ABSTRACT

Activism as Community:
How Political Engagement Styles Vary by Religiosity

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The significance of religion in shaping political and civic activity has received great attention over the years. Existing literature suggests that religious organizations provide institutional resources and civic skills that facilitate collective action. This study expands this effort by investigating the role of specific religious practices on forms of political engagement. Using the Wave IV of the Baylor Religion Survey (2013) I examine how religion and non-religion shapes political activity. Results indicate participation in community based religious activities, such as prayer groups or bible studies, is a robust predictor of traditional means of political participation such as participating in a voter registration drive. Religious Nones are more likely to engage in protest or use the Internet for political activities. Together these indicate a deep divide in the ways that Americans participate in the political process and a mechanism by which this division is maintained.

Activism as Community: How Political Engagement Styles Vary by Religiosity

by

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A Thesis

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

DEDICATION

To my parents, sister, and grandmother, for encouraging me to chase this dream.

CHAPTER ONE

Political Action in the 21st Century

The political climate in the United States is one of increasing levels of

polarization. James Davison Hunter (1992) described it as a battle raging between

"traditionalists" that value the morality and the tradition of the past and

"progressivists" that value change and new more individualistic forms of

morality. This divide is what lays the groundwork for the growing debates over

the direction and meaning of America. Central to his thesis is the role of religion,

or as he terms it, "cultural concerns." Hunter largely focused on the divide

between orthodox and progressive religion. However there has been a steady

and significant shift toward secularization in the United States (Cimino and

Smith 2011; Hout and Fischer 2002; Putnam, Campbell, and Garrett 2012). Given

this increasing secularization, how do the religiously *unaffiliated* participate in the

political process? Are they engaging in electoral process in similar or different

ways compared to their religiously observant counterparts? Since the religiously

unaffiliated lack the social connections and "communities of believers" (Smith

2009) that have often been found to increase pro-social and civic behavior

(Putnam 2000), does that modify their role in the political process? Furthermore,

the influence of technology, and in particular the internet, has grown

dramatically in the American landscape over the last decade. Is the growing role

of technology affecting the way that people participate politically? In what follows, I seek to provide some preliminary answers to these important questions, most of which have yet to be addressed by social scientists.

Literature Review

> Americans of all ages, all stations in life, and all types of disposition, are forever forming associations.

> --Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America (1835)*

Tocqueville's observation nearly two centuries ago remains true to this day. Americans are constantly forming and navigating associations, and these associations are often for political or civic service. Researchers have noted increased positive outcomes in many fields for the civically engaged. This forms the basis for the social capital research. Social capital can be thought of as features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam 2000).

Social capital is crucial in the performance and maintenance of a democracy (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994). Countries with more active civil societies have more politically engaged citizenry, flourishing democracies and increased levels of philanthropy (Brown and Ferris 2007). Social science research on the role of religion in civic society and the formation of social capital dates to the work of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. Durkheim's perspective emphasizes the role of religion and its rituals in creating group solidarity and strengthening the link between the individual and broader society (1912). Weber

saw that associations were critical in the development of civil morality and that these vibrant associations made the United States of America the model for civic educational projects (Kim 2015). Central to the Weber's thesis is that the religious quest, salvation seeking, intensifies the commitment to a community (Kalberg 2009).

Members of religious groups benefit from increased levels of social integration and support (Wuthnow 2002). Regular attenders of religious activities often have denser social networks than their non-churchgoing counterparts. This increased social support and integration provided by these social networks means that churchgoers have increased levels of social capital which can have significant effects that create stronger voluntary associations and a culture of trust (Inglehart 1997). This effect can often be seen through increased civic activity and pro-social behaviors (Putnam et al. 2012).

For the religiously affiliated, congregations often transform social capital into social movements. The success of much modern community organizing is rooted in the ability to access social capital through religious networks (Morris 1986; Warren 2009; Wood 2002). Sociologist of religion Robert Wuthnow (1991) noted that congregations can act as recruiting centers for political mobilization, including voter drives and voter education. They have also served as training centers for social movements. These congregations are generally located in neighborhoods where like-minded individuals spend regular scheduled time

together, making them perfect locations for political organizations and actions to emerge.

The religiously unaffiliated, or "Nones", have been one of the fastest growing categories in the United States since the 1990s. Researchers suggest that this may be due to demographic shifts and a distaste for the increasing mix of politics and religion (Hout and Fischer 2002). The religiously unaffiliated are a group consisting of atheists, agnostics, and those who do not claim any religious affiliation. While it may be easy to dismiss them simply as a group of non-believers, the group overwhelming majority still believe in God. Indeed, around ninety-five percent of Americans say they believe in God or some higher power (Bader, Mencken, and Froese 2007). It is important then to realize that this paper does not analyze the religiously unaffiliated as a group of non-believers but rather merely as those who reject the institution of organized religion. When surveys ask about their religious affiliation, they simply answer "None".

A potential consequence of the rejection of institutionalized religion is that the religiously unaffiliated do not benefit from the increased social capital provided by religious organizations (Putnam 2000). If a benefit from religious social capital is the ability to coordinate political action, we should see a reduction in the ability of the religious affiliated to organize and engage in political movements when compared to their churched counterparts (Driskell, Embry, and Lyon 2008).

