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Bridging Religion and Politics:
The Impact of Providential Religious Beliefs on Political Activity

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Abstract:
Past research shows that religious beliefs can shape political activity. Yet current literature leaves open many questions about the mechanisms at work. I point to the key role of a particular religious belief found across denominations: providentiality, or the belief that God has a plan that humans can further. Because providential believers want to facilitate God’s plan, they should be more politically active than non-providential believers when doing so is seen as helping the plan. I test this notion using survey data collected during the 2012 election campaign from congregants in [Author’s City]. In general, providential believers are less likely than their non-providential counterparts to participate in politics. However, when providential believers heard sermons from their clergy that connected religion and political activity, they were significantly more likely to participate. These findings illustrate one pathway by which religious beliefs can influence politics: through a cue that links providentiality and politics.

Key Words: clergy, congregations, providential beliefs, political activity, 2012 election
Religion influences political activity in a variety of ways—from the impact of religious tradition on vote choice (Layman 2001, Guth et al. 2006) to the correlation between church attendance and civic skills (Verba and Nie 1972, Jones-Correa and Leal 2001, Lasswell 1936). In addition to the established literatures on religious belonging and behavior, researchers have begun to pay increasing attention to religious belief, examining its influence on a range of political variables, from foreign policy attitudes (Djupe and Calfano 2013, Glazier 2013) to charitable giving (Lunn, Klay, and Douglass 2001) to opinions on the role of government (Baylor 2011). As a result, we now know with some certainty that people’s religious beliefs can affect their political behavior.

Yet what are the mechanisms by which religious belief influences political behavior? Understanding the link between religious belief and political behavior is challenging for many reasons, but key among these is the difficulty of constructing and deploying useful survey measures. Most religious belief measures are either too complex or too specific to regularly include in surveys (e.g., Barker, Hurwitz, and Nelson 2008, Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008), or there is not a clear causal mechanism driving their inclusion (Wielhouwer 2009), or both. As a result, we lack a solid understanding of the specific lines of influence that might lead people’s religious beliefs to influence their political behavior. This problem is a serious one, not only for political scientists interested in religion but, indeed, for political scientists who want to know more about the factors that drive political behavior more broadly.

Toward the aim of addressing this problem, I examine the path by which a specific type of religious beliefs—providentiality—shapes political behavior. Providential believers are those who believe, first, that God has a plan and, second, that they can help to bring it about. Religious believers from many backgrounds and traditions are providential, but they may not always see their providential beliefs as relevant for politics. Thus, individuals may believe that God has a plan that they can know and facilitate, but they may not see politics as part of that plan. A religiously framed
political cue can potentially change that—providing the link that can lead to a shift in political behavior. Here, I examine the providential religious beliefs and political activities of congregants in [Author’s City] during the 2012 presidential election campaign. I hypothesize that the effect of providential religious beliefs on political activity will be felt most strongly when clergy cues establish a bridge to connect religion and politics.

**Religion and Political Activity**

When it comes to research on religion and political activity, we can organize the literature in terms of the classic categories of religious behavior, belonging, and belief (Leege and Kellstedt 1993). First, the literature on religious behavior has generally focused on the impact of church attendance on political activity. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) demonstrate that churches are great places to learn the skills needed for participating in politics, providing attenders (and especially active members) with experience leading meetings, organizing events, recruiting volunteers, and so on (Verba and Nie 1972, Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). Thus, activity at church “spills over” into activity in politics and elsewhere (Peterson 1990). Additionally, those who attend church regularly are more likely to be targets of mobilization efforts (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, 166-7, Guth et al. 2002) and are politically socialized at church (e.g., Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988, 1990, Huckfeldt, Plutzer, and Sprague 1993, Harris 1994). Simply put, church life equips people for political engagement (Smidt 1999, 2003b, Lasswell 1936) and the literature has consistently shown that attending church is positively correlated with political activity.

