregation, and clergy data from several over-sampled denominations. Over-sampled Evangelical Protestant denominations include the Southern Baptist Convention, the Church of the Nazarene, and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church; over-sampled Mainline Protestant denominations include the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA), the United Methodist Church (UMC), the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the Presbyterian Church-USA (PC-USA). These over-samples were designed to be representative of the respective denominations. In all, the representative and denominational samples contain data from more than 300,000 congregants distributed across more than 2,000 congregations. Furthermore, most congregation clusters are quite large.

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1 See Djupe and Neiheisel (2012) for an exception in political science.
2 Additional explanation of the USCLS methodology is available from the investigators in their study report, Woolever and Bruce (2010).
3 Given the investigators’ interest in Presbyterianism, there are further subsamples of ethnically diverse and fast-growing Presbyterian churches (PC-USA).
4 Average number of per congregation respondents across the entire data set is about 85.
For the purposes of the research at hand there are reports of three political behaviors as well as various questions gauging traditional demographics and socioeconomic status and congregants’ social embeddedness. Finally, the congregation profiles, which are matched to each survey response, provide insight into the political norms of each congregation. For all of their strengths, however, the USCLS data have some important weaknesses. Most notably, the respondents do not report their political party, political ideology, or views on political issues.

Measuring the dependent variable

The dependent variable, political participation, is measured in an extremely straightforward manner. The survey of congregants, which was fielded on Sunday, April 29, 2001, asked if in the last twelve months the congregant had voted in the presidential election, contacted an elected official about about a public issue, or worked with others to solve a community problem. As reported in Table 4.1 the average voter turnout rate for all USCLS respondents is quite high, 75%. This rate is likely inflated; nevertheless, despite the fact that voter turnout is almost 50% higher than the VAP turnout in 2000, the USCLS respondents likely did vote at a higher rate than the national average: religious people of all denominations and traditions tend to vote at higher rates than secular and religiously unaffiliated adults.\footnote{Given the self-administered, exit poll-like method of gathering the congregant data, respondents are completely anonymous. There is no way to match them to voter files in order to validate turnout reports or to otherwise collect additional data about the respondents.}

Furthermore, the patterns across religious traditions with respect to voting are consistent with NES data from the 2000 election (Wielhouwer 2009).

Measuring the norm

In keeping with Chapter 3 I operationalize participatory norms as a function of each congregation’s provision of political services that are related to political participation. The profile
### Table 4.1: Political Participation by Religious Tradition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Comm. Prob.</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>72,279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>46,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>181,737</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-trad. Liberal</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>870</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>304,110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: USCLS data

survey, which was completed by a clergy member, staff member, or lay person at each congregation, asked whether in the last 12 months the congregation had provided political services, including “voter registration or voter education,” “community organizing of neighborhood action groups,” or “political or social justice activities (civil rights, human rights).”\(^6\) While these activities may not perfectly capture a congregation’s political norm of participation, a congregation that provides one or more of these services is a worship community that values its members’ participation in politics.\(^7\)

**Measuring the moderators**

There are various ways to measure social embeddedness, but the most ubiquitous version is church attendance. This measure is at the core of many studies of religious effects on political participation, so I use it here for the sake of comparison. Also, attendance represents the most straightforward kind of embeddedness: a person that attends church frequently is more socially embedded than someone who attends less frequently.

\(^6\)There is a moderate level of correlation between these items and factor analysis suggests that one underlying factor predicts the provision of all three political services.

\(^7\)The concern then is not about false positives, but false negatives, which would bias my analysis against the hypotheses.
As an alternative measure of embeddedness I also evaluate the extent to which congregants are involved in congregation-based groups. I use an additive index of whether the respondent participates in the congregation’s Sunday, Sabbath, or church school, whether the respondent participates in any prayer, discussion, or Bible study group, and whether the respondent participates in fellowships, clubs, or other social groups. Compared to a co-congregant that only attends large worship services, a person involved in one or more of these groups is more likely to know and to have internalized the congregation’s political norm. Furthermore, participation in these kinds of group more likely leads to political discussions with co-congregants, including the kinds of discussions that may accommodate surveillance of norms.

The USCLS does not offer a direct measure of social surveillance, but the congregation profile survey offers a proxy in the form of church strictness. According to Iannaccone (1994) strictness and surveillance are intimately connected: strict churches engage in social surveillance and high surveillance churches are strict. I compute a strictness measure that is an index of rules and prohibitions from the USCLS profile survey, including smoking, drinking alcohol, eating, dancing, grooming (dress, hairstyle, jewelry, or makeup), gambling, financial giving to the church, pre-marital sex, and homosexual behavior. More than 90,000 respondents in the USCLS, most of them Mainline Protestants, attend churches that have none of these restrictions. On the other hand, more than 15,000 survey respondents, most of them Evangelicals, attend churches with restrictions in six or more of these categories.

Control variables

Finally, because political participation is a function of individual characteristics, the models which follow also draw upon USCLS measures of congregant age, income, education, gender, race, and marital and employment statuses, variables shown by Wolfinger and Rosenstone.

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8 Given the lack of probing questions about these groups it is not possible at present to disentangle the effects whether these groups are most important in terms of providing a forum for political recruitment, norm articulation, or social surveillance.

71
to matter for political participation. Nevertheless, there is at least one variable critically absent from the USCLS data: party identification. The USCLS questionnaire does not include any question relevant to individual partisanship, political ideology, or political views.

The Community Life Survey

To further test the hypotheses about congregational norms and political participation and especially in order to better understand how partisanship matters to this theory, I fielded an original survey of religious Americans in June 2014. The Community Life Survey includes responses from more than 1,100 religious Americans. Respondents were recruited by Qualtrics from a national opt-in, on-line panel. Designed to validate the findings from the USCLS, the questionnaire borrowed heavily from the USCL congregants survey, but included measures of individual partisan identification as well as congregants’ perceptions of congregational political norms and social surveillance.

Measuring the dependent variable

The outcome variables are again measured as self-reports of political participation. The survey asked respondents if they had voted in the previous presidential election and whether that had in the last twelve months contacted an elected official or worked with others to solve a community problem. Although the Community Life Survey asked about a higher turnout election than did the USCLS, the overall turnout rate of 85%, reported in Table 4.2, is almost certainly inflated, even for religious people. Nevertheless, levels of contacting an elected official and working to solve a community problem are more comparable to the USCLS figures.

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[9] Before the nature of the survey became apparent, respondents reported their religious attendance. Those reported attending religious services seldom or never were judged ineligible to participate in the survey, leaving only those respondents who attend religious services a few times per year or more.
Table 4.2: Political Participation by Religious Tradition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Comm. Prob.</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainline</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>431</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>1,054</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Community Life Survey data

Measuring the norm

One shortcoming of the new data is that there is no independent measure of the norm from a congregational informant. The Community Life Survey instead relied on congregants to report their congregation’s participatory norm. To encourage objectivity the question asked about actual activities and services. The probe asked, “Within the past few years, have you been aware of any groups, meetings, classes or events at your congregation specifically focused on the following purposes or activities? (Mark all that apply.)” Modeled after a similar question on the National Congregations Study, the response options included political and non-political items. I include as measures of the participatory norm the following items: “To discuss politics,” “an effort to get people registered to vote,” “to organize or participate in efforts to lobby elected officials of any sort,” and “to organize or participate in a demonstration or march regarding some public issue or policy.” About 78% of respondents report that their congregation did not provide any political services; 13% say that their congregation provided one service and 9% say that their congregation provided two or more political services.
Measuring the moderators

The Community Life Survey again uses religious attendance to measure social embeddedness. To strengthen the theoretical link between church attendance and social embeddedness, the Community Life Survey asked specifically how often the respondent attended religious services at the specific congregation that they had previously named. About half of respondents said that they usually attend weekly or more.

Because the Community Life Survey was designed specifically to test hypotheses about social surveillance, it included direct questions gauging the extent to which respondents believed that their political behavior was surveilled by co-congregants. Respondents were randomly assigned to one of two versions of the surveillance question. The first was adapted from research on the secret ballot (Gerber et al., 2012) and asked, “Suppose you wanted to keep which candidate you voted for a secret from the people in your congregation. Do you think you could keep it a secret or would they eventually figure out who you voted for?” About 38% say that people in their congregation would find out. Whether this is because the respondent offers or because others inquire about their vote choice, the mere fact that others will find out is an indicator of social surveillance.

The second version of the question is more general. It asked, “Outside of any immediate family, would anyone in your congregation ever find out whether or not you voted in a presidential election?” While ballot choices are a private matter, voting is recorded and thereby knowable by others. It is entirely possible then that others in a congregation may find out whether or not a co-congregant voted without so much as inquiring. Furthermore, because voting is less controversial than voting for one candidate or another, congregants may be more willing to disclose to ask one another about voting. Nevertheless, the distribution of responses is nearly identical to the previous surveillance question: 37% of respondents say that others would find out whether or not they voted. I interpret the similarity of responses as evidence that the questions touch on a general sense of social surveillance of
political behavior. In the analysis that follows I collapse the two versions into one surveillance measure.

**Control variables**

Finally, the Community Life Survey also asked about demographics such as age, income, education, gender, race, and marital status. Notably, it also asks respondents about their own partisanship.

**Analysis**

**USCLS data**

Turning to the first hypothesis, which posits that a norm favoring participation increases the likelihood that congregants will engage in various political acts, I test this relationship using the USCLS data. Because the congregant-level data is clustered by congregation, I use a random intercept model to account for unobserved characteristics of the congregation I first separately model each political act as a function of a congregation’s participatory norm and controls for congregants’ educational attainment, age (and squared-age), gender, employment status, race, marital status and income. Table 4.3 in the appendix to this chapter, displays the coefficients for the models predicting voting, contacting an elected official, and working with others to solve a community problem.

The first hypothesis finds support in the USCLS data. Figure 4.1 shows that congregants are more likely to vote when their congregation holds a stronger participatory norm. Compared to respondents whose congregation provides no political services, congregants in a congregation that provides just one political service are predicted to vote at a rate that is about 0.5 percentage points higher, which is statistically different from the baseline at the 90% confidence level. Those in a congregation that provides two political services are
1.5 percentage points more likely to vote and those in a congregation that provides three services are more than 2 percentage points more likely to vote. Both of these differences are statistically different from the baseline of no political services at the 95% confidence level.

Figure 4.1: Participatory Norm and Probability of Voting

![Bar chart showing increase in probability of voting with number of political services.]

Note: USCLS data

Figure 4.2: Participatory Norm and Probability of Contacting an Elected Official

![Bar chart showing increase in probability of contacting an elected official with number of political services.]

Note: USCLS data
Furthermore, greater norms of political participation also correspond with higher levels of contacting elected officials, shown in Figure 4.2 and working with others on a community problem, shown in Figure 4.3. Although these political acts are less common, the differences in the probability of performing them are comparable to the increases in the probability of voting. The provision of one congregational political service is associated with a 1-point increase in the likelihood of contacting an elected official and two or three or more congregational political services is associated with a 2-point increase. In terms of the likelihood of working on a community problem, the provision of one, two, or three or more congregational political services is associated with an increase of about 0.5, 1, and 2 percentage points, respectively. These differences in political participation across varying levels of congregational political services are relatively small, but are in the predicted direction and are robust to the inclusion of standard predictors of political participation.

An important caveat is that the differences presented above do not distinguish between congregants who are politically independent and politically partisan nor for congregants in politically conservative, liberal, and moderate congregations. Although the USCLS does
not support further analysis by respondents’ own party identification, I can unpack the relationship between participatory norm and congregational partisanship. Table 4.4 in the appendix to this chapter, presents the models used to generate Figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3, but only for individuals whose congregation leans politically to the liberal or conservative side. The differences in the likelihood of doing each political act as the participatory norm strengthen are generally stronger in partisan congregations, although not dramatically different. One political service is associated with a 1 percentage point increase in the likelihood of voting; two services with a 2-point increase, and three political services with a 4-point increase. Similarly, a moderate norm favoring participation, the provision of just one political service, is associated with an increase of almost 2 percentage points in the likelihood of contacting an elected official and a stronger norm of participation, the provision of two or three political services, is associated with a 4- or 5-point increase. The relationship between the participatory norm of just one political service provision and working with others to solve a community problem is not statistically significant from the baseline of no services, but respondents in congregations that provide two or three services are about 3 or 4 percentage points more likely to perform this political act.

Though the direct relationship between congregational norm and individual participation is modest, my theory contends that this relationship is moderated by social factors. Specifically, the second hypothesis proposes that socially embedded congregants are more constrained by their congregation’s norm. I use attendance at a congregation’s worship services as a measure of congregant embeddedness. Table 4.6 included in the appendix to this chapter, displays coefficients and standard errors for models of political participation that are similar to the previous models, but now include religious attendance and interactions of attendance with variables measuring the congregation’s participatory norm. Although the...
interactions are generally not statistically significant, attendance has a clarifying effect on the relationship between norm and individual behavior.

Figure 4.4: Participatory Norm and Probability of Voting by Attendance

![Graph showing the relationship between number of political services and probability of voting for infrequent and frequent attenders.](image)

Note: USCLS data

Socially embedded congregants more clearly demonstrate norm constraint. Figures 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6 present separate panels for infrequent and frequent attenders and represent the difference in the probability of performing each political act as the congregation provides additional political services. In each case the frequent attenders are more reliably responsive to the congregation’s participatory norm. Figure 4.4 presents the most tenuous case. The slope of the relationship between norm and probability of voting is nearly identical for infrequent and frequent attenders. Nevertheless, among infrequent attenders, the differences in the likelihood of voting are not statistically different from the baseline condition of the absence of a participatory norm, where the congregation does not provide any political services. In contrast, frequent attenders are always predicted to vote at a higher rate and the differences are highly significant. If the congregation provides just one service, there is an

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11 Again, the baseline is no political services.
Figure 4.5: Participatory Norm and Probability of Contacting an Elected Official by Attendance

A stronger participatory norm, the provision of two or three political services, is associated with a 2- or 4-point increase in the likelihood of voting. Furthermore, the differences in likelihood of voting are statistically significant from the baseline turnout rate at the 95% confidence level.

Frequent and infrequent attenders are also distinguishable in terms of contacting an elected official and working on a community problem. Among the infrequent attenders, the low embeddedness group, there is no clear pattern of results between participatory norm and participation: respondents in a congregation that provides two political services are estimated to be 4 points more likely to contact an elected official, but the differences for respondents whose congregation provides one or three services are not statistically different from zero. By comparison the frequent attenders are perfectly responsive to the congregational norm: one, two, or three political services correspond to increases in the likelihood of contacting an elected official of about 2, 4, and 5 percentage points. Similarly, infrequent attenders
are estimated to be 2 percentage points more likely to work on a community problem if their congregation provides any political service, but these estimates are noisy and not statistically different from the baseline. Among frequent attenders, however, the stronger the participatory norm, the more likely a respondent is to work on a community problem. The difference for one political service is negligible, but a stronger participatory norm is associated with a 3 or 4-point increase in the likelihood of working on a community problem. These results are consistent with the hypothesis that socially embedded congregants are more constrained by their congregation’s participatory norm.