Several studies have noted a general decline in civic participation and associations that normally result in increased social capital at the end of the 20th century. This can be seen in the reduction in political participation and in civic organizations. Robert Putnam (2000) lamented political consequences of the decline in social capital as potentially catastrophic for American democracy. Since a significant portion of social capital comes through religious organizations, it is no surprise that this drop in civic participation coincides with the increase of Americans claiming no religious affiliation (Hout and Fischer 2002; Putnam et al. 2012; Roozen 1980). A retort to Putnam by less pessimistic researchers have argued that civic participation and forms of association are merely being transformed, pointing to online communities and harder-to-measure styles of connecting such as book groups or house churches as evidence (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe 2007; Shah, Nojin, and Holbert 2001; Stolle and Rochon 1998).

Consequently, social scientists may need to reconsider the measures and conceptions of social capital creation and transmission. The ways in which people interact are not static. The meaning surrounding involvement in a bowling league or the Lions Club will evolve over time. While these traditional forms of civic associations may in fact be declining, we need to consider the role of technological innovation in expanding the way citizens interact with one another (Fung, Russon Gilman, and Shkabatur 2013). Some scholars have found that while the internet connects people over great distances, it may also promote

activities near the home (Hampton 2007). It is possible that these online interactions may be a source of a new type of social capital which could increase pro-social behavior (Kittilson and Dalton 2010). Most pertinently, research shows that the religiously unaffiliated tend to "make use" of the internet in different ways and at greater rates (Smith and Cimino 2012) than those who have a traditional religious affiliation.

Use of media and technology could then be a predictor of political involvement. Initially, some sociologists and political scientists expressed skepticism at the ability of the internet and online digital platforms to foster real world political action. However, a powerful piece of confirming evidence came to light with the recent "Arab Spring". Beginning in the spring of 2011, a pro-democratic revolutionary wave came across the Arab world. Massive demonstrations gripped the area for more than a year. Social media played in central role in shaping the political debates and political actions of the time. Spikes in revolutionary talk in online platforms often proceeded major action on the ground (Howard et al. 2011). Participants acknowledged that networks such as Twitter and Facebook were the primary channels through which action was planned, coordinated and publicized. This moment confirmed the potential for social media platforms to play a critical role in shaping political movements.

Measures

This analysis uses the Wave IV of the Baylor Religion Survey from 2013. The Baylor Religion Survey includes a battery of questions about the type of religious practice one engages in as well as an array of questions about the way individuals participate politically. The Baylor Religion Survey is a nationally representative sample of 1,572 American adults.

Political Action

The Baylor Religion Survey contains a number of questions about political action. This battery of nine questions asks, "In the year leading up to the 2012 election, did you …" followed by a statement of some type of political action. These actions include reading the newspaper for political information, using the internet for political information, donating money to a political candidate, attending a rally, attending a lecture, participating in a protest, taking part in a voter registration drive, and watching a debate. I am including all of these potential political actions in this discussion except for the "watch a debate" category for two reasons. First, the number of people who watched a debate is very high (85%) which makes it virtually a constant and drawing meaningful conclusions about the action become impossible. Second, I argue that watching a debate on television requires very little investment. I am mainly interested in actions people deliberately undertook. Items such as taking part in a voter registration drives or seeking more information from particular media sources

suggest a motivated and conscious action by the respondent. Response categories are coded as Yes (1) and No (0).

Religion Variables

There are two types of religion variables in this analysis. The Baylor Religion Survey contains a battery of questions concerning an individual's religious practices. There are ten types of religious practice in this battery. But only two that are relevant this analysis as they are community based activities. The questions are phrased as "In the past year, were you involved in a community prayer group?" or "In the past year, were you involved in a community bible study?" These questions are coded as Yes (1) or No (0). The other questions are excluded as they tend to be about individual practices such as witnessing to a coworker or neighbor, and going to confession.

The second type of religion measure I will be discussing is religious tradition. I use the well-established classification system known as RELTRAD (Steensland et al. 2000). This system breaks Protestant denominations into Evangelical, Mainline, and Black Protestant categories. This type of system recognizes shared beliefs, practices, and historical contexts that characterize these different groups. This type of classification system is beneficial for my analysis as Protestants are a diverse group of denominations and practices. White Evangelical Protestants have significantly different religious and political practices compared to their Black Protestant counterparts.

The remaining groups in the RELTRAD classification include Catholic, Jewish, Other Religion, and None. The majority of my religious analysis will focus on Evangelical Protestant and the Religious Nones. Religious Nones should not be confused with Atheist. Atheists make up around six percent of the sample but are only one small part of this group. This category of Religious None is the fastest growing classification and includes a number of unaffiliated respondents who may identify as atheist, agnostic, humanist, spiritual but not religious, or simply no affiliation. They are not the member of any church, but the majority of them do claim to believe in God or some other higher power (Froese and Bader 2010). The religiously unaffiliated make up approximately fourteen percent of this sample.