Second, the literature on categorizing religious traditions has led to a much more nuanced understanding of religious affiliation and a greater emphasis on shared historical and theological developments when creating categories of religious belonging (Smidt, Kellstedt, and Guth 2009, Steensland et al. 2000). Advanced by Leege and Kellstedt’s (1993) book *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, scholars have placed additional emphasis on religious tradition as an
explanatory variable (see also Kellstedt et al. 1996, 182-6), leading to new insights into religion’s impact on voter turnout and participation (Layman 2001, Guth et al. 2006). Specifically, we have seen particular religious traditions serving as political mobilizers under different circumstances; Black Protestant churches during the Civil Rights Movement are the quintessential example (McKenzie 2004, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953, Calhoun-Brown 2000), with recent research also demonstrating the mobilizing power of Evangelical churches (Guth et al. 2006, Sernett 1991, Wilcox and Sigelman 2001).

Third is the comparatively scant research on religious belief, which generally begins from the assumption that “people view the world around them from within a framework or worldview,” which in turn helps them make sense of political events, messages, and actions (Wielhouwer 2009, 402). For instance, Quinley (1974) found that religious believers with an “otherworldly” orientation—meaning they are more concerned with spiritual salvation than temporal matters—are less likely to be politically active. The “liberation theology” more common in Black churches (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, Sernett 1991), on the other hand, may affect the political activity of congregations in both amount and kind (Harris 1994, McDaniel 2004). Some research on religious belief has focused on the relatively narrow issue of Biblical literalism, which Schwadel (2005) finds is negatively associated with political activity. Despite these important studies, until recently, there has been little rigorous analysis of religious belief and political activity (Regnerus and Smith 1998).

This state of affairs is changing, thanks in part to data collected through Baylor University’s nationally representative survey on religion and politics. This recent research demonstrates the importance of religious beliefs when it comes to understanding political activity (Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008, Driskell and Lyon 2011, Driskell, Lyon, and Embry 2008). Indicating, for instance, that religious beliefs (operationalized in part by asking respondents about prayer topics) have a greater impact on political activity than even church attendance (Driskell, Lyon, and Embry 2008),
that people who pray about general world concerns are more likely to be politically active, and that people who believe that “God is directly involved in world affairs” are less likely to be politically active (Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008).

This research on religious beliefs is both important and encouraging, but there is still much we don’t know. For instance, although prior work (e.g., Layman 2001, Guth et al. 2006) has shown the importance of belief for vote choice, we know much less about voter turnout and other, more demanding, forms of political activity (Wielhouwer 2009). In a subfield that has plenty of data but fewer causal explanations, beliefs form a critical link between the religious realm and the political, with effects that are more direct and immediate (Wald and Smidt 1993, 32) compared to other religious measures (Page and Bouton 2006). Although the field is changing, more work needs to be done on the relationship between religious beliefs and political activity. I propose that examining providential religious beliefs is one way to move this research agenda forward.

Providential Religious Beliefs

Although the reviewed literature has found that religious belief measures have great explanatory power (e.g., Guth 2009, Guth et al. 2006, Bader and Froese 2005, Finke and Adamczyk 2008, Jelen 1994), most religious belief batteries are either too narrowly focused on denomination to make them broadly applicable and/or too lengthy for regular inclusion in surveys. The Baylor data utilized by Driskell et al (Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008, Driskell, Lyon, and Embry 2008, Driskell and Lyon 2011) provides an incredible depth of survey research on religion from a representative national sample. However, the number and detail of the questions the survey asks about religion in general and religious belief in particular are rarely available to most survey researchers. The belief questions I use tap into a common religious belief—providentiality—that is broadly relevant and fairly simple to measure.
Providentiality is orthogonal to religious affiliation; Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, and spiritual non-church-going populations contain providential and non-providential believers. People who hold providential beliefs see the intervention of the divine in daily and in global affairs—thus, the question used by the Baylor survey, a yes/no response to the statement “God is directly involved in world affairs,” could be thought of as a providential indicator. Providentiality is measured here and elsewhere [Author Cite] through a battery of 3 questions: a 5 point Likert agreement scale in response to the two statements “The course of our lives is decided by God” and “God has a plan and I have a part to play in it”, and the ANES question “Would you say your religion provides some guidance in your day-to-day life, quite a bit of guidance, or a great deal of guidance in your day-to-day life” (“religion really isn’t important to me” is also available as a response option). Simply put, people who score highly on this battery believe that God has a plan that they can help carry out. Providential believers are guided through many of life’s decisions, at times including political decisions, by their belief in an ultimate purpose. Providential believers want to live according to God’s plan; they want to accomplish God’s will.

