SEEKING LEGITIMACY IN THE PAST:

CIVIL RELIGION AND IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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My dissertation, *Seeking Legitimacy in the Past: Civil Religion and Ideological Conflict*, focuses on the role of civil religious rhetoric in the generation of legitimacy for ideological perspectives. Civil religion refers to a subset of political culture that draws upon a generalized religious symbol system to imbue national events, artifacts, and heroes with transcendental meaning. In contrast to traditional conceptualizations, which view this articulation of the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose as serving a unifying function, I argue that civil religion is a tool which can be manipulated by political actors in ideological conflict. Employing a multi-method approach, I ask under what conditions presidents have historically relied upon this rhetoric and what are the effects of civil religious framing on public opinion.

With respect to the former, I compiled a unique data set of coded presidential speeches from the modern era and examined civil religious word usage in relation to a variety of political, economic, and social factors. The results demonstrate that while civil religious rhetoric is not utilized as a means of responding to crises, boosting public support, or stimulating a political campaign, it is employed strategically as a tool of legislative conflict. More specifically, civil religious word usage is significantly affected

by the partisan relationship between Congress and the White House such that it is employed to shore up the ideological base rather than build bridges with the opposition.

These findings are supported by the results of two survey experiments in which the treatment groups were exposed to civil religious frames and tasked with evaluating hypothetical policies before Congress. Again, rather than moderating or unifying public opinion, civil religion serves as a mediating variable which exacerbates ideological predispositions. Substantively, this suggests that at a time when the nation is faced with political gridlock and ideological polarization, attempts to legitimize ideological perspectives with references to our founding fathers and ideas about the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose are actually counter-productive.

<u>Acknowledgements</u>

First and foremost, I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee: Eric Davis for encouraging my exploration of civil religion; Richard Lau for consistently pushing me to produce better work; and Alvin Tillery and David Redlawsk for agreeing to serve as my co-chairs – for helping me transform a nebulous research interest into a dissertation, for guiding me through the midnight freak-outs, and providing invaluable advice that I will carry with me throughout my career. I will be forever in all of your debt. I would also like to thank the Rutgers University Department of Political Science for taking a chance on me when others refused and for the considerable funding they have provided me over the years.

Most importantly, I would like to express a very sincere thank you to all of my friends and family who listened to me while I complained and supported me as I struggled. Although none of us knew I would end up here (especially me), I couldn't have accomplished it all without you in my life. My greatest thanks is reserved for my parents who taught me, through their example, to never give up and to have the strength to make your own destiny in this world.

And of course to my future wife, Laura, for agreeing to marry me despite the torment I put her through while writing the dissertation; for listening and understanding; for helping me to become a better person. Love ya Lady!

Although I can't recall exactly when I set the goal to earn my doctorate, it was the most important decision of my life. Throughout the many, many years of work, I have relied on countless people to provide me with the support I needed to achieve this goal. While there is not enough space to mention everyone, thank you for all of your help as I made this journey.

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<u>Chapter 1 - Introduction</u>

There is no question that the events, heroes, and artifacts of America's founding occupy a sacred space in our culture and have political resonance among large swaths of the population. A divine quality is often ascribed to the national identity, meaning, and purpose of the United States; that we are an exceptional nation, guided by providence, and destined to be a light upon the world. Our history is replete with social movements and political figures which have relied on these understandings to legitimize their ideological/partisan interests by asserting that their agenda is consistent with the vision of our founders and our covenant with God. Abolitionists rallied against the hypocrisy of a nation jointly committed to the institution of slavery and the sacred ideal that "all men are created equal." Leaders of the civil rights movement chastised Jim Crow laws with metaphors of a "bad check" (King, 1963) or "broken promise" (Johnson, 1965) to highlight our collective failure to honor the pledges made during the founding. During the Great Depression, President Roosevelt built legitimacy for the New Deal by relating the tyranny of "economic royalists" with the political oppression faced by American patriots during the Revolutionary War (Roosevelt, 1936). A half century later, President Reagan found support for his own conservative revolution with a promise to return to the principles of our founding and restore that "city on a hill" (Reagan, 1974). Most recently, the Tea Party Movement has employed rhetoric soaked in the nostalgic remembrance of those revolutionaries whom they interpret to embody ideals that coincide with their own[1] (Armey and Kibbe, 2010; Lepore, 2010; O'Hara, 2010; Zernike, 2010).

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[1] Armey and Kibbe (2010) and O'Hara (2010) are considered to be semi-official "manifestos" from the Tea Party Movement. Lepore (2010) and Zernike (2010) are academic and journalistic accounts of the movement.

The point of this short list is to illustrate that throughout American history, political actors, of all ideological/partisan stripes, have relied upon civil religious rhetoric to legitimize their interests. Civil religion will be defined here as a set of broadly shared beliefs, myths, and symbols, derived from the United States' founding and history, which reflect ideas about the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose in the world; and that incorporate notions of American Exceptionalism and a Covenantal relationship with a non-denominationally specific God. Scholars of civil religion have traditionally conceptualized it as a monolithic entity that serves to integrate and unify a nation divided by race, religion, geography, and politics. In this way, these civil religious beliefs, myths, and symbols have a singular, or "correct" interpretation. Although I concur that this integrative result is possible, this research project embraces a more political conceptualization that acknowledges the potential for civil religious entities to be manipulated by a skilled orator in ways that can divide the polity. While the sacred events, heroes, and artifacts of our founding are themselves non-ideological symbols, their meanings can be manipulated and deployed by political actors to legitimize or mask their own ideological agenda.

To illustrate this proposition, consider the following passage from Franklin Roosevelt's 1936 Nomination Acceptance speech:

> These economic royalists complain that we seek to overthrow the institutions of America. What they really complain of is that we seek to take away their power. Our allegiance to American institutions requires the overthrow of this kind of power. In vain they seek to hide behind the Flag and the Constitution. In their blindness they forget what the Flag and the Constitution stand for. Now, as always, they stand for democracy, not tyranny; for freedom, not subjection; and against a dictatorship by mob rule and the over-privileged alike. (Franklin Roosevelt, Nomination Acceptance Speech, 1936)

President Roosevelt has been pejoratively labeled the political opponents to his New Deal agenda "economic royalists" to signal a connection between the effects of their economic power over the American public and the struggle of our revolutionary forefathers against the tyranny of the British crown. He explicitly notes the rhetorical battle taking place over the meaning of the Flag and Constitution; and simultaneously legitimizes his own ideological agenda as being consistent with the "truth" while delegitimizing his opposition for corrupting our democracy.

In the racially charged political environment of the 1960s, President Johnson similarly employed civil religious rhetoric to advocate for the Voting Rights Act. In the following passage, he uses the term "sacred heart" to remind the public of the divine nature of the American experience and to assert that racial inequality represents an existential crisis to the national identity. The implication is that passing the 1965 Voting Rights Act is a means of restoring our Covenant with God.

> But rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the sacred heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue. (Lyndon Johnson, "American Promise" Major Speech, 1965)

Finally, consider the manner in which President Reagan sought to legitimize his conservative ideological agenda by associating it with American Exceptionalism and the philosophy of our Founding Fathers. What is particularly striking about this passage is that the phrasing implies that there is a single, correct understanding of what our founders believed and how it would apply in the current political context. This rhetorical strategy ignores the rich diversity of thought exhibited by those men collectively and the often contradictory nature of their writings individually; historical realities which preclude any

honest assertion that we could know with certainty how they would individually or

collectively feel about modern political issues (Lepore, 2010).

> And that's why our focus is the values, the principles, and the ideas that
> made America great. Let's be clear on this point. We're for limited
> government, because we understand, as the Founding Fathers did, that it is
> the best way of ensuring personal liberty and empowering the individual
> so that every American of every race and region shares fully in the
> flowering of American prosperity and freedom. (Ronald Reagan, State of
> the Union Address, 1988)

Although these passages provide some circumstantial evidence to support this

politicized conceptualization of civil religion, no academic effort has been made to

empirically validate its assumptions or predictions as they relate to political institutions

and behavior. More specifically, there has been no investigation into whether civil

religion is habitually deployed as a perfunctory aspect of political rhetoric or a strategic

response to the social and political context. In the case of the latter, no attempt has been

made to measure the effect of civil religious appeals on public opinion. Assuming they

do have an effect, do they serve to rally partisan supporters and opponents to the orator's

cause or drive them further apart? The purpose of this research project is to answer these

questions and in the process gain a better understanding of the relationship between civil

religion and the development of ideological legitimacy by social movements and

institutional actors.

Traditional Approaches to Civil Religion

Rousseau (1762) coined the term "civil religion" to describe a set of unifying beliefs[2]

that were created and imposed by the state to inspire loyalty and a sense of duty among

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[2] The minimal tenants of this civil faith are: (1) "the existence of a mighty, intelligent, and beneficent
divinity, possessed of foresight and providence"; (2) the divine justice of an afterlife; (3) "the sanctity of
the social contract and the laws;" and (4) tolerance of "all religions that tolerate others, so long as their
dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship." (Rousseau, 1762)

the citizenry. In the modern political vernacular, this monopolization of civil religion by the state is more akin to the sort of religious nationalism exhibited by totalitarian regimes; leaving no agency for competing political actors or society more generally to contribute to the belief system or employ it to suit their own agendas. Writing more than a century later, Durkheim's (1915) "civic creed" provided an alternative, depoliticized conceptualization which served the same integrative and unifying functions but located the origin of these beliefs in the naturally occurring shared experiences of society.   In contrast to Rousseau, Durkheim was not concerned with issues of political legitimacy and viewed the civic creed simply as an important social corrective to the individualizing tendencies of the modern world.

Robert Bellah's "Civil Religion in America" (1967) was a catalyst for modern scholarship on the concept and may be viewed as an attempt to bridge the gap between these two intellectual strains. He asserted the existence of a "public religious dimension…expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals" which "have played a crucial role in the development of American institutions" (Bellah, 1967). More concretely, Bellah described civil religion's manifestation through a variety of myths (e.g. America as a "Pure Eden" and its colonization as an "Exodus" story), symbols (e.g. American Flag, George Washington as a "Moses" figure, Abraham Lincoln as "Christ") and rituals (e.g. Presidential Inauguration, 4th of July, Memorial Day, Presidents Day, Thanksgiving) that were rather homogenously understood and universally shared by the populace (Bellah, 1967 and 1992). This conceptualization builds off Durkheimian foundations in that these civil religious entities emerge naturally from society and are not under the exclusive control of the state, while drawing upon Rousseau to ascribe a

political effect to their usage.   Bellah notes that civil religion reflects "that abstract faith, those abstract propositions to which we [the nation] are dedicated" (Bellah, 1976) and provides religious significance to American history such that the actions of the state could be held to an evaluative standard.

Writing in the American context, Bellah argued that civil religious beliefs and values are primarily derived from the Declaration of Independence which he interpreted as serving a covenantal function establishing our rights and duties to one another and to a non-denominationally specific God. In forming the country, we appealed to "the supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions" and "with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence." Our obligations in this endeavor were to constitute ourselves according to the principle that "all men are created equal" with god-given unalienable rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We further promise to establish and maintain a democratic government in order to ensure the full realization of those divine gifts (e.g. political stability, economic prosperity, and international influence) associated with being God's "Chosen" nation (Bellah, 1967 and 1992; Angrosino, 2002).

Bellah argued that civil religion has been highly influential in American political development by providing a base level of cultural legitimacy for society and its political institutions, along with serving as an evaluative tool for judging perceived deviations. (Bellah, 1967) Broadly shared beliefs about the sacredness of our founding principles and their causal relationship to American Exceptionalism provide a strong motivation for citizens to ensure their congruence with institutional practices and arrangements. In "The Broken Covenant", Bellah (1992) argues that perceived institutional deviations from

these covenantal notions have the potential to induce an existential crisis of national identity; what he terms "Times of Trial[3]". Pierard and Linder (1988) argue that "societies need common goals and values validated through some cosmic frame of reference which their members recognize as defining their collective existence." If these goals and values are widely perceived to be violated, public demand for policy and institutional changes to realign the two can occur. Discourses of this kind often take the form of a Jeremiad[4] which provides an interpretation of the challenges faced by society, how those challenges prevent the full realization of our covenantal commitments, and an articulation of the means by which they may be surmounted. Accordingly, the economic, political, and military crises faced by society are often more broadly attributed to the contradictions that have emerged between our sacred ideals and governing practices. The road to recovery therefore lies in a revival and recommitment to those principles and ideals which made us exceptional in the first place[5].

In the immediate aftermath of Bellah's initial publication, scholarly attention was primarily devoted to more clearly defining and describing American civil religion along with providing comprehensive histories of how it evolved over time[6]. With respect to definition, a number of research projects sought to theoretically (Coleman, 1970; West,

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[3] Formally defined as "a time of testing so severe that not only the form but even the existence of our nation have been called in question" (Bellah, 1992)

[4] Although "Jeremiads" have traditionally been employed in an explicitly religious context, I believe that they may also be a useful analytical tool for understanding civil religious discourse. Andrew Murphy suggests that it is composed of four common elements: (1) description and identification of the symptoms of the current crisis, (2) a contrast between the current state of decline with a more virtuous past, (3) a call for spiritual renewal as a means of avoiding the inevitable crisis associated with the current trajectory, and (4) all while placing the American experience in the context of "God's Plan." (Murphy, 2009)).

[5] This train of thought is echoed by Huntington (1981) who argued that political development was the product of efforts to realign institutions with the American Creed when some exogenous factor rendered them dissonant. Thus, institutional change is a remedy for situations in which the practices incentivized by institutions no longer conform to the abstract ideas which inspired them in the first place.

[6] See Mathisen (1989) for an excellent literature review of the trajectory of civil religious scholarship.

1980) and empirically (Wimberly et al., 1976; Flerie and Lavric, 2007) demonstrate a distinction between civil religion and traditional religion. The emerging consensus was that civil religion is a subset of a more generalized religious symbol system that integrated and unified the polity by endowing the nation with non-denominationally specific religious significance; that although both the state and traditional religion contribute elements to this symbol system, neither was in complete control.

For others, the central concern was whether civil religion is actually reflected in the beliefs and sentiments of the public or simply some ivory tower construct of academics. Through a variety of empirical studies conducted in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Wimberly and Christenson demonstrated that civil religious beliefs were broadly felt and had political implications. More specifically, they discovered that these beliefs[7] were more likely to be found among those with higher levels of religiosity and lower socioeconomic status (Christenson and Wimberly, 1978). They also found that civil religious beliefs were an important component in modeling presidential voting (Wimberly, 1980) and policy preferences (Wimberly and Christenson, 1982).

Related research projects focused on the use of civil religion by various political actors throughout American history. Williams and Alexander (1994) describe the presence of civil religious rhetoric in the populist movement, while my own previous work (Hickel Jr., 2012) documents its employment by the Tea Party. However, no political actor has received more attention than the president. As the symbolic representative of the American identity (Bellah, 1967; Adams, 1987; Pierard and Linder, 1988) and most influential actor in our government (Cohen, 1995; Hill, 1998; Kernell,

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[7] The beliefs specifically evaluated included: "America is God's chosen nation today"; "To me, the flag of the United States is sacred"; "Human rights come from God and not merely from laws"; and "if government does not support religion, government cannot uphold morality."

2007), the President is arguably well positioned to articulate a Civil Religious discourse that can impact public opinion and the political process. A number of insightful qualitative analyses demonstrate that civil religion is often employed by the president to legitimize (Toolin, 1983) or challenge (Roof, 2009) the status quo; or that presidential rhetoric itself is a means of affirming or modifying civil religious beliefs (Beasley, 2001).

As it relates to policy Beasley (2004) explores the role of presidential rhetoric in the construction of national identity and finds that civil religious themes are often employed to exclude certain groups so as to legitimize restrictive immigration policies. Adams (1987) analysis demonstrates how President Reagan incorporated the theme of "volunteerism[8]" into the civil religion lexicon to legitimize his conservative policy positions against "big" government. Shifting to foreign policy, Ungar (1991) examines the role of civil religion in the cold war arms race. As he explains, the development of the atomic bomb was interpreted as a symbol of American Exceptionalism, that these beliefs in a divine destiny were violated by the Soviet launch of Sputnik, and that the subsequent arms race between these two nations occurred as a result of these challenges to both our national security and civil religion. Similarly, Haberski (2012) explores the dynamic relationship between civil religion and war from World War II through the War on Terrorism; ultimately arguing that these conflicts offer a means by which Americans can affirm and assess their shared civil religion.

As insightful as the above referenced works have been, they all share a common assumption which has limited their capacity to adequately explore how civil religion has been employed in the course of political conflict. It has traditionally been assumed that

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[8] "Volunteerism" understood as the individual's moral obligation to contribute to the betterment of society.

civil religion was a rather monolithic set of beliefs that functioned as a unified ideology; which precludes an examination into how it can and has been manipulated to serve alternative and competing ideological agendas. A number of notable scholars[9] have raised this critique and chastised others for failing to adopt a more politicized conceptualization (Cristi, 1997; Demerath and Williams, 1985; Whillock, 1994; Williams and Alexander, 1994; Wuthnow, 1988). As Demerath and Williams (1985) note, "Analysis should focus on the contexts and uses of civil-religious language and symbols, noting how specific groups and subcultures use versions of the civil religion to frame, articulate, and legitimate their own particular political and moral visions." In other words, while there does exist a set of broadly held and salient symbols which reflect ideas about American Exceptionalism and a divine covenant, we must abandon the assumption that they are inherently tied to any particular ideological project. Civil religious symbols, like all symbols, can be appropriated and manipulated to serve whatever purposes a skilled messenger desires. Although these authors have clamored for research explicitly conducted with this orientation, few analyses exist into how civil religious entities are created, manipulated, and exploited in this way. Furthermore, few studies exist which quantitatively measure the conditions under which civil religious rhetoric is employed or their effect on public opinion. The purpose of this project is to fill this void in the literature.