Analytic Strategy

Two separate correlation tables for the religion variables and the political action variables are presented first. The first correlates community based religious practice with political action. The second correlates religious tradition with both community-based religious practice and type of political action. This is necessary to identify if there are separate ways that religion, or lack thereof, interact with the type of political participation engaged in.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics (n=1572)

Variable	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Age	52.645	17.018	19	99
Income	4.151	1.707	1	7
Education	5.006	1.602	1	7
Race (W)	0.900	0.299	0	1
Sex (M)	0.411	0.492	0	1
Metro	0.251	0.433	0	1
Married	0.513	0.499	0	1
Use Internet for Political Information	0.556	0.496	0	1
Read Newspaper for Political Information	0.786	0.409	0	1
Write	0.159	0.366	0	1
Protest	0.041	0.199	0	1
Attend Rally	0.118	0.323	0	1
Attend Lecture	0.094	0.292	0	1
Voter Registration Drive	0.054	0.227	0	1
Donate Money	0.174	0.379	0	1
Community Prayer	0.092	0.289	0	1
Community Bible Study	0.060	0.237	0	1
Evangelical	0.267	0.442	0	1
Mainline	0.159	0.365	0	1
Black Protestant	0.067	0.250	0	1
Catholic	0.234	0.423	0	1
Jew	0.021	0.143	0	1
Other	0.055	0.229	0	1
Religious "None"	0.136	0.343	0	1
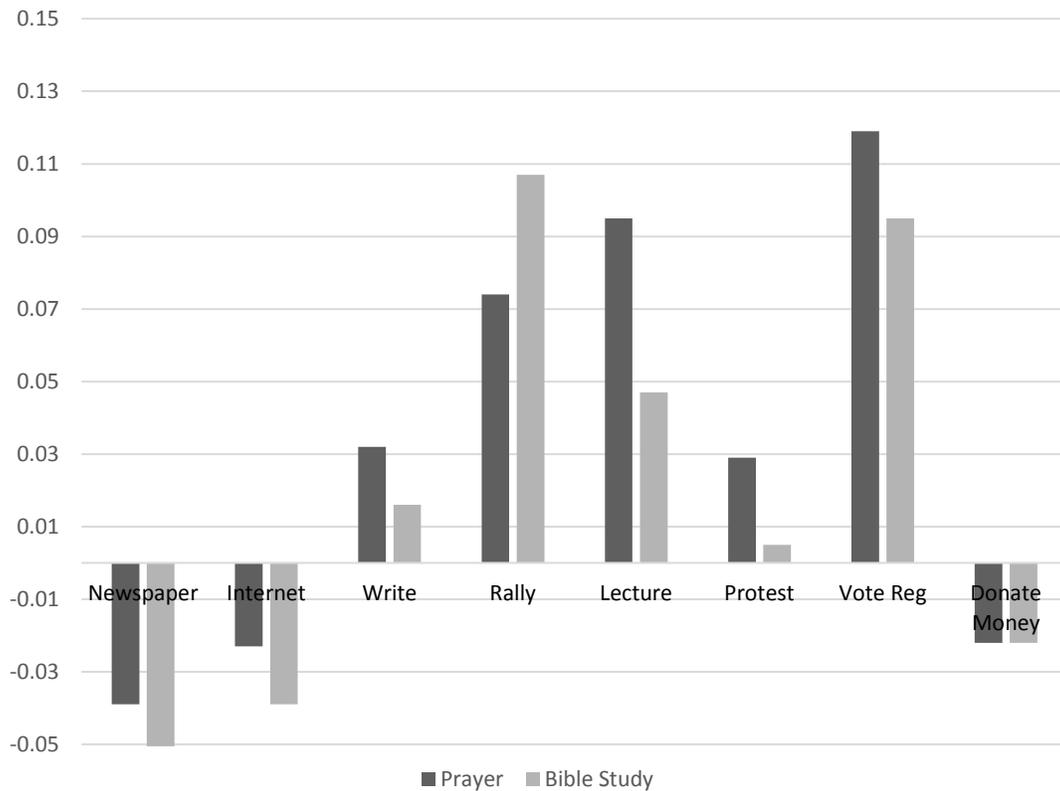
Figure 1. Visual representation for correlation between community based religious practice and political participation. See Table 2 for details.

Results

Community based religious activity significantly correlates with a number of political activities (See Table 2). Participation in community based prayer groups are positively correlated with attending a rally, attending a lecture, and participating in a voter registration drive. Engagement with a community bible study program is positively correlated with attending a rally and voter registration drives, and negatively correlated with reading the newspaper for political information.

Table 2

Correlations for Community Religious Practice

Variable	Prayer	Bible Study
Newspaper	-0.039	-0.052*
Internet	-0.023	-0.039
Write	0.032	0.016
Rally	0.074**	0.107***
Lecture	0.095***	0.047
Protest	0.029	0.005
Vote Reg	0.119***	0.095***
Donate Money	-0.022	-0.022

*p<.05, **p<.01 ***p<.001

Identification as an Evangelical or a Black Protestant is positively correlated with participation in both types of community based religious activity, prayer groups and bible studies (See Table 3). Not surprisingly, identification as a religious None is negatively correlated with participation in community based religious activity. This verifies the claim that the religious Nones are not participating in a place which has been historically identified as one where social capital can be both generated and transmitted.

For political activity, identification as an Evangelical is negatively correlated with reading the newspaper for political information, engaging in protest, and donating money. Being a Black Protestant is positively correlated with attending a rally or participating in a voter registration drive. Mainline

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Protestants are positively correlated with reading the newspaper for political information Catholics are negatively correlated with using the internet for political purposes. Judaism is positively correlated with reading the newspaper, attending a lecture, and donating money. Religious non-affiliation is positively correlated reading the newspaper and using the internet to obtain political information, as well as attending a rally, attending a lecture, and engaging in protest.