Theoretically speaking, this type of believer—regardless of their specific religious affiliation—may be more likely than non-providential believers or non-believers generally to see a divine purpose in voting for a particular candidate, participating in a political action, or pursuing a specific policy (e.g., fighting terrorism, preserving the lives of unborn children, or promoting democracy). Importantly, though, this is not necessarily the case. Driskell et al (2008) find that agreement with the statement about God’s active role in world affairs is negatively associated with political participation. Just as national surveys demonstrate that many Americans claim religion is very important to them but that they don’t see the relevance of religion for politics (Ben-Nun Bloom and Arikan 2013), in a similar way, providential believers don’t inherently link politics to their religious beliefs.
Building Bridges between Religion and Politics

In order for providential believers to see politics in a religious light, a bridge between the two must be built. We can think of this process in the classic political communication terms of “who says what to whom” (Lasswell 1936, Iyengar and Valentino 2000, Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953). A message (the “what”) is delivered to bridge religion and politics, but whether that bridge leads to real change depends on the credibility of the source (the “who”) and the characteristics of the receiver (the “whom”). Because church teachings are internalized and interpreted differently by different congregants, even within the same congregation (Broughton 1978) the nature of the receiver’s beliefs matters. If a providential and a non-providential believer receive the same bridging message from the same credible source, the providential believer will be much more likely to act.

Who can act as a credible source to construct the bridge? Bridge-builders can range from oneself to the divine, but congregation leaders are uniquely equipped to build such bridges. Clergy members tend to have more coherent worldviews (Crawford and Olson 2001, Guth et al. 1997, Beatty and Walter 1989), making them “particularly effective opinion leaders…[who can] frame grievances in a way that makes them politically relevant to parishioners” (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2010, 115). For instance, when a congregation leader talks about a traditionally political topic during a Sunday sermon, he or she provides congregants with a religious lens through which to see the issue (Smidt 2004, Schwadel 2005, Smidt 2003a, Djupe and Gilbert 2003). Similarly, when a political leader uses religious language—particularly “coded” language targeted to a specific religious audience (Calfano and Djupe 2009, Albertson 2014) the political becomes linked to the religious. Generally speaking, clergy have less credibility when they communicate political rather than religious messages (Djupe and Calfano 2009, Kohut et al. 2000), but, as “professional arbiters of values and absolute truths” (Olson 2009, 375), clergy pronouncements do carry a lot of weight, particularly
among the faithful, for whom God—speaking through religious leaders—has the ultimate source credibility (Druckman 2001, Iyengar and Valentino 2000, Jelen 1994).

However, the influence of congregation leaders is limited by a number of factors based in receiver characteristics (Leege 1985, Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995, Djupe and Gilbert 2009), including members projecting their own views on to clergy (Krosnick 1989, Krosnick et al. 1993), defensive motivations in information processing (Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla, and Chen 1996), and confirmation bias (e.g., Munro et al. 2002). Holding providential beliefs also changes the characteristics of the receiver—potentially making her more likely to respond to a call to political action framed in terms of God’s will and delivered by someone she views as God’s servant.

Thus, the message that bridges providential religious beliefs and politics forms the critical causal link that leads the receiver to take providential considerations into account when making decisions in the political realm. Without this link, believers don’t know what God’s will is on a particular political issue or whether it is even an issue of religious relevance. But once the connection is made, the political contributions of providential believers have the potential to be significant. Research indicates that tight-knit religious communities with strong commitments to their faith represent networks that can facilitate rapid, episodic mobilization, even if political activity among the membership is rare (Campbell 2004). One way to think of these believers is as “dry kindling” waiting to be mobilized (Campbell and Monson 2007). It is the bridge between religion and politics that makes such mobilization possible.

When it comes to the potential influence of religion on political activity, we know that attending church provides the civic skills, socialization, and mobilization opportunities that can boost political activity. However, it is likely that only a portion of the story of religion’s influence on political activity is told in the chapter on attendance. Research on religious beliefs has a lot of potential, but we don’t yet know how religious beliefs lead to political activity. Some mechanisms are
being explored through experimental research (e.g., Djupe and Calfano 2009, Djupe and Gwiasda 2010), but to fully answer the question, we need to know more about what the relationships between religious beliefs and political activity look like in practice and in context. It is possible that congregation leaders can play a role in the process of connecting powerful religious beliefs—here, specifically, providential religious beliefs—to politics. Sunday sermons are one opportunity for bridge construction. When these sermons encourage political involvement, providential believers who hear and remember them will respond with greater political activity. Thus, I hypothesize that the effect on political activity of receiving a political cue from a congregation leader will increase as providentiality increases.