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[9] Bellah himself could be included in this list as he noted that "conflict, explicit or implicit, over the deeper meaning of civil religion has been endemic from the beginning" (Bellah, 1976). However, this statement was employed to assert that some unscrupulous political actors have appropriated civil religion for nefarious purposes; which itself is consistent with a monolithic conceptualization of civil religion.
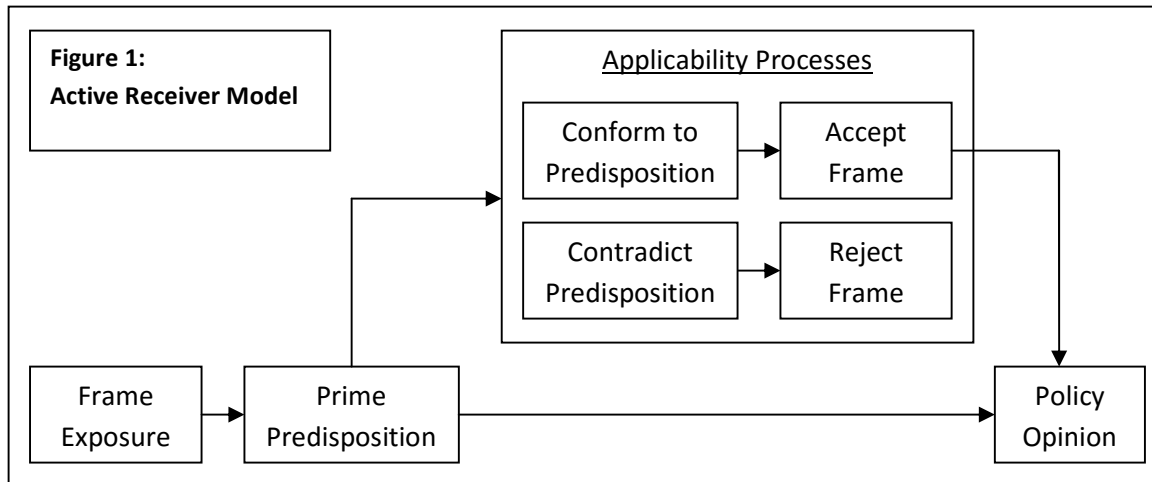
Towards a New Theory of Civil Religion

The premise of this research project is not that civil religion rhetoric cannot have a unifying effect or be employed for that purpose. Rather, I argue that it can also be used to build legitimacy for an ideological agenda, which may have the effect of further dividing the polity. While it is beyond the scope of this project to determine whether political actors recognize this divisive effect, I do intend to illustrate why that affect can occur under certain conditions. What follows is a new theory of civil religious framing and its implications for presidential communication.

The most recent trends in the political communication literature emphasize the external validity of framing experiments by considering the competitive context of frame exposure (Chong and Druckman, 2007) and/or the potential for predispositions to mitigate the effectiveness of messages we are exposed to (Brewer, 2001; Brewer and Goss, 2005). As such, many researchers have adopted what I will describe as "Active Receiver" models whereby the relationship between frame exposure and subsequent affect is largely determined by mental processes which evaluate whether the frame is applicable rather than simply available and accessible (Chong & Druckman, 2007). This applicability decision is theorized to be a function of whether the receiver considers the frame to be "strong" or "weak"; and this characterization is posited to be a function of the receiver's level of political knowledge (Slothuus, 2008), the source credibility of the frame, and its relationship to consensus values and prior beliefs (Chong and Druckman, 2007).

If we hold political knowledge, source credibility, and the frame's relationship to consensus values constant, this model would predict that the effectiveness of a frame

which carries implicit or explicit ideological references to be largely dependent upon the ideological predispositions of the recipient. The receiver's predispositions would be primed upon exposure to the frame and they would use that information to gauge whether it was applicable for the subsequent policy evaluation. Because we know that individuals generally seek and rely upon information that conforms to predispositions, and reject that which contradicts them (Marcus et al., 2000), we can assume that with sufficient political knowledge, the evaluation of the frame during the applicability process will often reflect their predispositions. For those who accept the frame, policy evaluation is the sum of the direct effect of ideological predispositions and the indirect effect of those predispositions mediated through frame acceptance. In other words, the frame contributes to policy evaluation beyond the influence of predispositions. However, for those who reject the frame, policy evaluation is simply a reflection of the direct effect of ideological predispositions (Figure 1).

However, the results of my survey experiments will illustrate that, controlling for source credibility and consensus values, exposure to civil religious frames exacerbate the differences between liberals and conservatives beyond the effects of traditional ideological frames. I will demonstrate that ideological predispositions have a highly significant effect upon agreement with the contents of the civil religious frames and that those who agree/disagree with these frames expressed significantly more extreme policy positions than those who were not exposed. What is it about civil religious frames that could cause these polarizing tendencies?

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│ ┌─────────────────────┐          Applicability Processes                      │
│ │ Figure 1:           │    ┌──────────────────────────────────────────────┐  │
│ │ Active Receiver     │    │  ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐       │  │
│ │ Model               │    │  │ Conform to   │ ───► │ Accept       │       │  │
│ └─────────────────────┘    │  │ Predisposition│     │ Frame        │       │  │
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│  │ Frame    │ ► │ Prime        │ ─────────────────────► │ Policy       │     │
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I theorize that the effects of civil religious frames differ from traditional ideological framing because they validate or denigrate the ideological predispositions of the receiver in an existential context. Because civil religious frames engage the receiver's sense of national identity and wed them to a particular policy preference, those exposed not only make a decision regarding whether to use the frames to help make a particular policy evaluation, but also to express the validity of their longstanding predispositions. Lipset argues that because America was founded upon "core values" our identity as Americans requires an ideological commitment; "It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American" (Lipset, 1996). Those recipients whose predispositions conforms to the frame can be expected to rally behind the call for action with more vigor and conviction given that the policy battle has now evolved into a conflict over the national identity. Conversely, partisan/ideological opponents can be expected to more forcefully reject the proposed action because acceptance would indicate that their predispositions were a contradiction of the American Identity.

This theory challenges one of the primary assumptions of the civil religious literature; that such rhetoric unifies the nation as petty partisan differences are temporarily shelved

to pursue a truly national purpose. Instead, my results suggest that it is precisely this elevation of the stakes of a policy decision that exacerbates ideological divisions on the issues. If we assume that the decision to employ civil religious rhetoric is a reflection of some strategic calculation (and not simply accidental or habitual) and that political actors understand this divisive potential, what goals do they hope to achieve and under what conditions is the attainment of those goals most probable?

As the symbolic representative of the American identity (Bellah, 1967; Adams, 1987; Pierard and Linder, 1988) and most influential actor in our government (Cohen, 1995; Hill, 1998; Kernell, 2007), the President is arguably well positioned to articulate a Civil Religious discourse that can impact public opinion and the political process. Pierard and Linder (1988) argue that, historically, the civil religious rhetoric employed by the president takes one of two functional forms: "Prophetic" and "Priestly". In the case of the latter, the President "leads the people in affirming and celebrating the nation, and at the same time he glorifies the national culture and stokes his political flock." (Pierard and Linder, 1988) The purpose is to legitimize status quo institutional arrangements and actions by articulating their consistency with the historic traditions and covenantal obligations that have led to American Exceptionalism. Clearly, when scholars ascribed a unifying effect to civil religious rhetoric it was this functional form they were primarily thinking of. In contrast, "Prophetic Civil Religion" is more conducive to the Jeremiadic discursive style in which the President speaks necessary (and often unpleasant) truths about the state of the nation and calls for judgment and repentance. "The President seeks to conform the nation's actions to the will of the Almighty, thus countering idolatrous religious nationalism and calling the nation to repent of its corporate political sins."

(Pierard and Linder, 1988) In other words, the President asserts that the status quo is inconsistent with our core values and covenant; and that policy change is necessary to restore American Exceptionalism. The distinction between these two forms therefore hinges on whether the aim is to legitimize status quo institutional arrangements ("Priestly Civil Religion") or to provide a discursive catalyst for political change ("Prophetic Civil Religion"). The strategic decision to employ one form or the other is therefore dependent upon the messenger's partisan/ideological affiliation with the status quo. Do they seek to maintain or build upon the legitimacy that their ideological agenda already enjoys from a position of political power ("Priestly Civil Religion") or use civil religion to simultaneously legitimize their agenda for change and denigrate the opponent ("Prophetic Civil Religion")?

Regardless of which functional form is adopted (and whether presidents or other political actors recognize which would better suit their interests), there are two broad sets of conditions that both forms would be arguably well suited towards: for simplicity sake, I will refer to them as positions of "Strength" and "Weakness." The latter condition is broadly characterized as a situation where things are not going well in the nation; economic decline, foreign policy challenges, faltering public opinion, and a divided government which emboldens your opposition and renders the task of dealing with these issues more difficult. Traditionally, it has been assumed by scholars of civil religion that these are precisely the conditions under which a president should employ this rhetoric; by elevating issues above partisan squabbles, the president may be able to quell ideological dissent and unify the nation to deal with the problems at hand. However, my theory of civil religious framing suggests that such rhetoric is more prone to polarize public

opinion; that receivers of these messages will identify the ideological implications of the issues and act in accordance with their predispositions. Because the president is already weakened by such challenges and the partisan oppositions holds a position of power in Congress, the deployment of civil religion under such conditions may hurt more than it helps. From a position of Weakness, civil religious rhetoric will solidify your base, but it will also galvanize the opposition; and in conditions where you need cooperation from the opposition to make government function this would be a poor strategy for success.

Alternatively, a position of Strength is characterized by an economy that is either growing or stable, an absence of salient foreign policy challenges, favorable public opinion, and unified government. I theorize that it is under these conditions that civil religious rhetoric provides the most benefit. Regardless of whether you are affiliated with the status quo ("Priestly Civil Religion") or came into power on behalf of the opposition ("Prophetic Civil Religion") you can harness the polarizing potential of civil religion to your advantage. Because the president enjoys majority support in one or both houses of Congress there is more to be gained by exciting and mobilizing your base than what is lost by further alienating the opposition. Furthermore, the absence of social conditions associated with a position of Weakness (i.e. declining economy, war, or faltering public opinion) reduces the risk that a president's supporters could be pouched by the opposition because of those vulnerabilities. In sum, I theorize that regardless of whether a political actor employs Priestly or Prophetic civil religious rhetoric, they are most likely to receive their desired outcome from a position of Strength.

Purpose of Study

Broadly stated, the purpose of this study is to explore the role of civil religion in political conflict; to determine when it is used and the effect that it has. I intend to quantitatively verify that civil religion is employed strategically by political actors and that it has a divisive effect upon public opinion. This will be accomplished through a multi-stage, multi-method approach that begins with an analysis of modern presidential rhetoric and the contexts in which civil religion is employed and concludes with survey experiments that examine the effects of civil religious frames on public opinion.

The literature reviewed thus far clearly illustrates that civil religion has been utilized by political actors generally and the President specifically. However, there has been no empirical research to determine whether its usage is a reflection of the rhetorical norms of our political culture or a strategic decision. In other words, do political actors simply interject civil religious themes into their rhetoric because that is what has always been done; that its inclusion is rather meaningless and perfunctory? Alternatively, is civil religion selectively employed under certain contexts and not others? If so, we can deduce that political actors view it as a rhetorical tool that can achieve some measurable effect upon the audience.

I hypothesize that civil religion is primarily employed strategically by the modern presidents. While I anticipate variation in the relative frequency of civil religious language used depending on the type of speech delivered, I also expect to find variation as a result of the social, economic, and political context. More specifically, I investigate whether the prevalence of civil religious language varies in response to (1) military, economic, and political crises, (2) the political campaign season, (3) the partisan

relationship between the White House and Congress, and (4) broader historical patterns of political polarization within Congress and the general public. Hypothesis 1 reflects the traditional, theoretical expectation that civil religion may be used by the President as a "pep talk" or means of rallying the nation when it is faced with war, a faltering economy, or declining public approval of his job performance. Similarly, Hypothesis 2 is consistent with the assumption that such rhetoric may serve to legitimize a President's policy agenda and therefore aid in his or his party's electoral prospects. These two hypotheses are consistent with traditional theories of civil religion that imply that the audience will respond to civil religious rhetoric rather uniformly in a manner that benefits the messenger; that the president can increase his standing with the public at a time when social, economic, or political conditions dictate otherwise. Alternatively, Hypotheses 3 and 4 evaluate my theory of civil religion which suggests that the President recognizes that these effects are contingent upon the partisan nature of his governing relationship with Congress and the public; that there are certain conditions under which civil religion should or should not be used because it will not uniformly affect the audience. Hypothesis 3 evaluates whether presidents are more likely to rely on such rhetoric under conditions of unified or divided government while Hypothesis 4 considers changes in the frequency of civil religious rhetoric before and after the election of President Carter (which is often regarded in the literature as the beginning of a more polarized political era.)

To evaluate these hypotheses, I have assembled a data set of 180 presidential speeches (State of the Union Addresses, Inaugural Addresses, Nomination Acceptance Speeches, and Major Speeches) from Franklin Roosevelt through Barack Obama (1939-

2012). A small team of coders were trained to identify complete sentences which

included civil religious rhetoric[10] and a continuous, interval level variable was created to

represent the number of civil religious words as a percentage of total words in each

speech.   The data set also includes a variety of social, economic, and political indicators

(collected at monthly, quarterly, or yearly intervals depending on the availability of the

data) that are used to conduct regression analyses to evaluate the merits of my

hypotheses. Collectively, my research demonstrates that modern presidents have

employed civil religious rhetoric strategically and that its frequency is primarily

influenced by the partisan governing context between the White House and Congress;

consistent with my theory presented in the last section, it is far less likely to be employed

under conditions of divided government (position of Weakness).

Understanding why Presidents avoid using civil religious rhetoric when faced with an

opposition Congress requires a better understanding of the effects of civil religious

framing on public opinion. The second stage of this research project explores these

effects through a series of survey experiments. Traditionally, scholars have assumed that

because civil religion reflects a set of broadly shared symbols and homogenous beliefs

about the national identity, meaning, and purpose in the world that it would amount to a

kind of national ideology that would integrate and unify the nation. As such, it might be

expected that when civil religion is employed in political framing, it would serve to

mitigate ideological differences on public policy as the rationale rises above petty

partisanship. However, my literature review illustrates that such a conceptualization, and

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[10] Civil religious references were defined as references to the American identity, meaning or purpose in the world. This included discussions of what it means to be an American, what American fundamental values are and what they hold sacred, references to the American founding or other important moments in American history, and discussions of the divine nature of the American experience or God's blessing.

its subsequent expectations, incorrectly assumes that civil religion is a national ideology with a universally accepted interpretation of exactly what its symbols and beliefs mean for public policy. As such, when civil religion is employed in political framing it is possible that an opposite effect on public opinion may occur; that ideological differences are exacerbated as policy debates evolve into battles over the national identity. It follows, that Presidents may recognize this phenomenon and avoid employing civil religious rhetoric when they already face a contentious relationship with their partisan opposition in Congress. Unfortunately, no such empirical analysis of civil religious framing effects exists.

The survey experiments conducted for this research project evaluate the effects of civil religious frames on attitudes regarding various hypothetical policy proposals being considered by Congress. Participants are divided into either a liberal or conservative group and tasked with evaluating policy proposals (affirmative action and tax policies) typically associated with those ideologies. These groups are further subdivided into control and treatment groups; both are exposed to an ideological frame which advocates for adoption of the policy, but the treatment group is also exposed to an ideological frame that incorporates civil religious language to legitimize that proposal.

Adopting the traditional conceptualization of civil religion (as a set of symbols and beliefs which are uniformly interpreted in the same way) might lead to the expectation that those exposed to such rhetoric (regardless of their ideological predispositions) will express greater support for the policy than the control group. However, because these symbols and beliefs are employed to legitimize policy that has clear ideological undertones, I hypothesize that exposure to these frames will affect participants differently

depending on their ideological predispositions. Participants whose ideological predispositions match the civil religious frame are expected to rally behind the call for action with more vigor and conviction given that the policy battle has now evolved into a conflict over the national identity. Conversely, ideological opponents can be expected to more forcefully reject the proposed action because acceptance would indicate that their predispositions were a contradiction of the American Identity. As such, I hypothesize that exposure to the civil religious frame mediates the relationship between ideological predispositions and policy evaluations such that those who agree/disagree with the frames express more extreme policy opinions than those in the control groups. Collectively, these expectations suggest that civil religious rhetoric can be employed to have a divisive effect on public opinion.