Because religious attendance is very high in the USCLS, I further consider an alternative measure of social embeddedness: the number of congregation-based groups with which the congregant participates. Whereas about 80% of USCLS say that they attend religious services weekly or more, there is greater variation in their involvement with congregational groups: 46% say they do not participate in any kind of group, 33% participate in one group,
14% participate in two kinds of groups, and about 8% participate in all three kinds of groups that were probed in the USCLS. While group affiliation is also an imperfect measure of embeddedness, I similarly expect that group activity will moderate the constraint of the congregation’s participatory norm, increasing political participation when it is highly by the congregation. Figure 4.7 shows this to be the case. For ease of interpretation the dependent variable is an additive index of the three political acts and the number of political acts is predicted using a Poisson regression framework. The plotted values are the predicted number of political acts that a congregant will perform given the congregation's participatory norm and the congregant’s level of social embeddedness. The top-left panel makes clear that congregants who are not embedded are not responsive to the norm. Nevertheless, for congregants who are embedded, participating with one, two, or three kinds of

---

12 For instance, in congregations that have few groups or place little emphasis on group activities, embedded congregants may opt to participate in few or no groups.
congregational groups, there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between participatory norm and the total number of political acts.

Turning to the third hypothesis, I explore the extent to which social surveillance also moderates the relationship between a congregation’s norm and the political behavior of congregants. While the USCLS data do not include a measure or surveillance, they include at the congregation level a list of prohibitions on individual behaviors, which is more aptly a measure of strictness. Given the high correlation and symbiotic relationship between strictness and social surveillance (see Iannaccone, 1994), I use the former as a proxy for the latter. I test the hypothesis about the moderating role of surveillance by including in the model of voting a dichotomous version of the strictness measure and an interaction of strictness with the congregational norm. The output for models with the strictness variables is contained in Table 4.8 in this chapter’s appendix.

Generally speaking, the USCLS data do not support the hypothesis that strictness moderates the relationship between participatory norm and political participation. Figure 4.8, which plots the differences in predicted number of political acts from the baseline condition, a congregation without a participatory norm, as a congregation provides one, two, or three political services. The separate panel represent four levels of strictness, which roughly correspond to quartiles of the strictness index. There is no clear pattern in these results.

Furthermore, the fourth hypothesis does not find support in the USCLS data. Though participatory norms most powerfully and reliably constrain the behavior of frequent attenders, there is no support for the notion that frequent attenders are further constrained by social surveillance. Figure 4.9 finds no pattern in norm constraint across levels of strictness. Taken together, Figures 4.8 and 4.9 demonstrate that congregational strictness does not,

\footnote{Though the CLS asks about nine prohibitions, including rules about food and alcohol consumption, premarital sex, and so forth, about half of all congregations have none of the included prohibitions. I therefore operationalize low and high surveillance as employing either no prohibition or one or more of the prohibitions.}

\footnote{Other specifications of strictness generate similar results.}
Figure 4.8: Predicted Number of Participatory Acts by Participatory Norm and Strictness (Attenders only)

![Predicted Number of Participatory Acts by Participatory Norm and Strictness](image)

Note: USCLS data

Figure 4.9: Predicted Number of Participatory Acts by Participatory Norm and Strictness (Attenders only)

![Predicted Number of Participatory Acts by Participatory Norm and Strictness](image)

Note: USCLS data

on average, moderate the relationship between a congregation’s participatory norm and the political participation of congregants.
With regards to these null findings, there is one notable exception. In terms of voting, strictness moderates the relationship between participatory norm and turnout, but only among congregations that have a norm of political ideology.

**Community Life Survey data**

The USCLS data provide evidence for the direct relationship of participatory norm to various form of participation and for the moderating influence of social embeddedness, but the USCLS lacks at least one critical variable, the party identification of congregants. In order to compensate for this deficiency and to confirm the patterns of findings in the USCLS data, I evaluate the same hypotheses using the Community Life Survey, an original survey fielded online that includes more than 1,100 religious Americans. The models are similar, but include a control for the congregant’s own partisanship. Also, I rely on respondents’ reports of what political services were provided by the congregation.

The findings are largely similar between these data and the USCLS. Figure 4.11 shows that voting is sensitive to congregational political service provisions: congregants in a reli-

---

Note: USCLS data
gious community that provides at least one political service are 5 percentage points more likely to vote than congregants in a religious community that provides no political services. Congregants whose congregations provides two or more political services\(^{15}\) are about 9 percentage points more likely to vote than congregants in the baseline, where the congregation provides no political services.

![Figure 4.11: Participatory Norm and Probability of Voting](image)

Figure 4.11: Participatory Norm and Probability of Voting

Note: Community Life Survey data

Figure 4.12 adds nuance regarding individual partisanship: Independents, whose baseline turnout is more than 10 points lower than the baseline turnout for Republicans or Democrats, are the most influenced by a congregation’s participatory norm. One political service, a modest norm of political participation, is associated with a 4 percentage point increase in voting among Democratic and Republican congregants and an 8 percentage point increase for political independents (differences significant at the 90% confidence level). Two or more political services, a strong norm favoring political participation, increases the likelihood of voting by about 7 percentage points among Democratic and Republican congregants and by about 13 percentage points among politically independent congregants.

\(^{15}\)The full range of the number of political services is zero to four, but I collapse the scale because just 33 respondents say that their congregation provides more than two services.
I also evaluate the relationship between congregational participatory political norm and less common forms of participation. Figures 4.13 and 4.14 demonstrate that congregants whose congregations promote political participation are much more likely to contact an elected official and to work to solve community problems. Promoting political participation through the provision of just one political service is related to an increase of 7 percentage points in the likelihood of contacting an elected official or working with others to solve a community problem. A high participatory norm, the provision of two or more political services, is expected to bring about an increase of 20 percentage points or more in terms of the likelihood of performing the same acts.

I again hypothesize that social embeddedness and surveillance moderate the relationship between congregational norm and congregants’ political participation. Figure 4.15 is derived from a model that includes religious attendance and an interaction of attendance with the congregational norm. There is a marked difference between those that attend and those
that do not\textsuperscript{16} Political services have virtually no impact on the predicted turnout for congregants that attend only infrequently, but among the frequent attenders, one political service is predicted to raise a congregant’s likelihood of voting by about 6 percentage points and two or more services raises the likelihood by more than 12 percentage points\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{16} Infrequent attenders are those that attend monthly or less; frequent attenders are those who report attending services two or three times per month or more.

\textsuperscript{17} I don’t show it here, but attendance strongly moderates the relationship between the participatory norm and contacting an elected official; it does not, however, moderate the relationship between participatory norm and working with others on a community problem.
Figure 4.15: Participatory Norm and Probability of Voting by Attendance

Note: Community Life Survey data

Figure 4.16: Participatory Norm and Probability of Voting by Surveillance

Note: Community Life Survey data

Social surveillance performs much less well as a moderator. Congregants who are subject to low or high social surveillance are almost equally likely to vote. Furthermore, among con-
gregants that face surveillance the difference of a moderate participatory norm, the provision of one political service, is statistically indistinguishable from the baseline condition, where the congregation provides no political services. Finally, the Community Life Survey do not allow further analysis of the intersection of embeddedness and surveillance because all of the respondents in this subset say that they voted.

A note about self-selection

One difficulty in evaluating the constraint of participatory norm on individual political participation is the possibility of self-selection. If congregants that value political life are choosing religious congregations based on the congregation’s view of the political world, the general findings of this chapter would be spurious. Individual political behaviors would not follow from a person’s involvement in a congregation that promotes political participation, but both would be a function of the same underlying variable.

Because this problem of possible self-selection is inherent in this kind of research, it plagues the religion and politics literature. Nevertheless, some scholars suggests that political views are generally not an important motivation for religious affiliation. For example, (Putnam and Campbell 2010) find the broadly defined category of “political or social views” to be least important reason that congregants cite for joining their current congregation. Furthermore, for self-selection to threaten the present analysis, congregants would have to select a place of worship not simply based on political views or ideology, but on a general taste for political participation, which may or may not map onto ideology.

In order to take this concern seriously I return to the USCLS data. Though there are not questions about the motivation for joining with a congregation, the USCLS asks congregants to list up to three things that they most value in their present congregation. One item, “wider community care or social justice emphasis,” touches perhaps on some notion of interest in
politics. It is possible that congregants who value these things in a congregation have selected their congregation using some political criterion.

Figure 4.17: Participatory Norm and Predicted Number of Political Acts by Community Care Emphasis

As a first step to address this issue of self-selection or endogeneity, I consider whether respondents who value a social just and community care emphasis are more likely to comply with a congregation’s pro-participatory norm. Figure 4.17 presents separately the relationship between the number of political services provided by the congregation and the predicted number of political acts for those who explicitly said that they value an emphasis on community care and social justice and those who did not. The primary difference between the panels is that those who value community care perform more political acts. However, the slope of the relationship between norm and behavior is nearly identical. For both groups of congregants the difference between no congregation-provided services and all three services is about 0.04. This difference is, of course, modest, but similar in magnitude and statis-
tical significance across both groups, suggesting that selection does not seem to increase compliance to a congregational participatory norm.\textsuperscript{18}

\section*{Conclusion}

Taken together these findings from the USCLS and the Community Life Survey show that congregants are sensitive to the participatory norm of their congregation. Controlling for congregants’ gender, age, educational attainment, income, and race, a greater provision of political services in the congregation is associated with a greater likelihood of voting, contacting an elected official, and working with others to solve a community problem. Furthermore, the Community Life Survey data show that the relationship between norm and behavior is also robust to the inclusion of congregants’ partisanship: Democrats, Republicans, and especially political independents are mobilized by a congregation’s participatory norm.

Evidence from both data sources similarly demonstrate that social embeddedness matters. Congregants that attend frequently show greater constraint between the congregation’s norm and their own behavior, voting at statistically higher rates as the congregation provides greater political services. This finding holds for at least one other specification of social embeddedness, congregants’ involvement in various types of congregational groups.

Finally, social surveillance does not seem to moderate the relationship between congregational norm and political participation. The USCLS provides support for the notion that strictness, a proxy for social surveillance, moderates the relationship of the participatory norm to turnout, but only for those in a congregation that espouses a norm of political ideology. On the other hand, surveillance does not increase norm constraint with regards to

\textsuperscript{18}I also analyzed differences across congregants that lived less than 10 minutes away from their congregation and those that did not as well as difference between those who valued non-political features of their congregation, such as the communion ritual or children’s offerings. None of these differences moderated the relationship between norm and behavior.
the other participatory act or to the additive participation index. Likewise, the CLS data
do not support the surveillance hypotheses.
Table 4.3: Logistic Regression Models of Political Participation with Congregation-level Random Intercepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Comm. Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.279***</td>
<td>0.233***</td>
<td>0.232***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
<td>(0.004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.088***</td>
<td>0.085***</td>
<td>0.043***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
<td>(0.002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>-0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.205***</td>
<td>-0.299***</td>
<td>-0.173***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
<td>(0.011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.058***</td>
<td>0.033**</td>
<td>0.029**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.995***</td>
<td>0.488***</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.023)</td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.262***</td>
<td>0.072***</td>
<td>-0.041***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>0.090***</td>
<td>0.090***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>0.072***</td>
<td>0.028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.025)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two services</td>
<td>0.130**</td>
<td>0.126***</td>
<td>0.055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
<td>(0.044)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three services</td>
<td>0.176**</td>
<td>0.139**</td>
<td>0.102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.088)</td>
<td>(0.066)</td>
<td>(0.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>216,095</td>
<td>216,095</td>
<td>216,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of congregations</td>
<td>2,227</td>
<td>2,227</td>
<td>2,227</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: USCLS data; standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 4.4: Logistic Regression Models of Political Participation with Congregation-level Random Intercepts (Partisan congregations only)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Comm. Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.300***</td>
<td>0.236***</td>
<td>0.234***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
<td>(0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.086***</td>
<td>0.086***</td>
<td>0.044***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.000***</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>-0.000***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.190***</td>
<td>-0.289***</td>
<td>-0.174***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.018)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
<td>(0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.063***</td>
<td>0.039**</td>
<td>0.050***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.022)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.937***</td>
<td>0.432***</td>
<td>-0.057**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.027)</td>
<td>(0.032)</td>
<td>(0.028)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.321***</td>
<td>0.067***</td>
<td>-0.060***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.021)</td>
<td>(0.020)</td>
<td>(0.019)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.206***</td>
<td>0.092**</td>
<td>0.094***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.008)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
<td>(0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.096**</td>
<td>0.111***</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.042)</td>
<td>(0.033)</td>
<td>(0.037)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two services</td>
<td>0.179***</td>
<td>0.214***</td>
<td>0.158***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
<td>(0.052)</td>
<td>(0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three services</td>
<td>0.346***</td>
<td>0.289***</td>
<td>0.205**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.115)</td>
<td>(0.087)</td>
<td>(0.096)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>117,700</td>
<td>117,700</td>
<td>117,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of congregations</td>
<td>1,326</td>
<td>1,326</td>
<td>1,326</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: USCLS data; standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Comm. Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.357***</td>
<td>0.301***</td>
<td>0.089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.042</td>
<td>0.138***</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
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<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.747***</td>
<td>-0.511***</td>
<td>-0.382**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
<td>(0.164)</td>
<td>(0.188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.764***</td>
<td>-0.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.292)</td>
<td>(0.289)</td>
<td>(0.272)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.368*</td>
<td>-0.027</td>
<td>-0.177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.219)</td>
<td>(0.185)</td>
<td>(0.213)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.267***</td>
<td>-0.029</td>
<td>0.305***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.084)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.506</td>
<td>0.452*</td>
<td>0.587**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.343)</td>
<td>(0.245)</td>
<td>(0.257)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more services</td>
<td>1.153**</td>
<td>1.485***</td>
<td>1.327***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.504)</td>
<td>(0.259)</td>
<td>(0.264)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1.089***</td>
<td>-0.744***</td>
<td>-0.308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.257)</td>
<td>(0.208)</td>
<td>(0.234)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.922***</td>
<td>-0.736***</td>
<td>-0.532**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.240)</td>
<td>(0.191)</td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
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<td>-0.110</td>
<td>-0.085</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.331)</td>
<td>(0.226)</td>
<td>(0.270)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>-1.159</td>
<td>0.126</td>
<td>-0.671</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.902)</td>
<td>(0.744)</td>
<td>(0.863)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-0.685**</td>
<td>-0.062</td>
<td>-0.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.344)</td>
<td>(0.228)</td>
<td>(0.268)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>0.460</td>
<td>0.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.775)</td>
<td>(0.600)</td>
<td>(0.696)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>-0.769</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>-0.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.854)</td>
<td>(0.446)</td>
<td>(0.496)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-2.681***</td>
<td>-0.394</td>
<td>0.666</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.533)</td>
<td>(0.549)</td>
<td>(0.485)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 1,053  1,053  1,053