**Data and Methods**

The [Study Name] was conducted from May 1 through November 11, 2012, with the aim of collecting data from both congregation leaders and congregants. The study proceeded in three stages. First, a survey of congregation leaders was distributed via mail to a total viable sample of 409 churches within the city limits of [Author’s City]. A total of 66 surveys were returned completed, for a return rate of 16.14%. Second, from these 66, a representative sample of 15 religious organizations was selected for congregation leader interviews. A major goal of these interviews was to establish relationships with the congregation leaders that would facilitate data collection from congregants in the third stage, where 5 congregations were selected for participation in the congregation portion of the study. The 5 selected were chosen to represent the four main denominational groupings in [Author’s City]: mainline Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Catholic, and Black Protestant. A congregation from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was also chosen, because of the prominence of candidate Mitt Romney’s Mormon faith in the 2012 campaign. Although these congregations represent the major religious traditions in [Author’s City], they are by no means representative. Among other data limitations, the Black Protestant and Evangelical congregations
surveyed were smaller than the Mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Mormon congregations, possibly obscuring religious tradition-specific relationships that may have been apparent in a larger sample.

Surveys were distributed by hand in each congregation on the Sunday before the 2012 Presidential Election. The return envelopes for the surveys were prepaid with postage back to the PI’s university address and respondents had the choice to mail them back or drop them in secure boxes on the way out of their church. There were a total of 968 surveys distributed and 274 returned, for a response rate of 28.3%. As a sample of convenience, data were only collected from those who attended church the Sunday the surveys were distributed.

Variables

Summaries and descriptions of the dependent and independent variables used in the analysis are presented in Table 1 and the full question wording is provided in Appendix 1.

The dependent variable in the models that follow is Political Activity, as measured by the sum of the American National Election Studies’ 6 item battery, which includes activities such as donating to a political campaign, displaying a campaign bumper sticker, and persuading someone to vote, undertaken in the previous 12 months. I hypothesize that the effect of receiving a strong political activity cue on Political Activity will increase as providentiality increases.

Identifying or creating a cue (for instance, through an experimental treatment) that will resonate across religious traditions is a challenging proposition. Religion is personal; individual interpretations can vary greatly. Because so much depends on receiver characteristics, one solution is to let respondents determine if they have received a cue (Welch et al. 1993). This is the approach adopted here. Respondents were asked how often they heard sermons in the past year on: getting involved in a local issue, getting involved in a national issue, volunteering in the community, and registering to vote (Burwell et al. 2010), all questions were measured on a 4-point scale from 1 to 4.
A binary *High Activity Cue* variable was then created by separating out those respondents who scored in the top 35% (9 or higher on a 4 to 12 point scale) on this summary measure. vi The impact of this clergy-built bridge between religion and political activity is hypothesized to be stronger for providential believers. Thus, the *High Activity Cue* measure is interacted with the *Providential* battery described above to create the interaction term *ProvXHighActivityCue*.

Other religious variables in the models include a measure of church *Attendance*, and a *Religiosity* measure that combines frequency of prayer and frequency of scripture reading. Looking across the religious traditions in the sample, Mainline Protestants and Black Protestants are significantly more politically active than Mormons, Catholics, and Evangelicals, and so both a *Mainline Protestant* and a *Black Protestant* religious tradition dummy variable are included in the models. vii In terms of political variables, *Party Identification* and *Political Interest* are included. Standard demographic variables, which the literature has shown often influence political activity, are also included: the dummy variable *Male* (Scholzmann, Burns, Verba 1999; Verba, Burns, Schlozmann 1997), *Income* (Brady, Verba, Scholzmann 1995; Verba et al 1993), *Education* (Nagel 1987), *Nonwhite* (Stokes 2003; Wiehlhower 2000) and *Age* (Campbell 2002).

**Results**

Providential religious beliefs can be powerful political motivators—when they are connected to politics. Without an explicit bridge linking politics to God’s will, providential believers may actually be *less* likely to get involved in politics, deciding instead to leave it in God’s hands. The first model of *Political Activity* presented in Table 2 includes the independent variables *High Activity Cue* and *Providential* to demonstrate the effects of both without their interaction. The second model in Table 2 adds in the *ProvXHighActivityCue* interaction term to demonstrate the effect of providential religious beliefs when there is a bridge to link those beliefs to political activity.