Academic Significance

Perhaps the most important question to ask of any research project is "so what?" What is the significance of your analysis? I believe that the results of this research will not only yield important insights for scholars of civil religion, but also provide strong justification to better incorporate the study of civil religion into the political science lexicon. Traditionally, civil religion has been largely ignored by political scientists; the majority of research has been published in theological and sociological journals by specialists in those disciplines. As my brief literature review illustrates, most have adopted a rather depoliticized conceptualization of the term and focused on its integrative and unifying function for society. Without denigrating the valuable contributions these scholars have made, their inability to construct research projects which explicitly consider the political nature and ramifications of civil religion has left many political

scientists at a loss for how the concept may be applied to their own work. As Andrew Murphy (2011) argues, an important challenge for this literature is "to find a way to bridge the theoretical analysis of ACR [American Civil Religion] and the concrete details of American politics and society." My research illustrates that the deployment of civil religious rhetoric is motivated by political considerations and that such rhetoric has an impact on public opinion about political issues. As such, I believe that it will help to bridge that divide between the disciplines and illustrate how the study of civil religion may be applicable to a variety of political phenomenon.

With respect to the presidential subfield, I believe that my research contributes to a rich literature that explores the means by which presidents seek to acquire political legitimacy. Skowronek (2003) persuasively argues that the construction of legitimacy lies at the heart of presidential leadership; that "power has been less of a problem for presidents than authority; getting things done, less of a problem than sustaining warrants for actions taken and for accomplishments realized." Although the capacity for the president to have an impact on public opinion is debatable, few would deny that considerable effort and resources are expended to manage public perceptions and enhance the legitimacy of their actions and agenda. In describing "Reconstructive[11]" presidents, Skowronek seems to imply an important role for civil religion:

> These presidents each set out to retrieve from a far distant, even mythic,
> past fundamental values that they claimed had been lost in the indulgences
> of the received order. In this way, the order-shattering and order-
> affirming impulses of the presidency in politics becomes mutually
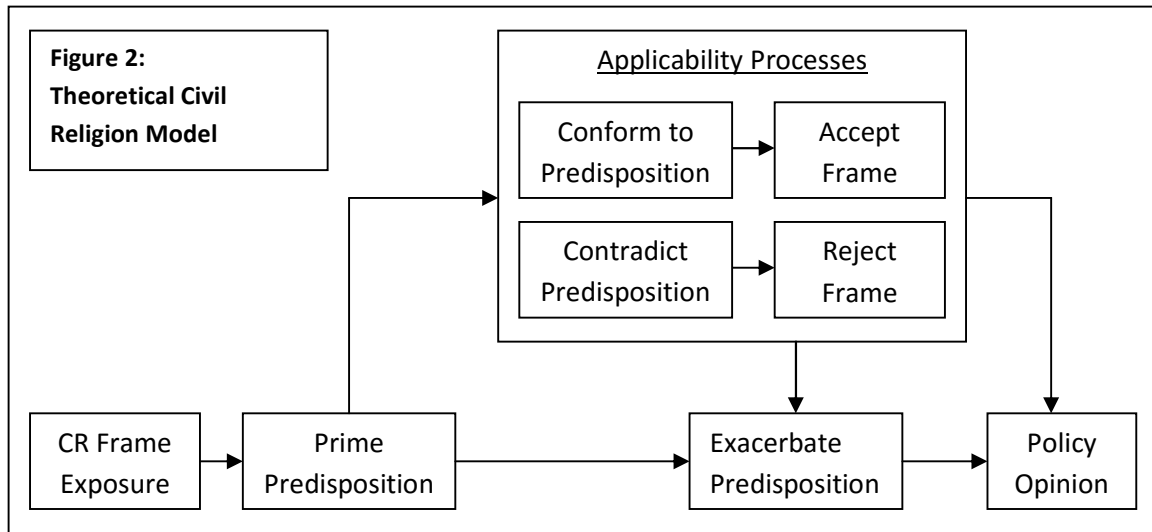> reinforcing. (Skowronek, 2003)

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[11] "Reconstructive" presidents refer to partisan opponents of their predecessor at a time when the political order is vulnerable. These individuals are the most likely to engage in the order creating aspects of the presidency and contribute greatly to American political development. Prominent examples include Franklin Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan (Skowronek, 2003).

My research on the strategic use of civil religious rhetoric by the presidency illustrates one means (of many) by which presidents attempt to construct or maintain the legitimacy of their actions and agenda. Whether these attempts are successful or not is beyond the explicit scope of this study and left to future research efforts. However, I do not believe that this limitation detracts from the significance of my work. The purpose of this aspect of the research project was to determine whether civil religion was employed strategically and under what contexts. Future research can now take that knowledge and examine whether civil religious rhetoric has the potential to overcome well documented limitations on the president's influence over public opinion, issue salience, and the legislative agenda. In short, the next step is to construct research projects which examine whether civil religious rhetoric is an effective means of creating and/or maintaining presidential legitimacy.

With respect to the subfields of political psychology and political communication, I believe that the results of my survey experiments provide valuable contributions in both theory and methods. Beyond identifying a type of framing that exacerbates ideological predispositions, my research highlights the importance of employing meditational analysis for ideological frames so as to more accurately determine the precise impact of frame exposure and predispositions on policy evaluations. Although Chong and Druckman's (2007) work found that prior values have a significant direct effect upon policy evaluations, they do not clearly delineate the relative size of this affect compare to that of their frames. Further muddying the waters is their finding that when participants are exposed to competing "strong" frames, there is a moderating effect on policy evaluations (Chong and Druckman, 2007); which implies that predispositions were less

important under these conditions. Unfortunately, because their research did not include a meditation analysis, there is no way of knowing the relative influence of predispositions.

Furthermore, the results of my meditation analysis not only point to more complicated processes involved in civil religious framing but also illustrate how this approach can aid in theory construction. Because both the direct effect of predispositions and the mediated effect of predispositions through frame evaluation were significant and similarly signed for policy evaluations, this particular result is classified as a case of "Complementary Mediation" (Zhao et al., 2010). In such cases, it is likely that there is an omitted mediator in the direct path (i.e. between predispositions and policy evaluation). Although I was unable to identify this omission in this research project, my theory on civil religious framing leads me to believe that it may be related to the emotional affect that theoretically occurs during the applicability process. Because civil religious frames wed broadly shared symbols about our national identity to ideological policy proposals, when applicability processes are engaged the participant not only evaluates whether the frames conform/contradict their predispositions, but uses that decision to reinforce or challenge those predispositions; such that they are (at least temporarily) exacerbated to produce a stronger direct effect on policy evaluations (Figure 2). In other words, perhaps the anger, enthusiasm, and/or anxiety that results from acceptance/rejection of the civil religious frame not only affects policy evaluation but also our predispositions. I believe that future research into this emotional component of civil religious framing is warranted.

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│ ┌──────────────────┐           ┌────────────────────────────────────────────┐    │
│ │ Figure 2:        │           │          Applicability Processes           │    │
│ │ Theoretical Civil│           │  ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐     │    │
│ │ Religion Model   │           │  │ Conform to   │─────▶│   Accept     │     │    │
│ └──────────────────┘           │  │ Predisposition│      │   Frame     │     │    │
│                                 │  └──────────────┘      └──────────────┘     │    │
│                                 │  ┌──────────────┐      ┌──────────────┐     │    │
│                                 │  │ Contradict   │─────▶│   Reject     │     │    │
│                                 │  │ Predisposition│      │   Frame     │     │    │
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│ │ CR Frame │──▶│    Prime     │─────────▶│  Exacerbate  │──────▶│  Policy  │     │
│ │ Exposure │   │ Predisposition│          │ Predisposition│       │ Opinion  │     │
│ └──────────┘   └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘       └──────────┘     │
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Figure 2: Theoretical Civil Religion Model

Organization of Project

In the chapters that follow I will present a more detailed review of the academic literature which informs the hypotheses under investigation. Each chapter will provide further evidence in support of my theory leading to the ultimate conclusion that civil religious rhetoric is employed strategically and that it has an effect upon public opinion.

The purpose of my second chapter is to directly engage with some of the most substantive theoretical and conceptual challenges that have been posed to the study of civil religion. Among other topics, I tackle the distinctions between civil religion and related constructs such as organized religion, political religion, nationalism, and patriotism. As such, this chapter is equal parts literature review and theoretical refinement. I begin with an extensive review that considers the origins and evolution of the term before diving into debates which have caused some to question the utility of civil religion and/or abandon the concept all together. By its conclusion, I hope to have persuaded the reader that employing a more politicized conceptualization not only allows us to draw clear distinctions from related terms, but also to find new ways of incorporating civil religion into the various subfields of political science.

Chapter three represents the first of several empirical chapters which collectively seek to demonstrate that civil religion is a real phenomenon that has a significant effect on our political system. The research presented here focuses on the Modern Presidency as a case study to explore the strategic nature of civil religious rhetoric and the contexts under which it has been employed in the past.

Once it has been demonstrated that civil religion has been employed by the Modern Presidency in particular strategic contexts, chapters four and five consider the effects of civil religious framing on public opinion. Chapter four opens with a more detailed recitation of my theory on civil religious framing and its relationship to the existing literature on political framing more generally. A survey experiment to validate this theory is presented and reported; ultimately confirming that civil religious framing has a significant effect upon public opinion and that it serves to exacerbate ideological positions on policy issues.

Chapter five also presents the results of a survey experiment that will not only validate the results of the previous chapter but also allow for a more in depth analysis of its effects. This survey experiment reevaluates the tax policy issue from the previous chapter while also considering the effects of civil religious framing on social issues; more specifically, affirmative action policies in college admissions. As a result of this survey, I will also present data exploring the nature of civil religious beliefs in contemporary America and how they may be affected by exposure to civil religious rhetoric.

My final chapter summarizes the results of my research, takes stock of their limitations, and muses about future steps. I will provide an honest appraisal of what has and has not been learned about civil religion from my research; along with how future

researchers can work to address these limitations and expand upon these findings to develop a more comprehensive accounting of a politicized civil religion. Furthermore, this chapter considers the normative implications of civil religious rhetoric for American democracy and politics. This involves considering the implications derived from traditional theorizing and how they hold up in light of the empirical research uncovered in this project. In other words, what is the social significance of this politicized conceptualization of civil religion and how is it reflected in contemporary politics? Perhaps most importantly, considering the results of my research, what are the normative implications of civil religion for our political culture, the polarization of elites and the mass public, and our democracy?

Chapter 2 – Theoretical Orientation

Scholarship on civil religion has waned considerably over the last thirty years (Mathisen, 1989). For many, the concept was entirely too ambiguous and was not adequately differentiated from traditional religion, nationalism, and similar constructs. The voluminous efforts of a number of authors to provide conceptual clarity only resulted in numerous definitions that failed to satisfy the critics and unify its practitioners. Others questioned whether civil religious beliefs themselves were genuine social phenomena or the product of ivory tower philosophizing; and in the case of the former, the political significance and applicability of the term outside its traditional confines in sociological and religious studies was unclear.

The purpose of this chapter is to arrive at a conceptualization of civil religion that addresses these concerns through a careful review of the literature. I will argue that although the term originates with Rousseau, those that followed were right to jettison much of his theory on the grounds that it attributed too much power and control over civil religion to the state. The vast majority of civil religious scholars built their work upon Durkheimian foundations which offered valuable insights but also incorrectly conceptualize civil religion as a homogenous, monolithic entity devoid of conflict and political significance. While some more recent work has attended to these errors by conceptualizing civil religion as an ideology that can legitimize or oppose the state, I believe that this approach inaccurately conflates the two terms; precluding the sort of precision necessary to generate and test empirical hypotheses. In contrast, I suggest a definition whereby civil religion is a set of cultural tools that can be manipulated and employed to legitimize political ideologies. Formally stated: *civil religion is a set of*

broadly shared beliefs, myths, and symbols, derived from the United States' founding and history, which reflect ideas about the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose in the world; and that incorporate notions of American Exceptionalism and a Covenantal relationship with a non-denominationally specific God. While these civil religious entities are themselves non-ideological, their meanings can be manipulated and deployed by political actors to legitimize or mask their own ideological agenda.

Arriving at this conceptualization of civil religion required understanding the origins of the term, how it has evolved theoretically over time, and the historical problems these authors were grappling with in formulating their theories. Knowledge of these issues provides additional context which facilitated a more informed process by which underlying assumptions are understood and accepted or rejected. In the pages that follow, I review the theoretical origins and evolution of the term and address the concerns of those who have largely abandoned the study of civil religion. In particular, I will specifically address the relationship between civil religion and traditional religion, political religion, nationalism, and similar constructs.

Civil Religion's Conceptual Origins – Rousseau

Writing during the Enlightenment, Rousseau sought to determine the proper relationship between religious and civil authority in a liberal state (Religio-Political Problem). He writes that "no state has ever been founded without a religious basis" (Rousseau, 1762) and ultimately argues that state power derives not from force[1], but rather from moral legitimacy. However, the existing relationships of that time between religious and civil authority either failed to legitimize the latter and unite the populace, or

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[1]This is in contrast to Weber's (1946) seminal definition of state power as a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.

succeeded on both accounts but suffered from serious flaws which rendered them impractical.

Rousseau argued that a situation in which religious and civil authorities are fused together ("Religion of the Citizen"[2]) has the effect of uniting "the divine cult with love of the laws, and, making country the object of the citizen's adoration, teaches them that service done to the state is service done to its tutelary god." (Rousseau, 1762) While this serves his twin goals of generating state legitimacy and social solidarity, it also has the potential to transform religion into empty ceremony (thus reducing its capacity to succeed in these goals) and devolve into a tyrannous state intolerant of those who do not follow the faith. An alternative arrangement was one in which religious observances were completely private with "neither temple, nor altars, nor rites, and is confined to the purely internal cult of the supreme God and the eternal obligations of morality." (Rousseau, 1762) However, this "Religion of Man" provided the state with no religious resources to legitimize the state or unify the populace. Finally, Rousseau described a dual-sovereignty model[3] whereby civil and religious authority is separated, but this scenario had the effect of dividing the loyalty of the citizenry between the state and their god. Citizens would be faced with "two codes of legislation, two rulers, and two countries, [and] renders them subject to contradictory duties, and makes it impossible for them to be faithful both to religion and citizenship." (Rousseau, 1762)

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[2] What might be termed "Religious Nationalism" whereby there is a fusion of the religious and political community such that the government actively encourages religious beliefs and organized religion promotes an uncritical patriotism. (Gorski, 2011)

[3] What might be termed "Liberal Secularlism" whereby there is complete separation between church and state; not only with respect to institutional structures and laws, but also for discourse and symbolism (Gorski, 2011)

Rousseau's solution to the Religio-Political problem was to articulate a new arrangement which could secure his twin goals of state legitimacy and social solidarity while avoiding the negative consequences of the alternatives. His "Civil Religion" would be a "purely civil profession of faith of which the sovereign should fix the articles, not exactly as religious dogmas, but as social sentiments without which a man cannot be a good citizen or a faithful subject." (Rousseau, 1762) The minimal tenants of this civil faith are: (1) "the existence of a mighty, intelligent, and beneficent divinity, possessed of foresight and providence"; (2) the divine justice of an afterlife; (3) "the sanctity of the social contract and the laws;" and (4) tolerance of "all religions that tolerate others, so long as their dogmas contain nothing contrary to the duties of citizenship." (Rousseau, 1762) This set of state created and controlled beliefs would "provide a source of transcendent morality [in which] the authority of the state is perceived as if ordained by God… [and where] civil duties become moral obligations" (Cristi, 1997) while remaining distinct from existing religious institutions and authorities.

Although Rousseau's tenets have largely survived, his insistence that the "sovereign should fix the articles" poses a number of serious issues which have all but relegated him to a passing footnote in most civil religious scholarship[4]. Most theorists that followed have premised their work on Durkheimian insights which posit that such beliefs emerge organically and are socially maintained. Perhaps more significantly, because Rousseau conceptualizes civil religious beliefs as being monopolized by the state, he has ignored

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[4] Gehrig (1981) and Demerath and Williams (1985) are clear exceptions and see Cristi (1997) for more elaboration on the significance of excluding Rousseau from the discussion.

the potential for its manipulation and deployment in political conflict[5]; which renders the term more akin to "Political Religion[6]." His civil religion was intended to provide political legitimacy and social stability without establishing a rival religious force (Gehrig, 1981), but in the process, he also eschewed the possibility of its usage by a rival political force.

Civil Religion 2.0 – Durkheim's Civic Creed

While Durkheim's *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (1915) never employs the term Civil Religion, it has had a profound effect upon all academic work on the concept that has followed. Writing at the dawn of the twentieth century, with rapid social transformations altering all manner of life, he sought to understand how collective unity could be maintained despite the modern world's tendency to inspire heightened individualism. As Rousseau before him, Durkheim too saw religion as instilling this solidarity among the populace by fostering shared beliefs and values. However, Durkheim did not believe that these beliefs and values could be imposed by the state; rather they emerged organically, from the ground up, and were maintained naturally through social coercive pressures[7]. Furthermore, Durkheim was not concerned with legitimizing the state or instilling a sense of citizen duty to it; instead, the sole purpose of his "Civic Creed" was to integrate a modernizing society, increasingly drawn towards individualistic tendencies, into a single moral community.