Note: Community Life Survey data; standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 4.6: Logistic Regression Models of Political Participation and Religious Attendance with Congregation-level Random Intercepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All congregations</th>
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<th>Partisan congregations</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.270*** 0.233*** 0.232***</td>
<td>0.290*** 0.237*** 0.234***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.004) (0.004) (0.004)</td>
<td>(0.006) (0.005) (0.005)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.087*** 0.087*** 0.043***</td>
<td>0.085*** 0.087*** 0.044***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.002) (0.003) (0.002)</td>
<td>(0.003) (0.003) (0.003)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.001*** -0.001*** -0.000***</td>
<td>-0.000*** -0.001*** -0.000***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000) (0.000) (0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000) (0.000) (0.000)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.204*** -0.299*** -0.173***</td>
<td>0.190*** -0.289*** -0.174***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.013) (0.011) (0.011)</td>
<td>(0.018) (0.015) (0.015)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.056*** 0.033*** 0.030**</td>
<td>0.058*** 0.038* 0.061***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.016) (0.015) (0.014)</td>
<td>(0.022) (0.020) (0.019)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.993*** 0.488*** 0.020</td>
<td>0.930*** 0.429*** -0.055*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.020) (0.024) (0.021)</td>
<td>(0.028) (0.032) (0.028)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.252*** 0.072*** -0.039***</td>
<td>0.308*** 0.067*** -0.057***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.015) (0.015) (0.014)</td>
<td>(0.021) (0.020) (0.019)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.211*** 0.090*** 0.090***</td>
<td>0.206*** 0.092*** 0.093***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.006) (0.005) (0.005)</td>
<td>(0.008) (0.007) (0.007)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel. attendance</td>
<td>0.388*** -0.086** -0.100***</td>
<td>0.403*** -0.075 -0.068</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.035) (0.034) (0.032)</td>
<td>(0.046) (0.046) (0.043)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.079 -0.131* 0.035</td>
<td>-0.032 -0.093 0.112</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.069) (0.069) (0.063)</td>
<td>(0.091) (0.093) (0.085)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two services</td>
<td>0.140 0.130 0.021</td>
<td>0.135 0.254** 0.130</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.092) (0.087) (0.084)</td>
<td>(0.126) (0.114) (0.112)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three services</td>
<td>0.211 0.052 -0.068</td>
<td>0.220 0.100 0.120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.151) (0.165) (0.150)</td>
<td>(0.230) (0.233) (0.213)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend X 1 srvc.</td>
<td>-0.027 0.212*** -0.010</td>
<td>0.135 0.212** -0.089</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.065) (0.067) (0.059)</td>
<td>(0.086) (0.090) (0.081)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend X 2 srvcs.</td>
<td>-0.009 -0.006 0.036</td>
<td>0.053 -0.045 0.030</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.081) (0.082) (0.077)</td>
<td>(0.115) (0.107) (0.103)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend X 3 srvcs.</td>
<td>-0.040 0.089 0.178</td>
<td>0.141 0.198 0.085</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.133) (0.160) (0.139)</td>
<td>(0.221) (0.230) (0.203)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of congregations</td>
<td>2,227 2,227 2,227</td>
<td>1.326 1.326 1.326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: USCLS data; standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 4.7: Logistic Regression Models of Political Participation and Religious Attendance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Vote</th>
<th>Contact</th>
<th>Comm. Prob.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.355***</td>
<td>0.300***</td>
<td>0.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.080)</td>
<td>(0.069)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.048</td>
<td>0.137***</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.043)</td>
<td>(0.039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.795***</td>
<td>-0.524***</td>
<td>-0.389**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
<td>(0.165)</td>
<td>(0.189)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>0.220</td>
<td>0.778***</td>
<td>-0.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.297)</td>
<td>(0.292)</td>
<td>(0.273)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.334</td>
<td>-0.039</td>
<td>-0.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.222)</td>
<td>(0.186)</td>
<td>(0.215)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.285***</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.310***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.086)</td>
<td>(0.062)</td>
<td>(0.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.198</td>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>0.644</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.508)</td>
<td>(0.426)</td>
<td>(0.426)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more services</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.828*</td>
<td>1.498***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.599)</td>
<td>(0.435)</td>
<td>(0.422)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>0.227</td>
<td>-0.012</td>
<td>0.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.221)</td>
<td>(0.190)</td>
<td>(0.230)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend. X 1 srvcs.</td>
<td>0.446</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>-0.139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.682)</td>
<td>(0.515)</td>
<td>(0.526)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend. X 2 or more srvcs.</td>
<td>2.348*</td>
<td>0.991**</td>
<td>-0.322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.201)</td>
<td>(0.528)</td>
<td>(0.526)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1.093***</td>
<td>-0.740***</td>
<td>-0.306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.259)</td>
<td>(0.209)</td>
<td>(0.236)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.914***</td>
<td>-0.730***</td>
<td>-0.544**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.242)</td>
<td>(0.192)</td>
<td>(0.231)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>-0.497</td>
<td>-0.133</td>
<td>-0.107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.333)</td>
<td>(0.228)</td>
<td>(0.272)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>-1.261</td>
<td>0.084</td>
<td>-0.685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.914)</td>
<td>(0.755)</td>
<td>(0.866)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>-0.655*</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
<td>-0.151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.346)</td>
<td>(0.228)</td>
<td>(0.269)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>-0.212</td>
<td>0.416</td>
<td>0.238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.785)</td>
<td>(0.606)</td>
<td>(0.699)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>-0.738</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.857)</td>
<td>(0.455)</td>
<td>(0.505)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-2.741***</td>
<td>-0.367</td>
<td>0.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.534)</td>
<td>(0.549)</td>
<td>(0.484)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.104**</td>
<td>-6.984***</td>
<td>-3.034**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.217)</td>
<td>(1.320)</td>
<td>(1.180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>1,052</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Community Life Survey data; standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 4.8: Logistic Regression Models of Political Participation and Strictness with Congregation-level Random Intercepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All congregations</th>
<th>Partisan congregations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.279*** (0.005) 0.230*** (0.004) 0.228*** (0.004)</td>
<td>0.290*** (0.006) 0.243*** (0.005) 0.229*** (0.005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.088*** (0.002) 0.084*** (0.003) 0.043*** (0.002)</td>
<td>0.085*** (0.003) 0.084*** (0.003) 0.043*** (0.003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.001*** (0.000) -0.001*** (0.000) -0.000*** (0.000)</td>
<td>-0.000*** (0.000) -0.001*** (0.000) -0.000*** (0.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.204*** (0.014) -0.301*** (0.012) -0.172*** (0.012)</td>
<td>0.187*** (0.019) -0.289*** (0.016) -0.174*** (0.016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>0.058*** (0.017) 0.034** (0.015) 0.021 (0.015)</td>
<td>0.069*** (0.023) 0.047** (0.021) 0.043** (0.021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.002*** (0.021) 0.486*** (0.025) 0.029 (0.022)</td>
<td>0.946*** (0.029) 0.427*** (0.034) 0.057* (0.034)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.269*** (0.016) 0.073*** (0.015) -0.038*** (0.015)</td>
<td>0.332*** (0.022) 0.061*** (0.021) -0.052*** (0.020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.208*** (0.006) 0.090*** (0.005) 0.091*** (0.005)</td>
<td>0.202*** (0.008) 0.091*** (0.007) 0.092*** (0.007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict</td>
<td>-0.086*** (0.013) -0.022** (0.011) -0.066*** (0.011)</td>
<td>-0.084*** (0.016) -0.024* (0.014) -0.100*** (0.015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.036 (0.050) 0.111*** (0.038) 0.057 (0.041)</td>
<td>0.132* (0.069) 0.169*** (0.053) 0.061 (0.057)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two services</td>
<td>0.126* (0.076) 0.142** (0.056) 0.120* (0.062)</td>
<td>0.103 (0.092) 0.164** (0.070) 0.136* (0.076)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three services</td>
<td>0.060 (0.149) 0.247*** (0.110) 0.114 (0.122)</td>
<td>0.199 (0.187) 0.356*** (0.139) 0.126 (0.150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict X One serv.</td>
<td>0.013 (0.028) -0.021 (0.022) -0.009 (0.024)</td>
<td>-0.026 (0.036) -0.031 (0.029) -0.012 (0.031)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict X Two serv.</td>
<td>-0.005 (0.045) -0.098 (0.034) -0.060 (0.038)</td>
<td>0.045 (0.057) 0.047 (0.045) -0.015 (0.049)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strict X Three serv.</td>
<td>0.034 (0.081) -0.062 (0.061) -0.042 (0.068)</td>
<td>0.125 (0.103) -0.011 (0.078) 0.023 (0.085)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations 198,064 198,064 198,064 107,620 107,620 107,620
Number of congregations 2,011 2,011 2,011 1,195 1,195 1,195

Note: USCLS data; standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 4.9: Logistic Regression Models of Political Participation and Surveillance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.357***</td>
<td>0.315***</td>
<td>0.091</td>
<td>0.605***</td>
<td>0.363***</td>
<td>0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>0.145***</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>0.106**</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.001***</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>-0.001</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.715***</td>
<td>-0.431***</td>
<td>-0.319*</td>
<td>-0.695**</td>
<td>-0.364</td>
<td>-0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female X 1 svc.</td>
<td>0.173</td>
<td>0.758***</td>
<td>-0.142</td>
<td>-0.319</td>
<td>0.653*</td>
<td>-0.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>0.378*</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.150</td>
<td>0.435</td>
<td>-0.066</td>
<td>-0.182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.273***</td>
<td>-0.043</td>
<td>0.305***</td>
<td>0.220*</td>
<td>-0.006</td>
<td>0.306***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One service</td>
<td>0.642</td>
<td>0.728**</td>
<td>0.692**</td>
<td>0.208</td>
<td>0.586</td>
<td>0.771*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or more services</td>
<td>0.920</td>
<td>1.578***</td>
<td>1.128***</td>
<td>2.037*</td>
<td>1.605***</td>
<td>0.686*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveillance</td>
<td>0.545**</td>
<td>0.843***</td>
<td>0.515**</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td>0.685**</td>
<td>0.390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveil. X 1 svc.</td>
<td>-0.477</td>
<td>-0.724</td>
<td>-0.304</td>
<td>1.678</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
<td>-0.273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveil. X 2 or more svc.</td>
<td>0.695</td>
<td>-0.276</td>
<td>0.355</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>0.892</td>
<td>0.987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1.057***</td>
<td>-0.780***</td>
<td>-0.335</td>
<td>0.727*</td>
<td>-1.235***</td>
<td>-0.606*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>0.872***</td>
<td>-0.822***</td>
<td>-0.598*</td>
<td>0.821**</td>
<td>-1.214***</td>
<td>-1.203***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>-0.469</td>
<td>-0.065</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>-0.634</td>
<td>-0.377</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Prot.</td>
<td>-1.228</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>-0.769</td>
<td>-3.319**</td>
<td>-0.800</td>
<td>-1.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>-0.662*</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>-0.109</td>
<td>-1.054*</td>
<td>-0.442</td>
<td>-0.406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>-0.094</td>
<td>0.424</td>
<td>0.342</td>
<td>-0.444</td>
<td>-0.464</td>
<td>0.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>-0.663</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td>-0.168</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>2.005*</td>
<td>0.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>-2.761***</td>
<td>-0.385</td>
<td>0.653</td>
<td>-2.986***</td>
<td>-0.463</td>
<td>0.603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-3.217***</td>
<td>-7.603***</td>
<td>-2.595***</td>
<td>-2.945*</td>
<td>-6.295***</td>
<td>-4.221***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>1.053</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>584</td>
<td>584</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Community Life Survey data; standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

100
Chapter 5

Congregational Influences on Vote Choices

“Most are affluent; many profess to be Republican. Secretly I think some voted Democrat but they wouldn’t admit it.” – a woman in her forties who infrequently attends an Evangelical community church

As demonstrated in Chapter 3, many religious congregations in America are partisan environments. The laity prefer one candidate or political party over another and congregants are able to perceive these preferences. Furthermore, religious context is a congregational phenomenon: congregations differ from one another politically—even within the same religious tradition or denomination. This chapter advances the cumulative understanding of how congregations, as an important social context for religious Americans, influence political behavior, especially vote choice.

In order to better understand how congregational political norms shape voters’ decision-making I turn to two original data sources: a regional exit poll of 2012 general election voters and a 2014 national survey of religious Americans. The first has the advantage of being collected in conjunction with an election, so respondents are actual voters who participated in the survey research when both the election and its social context were immediate
considerations. Nevertheless, the first dataset is geographically limited. I compensate for
this deficiency with the second dataset, which draws on a national sample of more than 1,100
religious Americans. These data provide an enlightening snapshot of the national religious
landscape, but they are limited also because the data collection was more temporally and
socially removed from the election. Nevertheless, these datasets complement each other,
providing a regional and national view on the constraint of congregational norms on vote
choice.

I previously demonstrated that a majority of congregants in every major religious tra-
dition perceive their congregation to have a partisan norm, a preference for one political
party or candidate over another; I now build on that finding, showing that all else equal,
congregants vote for the presidential candidate that they believe to be the majority pref-
erence of their congregation. I further demonstrate that social embeddedness, the extent
to which religious persons are involved with their congregation, is an important moderating
factor: socially embedded congregants are more likely to report vote choices in harmony with
their perception of the congregational partisan norm. This holds especially for voters who
believe that their congregation favors Obama. I also consider the moderating role of social
surveillance, the extent to which political behaviors are observed by co-congregants. I show
that surveillance also correlates with greater norm compliance, especially among voters who
believe that their congregation favors Romney.

Finally, I leverage a randomized survey experiment embedded within the exit poll to
further test the importance of congregation-based partisan norms. I show that embedded
congregants in perceived Romney-leaning congregations are especially sensitive to the ex-
perimental primes, reporting greater norm-consistent behavior when treated with a prime
designed to increase the salience of religious affiliation. I conclude that congregational parti-
san norms are an important predictor of vote choice and that social factors of embeddedness
and surveillance matter differently to right- and left-leaning churches.
Theory and hypotheses

Political science has long held religion as a predictor of vote choice. Early scholarship highlighted divergent partisan behaviors across Catholic and Protestant Americans (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1948) and contemporary studies have been very interested in the divide between Mainline and Evangelical Protestants (Layman 2001). Though the religious categories are now more refined (Woodberry et al. 2012), the evidence in Chapter 3 suggests that even a scheme that uses very refined denominational categories does not reliably predict whether a congregation is politically liberal, conservative, or in the middle. I argue that in order to understand how religion influences vote choice we must know the partisan norm of the congregation to which the voter belongs.