Table 3

Correlations for Religious Tradition

Variable	Evan.	Black Prot	Mainline	Cath	Jew	Other	None
Comm. Prayer	0.116***	0.110***	0.044	-0.016	-0.029	0.005	-0.117***
Comm. Bible Study	0.119***	0.099***	-0.008	-0.042	-0.016	-0.037	-0.104***
Newspaper	-0.077**	-0.040	0.056*	0.003	0.052*	0.021	0.067**
Internet	-0.024	-0.041	0.001	-0.051*	0.044	0.036	0.112***
Write	-0.036	-0.008	0.009	-0.021	0.039	0.028	0.021
Rally	-0.047	0.056*	0.022	-0.035	0.019	0.009	0.051*
Lecture	-0.027	0.018	-0.031	-0.031	0.065*	0.021	0.058*
Protest	-0.088***	0.042	-0.019	-0.014	0.041	-0.006	0.096***
Vote Reg	-0.028	0.117***	-0.033	-0.024	0.047	-0.007	0.011
Donate Money	-0.087***	0.039	0.021	-0.038	0.093***	0.048	0.049

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Discussion

As predicted by the social capital literature, participation in community based religious practice is associated with a degree of increased political participation (see Table 2). The type of political action tends to be of the non-contentious type(McVeigh and Sikkink 2001), such as attending a rally or participating in voter registration drives. The more traditional organizations, such as these religious groups, tend to be involved in more traditional (non-contentious) forms of political participation.

The results indicate a stark contrast between the religious and the non-religious in their political action. The religious Nones and Evangelical Christians are essentially opposites in terms of political action. While correlations are not significant in every case, every correlation coefficient is negative for Evangelical Protestants and political action, including protesting, donating money, attending rallies and lectures, writing government representatives and using the newspaper or internet for political information (see Table 3). In contrast, every correlation coefficient is positive for the religious Nones. Scholars have often pointed to the role of religion in facilitating political action, but here we find that the non-religious are more politically active by most measures than the majority of their religious counterparts. Especially in the case of contentious action, protest is significant and negative (p<.001) for Evangelicals and significant and positive (p>.001) for the Nones. The contrast could not be sharper.

The religious Nones are far more likely to be participate politically across the different types of political action. They are the most likely to engage in contentious actions like protest, and are far more likely to use the internet for political information. Ancillary analyses (see Appendix A) indicate that there is a significant correlation between using the internet for political information and participation in this type of contentious political action. In the following chapter, I will explore this relationship further.

CHAPTER TWO

Protest: A Case Study

As discussed in Chapter 1, significant correlations exist between some types of political action and internet usage, as well as between political action and religious tradition. In this chapter, I present a case study for a specific type of political action. Using quantitative analyses, I predict participation in political protest using measures of religion and measures of internet media consumption.

Literature Review

Participation in institutionalized political activity, such as a voting or writing a political leader, and protest are both considered to be an effective means of addressing both individual and collective complaints. McVeigh and Sikkink (2001) say the difference lies in the contentious nature of protests. They found that amongst American Protestants, most are reluctant to approve of contentious tactics. However, the probability of justifying the use of protests by these groups is increased if they believe that their religion or their religious values are threatened, and also by their volunteering for church organizations. Volunteering in church organizations and participating in community based religious activities like bible studies and prayer groups indicates a denser religious social network and increased social capital for the religiously affiliated.

These groups provide a location from which many types of social action can develop (Wuthnow 2002).

Results from studies on social capital indicate that level or type of social capital can predict political ideology, electoral behavior, and engagement in political protest. We have seen that while religion can be a force for social change, being religiously active tends not to be predictive of a willingness to protest (Deleon and Naff 2004). In social movement theory, Charles Tilly said that groups have "repertoires of contention"(2008). These are the tools and actions that politically motivated groups have available to achieve their means. Increased social position of the group and proximity to the nexus of power in society reduces the contentious nature of the actions and tactics these groups partake in (Tarrow 2008). The type of social capital formed in these groups contains norms against contention, working within the existing system rather than against it. In a Bourdieusian sense, the political habitus of these communities focuses on incremental reform and moderation, rather than revolutionary acts. Protest has historically been a central part of revolutionary action (Traugott 1995). Since I believe that protest is not a part of the political habitus of groups with traditional forms of political capital, I expect a reduction in the willingness to engage in political protest when a person participates in community based religious activities.

Hypothesis 1: Involvement in community based religious activity will decrease the odds of engagement in political protest.

The religiously unaffiliated should be lacking in the type of social capital that is afforded to their affiliated counterparts. The type of social capital religious Nones are afforded may contain norms that encourage contentious political action, or at least no values against them. If this is the case, then I suspect they will have less of an objection to participating in contentious political action (Andrews, Beyerlein, and Farnum 2016). Therefore, I suspect that the identification as a religious None will increase the chances of participation in contentious collective action.

Hypothesis 2: Identification as a religious "None" will increase the odds of engagement in political protest.

Studies have found that online civic and political activities can increase personal political efficacy (Kim 2015). Internet users have wider social circles but lower levels of trust than non-users (Uslaner 2004), the nature of which can be described as wide but shallow. Kavanaugh et al. (2005) suggest that the internet can play a constructive role in civil society through activist groups and discussion. Membership in these online activist groups may increase the chances that individuals will gather offline to attempt to effect social change. These internet communities may be providing a new location for democratic activity to

emerge (Cimino and Smith 2011). Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter

may be the location for political action to emerge (Correa, Hinsley, and de

Zúñiga 2010; Fung et al. 2013). While there is disagreement amongst some as to

whether online activity can result in offline activity, my claim here is that

internet use will improve the chances of participating in political action. If the

internet is providing a new type of civic community and a new form of social

capital, then we should see increased political activity for those who use the

internet for more than just passive consumption.