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[5] Later in this chapter it will also be stressed that the Durkheimian inspired forms of civil religion also suffer from this flaw because they similarly conceptualize civil religion as a homogenous, monolithic entity; albeit one that is not under the control of the state.
[6] Political Religion defined as a state ideology that functions as a secular religion. The distinction between civil religion and Political Religion will be expanded upon later in the chapter.
[7] To put a finer point on it, while Rousseau argued that a religious foundation was necessary but not an inevitable development for every society, Durkheim believed that this religious foundation was an inevitable, naturally occurring process.

Durkheim saw religion as a social entity emerging naturally from the experiences of society and argued that participation in religious social rituals served to bolster group identification and the beliefs and values which served as its foundation. He wrote of a collective "effervescence" that would be experienced as a result of such practices in pre-industrial society and believed that this same integrative function could be achieved its modern manifestation through a civic creed. This civic creed was conceptualized in a manner consistent with his understanding of religion; that it emerged organically and diffused naturally throughout all of society, and that it differentiated between the sacred and profane. It affirms values that are naturally shared and generationally ingrained such that it is society that coerces the population into belief rather than the state. (Durkheim, 1915)

Durkheim's analysis greatly improves upon Rousseau by properly extracting the state from the creation and control of civil religion, but in the process, he fails to consider its political implications. As Cristi (1997) summarizes:

> Durkheim neither conceives civil religion as an instrumental political
> process to secure loyalty to a particular social order, nor is he interested in
> the political utility of civil religion…Durkheim's theory does not consider
> a range of phenomena such as conflict, exclusion of certain groups,
> coercion, or the imposition of dominant values, and the power of dominant
> groups. (Cristi, 1997)

In describing a homogenous, monolithic civic creed, he has ignored the potential for its manipulation by political actors in political conflict; and these failures were unfortunately carried forward by those who followed.

The American Creed

Gunnar Myrdal's *American Dilemma* (Myrdal, 1944) implicitly applied the Durkheimian model of a civic creed to the American context. Responding to the

contradictory coexistence of a liberal political culture[8] and the oppressive conditions of African-Americans in the mid-twentieth century, Myrdal wanted to understand what held the nation together. The solution to this puzzle was the "American Creed":

> These ideals of the essential dignity of the individual human being, of the fundamental equality of all men, and of certain inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and a fair opportunity represent to the American people the essential meaning of the nation's early struggle for independence (Myrdal, 1944)

Myrdal argued that these "principles which ought to rule" (Myrdal, 1944) emerged organically through shared historical experiences that have been passed on over generations to acquire a nearly axiomatic quality in American culture. Combining the insights of Durkheim and Rousseau, Myrdal argued that these beliefs were socially coerced upon the individual but that state institutions (such as public schools and the legal system) contributed towards their maintenance and intergenerational stability. However, in contrast, Myrdal focused considerably more attention on the notion that these beliefs and values were derived from the historical experience of the nation rather than from divine inspiration. Although these "core values" have a "transcendental quality" to them (Doherty, 2008), explicit references to God do not appear to be required to achieve effects similar to those described by Rousseau and Durkheim[9].

In the years that followed Huntington (1981)[10] and Lipset (1996)[11] expanded and revised the content of the American Creed while others who study American Political

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[8] The notion of a American liberal political culture is derived from the broader Tocquevillian thesis of an "eminently democratic" American society which stressed liberty and equality of opportunity.

[9] The debate about whether explicit references to God and other religious ideas are necessary for civil religion will be addressed later in the chapter.

[10] Huntington (1981) expanded and revised the content of Myrdal's creed to include "liberty", "equality", "individualism", "democracy", and the "rule of law."

[11] Lipset's (1996) American Creed consisted of "liberty", "equality", "Individualism", "populism" and "laissez-faire".

Culture more generally built upon the idea of a universally held liberal political culture/ideology that could unite the populace. (Hartz, 1955[12]; Kingdon, 1999; Lipset and Marks, 2000) In an attempt to restore the focus on the political which was at the heart of Rousseau's analysis, Myrdal (and the variations that followed) also posited that the American Creed could provide legitimacy for the state and civic loyalty even when its institutions appeared to be failing to live up to its founding values[13]. Writing about the plight of African-Americans at the time:

> American Negroes know that they are a subordinated group experiencing, more than anybody else in the nation, the consequences of the fact that the Creed is not lived up to in America. Yet their faith in the Creed is not simply a means of pleading their unfulfilled rights. They, like the whites, are under the spell of the great national suggestion. With one part of themselves they actually believe, as do the whites, that the Creed is ruling America. (Myrdal, 1944)

According to Myrdal, African-Americans suffered under the political system but retained faith in the promise of the nation; one of Rousseau's central concerns. However, Myrdal's account also allows for the possibility that the creed could be employed in political conflict to bring about institutional change; that moral notions about the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose were a means by which African-Americans could "plead their unfulfilled rights" without appearing disloyal or unpatriotic.[14] Although this model

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[12] Hartz (1955) expanded upon the origins and consequences of this "Liberal Consensus"; suggesting that at its core was a Lockean philosophy that largely precluded the development of the sort of class-based, ideological conflicts that revenged much of Europe.

[13] This line of argumentation bears similarities to System Justification Theory.

[14] Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech (1963) is a perfect illustration of Myrdal's point: King states that "In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men, yes, black men as well as white men, would be guaranteed the "unalienable Rights" of "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note, insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds.""

of institutional change is rather implicit and ill specified, it is highly significant in the conceptual development of civil religion. Robert Bellah (1967) and those that followed would expand upon this insight and leverage it to clearly differentiate civil religion from political culture (something which Myrdal and his peers largely failed to do) and establish it as a concept worthy of further scholarly pursuit.

Bellah's American Civil Religion

For Myrdal, it is faith in the Creed that keeps the nation together despite the glaring disconnects between principles and practice; however, he and others in the political culture literature are rather vague on why this is so. Bellah's *Civil Religion in America* (1967) and latter work (1976, 1992) extends these insights to assert a causal role for civil religion in American political development. He reformulates the American Creed into an American Civil Religion which not only integrates society but also serves as an evaluative standard against which all institutional arrangements are assessed. Writing in the turbulent 1960s when the nation was severely divided and the legitimacy of the political order was contested, Bellah saw civil religion as a means of either reinforcing the authority of the status quo or propelling institutional change.

Bellah asserted the existence of a "public religious dimension…expressed in a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals" which "have played a crucial role in the development of American Institutions." (Bellah, 1967) For Bellah, civil religion was a means of attributing religious significance to American history; providing "apprehension of universal and transcendent religious reality as seen in or…as revealed through the experiences of the American people." (Bellah, 1967) Following the Durkheimian tradition, Bellah asserts that the beliefs, symbols, and rituals associated with that "that

abstract faith, those abstract propositions to which we [the nation] are dedicated[15]"

emerged organically from the earliest days of the American Republic and "defined the

norms of which the common good is conceived" (Bellah, 1976)

In the American context, these norms are manifested through a variety of myths (e.g.

America as a "Pure Eden" and its colonization as an "Exodus" story), symbols (e.g.

American Flag, George Washington as a "Moses" figure, Abraham Lincoln as "Christ")

and rituals (e.g. Presidential Inauguration, 4th of July, Memorial Day, Presidents Day,

Thanksgiving). However, what is truly significant in establishing the cultural power of

civil religion, are the "sacred" texts which articulate the nation's transcendental identity,

meaning, and purpose in the world (e.g. Declaration of Independence, Constitution).

(Bellah, 1967 and 1992; Angrosino, 2002) Bellah interpreted the Declaration of

Independence as containing an implicit covenantal relationship between the nation and a

non-denominationally specific God. In forming the country, we appealed to "the

supreme judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions" and "with a firm reliance

on the protection of divine providence." Our obligations in this endeavor were to

constitute ourselves according to the principle that "all men are created equal" with god-

given unalienable rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." We further

promise to establish and maintain a democratic government in order to ensure the full

realization of those divine gifts.

This latter point is often cited as an implicit recognition of American Exceptionalism;

the notion that America serves as the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in

history. (Bellah 1992; Skousen, 2009) The origins of these beliefs are most often

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[15] Given the controversy surrounding his argument, Bellah saw fit to differentiate between "General" and "Special Civil Religion". This quote is in reference to the latter, while the former is conceptualized as the "lowest common denominator of church religions." (Bellah, 1976)

attributed to John Winthrop's "Model of Christian Charity" sermon[16]. (Winthrop, 1630) where he described New Englanders' colonizing endeavor to his Puritan brethren as the forging of a new covenant with God; a successful voyage indicating God's ratification of this agreement in which they became a "chosen nation" with all the rights, duties, rewards, and punishments associated with such a distinction. The covenant forged with god was a promise to assume an "individual and collective obligation to carry out God's will on earth…as a light to all the nations of the world." (Bellah, 1967) It was understood that this chosen nation status entailed great rewards (e.g. economic growth, political stability, international influence) but also the threat of a more furious wrath should we fail to uphold our obligations.

In sum, Bellah argues that these twin notions of American Exceptionalism and a Sacred Covenant are (either explicitly or implicitly) intertwined with the beliefs, symbols, and rituals that comprise American civil religion and which are broadly shared by the populace. As such, when the behavior of our political institutions contradict the abstract civil religious ideals which inspired them, a national existential crisis emerges which must be resolved[17]. In *The Broken Covenant*, Bellah argues that America has undergone several "Times of Trial[18]"; "a time of testing so severe that not only the form but even the existence of our nation have been called in question." (Bellah, 1992) Under such conditions, institutional change is legitimated and necessary to restore our covenantal obligations and the congruence between idea and practice.

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[16] This sermon is often informally referred to as the "City on a Hill" speech.

[17] This train of thought is not entirely novel. Huntington (1981) argued that political development was the product of efforts to realign institutions with the American Creed when some exogenous factor rendered them dissonant.

[18] The American Revolutionary War and Civil War were characterized as means of overcoming the tensions of previous times of trial, while the social turmoil of the 1960s represented its most recent manifestation.

In the years that followed Bellah's initial publication, scholars quantitatively verified the existence of civil religious beliefs among the public (Christenson and Wimberley, 1978), its effects upon electoral and policy preferences (Wimberley, 1980; Wimberley and Christenson, 1982; Chapp 2012), and that such beliefs were clearly distinguishable from "church religion" (Coleman, 1970; Flerie and Lavric, 2007; West, 1980; Wimberley et al, 1976). There have also been a number of insightful qualitative analyses to illustrate the manner in which civil religion has been utilized to provide legitimacy for immigration policy (Beasley, 2004), the cold war arms race (Ungar, 1991) and military interventions throughout American history (Haberski, 2012).

Impressive as this body of research may be, it can also be said that much of the scholarship on civil religion muddled an already ambiguous concept and allowed itself to be dragged down by definitional debates (to the point where Bellah abandoned the term altogether[19]) (Mathisen, 1989). Gehrig (1991) notes the harmful effect this[20] has had on empirical work; citing Thomas and Flippen (1972) and Wimberley et al., (1976) employment of different and at times conflicting instruments to measure the term with contrasting results.

However, perhaps the more significant problem with this aspect of the research tradition is that it is all premised upon Bellah and his Durkheimian assumptions regarding the homogenous and monolithic nature of civil religion; consequently failing to adequately address the extent to which these beliefs and values can be manipulated by

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[19] Bellah's "Habits of the Heart" (1985) did not mention civil religion at all.
[20] Without ascribing specific blame to any particular author, Richey and Jones (1974) identification of five distinct types of civil religion and Coleman's (1970) articulation of three political environments in which civil religion exists exemplify the confusion which wracked civil religious scholarship.

elites in the course of political conflict. (Cristi, 1997; Demerath and Williams, 1985; Williams and Alexander, 1994; Wuthnow, 1988)

> The image of civil religion in America as a *canopy* of shared values, operating exclusively in terms of consensus and social cohesion turns attention away from the role that civil religion plays in defining (or obscuring) national self-understanding; stabilizing (or upsetting) social and national expectations, its sense of destiny and mission; maintaining (or undermining) social values and beliefs; strengthening (or weakening) social consensus; relieving (or exacerbating) social tensions (Cristi, 1997).

To be fair, Bellah concluded his original work suggesting that civil religion "has often been used and is being used today as a cloak for petty interests and ugly passions" (Bellah, 1967); but even here, this is viewed as a historical abnormality. In his later work, Bellah did articulate a better position by arguing that "conflict, explicit or implicit, over the deeper meaning of the civil religion has been endemic from the beginning" (Bellah, 1976), but this seems to have been too little, too late and was largely ignored by scholars that followed.

Incorporating the Multiple Traditions Thesis

Despite the important differences between the theories examined thus far, they all share the fundamental flaw of conceptualizing civil religion as a set of static, homogenous cultural beliefs and values. Throughout the 20th century, a variety of scholars made the same faulty assumption to posit political culture's potential to be a legitimizing force for American political institutions and a constraint on the path of development[21]. Responding to the tendency of these works to ignore the inegalitarian ideational strain of American history, Smith's (1993) Multiple Traditions thesis argues

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[21] For example, Kingdon (1999) argues that our institutions of Federalism and Presidentialism were the logical outgrowth of pre-revolutionary predispositions towards individualism, equality of opportunity, and limited government; and that these values precluded the development of a unitary or parliamentary system. As another example, Lipset (1996) and Lipset and Marks (2000) argue that our core values were a significant factor in explaining why Socialism never took root in the United States.

that there have been a variety of ideational traditions whose inherent tensions often

explode into conflict and result in political development. As Smith notes:

> The multiple-traditions thesis holds that Americans share a common
> culture but one more complexly and multiply constituted than is usually
> acknowledged. Most members of all groups have shared and often helped
> to shape all the ideologies and institutions that have structured American
> life, including ascriptive ones. A few have done so while resisting all
> subjugating practices. But members of every group have sometimes
> embraced "essentialist" ideologies valorizing their own ascriptive traits
> and denigrating those of others, to bleak effect. (Smith, 1993)

Consistent with the work of his peers, Smith posits the existence of a shared set of

cultural symbols and beliefs; however, he challenges the assumption that these entities

are universally interpreted and employed in the same way[22]. The application of these

insights to a discussion of civil religion reinforces the problems associated with

characterizing it as a homogenous or static entity; doing so precludes the possibility of its

manipulation to secure the ideological goals of political groups in society. As Cristi

notes:

> The values of civil religion and its ritual manifestations may be
> meaningful only to certain segments of the population, or, they may
> benefit certain groups, at the expense of others. Allegiance to certain types
> of civil religion may also conflict with social cohesion. Civil religion, in
> either of the two forms, is more likely to produce a 'qualified consensus'
> rather than full-scale social integration. The Durkheim/Bellah
> interpretation of civil religion, does not adequately allow for either the

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[22] Although it poses no threat to the ultimate outcome of his argument, there are those who have questioned whether distinct multiple traditions exist or simply multiple interpretations of the same liberal tradition. Orren (1996) notes the methodological ambiguity that results from what she views as Smith's rather arbitrary divisions between ideological traditions. From her perspective, liberalism has evolved over time (particularly in the context of property rights) such that it is nearly impossible to posit a strong distinction between it and inegalitarianism. Similarly, Greenstone's (1996) analysis of antebellum ideological conflict illustrates how the interpretation of "liberty" and subsequent policy preferences regarding slavery differed substantially between Lincoln, Douglas, and Webster. While resolving this debate goes beyond my purposes in this project, what is clear is that conceptualizing political culture or civil religion as a monolithic entity is exceedingly problematic; not only because it defies historical accuracy, but because it also precludes any analysis of how these cultural entities can be employed in political conflict.

potentially manipulative nature of civil religion or for the potentially
conflictual diversity (ideological, social, ethnic) of modem society. (Cristi,
1997)

Bellah's conceptualization of "Times of Trial" (Bellah, 1992) posits the deployment

of civil religion as an attempt to realign our inegalitarian tendencies with our "natural"

egalitarian ideology. While it is normatively pleasing to believe this is so, it is premised

on the faulty assumption that there exists a single "correct" American ideology, political

culture, or civil religious interpretation; which, as Murphy (2011) notes, ignores the

political nature of these appeals:

> Scholars of civil religion need always to keep in mind that the texts we use
> to provide insight into these larger, macro-level historical phenomena are
> voiced, by their speakers, in highly particular contexts and contests, and
> represent crafted narratives intended to make certain points to certain
> constituencies, often with very narrow political aims in mind. (Murphy,
> 2011)

Murphy (2011) continues that civil religion is a "space that permits (even encourages)

deep communal self-examination while maintaining a sense of the nation's singular

importance as a source of democratic and egalitarian values and, as Bellah put it in the

original article, 'a light to the nations.'" A proper conceptualization of civil religion

allows us to "focus on the tensions that arise from practical questions of how those

general principles are to be interpreted politically, not to mention geopolitically, in

specific situations." (Murphy, 2011)

Redefining Civil Religion: A Tool for Ideological Conflict

Although Bellah's conceptualization of civil religion has reigned supreme, the review

of the literature thus far illustrates a fatal omission: the potential for it to be interpreted,

manipulated and deployed for different political purposes[23]. This potential has been manifested throughout American history; from President Roosevelt's fireside chats, to Martin Luther King's metaphor of a "bounced check", Reagan's call to restore the "City on the Hill", and most recently with the Tea Party Movement opposition to Barack Obama. While efforts have been made to understand such phenomenon through the lens of civil religion, they have largely failed to zone in on the crucial question of how the strategic manipulation and deployment of civil religious language has impacted politics through the legitimation of ideological agendas[24]. At the heart of the problem is a conceptualization that more or less views civil religion as an ideology; one which, according to Bellah and others, should be employed to move the nation towards some normative good and resolve existential crises that emerge.