As in previous chapters, I argue here that congregations, like neighborhoods and other social groups, foster political norms. In this chapter I am interested primarily in norms touching on political ideology or partisanship, which I showed in Chapter 3 to vary across congregations of the same denomination and religious congregation. I argue that these congregational norms about politics shape congregants’ vote choice.

While I expect that norms constrain voting behavior on average, I do not require that all congregants are equally affected by their congregation’s partisan norm, especially because vote choice is a function of individual party identification and many other factors. Building on an earlier argument about alternative paths to norm-consistent behavior, I again expect that some congregants adopt the norm as their own. On the other hand, given the cross pressures influencing citizens’ vote choices, I expect that some congregants will comply with the congregational partisan norm only when surveillance is present. As in the previous chapter I evaluate the moderating roles of social embeddedness and social surveillance in order to better distinguish between these routes to norm-consistent voting behavior.

This theory leads to the following hypotheses:

**Hyp. 1** Religious voters conform to their congregation’s partisan norm.
Hyp. 2 *Social embeddedness leads to greater conformity to the congregation’s partisan norm.*

Hyp. 3 *Congregants who face greater social surveillance will be especially likely to comply with the congregational partisan norm.*

Hyp. 4 *Social surveillance operates among socially embedded congregants, increasing conformity to the congregational norm.*

The fourth hypothesis regarding the intersection of embeddedness and social surveillance is of special interest. Embedded congregants may be constrained because they have internalized the norm and derive intrinsic rewards or because they are so entrenched in the congregation that their violation of the congregational norm might bring about social sanctions. To better distinguish those who conform in order to derive intrinsic rewards from those who privately reject but publicly comply the norm, thereby deriving extrinsic rewards, I consider the role of surveillance among the subset of congregants that are socially embedded. Group members who adhere to the norm in the absence of any surveillance have internalized the norm or adopted it as their own (Turner, 1991). On the other hand, if surveillance is necessary to bring congregants into alignment with the congregation, they have not internalized the norm, but are only complying with it. I am especially interested in the latter mechanism—the role of social surveillance among congregants who are already embedded within a congregation.

Taking these hypotheses together, I expect that voters are sensitive to the perceived partisan norm of their congregation if they are embedded or experience surveillance. Furthermore, I propose that congregants are more likely to conform to their perception of the norm insofar as they are both socially embedded within the congregation and susceptible to social surveillance.
Data

In order to test hypotheses about congregational partisan norms and vote choice, I turn to two original data sources. The first dataset, the Princeton University Voter Survey, was collected through an exit poll held in conjunction with the November 2012 general election in Mercer County, New Jersey. Princeton University undergraduate students were dispatched to 11 pre-determined polling locations throughout Mercer County and invited exiting voters to take a one-page, double-sided, self-administered survey. Respondents were selected on having voted, not on being religious, but the sample contains a significant number of religious respondents: more than 1,100 provided information about their own congregation.

While the exit poll data have the advantage of being collected on election day among people that are known to have voted, I supplement these data with a similarly-sized national survey of religious Americans. The Community Life Survey, which I described more fully in Chapter 4, was fielded online in June 2014 drawing on an existing panel of survey respondents. All respondents report that they attend religious services a few times per year or more. Though these data are drawn from a convenience sample and therefore not nationally representative, the sample contains a significant number of religious respondents.

---

1 Exit poll interviewers, a group of more than 80 undergraduate students from Princeton University, invited exiting voters to participate in the self-administered paper-based survey. The results are based on approximately 1,782 self-administered surveys of systematically selected exiting voters in 11 polling places. Respondents were systematically selected between the hours of 7:00 AM, one hour after polls opened, and 7:00 PM, one hour before polls closed. Students were trained to invite every $n$th voter to participate, where $n$ was estimated separately for each polling place so as to provide approximately 150 completed surveys from each polling location. The sample followed a two-staged clustered design in which polling locations were clustered within four Mercer County municipalities. The municipalities were selected based on their size; comprising four of the six largest municipalities in terms of registered voters. Within each municipality, clusters of polling locations were selected on two criteria: type of polling location and proximity to other polling locations. In each municipality-cluster the polling locations consist of a school, a church, and some other public building. In one municipality the third polling location was deemed unsafe for exit polling, so the final data include voter surveys from 11 of the 12 sampled locations. The partisan composition of polling places, as obtained through an October 2012 update of the voter file, varies little across polling places within a municipality-cluster, but significantly so across clusters. If the sampling scheme were purely random, the margin of error would be approximately 2.3%; however, given the clustered design of the sample, the margin of error is slightly larger.

2 Rates of religiosity among online respondents are traditionally low (Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz, Summer 2012), so the company contracted to do the survey sampling terminated interviews with respondents that reported never or seldom attending religious services.
representative, they are useful to the present study because respondents are geographically and religiously diverse.

Both surveys asked questions about perceived congregational norms, social embeddedness, and surveillance, all of the variables necessary to test hypotheses about the constraint of church-based norms on vote choice. Both surveys also included a question order experiment, which I designed to exogenously increase the salience of congregational considerations to religious voters before reporting their vote choices.

**Measuring the dependent variable**

The main dependent variable is self-reported presidential vote choice. In the exit poll survey, respondents report their vote choices immediately after exiting the polling place. The question that they answered follows a usual exit poll format: “In today’s election for president, did you vote for...”. Exit poll respondents also provided their vote choices for U.S. senate and house vote races, which were measured using the same question wording. In all three contests, the Democratic candidate was the incumbent. Exit poll respondents, closely resembling all Mercer County voters, strongly preferred the President to his challenger. About 73% of exit poll respondents reported voting to re-elect the President. Similar percentages backed the Democratic incumbents running for U.S. Senate and House of Representatives.

In the national data, the vote choice question probed, “For which presidential candidate did you vote in 2012?” About 51% of all respondents in the Community Life Survey said they backed the President in his re-election bid, perfectly mirroring the national election results. Nevertheless, this figure includes respondents who were terminated for not meeting the selection criteria for the survey. Among the remaining religious respondents, 45% voted for the President’s re-election.
Measuring the congregational norm

The question measuring the congregation’s partisan norm is adapted from Djupe and Gilbert’s (2009) study of ELCA and Episcopalian congregants. The online version of the question asked, “On the whole, which presidential candidate do you think MOST people in your congregation voted for in 2012?” The exit poll questionnaire similarly asked, “On the whole, which presidential candidate do you think MOST people in your church/congregation will vote for in this election?”

Because the present surveys rely on perceptions of congregational norms, I made several accommodations to improve the quality of responses. For instance, I offered respondents an explicit “don’t know” option, thereby actively discouraging guessing. Furthermore, because the exit poll asked this question of all sampled voters, I tried to discourage satisficing by adding the language “if applicable” to any question that asked about religion or congregation. While there is significant item non-response for the exit poll’s congregational norm question, 80% of respondents, 1,011 out of 1,261, who identified with some “present religion” answered the question.

I present in Table 5.1 the distribution of perceived congregational partisan norms by respondents’ self-identified religion. Chapter 3 contains a more complete discussion of how congregational ideology varies across and within religious tradition, but I present the congregants’ perceptions to highlight that congregants also perceive a diversity of partisan norms within each religious tradition. It is also notable that in both datasets and across all religious traditions except for the umbrella categories of Something Else and None, a majority of congregants choose a partisan norm, even in the presence of an explicit don’t know option.

3Additionally, 128 of 328 respondents who said they had no present religion also answered the congregational norm question. I preserve these responses in the analysis because many of the same respondents also named a specific local congregation with which they regularly congregate. Obviously the correlation between stated religious preference and congregational participation is imperfect.

4Given the space constraints of the exit poll survey, the Princeton University Voter Survey used slightly coarser classifications of religious tradition.
Coupled with the analyses from Chapter 3, this is strong evidence that congregations are often ideological and partisan places and that congregants perceive these norms.
Table 5.1: Perceptions of Congregational Partisan Norm by Self-Identified Religion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious identity</th>
<th>National sample</th>
<th></th>
<th>Regional sample</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Prot.</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>213</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>431</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>359</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>359</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>145</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/Something else</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>135</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>1,105</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1,139</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PUVS and Community Life Survey data
There is some utility in comparing the perceptions of norms from the national Community Life Survey to the norms reported by congregational informants in Chapter 3. One way in which they are similar is that the congregational informants judged about one-third of congregations as politically in the middle and congregants failed to identify a congregational preference for Romney or Obama at about the same rate. Second, the most distinct traditions in Chapter 3 are distinct here: a majority of Jews think that their congregation prefers Obama and a majority of Latter-day Saints think that their congregation prefers Romney, a co-religionist. Evangelicals, however, look different across the two samples: Evangelical congregants say that their congregation prefers Obama much more often than Evangelical informants say that their congregation is politically liberal. Likewise, in every religious tradition except Latter-day Saint, more congregants say that their congregation prefers Obama than informants say that their congregation is politically liberal. This may be indicative of a shift in American religion and politics, but may also be a feature idiosyncratic to the 2012 presidential campaign, which featured a Latter-day Saint candidate at the top of the Republican ticket. Of course there are important reasons to not make too much of differences between the present distributions and those displayed in Figure 3.1 in a few ways. First, in Chapter 3 the congregational informants made judgments about the political ideology of the congregation, but here congregants are estimating the congregation’s partisanship or preference between the Democratic and Republican candidates. Second, neither sample is stratified by religious tradition so as to be representative of each tradition, but the sample of congregants also makes no claim to being necessarily representative of the American religious landscape, so difference across the two sets of distributions may be attributable to sampling bias. Nevertheless, the comparison between the distributions establishes that congregants’ perceptions of congregational norms are not wildly distant from informants judgments of a related concept.
Finally, Table 5.1 also highlights a virtue of using the national and Mercer County datasets. While the national data contain many more perceived Romney-leaning congregations than perceived Obama-leaning congregations, a finding consistent with informants’ judgments in the NCS, the Mercer County sample has more congregants who believe that their congregation prefers Obama. This is not surprising given the context of Mercer County, a Democratic stronghold. Still, even in Democratic Mercer County 25% of all respondents and 43% of Catholics perceive their congregation to favor the Republican. This diversity of congregational partisan norms in the national and regional sample facilitates a comparison of norm constraint across Obama- and Romney-leaning congregations.

Measuring the moderators

The three hypotheses related to social forces require that I measure social embeddedness and social surveillance. I measure the first using a common measure of religious attendance. Though attendance measures a potentially superficial sense of embeddedness, it is the most commonly used measure that taps social embeddedness. Congregants that attend services infrequently are reasonably not very embedded because they have fewer occasions to interact with co-congregants, but those who attend frequently are much more socially integrated within the religious community by virtue of their frequent and potentially close contact with co-congregants. The exit poll questionnaire asked, “Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?” Response options varied from “never” to “more than once a week.” The attendance question is slightly different in that it comes after the respondent has identified the congregation with which they most regularly participate. It asked, “How often do you attend worship services at this congregation?” and included response options ranging from “hardly ever” to “more than once a week.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>National sample</th>
<th>Regional sample</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;monthly</td>
<td>1-2x/month</td>
<td>weekly+</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>&lt;monthly</td>
<td>1-2x/month</td>
<td>weekly+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Prot.</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latter-day Saint</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PUVS and Community Life Survey data
Table 5.2 presents the rates of attendance across religious traditions for each sample. Attendance is higher in the national sample because it is a sample of religious people, not general voters; otherwise, there are not many important differences across traditions in each sample.

In order to measure congregation-level surveillance, I designed a new question patterned after recent work by [Gerber et al. (2012)](reference), which measures the extent to which individuals believe that their vote choices are completely concealable. Adapting the question wording to the domain of church surveillance, the exit poll asked, “Suppose you wanted to keep which candidate you voted for a secret. Do you think you could keep people in your church/congregation from finding out or would they eventually figure out who you voted for?” The purpose of this question is not to gauge belief in a secret ballot, but to measure whether congregants believe that they will be held accountable to their congregation for the political decisions that they make. In an effort to refine this question, the Community Life Survey used a split-ballot design, which randomly assigned respondents to the surveillance question from the exit poll or a more generalized version. The new version asked, “Outside of any immediate family, would anyone in your congregation ever find out whether or not you voted in a presidential election?” Across the two versions of the question, 38% and 37% of Community Life Survey respondents said that others in their congregation will eventually know about their political behavior. This tiny difference suggests that both questions get at a general sense of social surveillance of political behavior. Furthermore, 37% of religious respondents on the exit poll also said that they faced social surveillance within their congregation. Though a majority of respondents do not face social surveillance, the consistent levels of reported surveillance across samples and question forms suggest that surveillance is relatively pervasive.
Modeling

To test hypotheses about the influence of congregational partisan norms on congregants’ vote choices, I employ a series of multivariate logistic regression models. The outcome variable is vote choice, as described above, where a vote for the Democratic candidate is equal to one and a vote for the Republican challenger is coded as zero. In addition to congregation-level partisanship, social embeddedness, and church-based social surveillance, all described above, all models control for other individual-level factors that contribute to vote choice, including partisanship, education, income, age, gender, race, and religious tradition.

Analysis

Partisan congregants in partisan congregations

Given the preeminent place that party identification occupies in political behavior research, regarded generally as the “unmoved mover,” I first consider how individual and congregation-level partisanship relate to one another. The first notable characteristic of this relationship is how weakly individual partisanship correlates with perceptions of congregation-level preference between the major party presidential candidates: approximately .29 in the national sample and .08 in the regional sample. Table 5.3 shows the distribution of partisans across perceived congregation types. A cursory evaluation of this table reveals that individual partisanship and church-level partisan preference are distinct measures: nearly half of partisan congregants believe that either don’t know what is the partisan norm of the congregation or believe that the congregation prefers the opposing party’s candidate.

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5 For the purposes of the present study, votes for other persons are excluded.
6 Because the exit poll did not ask about strength of partisanship, I operationalize partisanship as a simple trichotomy of Independents, Democrats, and Republicans. The Community Life survey did ask about strength of partisanship, but to maintain comparability I do not make use of the additional questions.
Table 5.3: Perceptions of Congregational Partisan Norm by Individual Partisanship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual PID</th>
<th>Congregational norm</th>
<th>National sample</th>
<th>Regional sample</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Obama</td>
<td>Romney</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrats</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republicans</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>1,126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: PUVS and Community Life Survey data
I highlight the variation in perceptions of congregational partisanship across Republican, Democratic, and Independent respondents in order to provide evidence against the critique that congregational effects on individual decisions are merely an artifact of self-selection into like-minded congregations. More than 10% of Democrats and Republicans in both samples believe that their congregation prefers the opposite party’s candidate. More than 30% of respondents in each of the same group do not know or perceive a congregational preference. If congregants were selecting into worship communities for partisan reasons we would likely see many more congregants in churches where they believe that they share the majority partisan preference.