[Table 2 about here.]
The results in the first half of Table 2 show a number of significant variables. Congregants who care more about who wins the 2012 election—those who have higher Political Interest scores—are more likely to be active, as are Republican identifiers. In terms of religious variables, those who attend church more are more likely to be active, as are those who are more religious, and Mainline Protestants. Men, minorities, and those with higher incomes are all more likely to be politically active, but providential believers are not. In the absence of a bridge to link their beliefs to politics, providential believers appear to default to a position of leaving God in control and are no more likely to be politically active than non-providential believers. The High Activity Cue variable is also insignificant. Although congregation leaders may have intended to spur their congregants to action through political sermons, it doesn’t appear that the sermons had that effect. Simply put, a pastor talking about politics doesn’t lead to more political activity by congregation members.

But what about a pastor talking about politics to a providential audience? We know that providential beliefs are not inherently political, but if a providential congregant hears a strong political message from a congregation leader, might that bridge motivate political activity? The second column of Table 2 displays the results of the model that includes the interaction term ProvXHighActivityCue to directly test this hypothesis. Many of the same variables are significant in this model, including Political Interest, church Attendance, Religiosity, and the Mainline Protestant dummy variable. Once again, Republicans, men, minorities, and those with higher incomes are all more likely to be politically active. Including the interaction term also changed the effects of Providentiality and the High Activity Cue—rendering both variables significant and negative. The negative coefficient of Providentiality indicates that providential believers are actually inclined to refrain from political participation. But their impulse to participate if they see doing so as God’s will is captured by the most important variable in the model: the interaction term measuring the combined effect of holding providential beliefs and receiving a strong political activity cue. The interaction term is
positive and statistically significant, indicating that providentiality has a stronger positive effect on political activity when activated by a high activity cue. And, high activity cues have a stronger positive effect on political activity when used on providential believers. This finding is directly supportive of the hypothesized idea that providential believers, when exposed to a resonant political connection, will be more politically active.

We can further interpret these results by using the Clarify program for Monte Carlo Simulations to produce estimates of the substantive effects of all of the significant variables in the model on an average respondent (King, Tomz, and Wittenberg 2000). All of the independent variables are set to their appropriate measures of central tendency and then each independent variable, in turn, is changed from its lowest to its highest value. The resulting “first differences” make it possible to directly compare variable effects. The interaction term complicates the interpretation and is dealt with independently below. For the hypothetical average respondent used in the calculations here, both the high activity cue and the interaction term are set to their modal values of zero.

The results indicate that the interaction term is the most powerful variable in the model—more influential than even church attendance. The next strongest variable is the high activity cue, which, perhaps surprisingly to some, has a negative effect. Of course, when this variable is interacted with providential religious beliefs, the effect is a significant increase in political activity. The negative independent effect of the high activity cue indicates that political sermons delivered to non-providential audiences actually discourage political participation. As expected, church attendance and political interest are strong predictors of political activity, but the results also indicate that providentiality has a stronger effect than religiosity, gender, or income.

We can further use Clarify to interpret the impact of the interaction term by calculating predicted probabilities for hypothetical respondents. The statistics reported below are the predicted
values of the dependent variable of political activity when the independent variable of interest is moved from its minimum to its maximum, while all remaining independent variables are held at their mean or modal values. Unlike the first differences calculated above, here we can fully account for the different values of Providentiality, High Activity Cue, and their interaction: ProvXHighActivityCue. Looking first at highly providential respondents, the estimated political activity score of an average respondent who is a high providential believer but did not receive the high activity cue is 8.92. If we look at the same respondent but change the cue that he or she receives to the high activity cue, the predicted political activity score changes to 9.75. Thus, giving the same providential individual a high activity cue to connect those beliefs to political activity has the significant and measurable impact of increasing their political activity by nearly one point on a 22 point scale, with the final score of 9.75 ranking higher than the political activity scores of approximately 70% of the sampled population.