Formally stated - *civil religion is a set of broadly shared beliefs, myths, and symbols, derived from the United States' founding and history, which reflect ideas about the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose in the world; and that incorporate notions of American Exceptionalism and a Covenantal relationship with a non-denominationally specific God. While these civil religious entities are themselves non-ideological, their meanings can be manipulated and deployed by political actors to legitimize or mask their own ideological agenda.*

What is novel about my definition of civil religion is that it is related but analytically distinct from ideology; therefore accepting this definition requires more clearly

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[23] This should not be interpreted to suggest that civil religion cannot be utilized to further social integration. On the contrary, I am merely stipulating that it has the same potential to be employed in political conflict.
[24] While it remains an open question as to whether civil religion has a significant positive effect on this legitimizing project "there seems to be enough evidence indicating that civil religion is used as an instrument of legitimation." (Cristi, 1997)

specifying how ideology is conceptualized in this research context[25]. Formally defined,

ideology is a set of coherently related shared beliefs and issue positions that are held by

a social class or group, which reflect a set of tangible or intangible group or self

interests, and which influence and legitimize political behaviors and relationships of

power.

Although these conceptualizations of ideology and civil religion share some elements,

they differ in significant ways. Perhaps the most important difference is that while the

former reflect a set of coherent issue positions, the latter has no inherent connection to

any particular policy[26]. If civil religious beliefs naturally led to specific policy

prescriptions, that would imply an absence of political conflict over what these beliefs

mean. If that proposition was true, it would itself imply the existence of a homogenous,

monolithic entity, which the preceding literature review has already dismissed. Similarly,

conceptualizing civil religion as a "national ideology" is problematic because it implies

that the meanings and interpretations of these symbols and beliefs are universally held.

Cultural symbols are social constructed; which suggests that although the populace may

recognize that they are important components of the national identity, meaning, and

purpose in the world, it does not follow those meanings are universally shared[27].

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[25] Gerring (1997) makes a strong argument against attempts to construct or employ "all-purpose definitions [of ideology] that can be utilized for all times, places, and purposes." Rather, we must recognize that there are a variety of arguably valid attributes commonly associated with ideology and scholars should employ a definition that is "context-specific" to their particular research question. In sum, different definitions will be useful for different purposes and the responsible research will carefully consider why certain attributes are employed or discarded.

[26] Gerring (1997) reinforces this perspective by arguing that the primary distinction between ideologies and belief, philosophical, and cultural systems is that they specify a concrete political program and/or issue positions.

[27] For example, it is quite possible that while many people regard the constitution as a symbol of liberty and egalitarianism, this does not preclude segments of the African-American community from interpreting them in a negative context whereby the constitution is a symbol of inegalitarianism and slavery.

Civil religion and ideology also differ in that while both reflect a set of shared, coherent beliefs, those of the former are wedded to the historical experiences of the nation and its relationship to notions of American Exceptionalism and a covenantal relationship with God. Ideological beliefs, by contrast, reflect philosophical and/or moral principles related to political conduct. Although such philosophical and moral principles have often been ascribed to civil religion[28], I content that these are instances where civil religion (as a set of cultural tools) have been manipulated in the service of ideology.

Finally, while both ideology and civil religion are posited to serve a legitimizing function, the latter primarily operates to legitimize the former. Ideology influences and legitimizes political behaviors and relationships of power by presenting them as "being in the 'common good' or as generally accepted." (Williams and Demerath, 1991) Because ideologies reflect social class or group interests, they are naturally divisive; one cannot be part of a class or group without the existence of others who are not part of the class or group. There is therefore nothing inherent to ideologies which illustrates why or definitively explains how they are in the "common good" or "generally accepted." Obtaining these qualities therefore requires that they be presented in language which resonates with and appeals to those involved in political struggle. I argue that civil religion is one means of accomplishing this task. Because civil religion reflects a set of shared symbols and beliefs that contain no inherent ideological affiliation, they can be manipulated and deployed to legitimize ideological goals. The invocation of "The Founding Fathers", "The Declaration of Independence", or American Exceptionalism" does not inherently lead an individual towards any particular policy preference. However, presenting these ideas as being consistent with a particular policy or

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[28] Often under the guise of civic republicanism (Bellah, 1967; Gorski, 2011)

ideological outcome is clearly possible and I hypothesize that this is where civil religion attains its political significance.   In this way, civil religion also has the potential to mask the ideological nature of issue positions; making the ideological warrior appear to be operating in a non-ideological manner.

The Relationship between Civil Religion and Religion

Thus far I have argued that civil religion is a set of beliefs and symbols which are widely accepted by the population, but whose political implications are contested. Although it is clear that traditional religion has some relationship to civil religion, the purpose of this section is to clarify the nature of the relationship. I view civil religion as a type of religion (perhaps even a "national religion") that is distinct from denominationally specific traditional religions and Political Religion in both theory and practice. I will further argue that despite religious connotations of American Exceptionalism and a Covenantal relationship with God, civil religious symbols and beliefs do not require explicit religious references and do not exclude the non-religious.

In his seminal work on religion, Durkheim (1915) defines it as a "unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things…which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them." Although there are obvious problems with explaining the emergence of religious beliefs and organized religion in functional terms, his conceptualization remains highly influential because it touches on two important elements. The first is that religious beliefs define and categorize all "real and ideal things" according to the "sacred" and "profane"; which are not just mutually exclusive, but "hostile and jealous rivals." The second is that there is a communal, social

element to religion[29] whereby religious rites prescribe the rules by which members of the moral community comport themselves in the presence of these sacred things. As Cristi (1997) summarizes, "Durkheim believes that the moral unity of a society can be achieved only through ceremonies and gatherings where individuals 'reaffirm in common their common sentiments.'" Religious rites are therefore the means by which social solidarity is reaffirmed.

It is clear that Robert Bellah employed Durkheim's conceptualization of religion when he argued that civil religion constituted a "collection of beliefs, symbols, and rituals with respect to sacred things and institutionalized in a collectivity". (Bellah, 1967) Cristi (1997) argues that civil religion attempts to "reinforce group identity and to legitimize an existing social and political order, but it does so by injecting a transcendental dimension or by providing a religious gloss on the justification." In this context, we can draw parallels to Rousseau where the religious aspect of civil religion was manifested in its declaration of the sanctity of the social contract, the laws of the state, and citizen obligations. The beliefs, symbols, and myths of American civil religion (e.g. American Flag, Declaration of Independence, Principle of Equality) are deemed to be sacred and various rituals (e.g. Inaugurations, National Holidays) exist by which to reaffirm the sanctity of these cultural entities and integrate the populace.

Some scholars have questioned whether a meaningful distinction can be made between the beliefs and adherents of traditional religion (and specifically Christianity) and civil religion given that the historical origins of the latter lie in a Judeo-Christian ideational heritage. Bellah argued that civil religion "while not antithetical to and indeed

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[29] Durkheim (1915) makes a clear distinction between individualistic and communal forms of moral beliefs and behaviors with the former categorized as "Magic".

sharing much in common with Christianity was neither sectarian, nor in any specific sense Christian." (Bellah, 1967) Instead, it is marriage between the state and religion(s) with both contributing elements to a collective symbol system that neither have exclusive control or dominance over. (West, 1980) The content of Civil Religion should not be so "specific as to alienate or contradict other major religions, yet specific enough so that the nation becomes endowed with churchly attributes." (Coleman, 1970) Although Gerteis (2011) notes that most Americans will tend to interpret civil religion through a Christian lens, a variety of studies have documented the differences between the two beliefs systems (Coleman, 1970; Flerie and Lavric, 2007; Wimberley et al 1976; Wimberley, 1979).

Another common line of criticism asks whether civil religion is simply a form of "political religion[30]" which is generally understood to be the development of a state ideology with sufficient cultural and political power that it operates and functions like a secular religion; capable of sanctifying political institutions with a variety of symbols, myths, and rituals. Although political religion and civil religion appear very similar at face value, the key difference is that civil religion is not an ideology (as already discussed) and even if it were, it is not under the monopolistic control of the state. While civil religious beliefs and symbols are utilized by different actors for different ideological ends, the state mandates a single "right" interpretation of political religion; and those who use it "incorrectly" face state directed punishment (as described by Rousseau[31]).

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[30] Indeed, the origination of this term is often ascribed to Rousseau and his original articulation of civil religion. Political Religion has most often been employed to describe the Nazis and other totalitarian regimes in history.

[31] Rousseau's civil religious tenet of tolerance for other religions (as long as they tolerate others and do not contradict the duties owed to the state) was viewed as vital for the stability of the state and social solidarity.   While the state cannot compel belief, it does have the authority to banish citizens for acting as

Although civil religion remains distinct from traditional religion and political religion, it is altogether possible that it is an example of "Politicized Religion;" meaning the act of employing religion to legitimize political action. If civil religion is indeed a national religion, then efforts to establish a connection between preferred ideological policies and sacred aspects of civil religion would certainly be considered the politicization of religion. A more concrete example of such behavior can be found in Pierard and Linder's (1988) articulation of two functional forms of civil religious rhetoric (as found in the presidency). In "Priestly Civil Religion", the president "leads the people in affirming and celebrating the nation, and at the same time he glorifies the national culture and stokes his political flock." (Pierard and Linder, 1988) The purpose of this rhetoric is to legitimize his political program by asserting its consistency with our civil religious traditions. In contrast, "Prophetic Civil Religion" is more conducive to the Jeremiadic[32] discursive style in which the President speaks necessary (and often unpleasant) truths about the state of the nation and calls for judgment and repentance. "The President seeks to conform the nation's actions to the will of the Almighty, thus countering idolatrous religious nationalism and calling the nation to repent of its corporate political sins." (Pierard and Linder, 1988) Here the purpose of civil religion is to legitimize a political program which challenges status quo institutional arrangements.

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an "anti-social being, incapable of truly loving the laws and justice, and of sacrificing, at need, his life to his duty." (Rousseau, 1762) However, it is equally clear that it would be very easy to for the state to expel those who do not believe in the civil religion under the guise of anti-social behavior/attitudes.

[32] Although "Jeremiads" have traditionally been employed in an explicitly religious context, I believe that they may also be a useful analytical tool for understanding civil religious discourse. Andrew Murphy (2009) suggests that it is composed of four common elements: (1) description and identification of the symptoms of the current crisis, (2) a contrast between the current state of decline with a more virtuous past, (3) a call for spiritual renewal as a means of avoiding the inevitable crisis associated with the current trajectory, and (4) all while placing the American experience in the context of "God's Plan."

Despite the inherently religious nature of civil religion and its propensity to be employed as politicized religion, I concur with Cristi (1997) who writes that scholars of civil religion have been "too much concerned with the religious dimension of civil religion, and not concerned enough with its political implications." Although American civil religion draws heavily upon biblical imagery and the protestant tradition to connect its moral sentiments and historical experiences to a sacred covenant, such explicit references need not be acknowledged or held for the public to accept the tenets of this faith. When political leaders discuss the national identity and the vision provided by our founders, they are not simply arguing for consistency with tradition for tradition's sake; they are implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) arguing that there is something sacred about them. Explicit references to "God" are not necessary to convince the population that there is something exceptional about America or that there is a right and wrong way to understand what it means to be an American[33]. Insisting on an explicit reference to "God" not only excludes rhetoric that is rightly understood to be civil religion, but also has the potential to conflate civil religion with organized religion.

Furthermore, an insistence on restricting civil religion to explicit religious references has the potential to inaccurately assume that atheist, agnostic, or more secular members of the polity either do not share these beliefs or fail to be affected by them. While such individuals may be uncomfortable with the phrase "God's Chosen Nation" or "Covenant" (given the religious connotations), it is unlikely that this prevents them from accepting the implications. Even if individuals do not believe that "God" has actually blessed the United States, they may still understand our nation as playing an important role in world

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[33] Although this is a rather radical departure from the scholastic dogma of civil religion, Weller (2013) offers a persuasive theoretical argument for the diversity of beliefs among "non-theists" and that such understandings are not entirely contradictory.

events and history. Secular Americans are just as capable as their religious counterparts to believe that there is something precious about our founding and its ideals which must be preserved to ensure our continuing prosperity[34]. This view is shared by Gorski who cites Habermas[35] to argue that "even for unbelievers, the language of our religious traditions contain 'moral resources,' which are still far from exhausted." (Gorski, 2011b) Similarly, Murphy (2011) notes that American civil religion is an "overlapping consensus" similar to that described by Rawls (2005) who argued that agreement about basic principles is possible even among those who do not share the same "comprehensive worldview."

> an avowedly secular civic republican could agree with a social justice Christian about a great many things about the world historical significance of the American project, about the centrality of religious freedom and representative government to that project, about the admirable virtues of John Winthrop, Abraham Lincoln and Martin King, and so on, and so on, *without* thereby agreeing about the existence of God or a human *telos.* (Gorski, 2011b)

The Relationship Between Civil Religion and Nationalism

In the previous section we saw that while civil religion has a relationship with religion and may be employed as politicized religion, it is distinct from both traditional religion and political religion. For similar understandable reasons, civil religion has sometimes been conflated with nationalism and related constructs. In this section I will argue that although civil religion may be manipulated and deployed to facilitate and legitimize nationalistic political projects, it remains analytically distinct.

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[34] Exposure to such ideas is so prevalent in our society (from inaugural addresses to history lessons in our education system) that it could hardly be denied that the secular have just as much opportunity to be socialized into these beliefs as others.

[35] Quote is taken from Habermas, Pope Benedict, and Schuller, 2006.

For our purposes, nationalism will be defined as "a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent." (Gellner, 1983) Hechter (2000) argues for a clear distinction between nationalism and related terms such as imperialism, regionalism, or patriotism. The latter (which is most often conflated with nationalism in the context of civil religion) is defined as "the desire to raise the prestige and power of one's own nation state relative to rivals in the international system." (Hechter, 2000) Regardless of whether we agree with these distinctions, it follows that a nationalist or patriotic political project aims to secure/restore the alignment of the nation and its governance units (nationalism) and/or the pursuit/defense of what is deemed the "national interest" (patriotism). In either case, these are policy goals which are analytically distinct from my conceptualization of civil religion as a set of cultural tools that may be deployed to legitimize ideology and its attendant policy goals.

With respect to the political implications of nationalism, Gellner notes that "nationalistic sentiment is the feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the principle [of congruent political and national units] or the feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfillment", and that a "nationalist movement is one actuated by a sentiment of this kind." (Gellner, 1983) Should we be so inclined to differentiate nationalism from patriotism (as Hechter prescribes), we can simply replace the words "violation of the principle" with "inability to advance the national interest." In either case, the prerequisites of these political projects include the establishment of solidarity among the populace and a connection between the citizens and their state; precisely the goals articulated by Rousseau in his original formulation of civil religion. It therefore becomes clear that these sentiments, and the movements they inspire, can and often do draw upon

civil religion to fulfill these antecedent conditions; but it is also clear that civil religion is conceptually distinct. It would be illogical to conflate means and ends, or the prerequisites of a condition from the condition itself.

However, if civil religion can be differentiated from nationalism (as a political project), what is its relationship to the process or outcomes of nation formation? One school of thought on this process stipulates that the nation is imposed from above by elites to fulfill the requirements of a modern industrial society; through the imposition of a shared language and unifying "high culture." (Gellner, 1983) Accordingly, some scholars have associated this "high culture" with civil religion in a manner entirely consistent with Rousseau's original formulation. As such, the same conceptual issues already discussed regarding his theory of a state created and monopolized civil religion apply here. Without judging the veracity of Gellner's theory, I argue that this high culture is inconsistent with a modern conceptualization of civil religion that appropriately acknowledges the emergence of organic beliefs and its contested nature.

Rather than conceptualizing civil religion as a product of nation formation, I believe that it is more appropriate to view it as one potential means by which the nation may be formed or maintained. Anthony Smith (1986) locates the nation's origins in pre-modern ethnic communities who identify with a historic homeland, share common myths, historical memories, and political culture, and who display solidaristic attitudes. For Smith, nation formation and nationalistic political projects build upon these shared preexisting symbols and beliefs; they are therefore a cause, not a consequence. Building upon these insights, one could stipulate that civil religion is perhaps a prerequisite or means by which nation state formation is accomplished or solidified.

Aside from these considerations, civil religion has sometimes been conflated with one of a number of alternative understandings of "Religious Nationalism." One such understanding views it as state encouragement of religious behavior and organized religions' encouragement of uncritical patriotism, such that the political community is subservient to religious considerations. (Gorski, 2011) This view of religious nationalism appears to be a less insidious version of Political Religion or Rousseau's "Religion of the Citizen." Other variations on this theme view religious nationalism as the process of nation building or promotion of national interests based upon a particular religious denomination. Although these processes certainly occur in the world, I do not believe that civil religion can be characterized as such. Gorski gets around the conflation of the terms by developing a typology of religious/political configurations (based upon Weber's theory of value spheres) and placing civil religion in a category between Liberal Secularism (complete separation of church and state with respect to the law, politics, discourse, and symbolism) and Religious Nationalism. Although both Murphy (2011) [36] and Gerteis (2011) [37] are skeptical of hard boundaries between these categories, I believe that this typology could be useful if we recall that civil religion is at its core non-denominationally specific, and not under the exclusive control of either church or state.