Direct relationship of congregational norm to vote choice

The first hypothesis proposes that congregational norms directly constrain the vote choice of congregants. I test this hypothesis using a straightforward logistic regression model where the dependent variable is two-party presidential vote choice, which ranges from zero, a vote for Romney, to one, a vote for Obama. I find that perceived congregational partisanship indeed has a strong relationship with vote choice. Furthermore, this finding is robust to controls for individual partisanship, age, education, income, gender, race, and broad religious classifications.

---

7Putnam and Campbell (2010) rule out political self-selection by showing that political motivations are among the least important factors for most Americans as they choose a new congregation.

8As a further test of the self-selection hypothesis I consider the demographic profile of partisans across perceived congregational partisanship. This exercise is designed to ensure that partisans who attend a congregation where they are the perceived political out-party are not substantively different from their co-partisans who worship in politically congruent congregations. I find that Republicans in perceived Obama-leaning churches are similar to their counterparts in Romney-leaning churches with regards to gender and education, but are slightly younger and less likely to be white. Democrats who judge their congregation to favor Romney are also indistinguishable from their co-partisans in perceived Obama-leaning churches in terms of gender and education, but they are slightly younger, more likely to be white, and less wealthy.

9Full regression coefficient tables for this and subsequent models are found in the appendix.
Within the national sample of U.S. citizens, congregational partisanship has a large and statistically significant relationship with individual vote choice (see Figure 5.1). Controlling for standard predictors of vote choice, such as individual partisanship, sex, race, and religious tradition, a congregant who does not know or perceive a congregational partisanship is almost equally likely to vote for the President or his challenger. The assigned probability of voting for the President is 49%, with a 95% confidence interval that spans from 44% to 52%. All else equal, if the voter’s congregation prefers Obama, the likelihood of voting for the President shoots up to 66%. The difference of about 17 percentage points is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. As per the first hypothesis, congregants who perceive a pro-Romney norms are predicted to vote for the President at a rate that is about 15 points lower than the base condition. This difference easily attains statistical significance at the 99% confidence level.
The first hypothesis also finds strong support in the regional exit poll data. I again model two-party presidential vote choices using a logistic regression framework that accounts for perceived congregational partisanship and controls for standard predictors of vote choice, including individual partisanship, age, education, income, gender, race, and broad religious classifications. Figure 5.2 presents the predicted probability of voting for Obama.

Figure 5.2: Probability of Voting for Obama by Congregational Norm (Regional sample)

All else equal, voters who do not perceive a partisan norm are predicted to vote for the President at a rate of about 72%; which is much higher than in the national sample, but consistent with the strong support that the President enjoyed in Mercer County, NJ. This likelihood increases to 78% among voters in perceived Obama-leaning congregations and decreases to 65% among voters in perceived Romney-leaning congregations. These differences between the likelihood of voting for the President when in a perceived-partisan congregation and a congregation without a known partisan norm are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. As in the national data, there is a symmetrical effect of congregational
norms—they nudge voters toward or away from the President with similar force. Combined
with the finding from the national sample, I take this as strong evidence for the first hypoth-
esis: compared to congregants who do not perceive a norm, congregants who believe their
religious community to favor the President are more likely to vote for him and those who
see their congregation as preferring his challenger are less likely to vote for the President.

Of course, individual partisanship is extremely predictive of vote choice (Campbell et al.,
1960) and the model which produces the predicted probabilities in Figure 5.1 controls for
individual partisanship. Nevertheless, in order to better understand how congregational
norms interact with individual partisanship, I present Figure 5.3 which uses the same model
as before to estimate separately how pro-Obama and pro-Romney perceptions influence the
probability of voting for the President among independents, Democrats, and Republicans.

Figure 5.3: Probability of Voting for Obama by Partisanship and Congregational Norm
(National sample)

![Bar chart showing probability of voting for Obama by partisanship and congregational norm.]

Note: Community Life Survey data
There are two major takeaways from Figure 5.3. First, independent voters are most constrained by a congregational partisan norm. Political independents are predicted to vote for the President with a probability of 45% when they do not know or detect a congregational partisan preference. This probability jumps to 74% in pro-Obama congregations, but drops precipitously to 22% in perceived pro-Romney congregations. These predicted probabilities are all statistically different from one another at the 99% confidence level.

The second takeaway from Figure 5.3 is that though the differences in the probability of voting for the President are less pronounced among partisans, they are still in the predicted direction. Furthermore the differences attain statistical significance at the same high levels of confidence. Democrats are predicted to vote for the President with a likelihood of 88% if they don’t perceive a partisan norm, a likelihood of 96% if they perceive their congregation to be politically congenial, and a likelihood of 71% if they believe themselves to be outside of the congregation’s partisan preference. Similarly, Republican are predicted to vote for the President at a base rate of 12%, but the likelihood rises 20 percentage points to 32% when they perceive their congregation to favor the other party and falls to just 4% when they believe that the congregational norm is aligned with their own partisan disposition. All differences are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

Figure 5.4 affirms the same two general findings regarding individual partisanship and congregational partisan norms. Political independents are the most persuadable set of congregants. A perceived pro-Obama norm is associated with a 14 percentage point increase in the likelihood of voting for the President (p < .01, one-tailed test) and a pro-Romney norm is associated with a 15 percentage point decrease in the likelihood of voting for the President (p < .01). Both differences are statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

Again, the relationship between congregational partisan preference and presidential vote choice is clearest among independent voters, but operates in a similar fashion among partisans, but at a much more subtle rate. Within the Mercer County Democrats there are some
potential ceiling effects. Without perceiving a partisan norm in their congregation, they are predicted to vote for the President with a likelihood of 97%. This likelihood increases and decreases by just two percentage points based on the partisanship of the congregation. Nevertheless; there are sufficient Democrats in the regional sample that these small differences attain statistical significance at the 95% confidence level (p = .03, one-tailed test). On the other side of the political aisle there is more conversion. Republican congregants who do not perceive a partisan norm are predicted to vote for the President at a rate of about 14%. On average, support for the President increases to 26% if the Republican in question attends a perceived Obama-leaning church, but decreases to 8% if the respondent believes that the congregation prefers Romney. These differences of 11 (p = .02, one-tailed test) and 6 percentage points (p = .01), respectively, are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.
The consistency of findings across the two samples and across independents, Democrats, and Republicans, offers strong support for the first hypothesis, that congregation-level partisan norms are a constraining influence on individual vote choice. This relationship is most clearly pronounced among political independents, but is also evident among partisan congregants.

**The moderating role of social embeddedness**

Turning to the second hypothesis, which proposes that socially embedded congregants are more likely to support their congregation’s preferred candidate, I now consider the interaction of the perceived congregational norm with religious attendance. Modeling two-party vote choice as a function of the same individual factors as before, this second model only varies from the first set of models in that it interacts the congregational norm with respondents’ religious attendance, an ubiquitous measure of social embeddedness. I evaluate this relationship using both datasets.

The second hypothesis is generally borne out in the data. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 display first differences in predicted vote choice by attendance. That is, the estimates represent the difference in predicted probability of voting for Obama between congregants that attend infrequently and congregants that attend at least monthly.

In both datasets voters in perceived Obama-leaning congregations are more likely to say that they voted for the President if they attend services frequently. The increase in the national data is about 9 percentage points ($p = 0.09$, one-tailed test), from 63% to 71%, and the increase for frequent attenders in the regional sample is about 7 percentage points ($p = 0.04$, one-tailed test).

Similarly, social embeddedness seems to further constrain voters that worship in perceived Romney-leaning congregations. In the national dataset, the predicted probability of voting for Obama decreases from 41% to 27%, a difference of 14 percentage points ($p <0.01$, one-
Figure 5.5: Change in Probability of Voting for Obama by Congregational Norm and Attendance (National data)

![Graph showing change in probability of voting for Obama by congregational norm and attendance.]

Note: Community Life Survey data

tailed test). In the regional sample, the drop in likelihood among congregants in perceived Romney-leaning churches is 5 percentage points ($p = 0.11$, one-tailed test).

Though the theory does not expect embeddedness to matter to the political behavior of congregants in non-partisan congregations or congregations where respondents do not perceive a norm, Figures 5.5 and 5.6 provide mixed evidence that it may. Though the regional sample suggests that frequent attenders who don’t know or don’t perceive a partisan norm are no more or less likely to vote for Obama, the national data indicate that attendance has almost as much of a negative relationship to vote choice for congregants who don’t see a partisan norm and those who believe that their congregation prefers Romney.

The differences in predicted Obama vote suggest that social embeddedness, as measured by religious attendance, makes norm conformity more likely in perceived Obama-leaning and Romney-leaning churches. Insofar as embedded congregants conform with group norms because they have internalized them, it is tempting to say that conformity to the pro-Obama norm or pro-Romney norm is driven by internalization. Nevertheless, because the social
Figure 5.6: Change in Probability of Voting for Obama by Congregational Norm and Attendance (Regional data)

[Graph showing differences in probability of voting for Obama by congregational partisan norm]

Note: PUVS data

embedded are also more likely to be surveilled, I take care to consider separately the role of social surveillance in congregations.

The moderating role of social surveillance

The third hypothesis proposes that surveillance moderates the constraint of congregation-level norms because congregants are more inclined to comply with the norm if their behavior will eventually be known. I test this hypothesis by interacting surveillance with perceived congregational partisanship. Figures 5.7 and 5.8 present the difference in predicted probability of voting for Obama between congregants who think that others will find out their political decisions and those who think that others in their congregation will not find out.

10 The regional survey asked about the likelihood of others in the congregation finding out for whom they voted and the national survey asked the same question to half of the participants and a similar question pertaining to presidential election turnout, more broadly. As respondents reported nearly identical levels of surveillance across the two question wordings, I collapse them for the subsequent analysis.
I again present results separately for congregants who perceive no norm and for congregants who perceive a pro-Obama or pro-Romney norm.

Figure 5.7: Change in Probability of Voting for Obama by Congregational Norm and Surveillance (National data)

![Diagram showing change in probability of voting for Obama by congregational partisan norm and surveillance.]

Note: Community Life Survey data

On average, surveillance does not seem to moderate the relationship between partisan norm and vote choice. Especially among congregants in perceived Obama-leaning churches, the evidence does not support the notion surveillance matters to vote choice. In both samples, the difference between the surveilled and the non-surveilled is estimated to be zero.

Among congregants in perceived Romney-leaning churches, surveillance seems to matter more. Respondents in the national data who report social surveillance in their congregation are about 4 percentage points less likely to vote for the President. This difference is in the predicted direction, but falls short of significance at standard thresholds (p = 0.25, one-tailed test). In the regional sample, however, surveilled congregants in perceived Romney-leaning congregations are about 11 percentage points less likely to vote for the President. This decline in predicted Obama vote from 68% to 57% is highly statistically significant (p < .01, one-tailed test).
Although the weak evidence in the national sample attenuates what findings can be generalized from Figures 5.7 and 5.8, there is some support for a conditional understanding of social surveillance. Specifically, it may be the case that social surveillance matters in Romney-leaning churches and not in Obama-leaning churches. This suggests that voters in Romney-leaning congregations, especially within the regional sample, may not have internalized the congregation’s norm preferring Romney, but complied with the norm on election day. In order to tease apart the competing mechanisms of conformity and compliance, I consider the special cases where social embeddedness and surveillance overlap.

In accordance with Hypothesis 4, I expect that surveillance is constraining among socially embedded congregants because it brings into compliance voters who may not share the group’s preference, but will comply if they feel pressure from their peers. By comparing the added impact of surveillance among embedded congregants, I can better estimate the extent to which congregants publicly comply without personally accepting their congregation’s norm.
For ease of interpreting this intersection of congregational norms, social embeddedness, and social surveillance, I restrict this analysis to only frequently attending congregants, those who are socially embedded in their congregation. Inasmuch as congregants who are embedded but do not face surveillance conform to the norm, we can think of them as having internalized it. On the other hand, we can conceive of the difference in voting behavior between embedded congregants who do not face surveillance and those who do as the rate of compliance, or acting in accordance with a norm that has not been internalized.

Figures 5.9 and 5.10 present the first differences of surveillance among frequently attending congregants in perceived pro-Obama congregations, pro-Romney congregations, and congregations with no perceivable preference. In the national data, surveillance does not appear to at all influence the vote choice of voters that frequently attend Obama-leaning churches. There is weak evidence in the same data, however, that congregants in perceived Romney-leaning churches are moved by surveillance. Frequent attenders who do not report surveillance are predicted to have voted for the President at a rate of 27%, but attenders who report surveillance are predicted to have voted for the President at a rate of 21%. This difference of 6 percentage points is in the predicted direction, but falls short of statistical significance at any standard threshold (p = .17, one-tailed test).

In the regional data there is more support for the fourth hypothesis, especially with regards to congregants that frequently attend Romney-leaning congregations. Among those voters who are embedded in a congregation that they believe to be Romney-leaning, surveillance has a large and significant relationship with norm compliance. Embedded congregants who think that they can keep their vote choice a secret are predicted to support the President at a rate of 67%, but those who think others will eventually find out for whom they vote are estimated to support the President at a rate of 55%. This difference of about 12 percentage points is robust to individual-level control variables and is statistically significant at the 99% confidence level (p < .01, one-tailed test). Even embedded congregants in per-
ceived Obama-leaning congregation show a modest effect of surveillance on their reported vote choice. Support for the President is predicted to rise from 75% among the embedded congregants who report surveillance to 83% among the embedded congregants who say that others could find out for whom they vote.

Taken together, Figures 5.9 and 5.10 provide mixed support for the fourth hypothesis. In one dataset surveillance increases norm constraint negligibly for embedded congregants in perceived Obama-leaning congregations; in the other there is no discernible relationship. Generalizing from these results, it appears that embedded congregants that conform to the Obama-leaning norm do so without concern for any surveillance by their peers. This is to say that congregants are most likely conforming to the norm because they have adopted it as their own and need no further nudge from their peers.