Turning now to those who received the high activity cue, we simulate an average respondent and vary the extent to which they hold providential beliefs. The estimated political activity score for an average respondent who is not a providential believer (scores the lowest possible providential score of 4) but does receive the activity cue is 7.86. For the same respondent who is a strong providential believer (scores the highest possible providential score of 14) the estimated political activity score is 9.74. Thus, moving from low providentiality to high providentiality under the influence of political activity sermons leads to a significant—nearly two point—increase in political activity (p<.05).

Discussion and Conclusions

To understand how religion affects political behaviors and attitudes, we need to know more about the impact of religious beliefs. This study has looked at one particular type of religious belief—providential beliefs—and at the impact providential beliefs, once activated, have on political activity.
The results indicate that providential congregants who are exposed to sermons about political activity are more likely to be politically active.

These findings reveal the importance of cues that can bridge the providential and political realms. It appears that those who believe God has a plan may default to the position of leaving politics up to God. In order for providential believers to see the political as a part of God’s plan, there must be a compelling connection. Thus, in the results here, providential beliefs matter, but only when they are cued. For the congregants studied, the cue came from the political sermons their religious leaders delivered. Providential believers who reported hearing sermons about the importance of political participation were more likely to be politically active.

The data presented here are neither able to nor meant to generalize to the population at large. The sample is not representative, but includes only 5 churches in a single, Southern US city: [Author’s City]. Although far from perfect, the data represent responses from real congregants experiencing real political cues from their own congregation leaders. This provides a very different environment for evaluating the effect of clergy political messages, when compared to telephone surveys, experimental manipulations, or student convenience samples (Calfano and Djupe 2009, McKeown and Carlson 1987, Sears 1986, Djupe and Gwiasda 2010). The data here provide a look at the effects of clergy political cues in the context of political sermons delivered sporadically over a long period of time, which may or may not be heard or remembered by congregants. Essentially, they allow us to see what clergy cues can do in the “real world.”

Providentiality is still a new concept. The fact that providential religious beliefs cross denominational boundaries (the mean providential score of respondents was 11.58, ranging from a low of 10.76 for the Mainline Protestant congregation to a high of 13.17 for the Black Protestant congregation) is an advantage for survey researchers seeking analytical traction in a limited space. While we don’t have longitudinal data to know if these beliefs are growing in the population, we do
have a potential causal mechanism through which the religious beliefs—in this case, knowing and seeking to help bring about God’s will—can have measurable political effects. Thus, although the study sample is not representative, the processes and patterns observed within these congregations provide initial support for a casual story that can be further explored with larger and more representative populations.


Smidt, Corwin E. 2003b. Religion as social capital: producing the common good. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.