Still others regard Religious Nationalism as the worship of the state such that the nation itself is glorified and sanctified[38]. Richey and Jones (1974) argue that one type of

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[36] For example, Murphy notes that these categories relegate what we might consider normatively harmful manifestations of civil religion (such as the John Birch Society or the Know-Nothings) into religious nationalism without any real attention to why they and not others fall into that category beyond these subjective evaluations.

[37] Citing in particular a study which shows a solid majority of Americans believe that the U.S. is a Christian nation and that that is a good thing.

[38] This outcome is very similar to what Rousseau described as "Religion of the Citizen" whereby civil and religious authorities were fused together or the preceding discussion of Political Religion

civil religion (out of five types they identify) produces such an effect while Myrdal (1944) suggests that "when he worships the constitution, it is an act of American Nationalism." However, this conceptualization is in stark contrast to Bellah and other that followed who clearly differentiated civil religion from nation worship. Rather than a religion which worships the nation, civil religion is a set of symbols and beliefs which help the nation to understand their place in God's evolving plan for world history. To put a finer point on it, civil religious symbols and beliefs are considered sacred, not the state or its actions; the latter may be evaluated according to whether it conforms with the sacred or profane depending on the ideological position of the judge. Furthermore, these symbols and beliefs can be manipulated such that there is no static meaning associated with them and such that the state does not have a monopoly over their meaning or employment. Indeed, Young and Pieper (2011) argue that the fact that neither the state nor the church can monopolize the interpretations of civil religious beliefs and symbols has "saved the country from the often ugly consequences of a polity sanctifying itself in a sacrificial nationalism." (Young and Pieper, 2011)

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the evolution of civil religion; from a state imposed religion to breed loyalty to the state and integrate society, to a creed that emerges organically with little political relevance; from a historically rooted creed that legitimizes political institutions, to one which reflects religious notions of a sacred covenant to challenge the status quo. The fundamental problem I find in these conceptualizations is the underlying assumption that there is a single, homogenous, monolithic understanding of these beliefs, myths, and symbols; and that they are sometimes lumped together as comprising a coherent ideology.

I have endeavored to articulate why I believe that civil religion should be understood as set of cultural tools by which ideological notions of the nation's identity, meaning, and purpose in the world are legitimized and manifested in public policy. I have also used this line of argumentation to assert an analytic distinction between civil religion, traditional religion, nationalism, and a variety of closely related constructs, while maintaining a meaningful relationship to some of them. I believe that my work here provides a strong theoretical foundation for hypothesizing and empirically verifying a number of interesting political phenomena. More specifically, without this more politicized conceptualization of civil religion, it would be difficult to theorize about the strategic use of this rhetoric based on the political context or the effects of conflicting civil religious frames. In other words, if civil religion was a monolithic ideology (as traditional scholars have argued), then we would have no reason to suspect that it could elicit different reactions from the public or be utilized in some contexts but not others. In the chapters that follow, I will explore these possibilities, articulate how this theoretical framework applies to specific bodies of literature in the fields of political behavior and political institutions, generate testable hypotheses, and report the results.

Chapter 3 – The Civil Religion of Modern Presidents

These economic royalists complain that we seek to overthrow the
institutions of America. What they really complain of is that we seek to
take away their power. Our allegiance to American institutions requires
the overthrow of this kind of power. In vain they seek to hide behind the
Flag and the Constitution. In their blindness they forget what the Flag and
the Constitution stand for. Now, as always, they stand for democracy, not
tyranny; for freedom, not subjection; and against a dictatorship by mob
rule and the over-privileged alike. (Franklin Roosevelt, Nomination
Acceptance Speech, 1936)

But rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the sacred heart of America
itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or
abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the
purposes and the meaning of our beloved nation. The issue of equal rights
for American Negroes is such an issue. (Lyndon Johnson, "American
Promise" Major Speech, 1965)

And that's why our focus is the values, the principles, and the ideas that
made America great. Let's be clear on this point. We're for limited
government, because we understand, as the Founding Fathers did, that it is
the best way of ensuring personal liberty and empowering the individual
so that every American of every race and region shares fully in the
flowering of American prosperity and freedom. (Ronald Reagan, State of
the Union Address, 1988)

Regardless of partisan evaluations, few would deny that Presidents Roosevelt,

Johnson, and Reagan all presided over and even guided major transformations in

American government and society.   As these excerpts illustrate, each leveraged their

rhetorical skills to convince the public and Congress that their preferred policies and

broader political agenda were not only good for America, but also consistent with the

nation's historic identity, meaning, and purpose in the world. Although scholars have

traditionally assumed that civil religion would have an integrative and unifying effect on

a populace divided by partisan loyalties, ethnicity, geography, and religion (Bellah,

1967), my previous chapters assert that when political issues are framed in civil religious

terms, policy debates morph into battles over the nation's identity and exacerbate

ideological predispositions. Given the increasing prevalence of such rhetoric in contemporary American politics[1] and its implications for public opinion, it is important to have a better understanding of the conditions under which it has been historically employed so as to more accurately predict its use and effects in the future. Although a variety of studies have documented the use of civil religious rhetoric by presidents to influence the political process and legitimize their agenda (Adams, 1987; Gorski, 2011; Pierard and Linder, 1988; Roof, 2009), these accounts fail to offer a comprehensive account of the circumstances under which it has been deployed. In particular, no attempt has been made to identify whether it occurs habitually as a perfunctory aspect of the institutional norms of presidential rhetoric and/or if it is a strategic response to the social and political context. The purpose of this chapter is to shed some light on the factors which have precipitated the employment of civil religious rhetoric among modern presidents.

To that end, I have assembled a unique database of 180 coded speeches spanning the presidencies of Franklin Roosevelt through Barack Obama. The prevalence of civil religious language was found to vary significantly according to the type of speech delivered and the partisan relationship between Congress and the White House (governing context). Presidents were more likely to employ civil religious rhetoric in Inaugural Addresses than other types of speeches and generally less likely as partisan opposition in congress increased (though there were some interesting exceptions and nuances). Defying prior expectations, the results suggest that public opinion of the president has very little predictive power while the presence of war and the state of the

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[1] The most visible example of this spike in civil religious language comes from the Tea Party Movement (Hickel Jr., 2012), but it also figures prominently among members of the Republican Party more generally.

economy only sporadically have a relationship under certain conditions. Substantively, these results suggest that while there are certain rhetorical norms for different types of speeches, the deployment of civil religious language is strategic and largely contingent upon the governing context.

This chapter begins with some theoretical discussion of the existing civil religion research as it relates to the American presidency. From this literature I derive a series of theoretical expectations and posit several hypotheses.   I then describe the research design and present the results before offering some concluding remarks.

The Civil Religious Rhetoric of the Modern Presidency

As the symbolic representative of the American identity (Bellah, 1967; Adams, 1987; Pierard and Linder, 1988) and most influential actor in our government (Cohen, 1995; Hill, 1998; Kernell, 2007), the President is arguably well positioned to articulate a Civil Religious discourse that can impact public opinion and the political process. The overriding narrative in the evolution of the American Presidency is the incremental accumulation of power and influence by which occupants of the executive office today are expected to assert their authority as the sole representative of the entire nation to advance a truly "national" agenda (Greenstein, 1978). Zarefsky (2004) notes that "because of his prominent political position and his access to the means of communication, the president, by defining a situation, might be able to shape the context in which events or proposals are viewed by the public." On the other hand, presidential scholars have also argued that the effectiveness of these powers has been exaggerated (Edwards, 2003) and point to the constraints imposed by changes in the media environment (Cohen, 2004), partisan/ideological predispositions of the public and

legislators (Lee, 2008), and the general lack of attentiveness towards political matters by much of the public (Converse, 1964; Delli, Carpini, and Keeter, 1996).

Although the capacity for the president to have an influence on public opinion and the political agenda is debatable, few would deny that presidents continue to make such efforts and that they are perhaps best exemplified through official speeches (Tulis, 1987). While civil religious rhetoric is often a component of these efforts (Beasley, 2001; Schonhardt-Bailey et al, 2012), it remains unclear whether its presence is habitual (as a function of the norms of presidential rhetoric) or if it is deployed strategically (as the product of contextual factors); or both.

The Habitual Rhetoric Thesis

If the inclusion of civil religious language in presidential speeches was simply a reflection of the rhetorical norms of the office then we should expect to find its prevalence to be rather stable over time. However, there is evidence to suggest that these norms differ between speeches in ways that may affect the frequency of civil religious rhetoric. Although no explicit comparison of this kind has been made, several studies have articulated important differences in the form and purpose of Inaugural Addresses (Campbell and Jamieson, 1985), State of the Union Addresses (Schonhardt-Bailey et al, 2012), Campaign Speeches (Chapp, 2012; Tetlock, 1981), and Major Speeches (Coe and Neumann, 2011). Robert Bellah has asserted that the Inaugural Address is an "important ceremonial event" for American civil religion; a claim that has been corroborated by content analyses which have found ample evidence of civil religious language in these speeches (Beasley, 2001; Pierard and Linder, 1988; Toolin, 1983). Campbell and

Jamieson (1985) argue that the Inaugural Address is of a "distinct rhetorical type"

compared to other presidential communication because of their tendency to:

> (1) unify the audiences by reconstituting it as "the people" who
> witness and ratify the ceremony; (2) rehearse shared values drawn
> from the past; (3) enunciate the political principles that will guide the
> new administration; (4) demonstrate that the president appreciates the
> requirements and limitations of executive power; and (5) achieves
> these ends through means appropriate to epideictic discourse[2]
> (Campbell and Jamieson, 1985).

Although not mentioned by name, these tendencies share much in common with the

conceptualization of civil religion articulated in this project and reflected in Beasley's

(2001) documentation of the manner in which such rhetoric has been employed to

generate unity and ideological consensus in these speeches.

While considerably more scholarship has been devoted to understanding the role of

civil religion in Inaugural Addresses than other speech types, the implied consensus

seems to be that the prevalence of this type of rhetoric is influenced by the degree of

policy specificity that is typically found in the State of the Union Address, Major

Speeches, and Campaign Speeches. Schonhardt-Bailey et al, (2012) argue that "unlike

Inaugurals, State of the Union speeches tend to be more policy prescriptive and so are

less likely to embellish upon the broader, more principled rhetoric of civil religion;"

however, their work does not explicitly compare the two speech types. Campbell and

Jamieson (1985) similarly note that when policy proposals are employed in Inaugural

Addresses they serve as "illustrations of the political philosophy of the president" while

those in the State of the Union Address reflect "a call to immediate action." Furthermore,

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[2]This term was coined by Aristotle and refers to a "form of rhetoric that praises or blames on ceremonial occasions, addresses an audience that evaluates the rhetor's skill, recalls the past and speculates about the future while focusing on the present, employs a noble dignified, literary style, and amplifies or rehearses admitted facts" (Campbell and Jamieson, 1985).

Coe and Neumann (2011) argue that because Inaugurals are a "ceremonial genre" they are theoretically less likely than major speeches to discuss policy in a deliberative manner. We might therefore extrapolate from these insights that because State of the Union Addresses and Major Speeches are less ceremonial and more policy specific, that they will feature comparatively less civil religious language than Inaugural Addresses.

This argument can be applied to presidential campaign speeches which are more likely to exhibit simplistic, sweeping generalizations than the more nuanced, complex explanations of policy offered while in office (Tetlock, 1981). Thoemmes and Conway III (2007) found that presidents reduce the complexity of their rhetoric towards the end of their first term in office as their reelection draws near. While these accounts do not posit a ceremonial function to campaign speeches in the way we ascribe that status to Inaugurals, Chapp's (2012) analysis demonstrates that appeals to a "civil religious identity[3]" were highly prevalent when candidates spoke of religion[4]. Furthermore, it may be argued that because Nomination Acceptances speeches aim to strike a delicate balance between articulating a policy platform and presenting a broad vision for their candidacy and tenure in office (a vision which is often expressed as being consistent with the national identity, meaning, and purpose in the world), they more closely approximate the form and function of an Inaugural Address than other campaign speeches. As such, we should expect it occupy a middle ground in terms of the prevalence of civil religion between the Inaugural Address and the State of the Union Address/Major Speeches.

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[3] Appeals which "generally stress points of spiritual commonality among all Americans and posit a transcendent religious ethos that permeates American institutions and culture" (Chapp, 2012)

[4] Chapp (2012) does not provide concrete percentages on these civil religious appeals as they relate to total campaign communications, but does report that religious rhetoric (in general) accounts for less than 1% of all words spoken in campaign speeches and that these civil religious appeals account for 55.8% of that subset.

If the prevalence of civil religious rhetoric is a function of the institutionalized norms of presidential rhetoric (and not influenced by strategic considerations), then we should expect to find (a) significant differences in the amount of civil religious language employed among the different speech types, and (b) that changes in the social, economic, or political context have no significant effect upon the frequency of civil religious language within speech types[5]. These expectations are reflected in the following hypotheses:

> H1: Frequency of civil religious rhetoric will vary according to the type of speech delivered. Inaugural Addresses will have a higher prevalence of civil religious rhetoric than Nomination Acceptance Speeches, which in turn will have a higher prevalence of civil religious rhetoric than State of the Union Addresses and Major Speeches.

> H2: Frequency of civil religious rhetoric within speech types will not significantly vary with changes in the social, economic, or political environment.

The Strategic Rhetoric Thesis

Because I have conceptualized civil religion as a cultural tool that may be manipulated and deployed to legitimize ideological goals, it is appropriate to investigate the alternative proposition that the prevalence of such rhetoric is affected by strategic considerations. Accordingly, civil religion may be employed in response to changes in the social and political context to unify the body politic (as is conventionally assumed) or drive them further apart (as is the conclusion derived from recent scholarship). More specifically, there is reason to suspect a relationship between the prevalence of civil religious language and (1) military, economic, and political crises, (2) elections, (3) governing context, and (4) broader patterns of political polarization.

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[5] To put a finer point on it: A significant effect would suggest that Presidents vary the amount of civil religious language they employ in a particular type of speech according to the social, economic, and political context; which indicates that strategic considerations are involved.

With respect to crises, Ragsdale (1984) demonstrates that presidents are less likely to deliver Major Speeches at the onset of a military conflict and during times of economic distress. However, we know very little about if and how these factors systematically influence the deployment of civil religious rhetoric. In the context of military conflict, there is a tension between the public's tendency to "rally 'round the flag" at the onset of war and demand a rationale for why their sons and daughters lives are being put in harm's way. Historically, civil religious language has been a means by which presidents have conveyed the purpose of the conflict in terms of fulfilling national obligations and defending existential values (Haberski, 2012; Ungar, 1991); and we should expect to find that its usage increases during times of war. Similarly, during times of economic distress, presidents have often employed civil religious rhetoric to remind the public of their historical resiliency and to legitimize their proposed solutions (and/or denigrate those of their opponents). This is perhaps best exemplified by President Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, but is also illustrated in President Carter's "Malaise" speech and President Reagan's broader ideological assertion that government is the problem and not the solution to the economic woes of the 1980s. Formally stated:

> H3: The prevalence of civil religious language will increase when the nation is engaged in armed conflict.

> H4: The prevalence of civil religious language will increase when the economy is not operating at optimal levels.

Although it is likely that public opinion of the president may be related to both the state of the economy and the presence of military conflict, it is also clear that these perceptions may operate independently of those factors and have their own particular affect upon presidential rhetoric. Ragsdale (1984) found that presidents were more likely

to make discretionary (Major) speeches as their popularity rises or falls while Brace and

Hickley (1993) found that those speeches were more likely to occur when public

approval is on the decline. If a president acts strategically in response to public opinion,

then it is reasonable to assume that they will also speak strategically; and if civil religious

rhetoric is a means by which they can garner legitimacy for their agenda and actions, we

should expect to find an inverse relationship between its prevalence and public opinion.

Furthermore, if civil religious language is employed to enhance public perceptions, then

it is logical to hypothesize that it will also have a positive relationship to the political

campaign season. However, because presidential elections tend to produce more

contentious campaigns with higher levels of public interest and participation than

midterm elections, we might expect to find a higher proportion of civil religious rhetoric

in the former than the latter. Similarly, since reelection concerns are never far from a

president's mind and because "strategic activities" (e.g. delivering Major Speeches,

foreign and domestic travel) have a greater impact on public opinion during the first term

(Brace and Hinckley, 1993) than the second, it is likely that civil religion is employed

with greater frequency in the first four years of governance. Formally stated:

> H5: The prevalence of civil religious rhetoric will have an inverse
> relationship to public opinion. As public opinion declines, the frequency
> of civil religious language will increase.

> H6: Election year speeches will have a higher prevalence of civil religious
> rhetoric than non-election year speeches. Speeches delivered in a
> presidential election year should have a higher prevalence of civil
> religious rhetoric than those delivered in a midterm election year.

> H7: Speeches delivered in the first presidential term will have a higher
> prevalence of civil religious rhetoric than those delivered in the second
> presidential term.