On the other hand, for congregants embedded in Romney-leaning congregations, one dataset provides weak evidence of surveillance moderating the relationship of norm to vote choice and the other dataset provides strong evidence for the moderating effect. This sug-
Figure 5.10: Probability of Voting for Obama by Congregational Norm and Surveillance (Frequently Attending Congregants Only)

Note: Community Life Survey data

gests that much of the norm constraint in Romney-leaning congregations is driven by social surveillance of political behavior. Consider further that among the regional sample, the model used to test for the role of social embeddedness predicted that congregants would be 68% likely to vote for the President if they did not often attend their Romney-leaning congregation, but 63% likely to vote for the President if they attended frequently. When the analysis if restricted to just frequent attenders, the predicted rate of voting for Obama is 67% among congregants who do not report surveillance and 55% among those who do. This is to say that almost all of the constraint of embeddedness is attributable to social surveillance: absent surveillance the embedded congregants are more or less indistinguishable in their likelihood of voting for the President than their infrequently attending counterparts.
Two experimental tests

Congregational norms, social embeddedness, and social surveillance, do not lend themselves readily to experimentation, but both surveys included a question ordering experiment designed to make congregational considerations salient to the respondents immediately before they reported their political choices. I present the results from these experiments in order to better understand the causal relationship between congregational norm and individual behavior.

The design, which is common to both studies, is straightforward. There were three different versions of the questionnaire: a control and two treatment conditions. All three versions started by asking respondents about their gender, race, and age. Asking these questions first is standard practice for Edison Research, the group that performs exit polling for the national news networks. Placing these questions first also provided context in which I could ask respondents in the treatment conditions about their religious affiliation.

The treatments were designed to make congregational considerations more salient to voters immediately before they provided responses to political questions. In the first experiment, which was conducted through the 2012 regional exit poll, respondents assigned to the first treatment condition respondents were asked a religious preference question that was patterned after the item used by Edison Research. It asked, “What is your present religion, if any?” and offered several closed-ended response options. In the second treatment condition respondents were asked to name the specific local congregation that they most often attend. The question probed, “If applicable, what is the name of the local church/congregation that you most often attend? In what town is it located?” and provided lines for the respondent.

\[11\] In the online national study, the randomization was automated by Qualtrics. In the exit poll questionnaires were sequentially ordered into packets such that every third sampled voter was offered the same version of the questionnaire. In both studies the questionnaires varied only in terms of question order.

\[12\] Near the end of the survey respondents in the treatment condition were asked whichever question they had not previously been asked. Likewise, respondents assigned to the control condition were eventually asked both religion questions. All respondents were asked all of the question, if only in a different order.
to provide the information. Both primes are intended to make respondents think about their religious community, but the congregational prime is especially expected to make the local religious community and its political norms salient to the voter.

In order to evaluate the generalizability of the exit poll’s experimental findings and to improve upon the design, I included in the national Community Life Survey a similar experimental design with a slight modification. Instead of offering two affiliation treatments, I used a new treatment designed to prime notions of the divine without raising the salience of religious community. The purpose of this new treatment is to better assess whether religion operates as a social force, a reminder of a community to which one belongs, or as something more general. To get at this question, the new treatment probes regarding spirituality, which may touch on religious belonging, but is also commonly conceived of as belief without religious attachment (Bellah 1985; Stark 2008). Respondents were randomly assigned to three conditions: a control with no early mention of religion, an affiliation treatment that employed the same congregational prime from the exit poll, and a spiritual treatment, which simply asked, “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a spiritual person?”

I propose that the primes to think about one’s religious affiliation nudge congregants in the direction of their congregational partisan norm. Just as social surveillance operates as an external check on norm compliance, I expect that making religious community salient will cause respondents to bring their reports of political choices more closely into alignment with their congregation’s political norm. The present data present a hard test of the experimental hypotheses for at least two reasons. First, the treatments are very subtle. Religion is just one of four personal characteristics measured at the beginning of the questionnaire 13. Furthermore, in terms of identity primes, a mere mention of affiliation is a relatively weak type of prime (Klar 2013). Most importantly, however, the exit poll and the online survey data offer a hard test because voters in both studies had already cast their ballots. Since

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13 The other characteristics are race, age, and gender.
respondents are randomly assigned to experimental condition, any observable differences across the experimental conditions are the function of respondents inaccurately recalling or deliberately misrepresenting their vote choices.

Finally, in order to interpret the results of the experiments, it is important to first note that although respondents were asked about their congregation’s political norm after the treatment or control questions were administered, their perceptions of the congregational norm are independent of their assignment to treatment or control. The correlation between the two variables is .02 in the national data and less than .01 in the regional data and .02. Furthermore, the randomization of treatment and control worked properly such that no demographic variable predicts assignment to either religious prime.

Experimental analysis

Turning first to the exit poll study conducted in Mercer County, NJ, Figure 5.11 shows the differences in means between congregants assigned to the congregation and religion primes and to the baseline, where there was no early mention of religion. As per predictions, voters primed with either version of their religious affiliation are slightly more likely to say that they voted for the President: the religion prime yields a positive difference of 4 percentage points (p = .12, one-tailed test) and the congregational prime yielded a 2 percentage point difference (p = .28). Nevertheless, these differences are very small and not statistically significant at standard thresholds. The differences for voters in Romney-leaning congregations are somewhat larger. Voters assigned to the religion prime said they voted for the president at a rate that is 6 percentage points lower than the baseline group (p= .22, one-tailed test) and those assigned to the congregation prime said they voted for the president at a rate that is

14 The congregational norm question was placed near the end of each survey, after a significant buffer of unrelated questions.

15 Differences in means for the control variables are not statistically significant at any standard threshold.
7 percentage points lower than the baseline (p = .16, one-tailed test), but these estimates are also exceptionally noisy and not statistically significant at any standard threshold.

Figure 5.11: Differences in Mean Democratic Vote by Congregational Norm and Experimental Condition (regional data)

![Graph showing differences in mean Democratic vote by congregational norm and experimental condition.](image)

Note: PUVS data

On average, primes designed to raise the salience of religious affiliation do not have a very large or statistically significant effect on reports of vote choice; nevertheless, given the foregoing observational finding regarding the intersection of surveillance and embeddedness, I further consider whether the priming experiment has a stronger effect on reported vote choice for embedded congregants.

Figure 5.12, which is restricted to frequent attenders, more closely approximates Hypothesis 4 regarding the role of surveillance among the socially embedded. Consistent with the earlier test of Hypothesis 4, voters who do not perceive a congregational partisan norm or believe that their congregation prefers Obama are relatively unmoved by the external stimuli of the priming experiment, but congregants who believe that their congregation prefers Romney are strongly affected. Although estimates are exceptionally noisy because of the smaller cell sizes, among regularly attending congregants in perceived pro-Romney churches...
there is a clear and statistically significant negative effect of the religious primes on voting for the Democratic candidate.\textsuperscript{16} Between the two religious primes, the congregation prime seems to have a slightly more negative effect on reported vote choice, but this is merely suggestive as the differences for the congregation and religion primes are not statistically different from one another.

Figure 5.12 corroborates the observational findings in Figure 5.10: socially embedded congregants in perceived Romney-leaning congregations are especially influenced by external stimuli. They are less likely to say they voted for the President if they think that others in their congregation will eventually find out for whom they voted and they are similarly less likely to report having voted for the President if the questionnaire explicitly prompts them to consider their religious affiliation. Together with the earlier observational analyses, the

\textsuperscript{16}As a robustness check I also look at mean support for Democratic candidates for U.S. House and Senate. Though not shown here, the pattern of results is identical for the down-ballot races: primes of religious affiliation make congregants in pro-Romney congregations much less likely to say that the support the Democratic candidate, which was the incumbent in all three races.
first experiment provides evidence that congregants in right-leaning churches are slower to adopt their congregation’s norm, but relatively quick to comply.

In order to better test whether the influence of religion is social or something more general, I adapted the experiment slightly and fielded it again. Rather than use two affiliation primes, I preserved just the congregational version and traded out the religious tradition prime for a prime about spirituality. Because spirituality is often invoked in the absence of religious attachment, it seems like the perfect counterpoint to congregational affiliation. Inasmuch as I observe differences between respondents primed with spirituality and those primed with congregational affiliation, I think of this as the unique contribution of the community or social influence of religion to political behavior.

Figure 5.13: Differences in Mean Democratic Vote by Congregational Norm and Experimental Condition (all respondents, national data)

Figure 5.13 presents the mean Democratic vote for each condition and across perceived congregational partisan norms. Among respondents in Obama-leaning congregations the congregation prime increases the mean Democratic vote and among respondents in Romney-leaning congregations the same prime decreases the mean vote for Obama. These differences...
are relative to both the control condition and to the spiritual prime condition; nevertheless, while these differences are in the predicted direction, they are small and generally not statistically significant. One exception is among voters in Obama-leaning congregations; the congregation prime makes them almost 7 percentage points more likely to say that they voted for the president, a difference which is statistically significant at the 90% level (p = .1, one-tailed test).

Figure 5.14: Differences in Mean Democratic Vote by Congregational Norm and Experimental Condition (frequent attenders only, national data)

Turning then to analysis of just the frequently attending congregants, Figure 5.14 again presents the mean Democratic vote by congregational partisan norm and experimental condition. Confirming the experimental findings of the exit poll as well as the observational results about surveillance among the socially embedded, the congregation prime has its only strong and statistically significant effect among those embedded in a Romney-leaning congregation. They become much less likely to say that they voted for the president. In the control condition, which had no early questions about religion or spirituality, voters in Romney-leaning congregations said they voted for the president at a rate of 13%. Their peers who received
the spiritual person prime said they voted for the president at the indistinguishable rate of 12%, but just 4% of those primed to think of their congregation said that they voted for the president. Differences between the congregation prime and both of the other conditions are significant at the 95% confidence level. This finding suggests that the effect of priming the congregation is not just about religious beliefs or religion generally, but has to do with the differences between a congregation and one’s notions about personal religion and spirituality.

**Discussion**

The present work makes a major contribution to the study of religion and politics by demonstrating with national and regional data that voters conform to what they perceive to be the partisan norm of their congregation. There is a symmetrical force pushing voters toward the President when they believe that he is the majority preference and away from the President when they believe that most other congregants prefer his challenger. This is a robust finding that holds across individual-level partisanship. Furthermore, this finding builds and improves upon previous work on church-level contextual effects because it introduces a measure of the congregational norm that is not functionally dependent on the responses of congregants. Nevertheless, the real contribution of the present work comes from its exploration of why voters choose to conform to their congregation’s norm.

I find evidence that some congregants conform because they are embedded within the congregation and have probably internalized the norm as their own. Still, others are embedded but do not comply with the perceived congregational norm unless they face surveillance from co-congregants. I validate this general finding with experimental data: there is a sizable and statistically significant difference in reported vote choice between regularly attending congregants that are made to consider their religious affiliation and those who are not.
These results are more interesting still because the moderators operate differently across perceived congregational norms. Voters who believe that their congregation favors Obama conform to this perception when they are more embedded; however, there is no added effect of surveillance or priming religious identity among these embedded congregants. This indicates that congregants who perceive an Obama-leaning norm have also internalized the pro-Obama norm and do not require external stimuli in order to bring their choices into alignment with the congregation.

On the other hand, embedded congregants who perceive a pro-Romney norm do not behave much differently than their less embedded peers. Nevertheless, there are sizable decreases in predicted probability of violating the partisan norm when congregants are threatened by social surveillance or when their religious affiliation is made immediately salient to them through a religious identity prime. These results indicate that many congregants have not fully internalized the pro-Romney norm but will comply with it if external stimuli prompt them to do so.

There are at least two reasons why social surveillance is so important in right-leaning churches. The first is idiosyncratic to the 2012 election in Mercer County: since the area in which the research was conducted is heavily Democratic and because the President was expected to handily carry the county and state, it may be the case that congregants in Romney-leaning churches faced social pressures from other political reference groups to support the President. These pressures may trump the social influence of religion except when the congregants are made to consider religion or when they believe that the congregation will hold them accountable for their vote choices. Replication in other political environments might provide important insights about how predominant regional political forces interact with congregation-level influences.

Another explanation for this imbalance in observed forces is that congregants who perceive their congregation to favor Romney may face a different kind of surveillance than those
who perceive their congregation to favor Obama. It is noteworthy that congregants in perceived Obama-leaning churches more often said that their vote choice would eventually be known among co-congregants, but the current data do not tell us very much about the actual mechanisms or modes of surveillance. Surveillance would reasonably be more constraining for voters in Romney-leaning congregations if those congregations practiced a more formal version of surveillance or if congregants more vocally disapproved of or shunned the political minority. While it is possible that these differences could be discovered through additional survey work, in-depth qualitative analysis would be especially helpful in understanding practices of surveillance and sanctions in American congregations.

Finally, the present work, especially the experimental component, demonstrates that some religious Americans are sensitive to relatively subtle primes about religious affiliation. Additional research is needed to better determine if reminders about religion actually change behavior or just change reports of behavior. Even the present observational findings about surveillance and norm compliance are hampered by an inability to distinguish true behavior from reports of behavior. If religion’s influence on politics is overstated in survey research because of social desirability or some other artifact that causes religious people to exaggerate the constraint of religion on their political behavior, we need to reconsider much of the literature concerning religion’s influence on individual political behavior.
Supplementary Tables for Chapter 5
Table 5.4: Logistic Regression Models of Presidential Vote Choice

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<td>0.008</td>
<td>0.047</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>(0.054)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
<td>-0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.000)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.427**</td>
<td>0.448**</td>
<td>0.421*</td>
<td>-0.193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.218)</td>
<td>(0.222)</td>
<td>(0.221)</td>
<td>(0.346)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent attendance</td>
<td>-0.702**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.315)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama cong. X Freq. att.</td>
<td>1.334**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.561)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney cong. X Freq. att.</td>
<td>-0.415</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.499)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveillance</td>
<td>-0.524</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.394</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.338)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.508)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama cong. X Surv.</td>
<td>0.510</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.358</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.575)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.916)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney cong. X Surv.</td>
<td>0.243</td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.533)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.819)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.377</td>
<td>-0.047</td>
<td>-0.144</td>
<td>-1.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.604)</td>
<td>(1.646)</td>
<td>(1.630)</td>
<td>(2.744)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Observations: 869 869 869 476