Hypothesis 3: Using the internet for political information will increase the odds that one will engage in political protest.

Measures

For this case study, I again use the Baylor Religion Survey for my data

source. The Baylor Religion Survey is a nationally representative survey of 1572

Americans performed by Gallup, Inc. Demographic data compares favorably to

the General Social Survey.

Control Variables

Control variables relevant to this study include age, race, gender,

household income, education, marital status, and metropolitan residency. These

control variables have been previously tested or are suggested by the literature

on religion and political action. Age is often considered a predictor for political

activity through "biographical availability" (McAdam 1999). Kirkpatrick (2008) suggests that while certain political action like protest is often associated with youth movements, it is often well-established older Americans that are involved in political action more broadly. The age variable presented is continuous, with a range from 19-99 years.

I include a dummy variable for gender and race. Race is broken down to white and non-white (white = 1). Race may be an indicator of willingness to participate in certain types of political action such as protest or voter registration drives, especially for non-whites. Research has suggested that whites may be less likely to protest due to the privileged position whites tend to occupy (Isaac, Mutran, and Stryker 1980), and blacks may be more likely to protest because of the historical legacy of the civil rights movement in the 1960's (Andrews et al. 2016).

Marital status can be predictive of a lack of willingness to engage in political protest. Previous studies have concluded that the majority of protestors are unmarried (Petrie 2004) and that those who have engaged in protest are likely to marry later in life than those who have never engaged in protest (Sherkat and Blocker 1997). I coded marital status dichotomously, respondents who are married (married =1) in one group and all else in another (married = 0). Furthermore, some have found associations between living in metropolitan areas and the willingness to engage in protest compared to those who live in more rural areas (Eisinger 1973). It is unclear if this is a due to the political culture of

metropolitan life, or simply because of the proximity of government agencies and buildings or population density creating greater opportunity for protest action (Oliver and Maney 2000). Some have also claimed that urban centers tend to have lower levels of religious affiliation (Baker and Smith 2009; Heilman 2015). For these reasons, I am including a dichotomous control for metropolitan residence.

Household Income and Education are both indicators of socio-economic status. Researchers have noted that while neither education or income are strong predictors of the type of political action one engages in, education is a predictor of increased levels of political engagement generally (Putnam 2000). Income and education are both broken into 7 categories, where income is $10,000 or less, $10,001–$20,000, $20,001–$35,000, $35,001–$50,000, $50,001–$100,000, $100,001–$150,000, and greater than $150,000 and education is coded as 8th or less, 9–12th no diploma, high school graduate, some college, trade/technical/vocational training, college graduate, postgraduate work/degree. While household income and education are correlated to a degree, low Variance Inflation Factor scores suggest no significant multicollinearity issues.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for this analysis is dichotomous in nature. The Baylor Religion Survey asks respondents, "In the year leading up to the 2012 election, did you participate in a political protest?" Respondents indicated by

checking a box yes or no. Responses were coded as Yes (1) and no (0). Around 4.5% of the sample indicated they participated in a protest during the 2012 election cycle.

Independent Variables

Using the RELTRAD classification scheme, I am using the category of religious None. Identification as a religious None is coded dichotomously. One either states they have a religious affiliation or not. As stated previously, the main characteristic of the Nones is the lack of membership in religious organizations and includes atheists, agnostics, spiritual but not religious and the otherwise unaffiliated. The religiously unaffiliated make up around 15 percent of the sample.

The other independent variables for this analysis are also dichotomous in nature. The Baylor Religion Survey asks respondents, "In the year leading up to the 2012 election, did you use the internet for political information?" Respondents indicated by checking a box yes or no. Responses were coded as Yes (1) and No (0). Around 56 percent of the sample indicated they used the internet for political information during the 2012 election cycle. Measures of community religious participation are also included, with nearly ten percent involved in community prayer and six percent involved in community bible study.

I present binary logistic regression models predicting engagement in political protest. Model 1 includes the control variables and identification as a religious None as the predictor. Model 2 includes use of the internet to predict protest and Model 3 includes the community based religious activity variables. Estimates are presented, with positive values indicating an increase in the chances of engaging in political protest and negative values indicating a reduction. Finally, I present odds ratios for all three models. These odds ratios allow us to interpret the probability that an individual engaged in protest. To account for under- and over-representation of certain categories and potential coefficient inflation, all models include appropriate weighting.

Results

Table 4 displays the results for binary logistic regression models predicting political protest. Results from model one indicate a statistically significant increase in the odds of a religious None engaging in political protest. Nones (β=0.195) are around two and-a-half times as likely to protest than their religious counterparts (See Table 5). Consistent with Kirkpatrick's(2008) findings, age is significant, with older Americans more likely to protest than those who are younger. Each additional year in age corresponding with a nearly two percent increase in the odds. Income and education are not significant, while Whites are much less likely to protest than non-Whites. Consistent with the literature, those

who are married are 70 percent less likely to protest compared to the unmarried and those in metropolitan areas are about twice as likely to protest than those who live in a non-metropolitan area.