The preceding "strategic" hypotheses largely reflect circumstances in which concern over the perceptions of the general public are paramount. However, it is also possible that the prevalence of civil religious language could be influenced by the legislative environment. Cohen (2011) and Coleman and Mann (2007) found evidence that a president's policy and rhetorical strategies are powerfully influenced by the presence or absence of divided government. If we assume that civil religion can serve to unify the public and raise issues above the partisan fray (as is conventionally assumed) then we can expect president's to employ it with greater frequency when they face an opposition congress. This expectation is supported by Campbell and Jamieson (1985) who note that in Inaugural Addresses "the traditional values rehearsed by the President are selected and framed in ways that unify the audience."

> H8a: The frequency of civil religious rhetoric will have a positive relationship with partisan congressional opposition to the president (i.e. Divided Government).

On the other hand, my previous chapters theorized that civil religion will have a polarizing effect upon public opinion. This would suggest that employing such rhetoric during times of divided government reduces the prospects of passing legislation and political compromises become more elusive. This hypothesis is tangentially supported by Cohen (2011) who found higher levels of moderation in presidential policy positions under conditions of divided government. However, while the potential for civil religious rhetoric to antagonize the opposition and rally the base makes its deployment ill advised under conditions of divided government, these propensities render it an ideal leadership tool under conditions of unified government.

> H8b: The frequency of civil religious rhetoric will have a negative relationship with partisan congressional opposition to the president (i.e.

Divided Government) and a positive relationship with partisan
congressional support for the president (i.e. Unified Government).

The relationship between civil religion and the legislative environment may be further

complicated by considering the historical trend towards greater elite polarization and

development of the "Polarized Presidency[6]" (Cameron, 2004). Rhodes (2014) argues that

presidents Carter through Obama have responded to increasing partisan polarization

among members of congress and political activists by adopting a "bipartisan leadership

posture." In this context, he contends that "recent presidents have used bipartisan themes

both to obscure their own ideological positions and to create a positive contrast with a

highly partisan congress" (Rhodes, 2014). Because civil religion invokes broadly shared

beliefs, values, and symbols regarding the national identity, meaning, and purpose to

legitimize and mask ideology, it is reasonable to hypothesize that it will occur with

greater frequency under these conditions.

> H9: The frequency of civil religious rhetoric will be greater among
> presidents operating in the age of Bipartisan Posturing (Carter through
> Obama) than those who did not (Roosevelt through Ford).

Data

The first step in evaluating these hypotheses was to assemble 180[7] presidential

speeches[8] spanning from Franklin Roosevelt to Barack Obama (1939-2012) which were

subsequently coded to identify civil religious passages. This includes all "Obligatory"

speeches (State of the Union Address, Inaugural Address, and Nomination Acceptance

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[6] Cameron (2004) defines this condition as a situation "when politics is polarized and control of government is divided by party."
[7] The number of speeches originally assembled and coded was 200, however, because public opinion data was a critical control variable for subsequent analyses, 20 cases were excluded. The vast majority of these come from Franklin Roosevelt's first two terms.
[8] The full text of these speeches was obtained from the Public Papers of the President and/or The American Presidency Project (http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/).

Speech) delivered[9] during the time period along with a random sample of "Discretionary" speeches. The latter are confined to "Major Addresses" which are defined as speeches delivered during prime time broadcasting hours on all the major networks and which preempt regular network programming (Ragsdale, 1984). After a full list of these Major speeches was obtained[10], I randomly sampled a number of them from each president equal to the number of years they were in office from each term[11]. This sampling method provided a control for idiosyncratic tendencies in discretionary speech making among the presidents and variability in the political context which may have had an effect on the number of speeches given during their tenure. Out of 302 Major Speeches delivered during this time period, 72 (23%) were incorporated into my sample for subsequent content analysis[12]. Table 1 provides an overview of the sample with the number of speeches delivered by each president along with the percentage of each speech type delivered. Because Nomination Acceptance speeches and Inaugural Addresses are only delivered once a term, they are obviously a small percentage of the total sample compared to Major Speeches and State of the Union Addresses.

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[9] I have excluded speeches which were written but not delivered in person during this time period. There were only a handful of State of the Union speeches which fell into this category and I wanted to avoid any potential confounds associated with a difference between the two delivery formats (Tulis, 1987). For similar reasons, where there was a difference between the written speech and what was delivered in person, I rely upon the spoken text for content analysis.

[10] Lyn Ragsdale's "Vital Statistics on the Presidency" (1998) provides a comprehensive listing of all Major Speeches; however, the current edition only extends through the George W Bush Presidency. The author was gracious enough to provide me with a current listing that includes Barack Obama's first term in office from a forthcoming edition. Her listing was itself originally obtained from successive volumes of the Public Papers of the President.

[11] i.e. I sampled three speeches from John F. Kennedy, four speeches from Ronald Reagan's first term and four more speeches from his second term.

[12] The number of Major Speeches originally assembled and coded was 81 (23%), however, because public opinion data was a critical control variable for subsequent analysis, 9 cases were excluded. These primarily come from Franklin Roosevelt's first two terms.

Table 1: Number of Speeches Delivered by Type and President

President	Major		Nomination		Inaugural		State/Union		Total	
Franklin Roosevelt	5	6.9%	2	9.5%	2	11.1%	6	8.7%	15	8.3%
Harry Truman	7	9.7%	1	4.8%	1	5.6%	5	7.2%	14	7.8%
Dwight Eisenhower	8	11.1%	2	9.5%	2	11.1%	7	10.1%	19	10.6%
John Kennedy	3	4.2%	1	4.8%	1	5.6%	3	4.3%	8	4.4%
Lyndon Johnson	5	6.9%	1	4.8%	1	5.6%	6	8.7%	13	7.2%
Richard Nixon	6	8.3%	2	9.5%	2	11.1%	4	5.8%	14	7.8%
Gerald Ford	2	2.8%	0	0%	0	0%	3	4.3%	5	2.8%
Jimmy Carter	4	5.6%	2	9.5%	1	5.6%	3	4.3%	10	5.6%
Ronald Reagan	8	11.1%	2	9.5%	2	11.1%	8	11.6%	20	11.1%
George H.W. Bush	4	5.6%	2	9.5%	1	5.6%	4	5.8%	11	6.1%
Bill Clinton	8	11.1%	2	9.5%	2	11.1%	8	11.6%	20	11.1%
George W. Bush	8	11.1%	2	9.5%	2	11.1%	8	11.6%	20	11.1%
Barack Obama	4	5.6%	2	9.5%	1	5.6%	4	5.8%	11	6.1%
Total	**72**	**40%**	**21**	**11.7%**	**18**	**10%**	**69**	**38.3%**	**180**	**100%**

Notes: Figures represent the number of speeches delivered by each president and the percentage of that type of speech delivered by each president.

Two undergraduates from the Rutgers Political Science Program were hired to code the speeches in the summer of 2014. They were instructed to identify complete sentences which included civil religious rhetoric: defined as any reference to the American identity, meaning, or purpose in the world. This included discussions of what it means to be an American, what American fundamental values are and what they hold sacred, references to the American founding or other important moments in American history, and discussions of the divine nature of the American experience or God's blessings[13]. Although the coders were not restricted to only identifying passages with certain keywords, the following list was provided to aid in distinguishing civil religious passages: "Sacred, God, Divine, Providence, Covenant, Consecrate, Destiny, Identity, Purpose, Spirit, Values, Ideals, Truths, Principles, Forefathers, Ancestors, Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Historical Figures (e.g. Lincoln, Washington, Roosevelt,

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[13] While discussions of how God has guided the U.S. or has intervened on our behalf were included, the typical end of speech refrain that "May God Bless America" was excluded. This was done both to provide a conservative accounting of civil religious rhetoric and because asking for God's blessing (religion) is different from arguing that God has actually blessed America (Civil Religion). This is consistent with Schonhardt-Bailey et al (2012) who argue that phrases such as "God bless America" or "God bless you" are "vacuous" and less substantive usages of "God".

Reagan), Historical Events (e.g. Revolution, Constitutional Convention, Great Depression). This coding criterion is consistent with Schonhardt-Bailey et al.'s (2012) computer-assisted content analysis that sought terms that represent the "common denominator" and "fundamental basics for civil religious rhetoric": "mission, sacrifice, destiny, chosen, freedom, divine/providence/spirit/God, American as an international example."

After refereeing their work[14], I calculated a continuous, interval level variable that represents the number of civil religious words as a percentage of total words in each speech (CRWP). This will serve as my dependent variable for all subsequent analyses performed in this project. The distribution of CRWP (Figure 1) illustrates that it accounted for an average of 15% of each speech in the sample and ranged from 0% to nearly 70%[15]. However, we can also see that CRWP is a bounded variable (0-1) with a non-normal[16], positively skewed distribution[17]. Several data transformations (log, square root, and arcsine) were attempted to correct for these issues but all failed to improve the normality of the data[18]. Although the nature of the data must be kept in mind when evaluating the results of this study, the robustness of OLS against non-normality with a sufficiently large sample size provides us with a reasonable level of confidence in the forthcoming analysis.

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[14] The inter-coder reliability of their work was a 90% Agreement and .4 Krippendorf's Alpha

[15] An analysis of CRWP revealed 4 potential extreme outliers which ranged from 57% - 68.9% of their respective speeches. After reviewing the data, it was decided to retain these outliers because no errors were made in the coding and there was nothing contextually abnormal about their occurrence.

[16] A Shapiro-Wilk test of normality failed to reject the null hypothesis of non-normality with a test statistic of .802.

[17] Skewness (1.839; Std. Error .181) and Kurtosis (3.423; Std. Error .360) test statistics fell outside of the normal range.

[18] Alternative models (Poisson and Tobit) were considered, but ultimately rejected because they are not appropriate for the type of data analyzed here.

Figure 1: Civil Religious Word Percentage Distribution

Mean =.14998
Std. Dev. =.138891
N =180
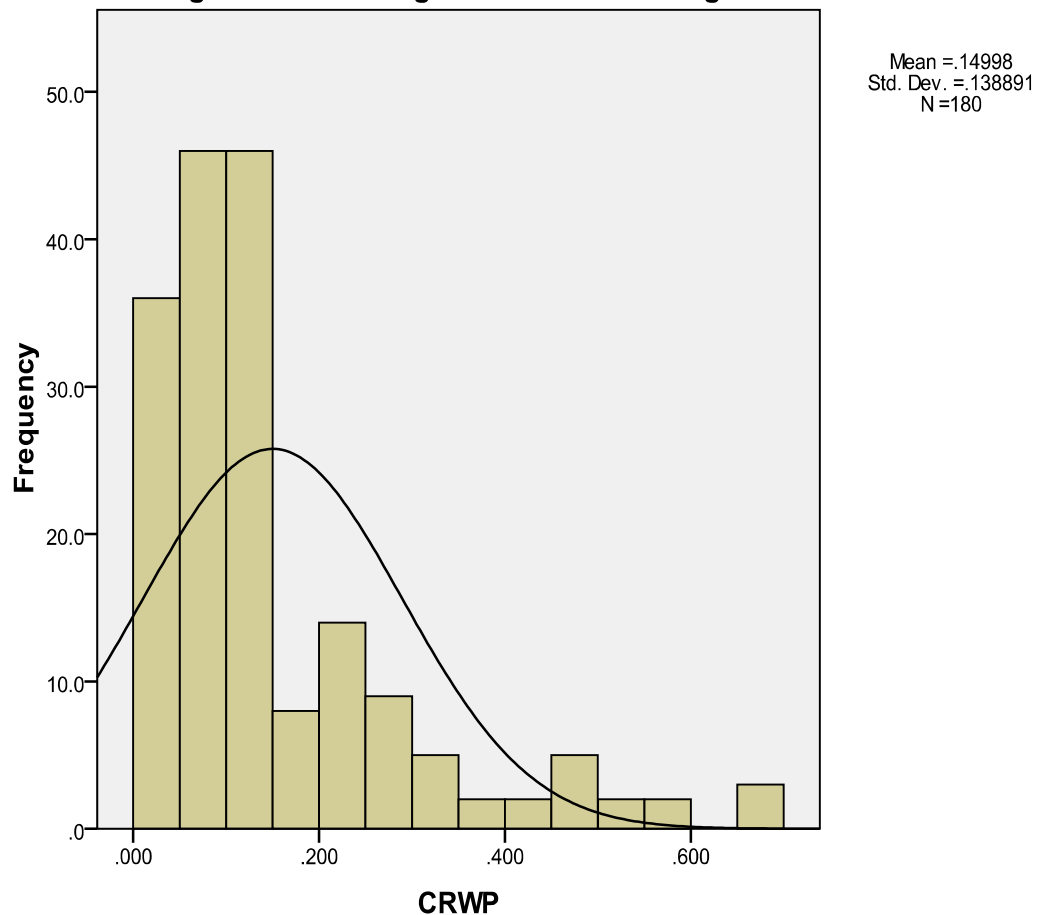
A series of independent variables were created to evaluate the merits of my

hypotheses; many of which are rather standard and straight-forward for this type of

research. To control for unmeasured idiosyncrasies of each particular president and

partisan influence over rhetoric, a categorical variable (PRES) and binary variable (REP)

were created (respectively). Hypothesis 1 states that the frequency of civil religious

rhetoric will vary according to the type of speech delivered and required the creation of a

series of binary variables to represent State of the Union Addresses (SOTU), Inaugural

Addresses (INA), Nomination Acceptance Speeches (NOM) and Major Speeches (MAJ).

To evaluate the relationship between CRWP and election year politics (Hypothesis 6), I

created binary variables to represent whether a speech was delivered during a presidential

election year (PRESYEAR) or a midterm election year (MIDYEAR). Hypothesis 7

suggests that presidents may rely upon civil religious rhetoric to a greater extent in their

first term of office compared to the second and a binary variable representing the latter

was created (SECOND TERM). Finally, to evaluate whether the age of heightened

polarization among political elites has had an effect upon a president's reliance upon civil

religious rhetoric (Hypothesis 9), a binary variable was created (IP[19]) that included the

following presidents: Carter, Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, Bush II, and Obama.

    The remaining independent variables utilized in this study were chosen after

considered comparisons were made among several alternatives (footnotes provide

explanations for these decisions). To investigate the link between war and civil religious

rhetoric (Hypothesis 3), a binary variable (WAR) was created to represent the presence of

an active military conflict.[20] Economic performance (Hypothesis 4) is represented by the

percentage change in the seasonally adjusted gross domestic product from the previous

data point (GDP).[21] Hypothesis 5 will be evaluated with survey data on Presidential Job

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[19] "IP" refers to Kernell's (2007) discussion of "Institutionalized Pluralism" which I consider to be a factor contributing to heightened polarization among political elites and whose time frame is also consistent with Rhodes (2014) research that found this time frame to be a significant predictor of Bipartisan Posturing.

[20] This variable excluded conflicts in which there were there was a relatively small number of ground troops involved and/or where the mission was primarily peace-keeping (i.e. Lebanon, 1982; Somalia, 1993; Bosnia, 1994; and Kosovo, 1999). The rationale for these exclusions was a desire to limit this variable to conflicts which were likely to significantly influence presidential speech making because of widespread public interest. The conflicts included were: World War II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Invasion of Grenada, Invasion of Panama, Gulf War, Invasion of Haiti, and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Alternative variables such as Active Duty Military Personnel (excluding National Guard and Reserves) for each year and Percentage change in Active Duty Military Personnel from the last year were found to be less effective in the models presented in this study.

[21] Data obtained from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (US Department of Commerce) (www.bea.gov/iTable/index nipa.cfm). These figures reflect the percentage change from the previous data point; seasonally adjusted annual rates from 1929-1946 and quarterly rates from 1947-2013. Alternative economic indicators such as the Unemployment Rate, Consumer Price Index, and Income Shares for the top 10% (proxy for inequality) were considered but found to be less effective in the models presented in this study.

Approval[22] (APP). Finally, to investigate the influence of the governing context between

the president and congress[23] (Hypothesis 8a/8b), a categorical variable (DIVISION) and a

series of binary variables were created to represent the type of governing context: UNITY

represented a condition whereby the majority of both houses of Congress were off the

same party as the president; HSOPP represented a condition when either the House or

Senate was controlled by the president's partisan opposition (hereafter referred to as

"Partially Divided Government"); and NOUNITY representing "Divided Government"

where both houses of Congress are controlled by the president's partisan opposition[24].

Table 2 presents summary statistics of the variables included in this analysis. We can

see that presidential job approval had a mean of 57% with an average 3% growth in GDP.

Nearly half of the speeches were delivered by Republicans, under conditions of United

Government, and in the presence of an active military conflict. Half of the speeches were

delivered by presidents in the age of bi-partisan posturing/institutionalized pluralism.

Election year speeches comprised about half of the sample and nearly 40% of speeches

were delivered during the second term in office. As Figure 2 illustrates, we can also see

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[22] Polls were selected as close to the speech date as possible but no more than 6 weeks prior. The vast majority of these statistics were gathered from the Gallup Poll archives at the Roper Center IPoll Database. (http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/CFIDE/roper/presidential/webroot/presidential_rating.cfm) In those cases where Job Approval data was not available (i.e. first month in office) Election results were used as a proxy. In other instances where polls were not available, data was gather from Favorability questions or "Who would you vote for questions". Alternative variables such as a Presidential Job Approval to Disapproval Ratio and a Percentage Monthly Change in Job Approval Rating were evaluated but found to be less effective for the models presented in this study.