Note: Community Life Survey data; standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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Table 5.5: Logistic Regression Models of Presidential Vote Choice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Direct</th>
<th>Embeddedness</th>
<th>Surveillance</th>
<th>Surv. (embedded only)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Obama cong.</td>
<td>0.812** (0.343)</td>
<td>0.545 (0.419)</td>
<td>0.639 (0.429)</td>
<td>0.411 (0.782)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney cong.</td>
<td>-0.719** (0.302)</td>
<td>-0.349 (0.431)</td>
<td>-0.498 (0.370)</td>
<td>-0.693 (0.601)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>3.040*** (0.360)</td>
<td>3.047*** (0.363)</td>
<td>3.168*** (0.388)</td>
<td>4.181*** (0.832)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republican</td>
<td>-2.769*** (0.323)</td>
<td>-2.730*** (0.325)</td>
<td>-2.712*** (0.345)</td>
<td>-2.929*** (0.620)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>-0.122 (0.345)</td>
<td>-0.095 (0.351)</td>
<td>-0.142 (0.359)</td>
<td>-1.134** (0.568)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christ.</td>
<td>-0.681 (0.510)</td>
<td>-0.647 (0.510)</td>
<td>-0.561 (0.545)</td>
<td>-0.931 (0.878)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>-0.199 (0.462)</td>
<td>-0.213 (0.469)</td>
<td>-0.164 (0.489)</td>
<td>-0.271 (0.845)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something else</td>
<td>0.611 (0.576)</td>
<td>0.653 (0.583)</td>
<td>1.049 (0.647)</td>
<td>1.048 (1.413)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0.023 (0.488)</td>
<td>0.124 (0.510)</td>
<td>-0.179 (0.522)</td>
<td>-0.235 (2.735)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>-0.079 (0.070)</td>
<td>-0.072 (0.071)</td>
<td>-0.068 (0.074)</td>
<td>-0.197 (0.124)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>0.096 (0.144)</td>
<td>0.098 (0.145)</td>
<td>0.070 (0.150)</td>
<td>0.479* (0.265)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>1.005 (0.767)</td>
<td>0.936 (0.753)</td>
<td>1.162 (0.801)</td>
<td>0.073 (1.360)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>-0.838*** (0.364)</td>
<td>-0.802*** (0.368)</td>
<td>-0.825*** (0.391)</td>
<td>-1.689*** (0.753)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.049 (0.044)</td>
<td>-0.056 (0.045)</td>
<td>-0.050 (0.047)</td>
<td>-0.064 (0.074)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age-squared</td>
<td>0.001 (0.000)</td>
<td>0.000 (0.000)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.000)</td>
<td>0.001 (0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.238 (0.252)</td>
<td>0.211 (0.254)</td>
<td>0.332 (0.266)</td>
<td>0.305 (0.450)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend frequently</td>
<td>0.117 (0.415)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama cong. X attend</td>
<td>0.872 (0.707)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney cong. X attend</td>
<td>-0.644 (0.588)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveillance</td>
<td>-0.194 (0.464)</td>
<td>-0.903 (0.785)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obama cong. X surveil</td>
<td>0.346 (0.734)</td>
<td>2.066 (1.380)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romney cong. X surveil</td>
<td>-1.039 (0.686)</td>
<td>-0.874 (1.103)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 867 862 801 381

Note: PUVS data; standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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Chapter 6

Conclusion

The political scientist’s toolkit for understanding religion’s influence on politics is not very sophisticated. The “state of the art” still relies on a categorization scheme that collapses all religious affiliations into a set of five to 10 categories (Steensland et al., 2000; Woodberry et al., 2012). By contrast, the 2010 U.S. Religion Census, a decennial study of congregants and adherents conducted by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious Bodies, finds that there are more than 236 religious groups in the United States, including 217 Christian denominations. Furthermore, these groups collectively sponsor nearly 350,000 congregations or worship communities and count as their adherents almost half of the American adult population, more than 150 million people (Grammich et al., 2012).

The trend over the last several decades of survey research is to try to make better sense of religious diversity by refining the set of categories to which we assign religious Americans. Certainly the current set of categories, especially the distinction between Mainline and Evangelical Protestants (Leege and Kellstedt, 1993), improves upon the original Protestant, Catholic, or Jew framework. Nevertheless, while the religious categories approach necessarily combines politically disparate groups into the same category, it is unclear that the problem can be resolved through the addition of more categories. For one, many of the religious groups are very small and unlikely to be well represented in national surveys. 143
Consider, for example, Latter-day Saints, who comprise the fifth largest Christian denomination in the United States, and Jews. Each is a distinct religious tradition according to the most recent iteration of RELTRAD [Woodberry et al. (2012)], but each comprises just 1.7% of the adult population [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life (2008)]. The addition of new categories to the religious traditions scheme would likely not provide much explanatory power because the added groups would be exceedingly small.

Rather than further encumber the religious traditions approach with a set of rarely detectable groups, we might do better to set it aside. As discussed earlier, [Wuthnow, 1988] finds that sectarian divisions are much less important now than they once were and that religious Americans are much more distinct across the modernist-centrist-traditionalist divide. Recent research by [Putnam and Campbell (2010)] similarly suggests that the cleavage between Americans who pray or “say grace” and those who do not may better explain differences in many behaviors, political and otherwise. These approaches are helpful for modeling individual behavior, but Wuthnow’s focus is on religious belief and Putnam and Campbell’s is on religious behavior. The central question of this dissertation, how congregations influence religious Americans’ political behavior, is about the remaining of the three Bs: religious belonging.

By contrast, the present work seeks to draw a meaningful distinction in political behavior across the dimension of religious belonging. Rather than reforming the religious traditions model, I argue that the more important level of affiliation is with a religious community or congregation. This move to the local level is consistent with how Americans experience religion; furthermore, it takes seriously the notion that congregations are distinct communities [Ammerman and Farnsley, 1997] that influence their congregations through social means [Johnson and White, 1967; White, 1968; Wald, Owen, and Hill, 1988].
Summary and implications of findings

My analyses provide at least three major insights regarding the influence of congregations on political behavior. First, I find that there is a rich diversity of congregational political norms within religious traditions and denominations. Second, all else equal, congregants are generally very responsive to their congregation’s political norms. Third, different factors motivate norm compliance in left- and right-leaning churches.

The diversity of congregational political norms

The third chapter provides strong evidence that congregations are politically diverse, especially in terms of ideology. A majority of congregations in the United States have a partisan norm. That is, in most congregations a majority of congregants clearly favor one party or political ideology over another. Congregants also perceive this diversity: Chapter 5 demonstrates that a majority of congregants say that their congregation has a preferred partisanship. Given the high rate at which congregational informants and congregants identify partisan norms within religious congregations, I conclude that congregations are important political references groups for religious Americans.

Although participatory norms are less common, there is a similar diversity across congregations in terms of how much emphasis is placed on political participation. The majority of American congregations provide no political services to promote participation, but within every tradition and in both datasets, some congregations provide one, two, or more political services.

Beyond the descriptive finding that congregations have partisan and participatory norms, a critical finding from the third chapter is that religious tradition does not distinguish patterns of political norms. There is more diversity in congregational norms within a religious tradition or denomination than there is on average across religious traditions or denomina-
tions. Furthermore, multivariate analyses reveal that after controlling for other congregational factors, religious tradition does not differentiate the political norms of congregations.

These findings regarding the very weak relationship between religious tradition and denomination and the prevailing congregation-level political norms represent a significant blow to our standard way of thinking about religion’s influence on political behavior. By controlling only for some aggregated religious category, we fail to observe the local political forces that shape a religious person’s political behavior. Where possible, studies of political behavior, especially studies of religious Americans, must incorporate measures of the congregation in order to more precisely understand how religious belonging shapes citizens’ political choices.

The constraint of congregational political norms

Chapters 4 and 5 present strong evidence that norms constrain behavior. The fourth chapter employs objectively-measured participatory norms and congregants’ perceptions of the same. Both are related to congregants’ levels of political participation, although results are stronger for the latter. The mobilizing effect of a congregation encouraging political participation is robust to the inclusion of standard predictors of political participation, including party identification. It is noteworthy, however, that though congregational political services motivate partisan congregants to vote, they work even more strongly for Independents.

Partisan congregational norms also constrain behavior. Politically Independent congregants are the most influenced by their congregation’s partisan norm: they are predicted to vote for the President at a much higher rate when they believe their congregation to favor him, but vote against the President when they observe a pro-Romney norm. This finding hold for both datasets and is true for Republicans and Democrats. Though individual partisanship has a significant impact on their base rate, perceived pro-Obama and pro-Romney norms move them in the predicted direction.
These two kinds political norms produce divergent implications. First, insofar as congregations foster norms favoring political participation, congregations may serve to mobilize a set of eligible voters that are least inclined to participate. Figure 4.12 provides evidence to this effect: political independents, who are generally less likely to participate in politics, are the most influenced by a congregation’s participatory norm. Republican and Democratic congregants are also more likely to vote when the congregation provides multiple participation-promoting political services, but partisans’ base rate of political participation is already much higher. As such, the differences in predicted levels of participation are largest and most clearly pronounced among political independents.

The implication of this finding is that religious congregations may provide a public good by mobilizing citizens who might otherwise be outside of the political realm. Furthermore, this mobilization is not, as previously hypothesized by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995), contingent on congregants learning and exercising civic skills. I demonstrate that mobilization occurs more naturally through the social norms favoring political participation. Congregants who are embedded within the congregation are more likely to act on the group’s pro-participatory norm. Insofar as political participation is valuable to the well-being of a democracy, political mobilization occurring within churches contributes to this well-being.

Nevertheless, congregations are not politically neutral mobilizers and their social influence sometimes requires social surveillance. About two-thirds of congregations are politically partisan: they prefer one party over another. Here too, political independents are most clearly constrained. Democratic and Republican congregants are slightly more likely than to vote for or against the incumbent Democratic president based on the partisan norm prevailing in the congregation, but political independents demonstrate much greater norm constraint.

No longer in the realm of mere political mobilization, the rate at which congregants come to prefer the candidate favored by their congregation raises the question of whether political mobilization is still desirable if newly mobilized voters also face pressures to conform to a
group standard. One important caveat, however, is that the congregation’s partisan political norm is measured as a group preference or social norm, not as an elite preference imposed upon congregants. Nevertheless, even if partisan political norms arise more organically, they may not be normatively desirable if they rely on social surveillance for their maintenance. The findings from chapter 5 on this regard are mixed: some congregants conform to a partisan political norm absent social surveillance, but others, especially those in right-leaning congregations, are much more likely to comply when social surveillance is present.

**Divergent routes to norm constraint**

The issue of social surveillance of political behavior within congregations deserves greater attention. Within the realm of partisan political norms, my *a priori* expectations were that social embeddedness and surveillance would lead to greater norm constraint. Nevertheless, the analysis reveals greater nuance. Congregants in the national and regional datasets and in perceived Obama- and Romney-leaning congregations are more or less equally influenced by their congregation’s partisan norm. However, surveillance only seems to matter for congregants who say that theirs is a right-leaning congregation. Furthermore, the exit poll data suggest that surveillance even constrains the congregants who are already embedded in a Romney-leaning church. The same is not true for those in perceived Obama-leaning congregation. I generalize from this that norm constraint in an Obama-leaning church is a function of norm internalization because surveillance has no constraining effect; but in Romney-leaning churches, constraint is driven by surveillance. Even the socially embedded, those who attend religious services frequently, are much more likely to have voted for the president if they report surveillance in the congregations.

In two experimental extensions of this research I consider whether congregants report different political behaviors when primed with their religious affiliation. These affiliation primes, executed through a question ordering experiment, are theorized to work similarly
to social surveillance in the sense that they are external stimuli meant to encourage norm compliance. Again the differences are restricted to those who say that their congregation prefers Romney. In both datasets those who were primed to think of their pro-Romney congregation were much less likely to report that they had voted for the President. In the national data, this low rate of reporting having voted for the President was additionally different from the rate at which respondents primed with a general sense of spirituality reported voting for the President. This is further evidence that the constraint of religion is about community and norms as opposed to something more abstract.

These findings about the importance of surveillance within religious congregations and especially among right-leaning congregations point to a critically underdeveloped area in religion and politics research. Further work is necessary in order to understand how participation with a right- or left-leaning congregation matters to a religious person’s political behavior.

Strengths, limitations, and directions for further research

This project combined several data sources, including new survey data and survey experiments, to paint a picture of how religious Americans are constrained by their religious congregations. The data represent some of the project’s greatest virtues as well as its liabilities. For instance, by making use of existing representative samples of congregations, I am able to draw generalizable conclusions about the diversity and prevalence of congregational political norms. Nevertheless, the measure of the participatory political norm was especially incomplete. Ideally the surveys would also ask about clergy speech.

Another shortcoming of the present data is that though I can roughly compare congregants’ perceptions of congregational norms and informants’ judgments about norms in the
same religious tradition, I cannot directly validate congregants’ perceptions of their own congregation’s norms. In future research, I could improve upon this design by validating perceptions through a clergy or informant survey.

Finally, though it is a larger critique of this field of research, the problem of endogeneity looms large in this project. Very few Americans say that political or social views are a factor in how they select a congregation [Putnam and Campbell 2010], so it is unlikely that many are choosing a congregation on the basis of its political norms. Nevertheless, it is impossible to completely rule out the possibility that religious Americans are to some extent selecting places of worship on criteria that correlate with congregational political norms.

Despite the limitations of this project, it greatly enriches the literature on religion and politics by considering congregation-level political influences across a wide set of religious traditions and denominations and across places. Furthermore, no political science work has considered the extent to which congregations of the same religious category diverge from one another politically. The findings that I generate regarding the diversity of political norms significantly complicates our understanding of religion’s influence on politics. For instance, the American National Election Studies and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study Study currently dedicate nontrivial resources, especially survey space, to gather refined religious affiliation data, but findings from the third chapter suggest that the religious categories generated through these efforts map poorly onto congregational political contexts.

In addition to adding necessary nuance to how political science views the relationship between religion and politics, the present work makes important advances in terms of understanding how and for whom congregational forces shape political behaviors. Congregational norms about politics matter: controlling for standard predictors of participation and vote choice, congregants are more likely to participate in politics when participation is prioritized by their religious community and to vote for the candidate preferred by their religious peers. This is especially true for political independents, but is often true too for partisan congre-
gants. The importance of religious attendance has been recast in this work. While religious attendance has been shown to correlate generally with higher voter turnout, I show that it also matters to less common forms of participation. If a congregations values political participation, more frequent attenders will also contact elected officials and work on community problems at higher rates.

These findings about congregational norms and norm constraint offer important avenues for future research. Perhaps most immediately the demonstrated sensitivity of survey responses to order of religious primes raises the possibility that many of our beliefs about the relationship of religion to politics may need to be revisited to determine whether our survey instruments have unknowingly activated or deactivated relevant religious considerations. Beyond reports of vote choices, it may be the case that religious congregation primes have the power to change actual behavior. If the primes were administered before the voting act instead of in an exit survey, perhaps the voter may behave differently in the voting booth. While this kind of experiment would be ethically tenuous, a more benign experimental design might induce congregations to reach out to lapsed congregants before an election or other opportunity for political participation.

Another big question generated by the present research pertains to the asymmetric importance of social surveillance in congregations. Further work should also explore why the incidence of surveillance is comparable across right- and left-leaning congregations, but only important to political behavior for those in right-leaning churches. Is social surveillance always important in right-leaning congregations or is there something special about the 2012 election? Replication is the most straight forward way to answer this question. If this asymmetry persists across time and place, the next question is why or how surveillance operates differently across left- and right-leaning congregations.