Table 1. Variable Names, Question Wording, and Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Name</th>
<th>Question Wording</th>
<th>Descriptive Statistics</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Activity</td>
<td>In the past 12 months, have you:</td>
<td>Range: 6 to 24.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Tried to persuade someone to vote</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha: 0.79</td>
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<td></td>
<td>b) Donated money to a political candidate or campaign</td>
<td>Mean: 9.35, SD: 3.44</td>
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<td></td>
<td>c) Worked as a volunteer for a political candidate or campaign</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Attended a political rally</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) Stuck a campaign bumper sticker on your car or window</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) Signed a petition</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>No (1), Yes, once or twice (2), Yes, a few times (3) or Yes, many times (4) for each</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Range: 6 to 24.</td>
<td>Cronbach’s alpha: 0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean: 9.35, SD: 3.44</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Providentiality</td>
<td>Agreement with the statements: The course of our lives is decided by God; God has a plan and I have a part to play in it; plus religious guidance question.</td>
<td>Theoretical Range: 3 to 14 Actual Range: 4 to 14 Cronbach’s alpha: 0.41 Mean: 11.65; SD: 2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Activity Cue</td>
<td>In the past year, how often have you heard sermons or homilies by the pastor/priest here that:</td>
<td>Range: 0 to 1 Mean: 0.34, SD: 0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) Encouraged you to get involved in a local political cause or issue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Encouraged you to get involved in a national political cause or issue</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) Encouraged members to serve or volunteer in the community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) Urged you to register to vote?</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Never (1), Sometimes (2), Often (3) Total score coded (1) if in top 35% (9 or higher) and (0) otherwise.</td>
<td>Range: 0 to 1 Mean: 0.34, SD: 0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prov X HighActivityCue</td>
<td>Interaction term that multiplies Providentiality by High Activity Cue</td>
<td>Range: 0 to 14 Mean: 4.18, SD: 5.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>How often do you attend religious services? Range from Never (1) to Multiple Times a Week (6)</td>
<td>Theoretical Range: 1 to 6 Mean: 5.05, SD: 0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>How often do you read Holy Scripture? Range from Never (1) to Several Times a Day (6), plus How often do you pray? Range from Never (1) to Several Times a Day (6)</td>
<td>Theoretical Range: 2 to 12 Actual Range: 3 to 12 Cronbach’s alpha: 0.56 Mean: 9.17, SD: 1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>How much do you care who wins the 2012 presidential election?</td>
<td>Range: 0 to 4 Mean: 3.66; SD: 0.63</td>
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<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, independent, or what? Range from Strong Democrat (1) to Strong Republican (7)</td>
<td>Range: 1 to 7 Mean: 4.66; SD: 2.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>What is your race/ethnicity? White (0) Other (1)</td>
<td>Range: 0 to 1 Mean: 0.11; SD: 0.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>In what year were you born? Age calculated by subtracting from 2012.</td>
<td>Range: 18 to 88 Mean: 53.04; SD: 15.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>What is the highest year in school/degree you have achieved? Range from less than high school (1) to post-graduate (5)</td>
<td>Range: 1 to 5 Mean: 3.88; SD: 0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>What is your gender? Male (1) Female (0)</td>
<td>Range: 0 to 1 Mean: 0.42, SD: 0.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>Completed a survey distributed at the Mainline Protestant congregation. Yes (1) or No (0)</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>Completed a survey distributed at the Black Protestant congregation. Yes (1) or No (0)</td>
<td>0 to 1</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>By your best estimate, what was your total household income last year, before taxes? Range from $10,000 or less (1) to $150,000 or more (7)</td>
<td>1 to 7</td>
<td>5.18</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. OLS Regression Models of Congregation Member Political Activities, calculated from imputed datasets (m=5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Without Interaction Term</th>
<th></th>
<th>With Interaction Term</th>
<th></th>
<th>First Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>Coefficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Interest</td>
<td>1.01**</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>1.04**</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providentiality</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.13**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Activity Cue</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>-3.75**</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>-3.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ProvXHighActivityCue</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.51**</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>3.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religiosity</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.57**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.60**</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.005</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-white</td>
<td>1.24**</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.35**</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>1.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.14**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Party ID</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainline Protestant</td>
<td>2.39**</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.32**</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>2.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Protestant</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-1.05</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=1,546</td>
<td></td>
<td>R squared =</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>R squared</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p<.05, **p<.01

Note: First differences were calculated using Clarify. The hypothetical individual is a 53 year-old white female Republican, holding the mean scores for political interest, providential beliefs, church attendance, education, income, and religiosity. She is not a Black Protestant or a Mainline Protestant and did not receive the high activity cue.
Appendix A. Question Wording

**Congregant Survey Questions**

By your best estimate, what was your total household income last year, before taxes?

1. $10,000 or less
2. $10,001-20,000
3. $20,001-35,000
4. $35,001-50,000
5. $50,001-100,000
6. $100,001-150,000
7. $150,000 or more

In the past year, how often have you heard sermons or homilies by the pastor/priest here that:

1. Never
2. Sometimes
3. Often

A. Spoke against same-sex marriage?
B. Encouraged you to get involved in a local political cause or issue?
C. Encouraged you to get involved in a national political cause or issue?
D. Encouraged members to serve or volunteer in the community?
E. Urged you to register to vote?
F. Spoke against abortion?

In the past 12 months, have you:

1. No
2. Yes, once or twice
3. Yes, a few times
4. Yes, many times

A. Tried to persuade someone to vote
B. Donated money to a political candidate or campaign
C. Worked as a volunteer for a political candidate or campaign
D. Attended a political rally
E. Stuck a campaign bumper sticker on your car or window
F. Signed a petition

How often do you pray?

1. Never
2. Occasionally
3. About Once a Week
4. A Few Times a Week
5. About Once a Day
6. Several Times a Day

How often do you read Holy Scripture?