Table 4

Results of Binary Logistic Regression predicting Political Protest

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept	-4.074***	-4.478***	-4.494***
Age	0.019*	0.025*	0.026**
	(0.179)	(0.237)	(0.247)
Income	0.053	-0.003	0.029
	(0.048)	(-0.002)	(0.028)
Education	0.092	0.024	-0.021
	(0.081)	(-0.021)	(-0.018)
Race (W)	-0.991*	-1.049*	-1.134*
	(-0.164)	(-0.173)	(-0.189)
Sex (M)	0.314	0.268	-0.194
	(0.086)	(0.074)	(-0.054)
Married	-1.245**	-1.269**	-1.276**
	(-0.343)	(-0.349)	(-0.353)
Metro	0.693*	0.635[I]	0.695[I]
	(0.157)	(0.144)	(0.156)
Internet		1.177**	1.316***
		(0.323)	(0.362)
Community Prayer			0.591
			(0.082)
Community Bible Study			-1.111
			(-0.125)
Religious Nones	0.948**	0.842**	0.900**
	(0.195)	(0.229)	(0.197)
N	1193	1191	1138
Pseudo R²	0.105	0.133	0.147

Key: Parameter Estimate
        (Standardized Beta)
[I]p<.10, *p<.05, p<.01, ***p<.001

Table 5

Odds Ratios predicting Political Protest

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age	1.019*	1.025*	1.026*
	(1.000-1.037)	(1.005-1.044)	(1.006-1.046)
Income	1.054	0.997	1.030
	(0.849-1.309)	(0.800-1.242)	(0.820-1.293)
Education	1.097	1.024	0.980
	(0.887-1.355)	(0.826-1.271)	(0.785-1.223)
Race (W)	0.371*	0.350*	0.321*
	(0.160-0.862)	(0.149-0.822)	(0.135-0.766)
Sex (M)	1.369	1.308	1.214
	(0.732-2.561)	(0.639-2.469)	(0.633-2.328)
Married	0.288**	0.281**	0.279**
	(0.160-0.862)	(0.128-0.617)	(0.124-0.627)
Metro	2.001*	1.886^t	1.934^t
	(1.032-3.879)	(0.965-3.687)	(0.975-3.836)
Internet		3.247**	3.729***
		(2.568-18.143)	(1.620-8.583)
Comm Prayer			1.804
			(0.162-7.038)
Comm Bible Study			0.329
			(0.025-4.276)
Nones	2.580**	2.321**	2.459**
	(1.294-5.146)	(1.476-7.145)	(1.193-5.067)
Pseudo R²	0.105	0.133	0.147

Key: Odds Ratio
    (95% Confidence Interval)
^{t}p<.10, *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

Model 2 adds internet usage into the model. Religiously unaffiliated are still more than twice as likely to engage in protest than the religiously affiliated. Metropolitan residence is now only marginally significant (p=.058). The general results for the rest of the controls remain the same, with only some minor variation in the odds ratios reported. Using the internet for political information increase the odds of participating in a protest by around three and-one-quarter times compared to those that do not use the internet for political information when controlling for age, race, sex, and socio-economic status indicators. This model supports both my second and third hypotheses, with a significant increase in the odds of participating in protest for the religious Nones and for those who use the internet to seek out political information.

In Model 3, I add the community religious practice variables. Neither community prayer nor community bible study are significant predictors of protest participation. The significant effect of age remains consistent from throughout the models. Race remains a significant predictor with Whites continuing to have around a 65 percent reduction in the odds of participating in protest compared to non-Whites. Use of the internet for political information remains significant. The odds of engaging in protest are about three and-one-half times higher for those who use the internet for political information compared to those who do not. And once again the religious Nones are about two and-one-half times as likely to protest compared to their religious counterparts. Being married (β=-0.353), being religiously unaffiliated (β =0.197) and internet usage

(β=0.362) are the strongest effects in the model. I do not find support for my first

hypothesis, with the models showing no significant effect of community

religious activity on reducing the odds of engaging in political protest.
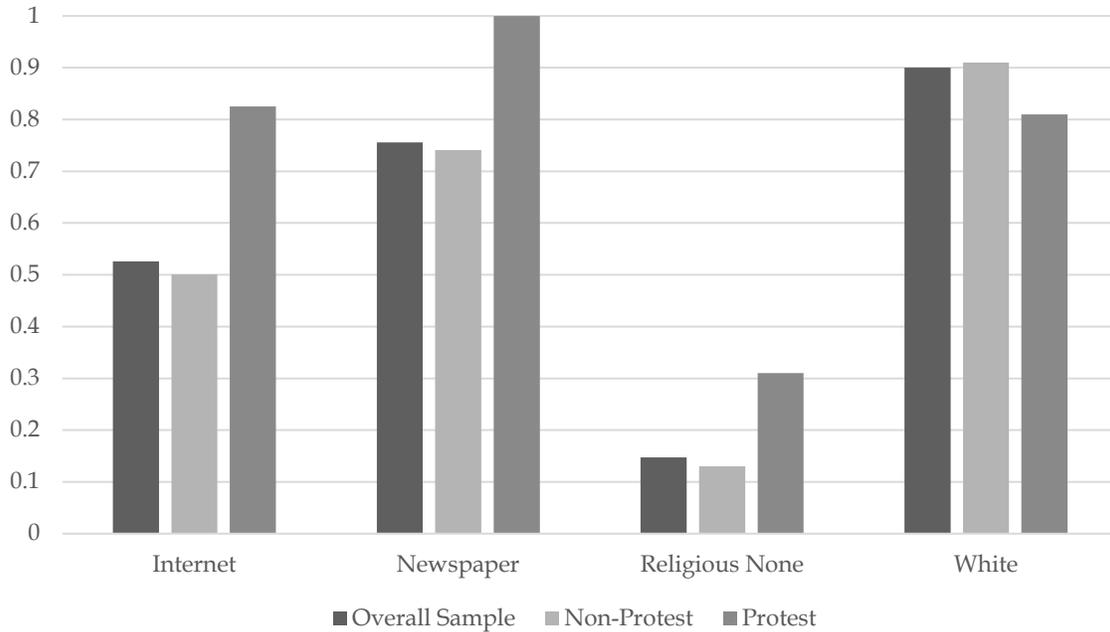

Figure 2. Visual representation for weighted means, protest specific, see Appendix B for details.