Finally, if almost one-third of religious respondent believe that others at their congregation will learn of their political behavior, a natural follow-up question is how others will find
out. Having gathered only some preliminary data on this subject, it appears that surveillance occurs commonly through friendly conversation. Additional work on social surveillance within religious congregation would be a rich contribution to our cumulative knowledge about religion and politics, especially the social influence of religion on political behavior.
Appendix A

Question Wordings and Frequencies

National Congregations Study

The National Congregations Study employed a hypernetwork sampling strategy in order to obtain a nationally representative cross section of American congregations. Participants in the 1998 and 2006 General Social Survey, a high quality in-person survey of adult Americans, who said that they attended religious services at least once per year were asked to provide a name and location for their congregation. The NCS then identified these congregations and invited them to participate in the NCS survey. In the 1998 and 2006-2007 cross-sections, a vast majority of interviews were conducted by phone, although some additional responses were collected in-person, and about three-quarters were conducted with a clergy person, although just over 10% were conducted with a layperson informant.

The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Mark Chaves, principal investigator.

Selected question wording and unweighted frequencies

Religious tradition  Collapsed from a series of denominational codes  (N=2,740)
• Catholic 24%
• Evangelical Protestant 36%
• Black Protestant 12%
• Mainline Protestant 23%
• Latter-day Saint 2%
• Jewish 2%
• Other 2%

Political ideology Politically speaking, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle? (N=2,591)

• Conservative 54%
• Liberal 38%
• Middle 8%

Political service provisions Within the past twelve months, have there been any groups or meetings or classes or events specifically focused on the following purposes or activities?

• To discuss politics? (N=2,731) 14%
• An effort to get people registered to vote? (N=2,721) 20%
• To organize or participate in efforts to lobby elected officials of any sort? (N=2,730) 13%
• To organize or participate in a demonstration or march either in support of or opposition to some public issue or policy? (N=2,728) 19%

Voter guide Have voter guides ever been distributed to people through your congregation? (N=2,718)
• No 74%
• Yes 26%

Sum of service provisions Index of political service provisions. (N=2,702)

• Zero 51%
• One 24%
• Two 13%
• Three 7%
• Four 4%
• Five 2%

Congregational characteristics All questions probe for estimates by the informant.

• Thinking again of these regular adult participants, what percent would you say are female? (N=2,636) mean=59.2
• What percent of the regular adult participants in your congregation are white and non-Hispanic? (N=2,669) mean=72.4
• What percent would you say live in households with income higher than $100,000 a year? (N=2,350) mean=13.4
• What percent would you say live in households with income under $25,000 a year? (N=2,277) mean=22.9
• What percentage of the regular adult participants would you say are under thirty-five years old? (N=2,645) mean=28.6
• Of the regular adult participants, about what percentage would you say are over sixty years old? (N=2,664) mean=30.7
• About what percentage would you say have four-year degrees or more? (N=2,433) mean=37.9

**Theological orientation** Theologically speaking, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle? (N=2,665)

- Conservative 55%
- Liberal 34%
- Middle 10%

**Clergy education** Education level of senior clergy person *Collapsed to reflect different response options across survey waves.* (N=2,606)

- Less than a seminary or four-year degree 19%
- Seminary/four-year degree or more 81%

**Number full time staff** How many people currently work in this congregation as full-time paid staff? (N=2,725)

- mean=8.0; s.d.=18.7

**Number of congregants** How many adults—people 18 years or older—would you say regularly participate in the religious life of your congregation? (N=2,740)

- mean=708; s.d.=1290

**Age of congregation** *Difference between year of survey and year of founding.* In what year was your congregation officially founded? (N=2,725)

- mean=77.7; s.d.=52.9
Region  Region in which congregation is located (N=2,740)

- Northeast  17%
- Midwest  25%
- South  40%
- West  19%

U.S. Congregational Life Survey

Congregation profiles, random sample

The U.S. Congregational Life Survey, or USCLS, used a similar methodology as the NCS, albeit for a much smaller sample. Respondents in the 2000 GSS sample were asked to name their specific congregation or place of worship. NORC researchers then verified the information for the congregation and in 2001 the religious research group U.S. Congregations, under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church (PC-USA), invited the nominated congregations to participate in congregant and clergy surveys and to provide a congregational profile. All surveys were self-administered and paper-based surveys and the researchers attempted to interview all adults in attendance at the sampled church. The response rate and sample size are more modest among the USCLS: 36% of nominated congregations returned self-administered surveys, resulting in 434 completed cases.\(^1\) In 2008-2009 U.S. Congregations fielded a second wave of the Congregational Life Survey. Though smaller in size than the first wave (n=256), the second cross-sectional wave employed a similar methodology, but traded the GSS for a national sample drawn by Harris Interactive (Woolever and Bruce 2010). In Chapter 3 I pool the data from both waves of random sample congregation profiles in order

\(^1\)Additional explanation of the USCLS methodology is available from the investigators in their study report, Woolever and Bruce (2010).
to make better inferences about the prevalence and distribution of political norms in U.S. congregations.

The data were downloaded from the Association of Religion Data Archives, www.TheARDA.com, and were collected by Cynthia Woolever and Keith Wulff, co-principal investigators.

Selected question wording and unweighted frequencies

**Religious tradition**  *Collapsed from a series of denominational codes (N=649)*

- Catholic  8%
- Evangelical Protestant  39%
- Black Protestant  2%
- Mainline Protestant  50%
- Other  1%

**Political ideology**  Politically speaking, would your congregation be considered more on the conservative side, more on the liberal side, or right in the middle? (N=644)

- Conservative  47%
- Liberal  40%
- Middle  13%

**Political service provisions**  In the past 12 months, did your congregation provide the following service for your own congregation’s members or for people in the community?

- Voter registration or voter education (N=662)  24%
- Community organizing or neighborhood action groups (N=662)  18%
- Political or social justice activities (civil rights, human rights) (N=662)  23%
**Sum of service provisions** Index of political service provisions. (N=662)

- Zero 58%
- One 24%
- Two 13%
- Three 5%

**Theological orientation** Theologically speaking, would your congregation be considered...

(N=2,665)

- More on the conservative side 44%
- Right in the middle 40%
- More on the liberal side 17%

**Princeton University Voter Survey**

The Princeton University Voter Survey, was collected through an exit poll held in conjunction with the November 2012 general election in Mercer County, New Jersey. Exit poll interviewers, a group of more than 80 undergraduate students from Princeton University, invited exiting voters to participate in the self-administered paper-based survey. The students collected 1,782 self-administered surveys of systematically selected exiting voters in 11 polling places. Respondents were sampled between the hours of 7:00 AM, one hour after polls opened, and 7:00 PM, one hour before polls closed. Students were trained to invite every $n$th voter to participate, where $n$ was estimated separately for each polling place so as to provide approximately 150 completed surveys from each polling location.

The sample followed a two-staged clustered design in which polling locations were clustered within four Mercer County municipalities. The municipalities were selected based on
their size; comprising four of the six largest municipalities in terms of registered voters. Within each municipality, clusters of polling locations were selected on two criteria: type of polling location and proximity to other polling locations. In each municipality-cluster the polling locations consist of a school, a church, and some other public building. In one municipality the third polling location, a community center in Trenton, was deemed unsafe for exit polling, so the final data include voter surveys from 11 of the 12 sampled locations. The partisan composition of polling places, as obtained through an October 2012 update of the voter file, varies little across polling places within a municipality-cluster, but significantly so across clusters. If the sampling scheme were purely random, the margin of error would be approximately 2.3%; however, given the clustered design of the sample, the margin of error is slightly larger.

Respondents were selected on having voted, not on being religious, but the sample contains a significant number of religious respondents: more than 1,100 provided information about their own congregation.

**Selected question wording and frequencies**

**Gender**  Are you:  (N=1,679)

- Male  46%
- Female  54%

**Race**  Are you:  (N=1,712)

- White or Caucasian  67%
- African American or Black  13%
- Hispanic or Latino  5%
- Asian  12%
• American Indian or Native American 0%
• Other (please specify) 2%

**Age** What year were you born? (N=1,126)

• Mean (age in years) 48
• S.D. (in years) 17

**Congregation probe** If applicable, what is the name of the local church/congregation that you most often attend? In what city or town is it located? (N=1,194)

**Vote choice** In today's election for president, did you vote for: (N=1,680)

• Barack Obama, Democrat 74%
• Mitt Romney, Republican 25%
• Other 2%
• Did not vote for president 0%

**Attendance — general** Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? (N=1,542)

• More than once a week 8%
• Once a week 18%
• Once or twice a month 13%
• A few times a year 24%
• Seldom 19%
• Never 18%

**Present religion** What is your present religion, if any? (N=1,585)

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• Protestant 15%
• Catholic 27%
• LDS / Mormon 0%
• Other Christian 12%
• Jewish 13%
• Muslim 2%
• Something else 10%
• None 20%

**Partisan norm** On the whole, which presidential candidate do you think MOST people in each of the following groups will vote for in this election? People in your church/congregation (if applicable) (N=1,156)

- Obama 41%
- Romney 35%
- Someone else 0%
- Don’t know 35%

**Social surveillance** Suppose you wanted to keep which candidate you voted for a secret. Do you think you could keep people in the following groups from finding out or would who you voted for? People in your church/congregation (if applicable) (N=1,252)

- Could keep it a secret 64%
- They would figure out 36%

**Marital status** What is your marital status? (N=1,558)

- Married 61%
• Divorced 5%
• Widowed 3%
• Single 26%
• Civil union 1%
• Living with a partner 4%

**Education** What is the highest level of education that you have received? (N=1,565)

• Some high school or less 2%
• High school graduate or equivalent 10%
• Some college 29%
• College graduate 31%
• Post-graduate 41%

**Party ID** Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a(n): (N=1,560)

• Republican 15%
• Democrat 56%
• Independent 25%
• Something else (*collapsed with independents for analysis*) 5%

**Community Life Survey**

To further test the hypotheses about congregational norms and political participation and especially in order to better understand how partisanship matters to this theory, I fielded an original survey of religious Americans in June 2014. Respondents were recruited by Qualtrics from a nationwide, opt-in Internet sample. Before the nature of the survey became

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2Because the sample is drawn from an opt-in population of respondents rather than a probability sample, no estimates of sampling error can be calculated.
apparent, respondents reported their religious attendance. Those who reported attending religious services seldom or never were judged ineligible to participate in the survey, leaving only those respondents who attend religious services a few times per year or more. Of 2,395 potential respondents that accepted the survey invitation, 1,219 were terminated because they did not meet the religious attendance criteria and 50 more cases were terminated for failing a basic attention check question. The remaining 1,126 respondents met all sampling criteria.

Selected question wording and frequencies

Gender What is your gender? (N=1,126)

- Male 39%
- Female 61%

Race How would you classify your race? (Mark all that apply) (N=1,126)

- White or Caucasian 84%
- Asian or Pacific Islander 3%
- African American or Black 9%
- Native American 1%
- Hispanic or Latin American 5%
- Other (please specify) 1%

Age In what year were you born? (N=1,126)

- Mean (age in years) 54
- S.D. (in years) 13.8
Congregation probe If applicable, what is the name of the local church/congregation that you most often attend? In what city or town is it located? (N=1,034)

Spiritual Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a spiritual person? (N=1,126)

- Yes 91%
- No 9%

2012 Turnout — version A In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren’t registered, they were sick, or they just didn’t have time. Thinking about the 2012 presidential election between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney, which of the following statements best describes you? (N=569)

- I did not vote in the 2012 presidential election 14%
- I thought about voting, but didn’t 3%
- I usually vote, but didn’t 2%
- I am sure I voted 82%

2012 Turnout — version B Did you vote in the 2012 presidential election? (N=558)

- Yes 87%
- No 13%

Vote choice For which presidential candidate did you vote in 2012?

- Barack Obama 45%
- Mitt Romney 51%
- Someone else 5%

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Attendance — general  Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services? (N=1,126)

- More than once a week 17%
- Once a week 40%
- Once or twice a month 18%
- A few times a year 25%
- Seldom [respondents terminated; excluded from analysis] 0%
- Never [respondents terminated; excluded from analysis] 0%

Present religion  What is your present religion, if any? (N=1,126)

- Protestant 40%
- Catholic 29%
- Mormon 2%
- Eastern or Greek Orthodox 1%
- Jewish 3%
- Muslim 1%
- Buddhist 1%
- Hindu 1%
- Atheist 0%
- Agnostic 0%
- Nothing in particular 4%
- Something else (please specify) 19%
**Recode tradition** Using further probes to classify respondents into religious tradition categories (N=1,105)

- Mainline Protestant 18%
- Evangelical Protestant 39%
- Black Protestant 1%
- Catholic 30%
- Latter-day Saint 2%
- Jewish 3%
- Other 3%
- None 5%

**Attendance — specific to congregation** How often do you attend worship services at this congregation? (N=1,125)

- Hardly ever 7%
- Less than once a month 17%
- Once a month 7%
- Two or three times a month 15%
- Usually every week 40%
- More than once a week 14%

**Political services** Within the past few years, have you been aware of any groups, meetings, classes or events at your congregation specifically focused on the following purposes or activities? (Mark all that apply.) (N=1,123)

- To discuss politics 15%
• An effort to get people registered to vote 23%
• A class for prospective or new members 72%
• To discuss or learn about a religion other than your own 31%
• To organize or participate in efforts to lobby elected officials of any sort 16%
• To organize or participate in a demonstration or march regarding some public issue or policy 21%

Partisan norm On the whole, which presidential candidate do you think MOST people in your congregation voted for in 2012? (N=1,126)

• Barack Obama 29%
• Mitt Romney 32%
• Someone else 2%
• Most did not vote 3%
• Don’t know 35%

Social surveillance — version 1 Suppose you wanted to keep which candidate you voted for a secret from the people in your congregation. Do you think you could keep it a secret or would they eventually figure out who you voted for? (N=554)

• Could keep it a secret 68%
• They would figure out 32%

Social surveillance — version 2 Outside of any immediate family, would anyone in your congregation ever find out whether or not you voted in a presidential election? (N=572)

• Yes 37%
• No 63%
**Marital status** What is your marital status? (N=1,126)

- Married 60%
- Separated 1%
- Single 15%
- Domestic partnership 4%
- Widowed 7%
- Divorced 13%

**Education** What is the highest level of education that you have received? (N=1,126)

- Less than high school 0%
- Some high school 2%
- Finished high school or GED 20%
- Trade certificate 5%
- Some college or associate’s degree 36%
- Bachelor’s degree from a university or college 23%
- More than four years of college 13%

**Party ID** Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (N=1,126)

- Republican 35%
- Democrat 34%
- Independent 26%
- Something else (*collapsed with independents for analysis*) 5%
Bibliography


Davis, David A. 2011. *When Kings Fail*. 10 April, Nassau Presbyterian Church, Princeton NJ.