1. Never
2. Occasionally
3. About Once a Week
4. A Few Times a Week
5. About Once a Day
(6) Several Times a Day

How often do you attend religious services?
(1) Never
(2) Occasionally
(3) About Once a Month
(4) 2-3 Times a Month
(5) Every Week
(6) Multiple Times a Week

Generally speaking, would you say that you personally care a good deal who wins the presidential election this fall, or that you don’t care very much who wins?
(1) Don’t Care
(2) Very Little
(3) Some
(4) Quite a Bit
(5) A Great Deal

Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, Republican, independent, or what?
(1) Strong Democrat
(2)
(3)
(4) Independent
(5)
(6)
(7) Strong Republican

What is the highest year in school/degree you have achieved?
(1) Less than High School
(2) High School/Ged
(3) Some College/Applied Degree
(4) College Graduate
(5) Post-Graduate

What is your race/ethnicity?
(1) White
(2) Black
(3) Hispanic
(4) Other

In what year were you born?

Providential Beliefs 3 Question Battery:

Please circle if you agree or disagree with the following statements about religious beliefs.
The course of our lives is decided by God.
(1) Strongly Disagree
(2) Disagree
(3) Neutral
(4) Agree
(5) Strongly Agree

God has a plan and I have a part to play in it.
(1) Strongly Disagree
(2) Disagree
(3) Neutral
(4) Agree
(5) Strongly Agree

Would you say your religion provides some guidance in your day-to-day life, quite a bit of guidance, or a great deal of guidance in your day-to-day life?
(1) Religion Really Isn’t Important To Me
(2) Some Guidance
(3) Quite a Bit of Guidance
(4) A Great Deal of Guidance
We know, for instance, that church attenders are more likely to vote (Peterson 1992, Wald, Kellstedt, and Leege 1993, Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), although research on more demanding political activities is mixed (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993, Verba and Nie 1972, Beyerlein and Chaves 2003, Jones-Correa and Leal 2001).

Political communication scholars might aptly compare this process to priming (Bartels 2009, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007).

Whereas Black Protestant churches make up 27% of the churches in [Author’s City], Black Protestant respondents make up only 5.5% of the sample analyzed here. Similarly, Evangelical churches are 48% of all churches in [Author’s City] but only 5.5% of the respondents in this study.

As with many surveys, the data contained some missing values. For instance, in the pre-election survey, the question about how often the respondent attends church had about 10% of responses missing. In order to deal with the missing data problem, I used multiple imputation, which generates more than one estimate for each missing value (Penn 2007). The imputation proceeds in three steps. First, using the additional variables in the data set, a series of multiple (in this case, 5), separate and distinct values are calculated for the missing data. These values are inserted for the missing data, resulting in 5 new data sets. Second, regression analysis is conducted on each of the 5 data sets. Third, the results of the multiple regressions are combined resulting in one set of regression coefficients and standard errors (Little and Rubin 2002, Rubin 1996). Multiple imputation is the best available technique for dealing with missing data (Penn 2007, Horton and Lipsitz 2001). The pre-election survey, analyzed here, had a total of 274 respondents. Dropping all missing data cases would have left a much smaller dataset (the exact number depending on the model specifications). Multiple imputation allows for the retention of these cases and for greater confidence in the resulting estimates (King et al. 2001). I used the “ice” package created by Patrick Royston (2005a, b, 2009) to generate 5 imputed datasets and conduct regression analyses.

An alternative approach would be to collect sermon transcripts and code them for political content. But, beyond concerns over individual interpretations of political sermons, congregants who didn’t attend that day or who attended and fell asleep would not receive the cue. By asking the respondents about the political content of sermons, we know they received the cue, whether or not they agreed with it or acted as a result of it.

Although, on average, members of the different congregations reported receiving significantly different levels of cues via sermons—ranging from a low of 6.2 in the Mainline Protestant congregation to a high of 10.2 in the Black Protestant congregation—in each congregation, individuals reported activity cues of 10 or higher. In fact, every congregation but the Mainline Protestant one had respondents reporting the highest score of 12. This further reinforces the idea that congregation members do not necessarily hear the same messages. The standard deviation was highest in the Mormon congregation (1.88) and lowest in the Mainline Protestant congregation (1.34).

A dummy variable is not included for Evangelical Protestants. Although the literature suggests that Evangelical Protestants may be more likely to be politically active, particularly when mobilized by congregation leaders (Guth et al. 2003, Campbell 2004), the n for Evangelicals in this sample is simply too small and the sample population is not statistically distinguishable from Catholics or Mormons.