Discussion

My models indicate that there is a strong and consistent relationship

between both being religiously unaffiliated and using the internet for political

information with participating in political protest. Across each of the measures

of political activity, the religious Nones are either as likely or more likely to

engage than their non-religious counterparts. When it comes to this case study of

protest, the Nones are more than twice as likely to engage in this type of

contentious political action. While the Nones make up about 15 percent of the sample, they make up a full 30 percent of those who protest (see Figure 2). They are highly engaged in public political activities, especially those that may consider to be outside mainstream political techniques.

CHAPTER THREE

What does it all mean?

These findings offer insight into the connection between forms of political and the non-religious as well as well as the growing of effect of the internet on the political process, which has heretofore been under-examined and theorized. This study finds that there are significant differences in the ways that the religiously unaffiliated participate in the political process compared to the those that claim a religious tradition, with the greatest divide between the religious Nones and Evangelical Protestants. Religious Nones are far more likely to engage in political protest than their affiliated counterparts.

Theoretical Considerations

A New Battlefield of the Culture War?

When it comes to religious tradition, Evangelicals and Black Protestants are more likely to participate in community based prayer groups and bible studies. There is no significant correlation with these activities for the other religious traditions. As shown in Table 2, there is a significant correlation between community based religious practice and certain types of political activity. These are actions such as attending a rally or participating in a voter registration drive, both types of activities are considered to be traditional forms

of political activity. By traditional, I mean they may be considered an activity that is mainstream in nature and unlikely to be revolutionary.

These are people working within the system and if their purpose is in effecting change, it more likely to be incremental rather than revolutionary. These groups of people prize loyal group enthusiasts that generate stronger collective identities, and interactions occur in recurrent patterns that arise from what it means to be a good member(Lichterman 2009). This traditional political engagement found in this study, indicates a group style (Lichterman 2006) that differs from those outside the group, and helps to maintain group bonds and boundaries. Note that correlations for community based religious activity and political information (newspaper and internet), though only significant in one case, all have negative coefficients. While we cannot draw any significant conclusions with this data, it may be indicative of a trend that warrants further investigation.

The religious Nones, which are negatively correlated with participating in community religious activity, are positively correlated with a number of political actions. They are highly informed. In our sample, eighty-five percent of the Nones used the newspaper for political information compared to seventy-three percent of their religious counterparts (see Appendix B). Internet use showed an even larger increase, with seventy-one percent using the internet for political information compared to just forty-eight percent of their religious counterparts.

This is a significant difference, which suggests that the religious and the Nones may be operating in separate spheres.

This divide in political engagement is especially apparent between the Nones and Evangelicals, with Evangelicals being negatively correlated with both newspaper and internet use for political information. In nearly all types of public political participation, Evangelicals and the religiously unaffiliated are effectively opposites, with Evangelicals seemingly de-politicizing (see Table 3). This may be indicative of a boundary between two oppositional cultures (Gramsci 1971), cultural mirrors of one another, reminiscent of the divide between Hunter's "traditionalists" and "progressivists"(1992).

I postulate that the critical and perhaps causal factor driving all these findings is the differential effects of "communities of discourse" (Wuthnow and Evans 2002) on styles of political engagement. Put another way, these Americans engage politically the way they do because of the symbolic communities they belong to, each of which carries its own set of accepted norms for political behavior and political values. We may succinctly refer to this internalized set of norms as a "political habitus," using Bourdieu's idea in a more narrow sense. The key cleavage here is the view of traditional versus alternative social institutions, such as media, politics, and religion.

For example, use of traditional media may be emblematic of the traditional power structure, one that has been shaped by establishment political powers and religious leaders (Hout and Fischer 2002). The religiously

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unaffiliated rejection of establishment religion may reveal a general disposition related to the rejection of establishment institutions, including traditional media, more broadly. Skepticism toward traditional media, could be what is driving this increased reliance on alternative information sources. This would dovetail with their prior rejection of conventional religious institutions, revealing an underlying cultural disposition of eschewing established, accepted social forms.

The *à la carte* and personally customizable nature of the internet could make maintaining civil society difficult. Individuals can easily and quickly obtain the information they need, however there are no checks and balances on the veracity of the information obtained. With little fact checking actively done, confirmation bias creates groups of people who entrench in the type of things they want to hear or believe (Lelkes, Sood, and Iyengar 2017). This is creating two ideologically separate spheres of internet news and information, colloquially known and the blue web and red web. People can actively be involved in one side of this divide without ever crossing to the other. With no common ground or mutual understanding, civil society can crack. Recent research on the wildly divergent content seen on social media between progressives and conservatives due to similarity-based algorithms is evidence (Bakshy, Messing, and Adamic 2015). The unprecedented level of political polarization identified by political scientists and manifested in the 2016 election provides even more support for this opening rift. This is a promising area of research that future studies should focus on.

Social Capital and Seeking Community

Members of religious groups benefit from increased levels of social integration and support. Regular attenders of religious activities often have denser social networks than their non-churchgoing counterparts. Within these social networks they are able to obtain and maintain friendships with others who hold similar beliefs and values. The regular religious services and activities allow for people to generate deep bonds and contribute to higher levels of pro-social behaviors. I argue that this creates a form of habitus that is specific to these religious communities, and traditional in nature. This may help explain why those who are involved in community based religious activities have increased participation in things like rallies and voter registration drives.

Furthermore, the religious are more likely than the non-religious to claim they have a purpose in life (Froese 2015). He also notes that the religious tend to find meaning in the language of God, and that more secular people tend to find meaning in the language of justice. Drescher(2016) wrote that Nones have a "ethic of care", one that is based in the ideals of the Good Samaritan, pluralistic in nature and grounded in fairness. It is clear from her study, that the religiously unaffiliated are not isolated persons, but rather deeply relational. It is plausible that the non-religious may be seeking purpose, finding meaning, and fulfilling their relational "ethic of care" in these political avenues. We see this in their very high rate of political media consumption and the positive correlations of political behavior in most of our political activity types. With the especially high use of

the internet and the participation in protest, these may be the key indicators of a form of habitus for the non-religious that differs from the religious.

A tentative explanation for the divergent findings presented here is that fundamentally the Nones are seeking community, a functional equivalent of the community traditionally sought through religion. This community-seeking behavior leads them to ultimately to online gathering places. The internet could be providing groups of like-minded individuals a place to gather and support one another, generating an online form of social capital. These groups offer a sense of community along with a moral purpose analogous to the social capital that the religious are getting from their religious communities. It may also be that the internet is a channel to a sense of community, and it is these political activities, especially protest, that are the purpose communities themselves. I suspect that the moral communities are found in the internet and these political activities are secondary to the online community. A study of this kind cannot definitively answer the direction of this pathway, but further investigation could readily clarify it. At the very least, this study identifies indicators suggesting that the internet could be operating as a secular prosocial institution. For the religiously unaffiliated, the internet may be acting functionally as a congregational proxy.

What accounts for the near twenty-five percent increase in internet use for political information by the Nones? Some may argue that this is simply a generational difference, that the youth are driving this difference. However, our

mean age in our sample for the religious is forty-eight and the mean age for our group of Nones is forty-one (see Appendix C). While they do trend younger overall, this is not purely a youth movement and the difference in age does not completely account for the twenty-five percent difference in the rate of media consumption.

Limitations

This study, though robust and provocative in many ways has several shortcomings that deserve mentioning. First, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits generalizability. Something peculiar about the 2012 election cycle might be generating these types of results. Longitudinal research could ascertain whether this is simply a one-time anomaly. In support of the claims of a larger pattern, however, we should recall that the Tea Party protests and political emergence were also active during this time which included a significant number of conservative religious members. It could be that this movement may have increased the participation of the religiously affiliated in political protests and this study could be underestimating the effects. Similarly, this study does not focus on voting behavior, the most common form of political behavior, but on more active forms of participation. The conclusions drawn here may not correlate well with electoral behavior, and future research could focus on this area. Finally, as with all survey research, this study is limited by the questions asked in the instrument. While the questions on political action and media

consumption tap into most of the major domains of political participation and information sources, they are by no means exhaustive.

Conclusion

This study expands our knowledge of differences in political engagement by religious background. The findings demonstrate that significant patterns exist between the religious and the Nones in this area, especially on the topic of political protest. I advance a set of tentative explanations for these patterns based in the differential, even opposite, political habitus that are generated in their primary communities of discourse. It should be viewed not as exhaustive but as opening a fruitful avenue of research on the political characteristics of the growing number of non-religious Americans. This trend does not appear to be abating, thus the more social science is dedicated to it, the more accurate and thorough our understanding of our future will be.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Correlation Coefficients for Protest

Variables	Protest
Internet Used for Political Information	0.158***
Community Prayer	0.021
Community Bible Study	0.011

APPENDIX B

Weighted Means Protest Specific

Variable	Mean	Mean Protest=0	Mean Protest=1	Min	Max
Age	48.766	48.866	47.954	19	99
Income	3.848	3.905	3.885	1	7
Education	4.393	4.413	4.996	1	7
Race(W)	0.899	0.904	0.818	0	1
Married	0.471	0.483	0.280	0	1
Metro	0.236	0.228	0.402	0	1
Internet	0.520	0.507	0.825	0	1
Newspaper	0.756	0.744	1.000	0	1
Community Pray	0.084	0.082	0.118	0	1
Community Bible Study	0.055	0.055	0.067	0	1
Religious None	0.147	0.145	0.292	0	1

APPENDIX C

Weighted Means for the Religiously Affiliated and Non-affiliated

Variable	Mean	Mean None=0	Mean None=1	Min	Max
Age	48.766	50.159	41.183	19	99
Income	3.848	3.825	3.982	1	7
Education	4.393	4.343	4.672	1	7
Race(W)	0.899	0.892	0.941	0	1
Married	0.471	0.486	0.387	0	1
Metro	0.236	0.205	0.412	0	1
Internet	0.520	0.487	0.709	0	1
Newspaper	0.756	0.739	0.853	0	1
Community Pray	0.084	0.097	0.011	0	1
Community Bible Study	0.055	0.065	0	0	1

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