[23] Variables representing the number of Democrats/Republicans in the House and Senate, along with Poole-Rosenthal data on Differences in Party Means in the House and Senate were found to be less efficient in these models.

[24] Data reflects Election Day results and classifies all 3rd parties as "not of the same party" as the president regardless of ideology. Nomination Acceptance speeches reflect a measurement of the governing context if the candidate were president when the speech was delivered. Data obtained from: History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, "Party Divisions of the House of Representatives*," http://history.house.gov/Institution/Party-Divisions/Party-Divisions/ and Senate Historical Office, "Party Divisions in the Senate, 1789-Present," http://www.senate.gov/pagelayout/history/one_item_and_teasers/partydiv.htm (January 08, 2014)

that the employment of civil religion has been highly variable with no discernible pattern over the time period.

Table 2: Summary Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Freq.	Freq./Total
Civil Religious Word Percentage	.149	.138	0	.689	-	
Approval	.570	.136	.260	.890	-	-
Gross Domestic Product (Percentage Change)	.029	.050	-.019	.283	-	-
Republican	-	-	-	-	89	49.4%
United Government	-	-	-	-	84	46.7%
Partially Divided Government	-	-	-	-	28	15.6%
Divided Government	-	-	-	-	68	37.8%
IP	-	-	-	-	92	50.8%
Second Term	-	-	-	-	70	38.7%
Midterm Election	-	-	-	-	35	19.3%
Presidential Election	-	-	-	-	54	29.8%
War	-	-	-	-	84	46.7%

Notes: N Cases = 180 for all variables

Figure 2: Civil Religious Word Percentage Distrubtion Over Time
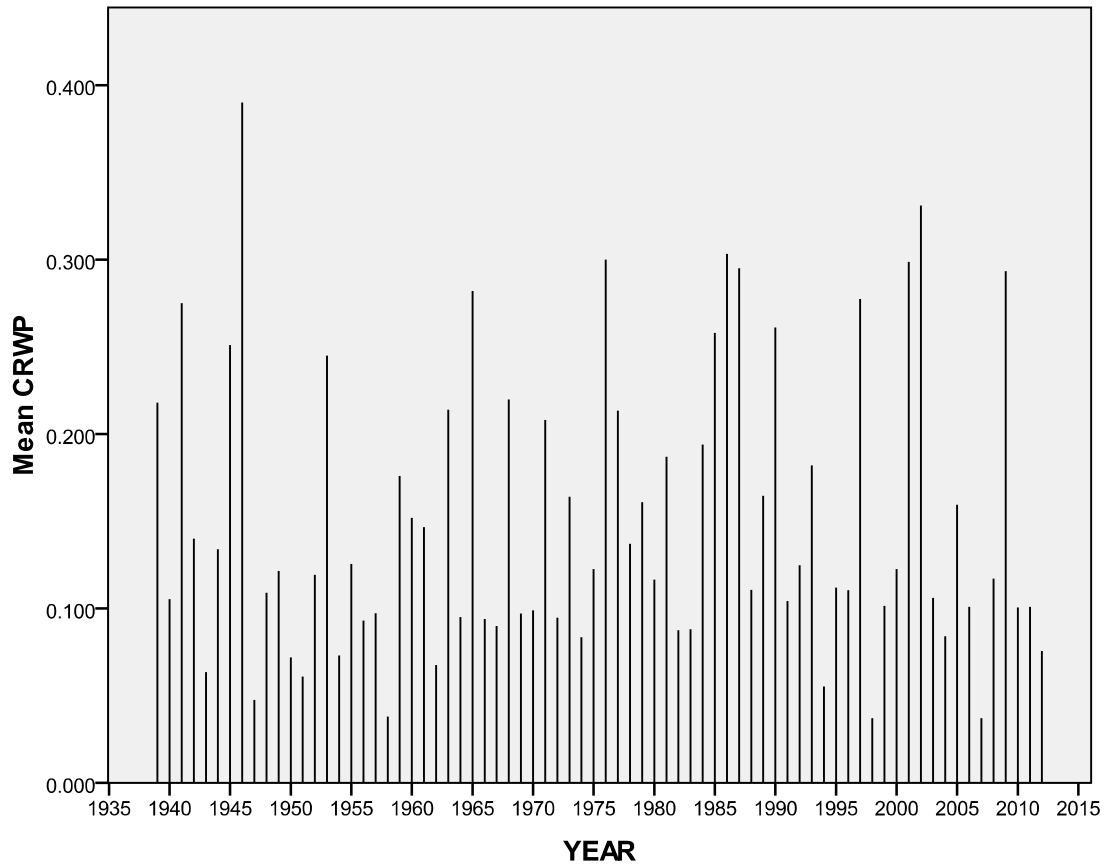
Results

Several linear regression analyses[25] where speeches were combined and considered in isolation (Table 3) were conducted to evaluate the merits of the various hypotheses advanced in this study. Because of the inherently small sample sizes for Inaugural Addresses and Nomination Acceptance speeches, and the large number of variables that would be included in those models, they have been excluded from this analysis.

Table 3: Regression Predicting CRWP

Variable	All-Speech B/(SE)	Major B/(SE)	SOTU B/(SE)
(Constant)	.054 (.051)	.063 (.099)	.039 (.052)
REP	.032 (.018)+	.036 (.038)	.032 (.017)+
PRES	.002 (.006)	.009 (.012)	-.006 (.006)
SECOND TERM	.008 (.018)	.036 (.034)	.000 (.017)
MIDYEAR	.021 (.022)	.029 (.038)	.015 (.019)
PRESYEAR	.003 (.022)	-.010 (.041)	.014 (.018)
IP	.000 (.043)	-.074 (.086)	.055 (.040)
APP	.085 (.062)	.087 (.121)	.083 (.063)
WAR	-.008 (.019)	-.028 (.039)	-.010 (.018)
GDP	.099 (.194)	-.349 (.388)	.435 (.181)*
DIVISION	-.074 (.029)*	-.055 (.023)*	.015 (.010)
SOTU	-.356 (.038)***	-	-
NOM	-.275 (.050)***	-	-
MAJ	-.326 (.038)***	-	-
DIVISION*NOM	.045 (.038)	-	-
DIVISION*SOTU	.084 (.032)**	-	-
DIVISION*MAJ	.034 (.032)	-	-
Adj. R^2	.436	-.019	.165
N	179	71	68

*Inaugural Speeches and the interaction between Inaugural Speeches and Division were excluded variables in the All-Speech Model. Significance levels are presented as: +<.1, *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. Division was coded as: 0 = United Government, 1 = Partially Divided Government, 2 = Divided Government.*

The results illustrate that most of the action in these models centers around the role of speech type and division (and the interaction between them). Compared to

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[25] Despite concerns about potential serial correlation among the residuals because of the time lag between the data points, the Durbin-Watson test for each model are considered within an acceptable range to reject the null hypothesis of serial correlation. Durbin-Watson Scores: All Speech = 2.179; Major = 2.400; Nomination = 2.260; Inaugural = 2.673; State of the Union = 1.669.

Inaugural Addresses (reference group in the All Speech Model), the other speech types featured significantly less civil religious language. Not only does the presence of partially divided and divided government have a significant effect upon CRWP in the All Speech Model, but so too does the interaction between Division and State of the Union Addresses. These finding illustrates that while established rhetorical norms for particular speeches may be important as it relates to civil religion (as evidenced by the differences between speech types), they are subject to modification depending on the governing context. These results provide initial confirmation for the assertion that presidents are less likely to rely on civil religion during times of partisan congressional opposition (Hypothesis 8b) and more broadly, initial support for the strategic rhetoric thesis. However, when examining the isolated models we can see that Division failed to achieve statistical significance for State of the Union Addresses and that it had a positive rather than negative effect on civil religious rhetoric. On the other hand, Division was found to have a significant negative effect for Major speeches.

While these interactions will be explored in greater detail in the next section, for the moment it is worth remarking on the lack of significance for the vast majority of the hypothesized relationships. Term of office (Hypothesis 7), election year politics (Hypothesis 6), public opinion of the president (Hypothesis 5), and the presence of war (Hypothesis 3) all failed to register a significant effect on CRWP in the All-Speech model and when examining the speech types in isolation. (The latter finding provides tentative support for the Habitual Rhetoric Thesis – Hypothesis 2). It also

appears that the age of Bi-Partisan Posturing/Institutional Pluralism (Hypothesis 9) had no significant effect upon the frequency of civil religious rhetoric[26].

Evaluations of the remaining variables/hypotheses produced more mixed results. While economic growth (Hypothesis 4) was found to have a significant, positive effect upon CRWP in the State of the Union model, it was not a significant predictor in any of the other models. It is also worth noting that the president's party identification nearly achieved a positive statistically significant relationship to CRWP in the All-Speech (.87) and State of the Union Model (.63) but not in the others. Collectively, these results suggest that further examination is warranted before conclusively supporting or rejecting these particular hypotheses.

Evaluating Interactive Effects of Speech Type and Governing Context

Because speech type and the governing context were significant predictors in the All-Speech model and have varying levels of significance and effects for the speeches in isolation, it behooves us to examine them in greater detail. Table 4 provides summary statistics for CRWP and each type of governing context broken down by speech type. Because GDP was found to be a significant factor for State of the Union Addresses it is also included here and in subsequent models for that speech type. While Inaugural Addresses tallied the highest average of CWRP at 41%, the other speech types had a mean between 10% and 16%. The majority of all speech types with the exception of the State of the Union in this sample were delivered under conditions of united government

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[26] It should be noted that this particular relationship may warrant further analysis since it is measured rather crudely in this study. One could imagine more nuanced data on the varying levels of polarization within each particular Congress (i.e. Poole-Rosenthal Data Set) providing a more refined test on this potential relationship.

with nearly twice as many occurring under divided government than partially divided

government.

Table 4: Summary Statistics of Variables by Speech Type

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	Freq.	Freq./Total
Major Speeches						
Civil Religious Word Percentage	.106	.130	0	.689	-	-
United Government	-	-	-	-	38	52.8%
Partially Divided Government	-	-	-	-	12	16.7%
Divided Government	-	-	-	-	26	36.1%
Nomination Speeches						
Civil Religious Word Percentage	.161	.081	.048	.349	-	-
United Government	-	-	-	-	11	52.4%
Partially Divided Government	-	-	-	-	3	14.3%
Divided Government	-	-	-	-	7	33.3%
Inaugural Addresses						
Civil Religious Word Percentage	.415	.143	.104	.653	-	-
United Government	-	-	-	-	10	55.6%
Partially Divided Government	-	-	-	-	3	16.7%
Divided Government	-	-	-	-	5	27.8%
State of the Union Addresses						
Civil Religious Word Percentage	.122	.067	.014	.295	-	-
Gross Domestic Product (Percentage Change)	.031	.052	-.019	.283	-	-
United Government	-	-	-	-	29	42.0%
Partially Divided Government	-	-	-	-	10	14.5%
Divided Government	-	-	-	-	30	43.5%

Notes: Major Speeches N = 72, Nomination Acceptances Speeches N = 21, Inaugural addresses N = 18, State of the Union addresses N = 69.

    To better understand the interactive effects of speech type and governing context, I ran a series of Analyses of Variance models that compare the prevalence of civil religious language between speech types while holding the governing context constant[27]. Table 5a and 5b presents the results[28] of such an analysis and illustrates that Inaugural Addresses feature significantly more civil religious rhetoric than other speeches under each type of governing context. Under conditions of united government, Nomination Acceptances speeches were also found to exhibit significantly more CRWP than State of the Union

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[27] The results presented here exclude REP, GDP, and WAR as covariates even though they were shown to have varying levels of significance in some of the previous regression models. A comparison of ANCOVAs with and without these covariates revealed no substantive differences except to say that the models without covariates had a higher Adj. R^2.

[28] Levene's F-Tests were found to be non-significant in each model: (Unified F=1.679, Sig = .178) (Part Divided F = 1.160, Sig = .345) (Divided F = .833, Sig = .481)

Speeches. However, under conditions of divided government, we see that in additional to these differences, Major speeches also have significantly less CRWP than Nominations Acceptance speeches and State of the Union Addresses.   Collectively, these results suggest that the governing context is an important predictor of civil religious rhetoric.

The estimated marginal means from the preceding analysis also hint at potentially important differences within speech types according to the governing context. Tables 6a and 6b present the results[29] of a series of Analyses of Variance/Covariance which compare the marginal means of each type of speech under these different conditions[30]. Because GDP was found to have a significant effect upon CRWP in the State of the Union Regression pretests (Table 3), it was included as a covariate in that particular model.

Table 5a: Estimated Marginal Means of CRWP – Comparing Speech Types within Governing Context

| Speech Type | Marginal Means | | |
	Unified	Part Divided	Divided
MAJ	.129 (.019)	.134 (.040)	.065 (.014)
NOM	.186 (.034)	.138 (.079)	.134 (.027)
INA	.443 (.035)	.520 (.079)	.298 (.032)
SOTU	.107 (.021)	.125 (.043)	.137 (.013)
N	84	28	68

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means.

[29] Levene's F-Tests were found to be non-significant in each model: (Major F=3.024, Sig = .055) (Nomination F = .717, Sig = .502) (Inaugural F = .551, Sig = .558) (SOTU F = 1.220, Sig = .302).
[30] The results presented here exclude REP as covariates even though it was shown to have varying levels of significance in some of the previous regression models. A comparison of ANCOVAs with and without these covariates revealed no substantive differences except to say that the models without covariates had a higher Adj. R^2. However, GDP was included as a covariate in the State of the Union model as it was shown to be a significant factor in the previous regression.

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government featured nearly significantly (p = .061) less CWRP than those delivered under united government. Similarly, Inaugural Addresses were found to have significantly higher CWRP under partially divided than divided government and nearly significantly (p = .053) more under united than divided government. Collectively, this adds further support to the contention that presidents avoid relying on civil religion during times of heightened partisan congressional opposition (Hypothesis 8b). Conversely, when controlling for economic performance (GDP), State of the Union Addresses delivered under conditions of divided government had significantly more CWRP than those of united government. This finding provides support for the classical assumption that civil religion would be deployed to unify the nation and overcome political opposition (Hypothesis 8a).

Even though many of these comparisons were not statistically significant, the pattern they present is worth noting and is consistent with these contradictory findings. Civil religious rhetoric appears to decline in Nomination Acceptances speeches as partisan opposition in Congress to the President increases; while the opposite pattern takes shape among State of the Union Addresses. Even more interesting is that civil religious rhetoric is at its peak during times of partially divided government for Inaugural Addresses and Major speeches but at its lowest under divided government.

Discussion

So what have we learned about the employment of civil religion by modern presidents? First, the frequency of civil religious rhetoric is not simply a habitual aspect of the institutionalized norms of presidential speech making. Although differences between speeches exist, the variance in civil religious rhetoric within speech types across

different types of governing contexts suggests that there is a strategic calculation. Clearly, presidents recognize that this type of rhetoric is more or less useful under different contexts.

However, untangling those contexts is more complicated. We have seen that the deployment of civil religious rhetoric is not generally influenced by the presence of war, economic decline, or public opinion; nor does it fluctuate based on the electoral cycle. This suggests that in this sample of speeches civil religion is not utilized as a means of responding to crises, boosting public support, or stimulating a political campaign. Instead, it appears to be employed solely in response to the partisan relationship between Congress and the White House; which implies that it is a rhetorical tool for legislative conflict.

But in service to this legislative conflict, it remains unclear whether civil religious rhetoric has been strategically deployed to build alliances or burn political bridges. Because civil religious rhetoric was employed less under conditions of divided government for all speech types (with the exception of State of the Union Addresses) we can tentatively conclude that its purpose is not to build bridges with the political opposition. If this conventional interpretation were true, then it is precisely under these conditions that civil religious rhetoric would be at its peak. However, because this was in fact the case with State of the Union Addresses, we must ask ourselves what it is about that type of speech that violates the broader trend? Future theoretical and empirical work to address this question is clearly warranted. Equally perplexing is that civil religious rhetoric was at its peak under conditions of partially divided government for both Inaugural Addresses and Major speeches. While the motivations of these presidents are

unclear, perhaps it is the case that under these conditions they believe that employing this rhetoric will serve to both rally their base and put sufficient pressure on the opposing house of congress to accede to their agenda and policies.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to both investigate and provide a causal accounting of the factors which have historically influenced the frequency of civil religious rhetoric in presidential speeches. Despite some mixed results and ambiguous conclusions, it is clear that civil religious rhetoric is deployed strategically as a function of the legislative battle between the White House and Congress. While these findings should clearly be of interest to presidential historians and students of civil religion, they could also serve as a starting point for investigating similar phenomenon among legislators, interests groups, and social movement actors. If civil religion is conceptualized as having a polarizing effect, such information regarding when it has been employed by such actors would be invaluable in this time of political gridlock and ideological hostility where further polarization is a detriment to all concerned.

Chapter 4 – Civil Religious Framing

In previous chapters I argued that civil religion should be conceptualized as a cultural tool that may be manipulated and deployed to legitimize ideology. The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate upon this relationship by postulating a model of civil religious framing that will be evaluated through a survey experiment. I argue that because civil religious framing weds notions of the American identity, meaning, and purpose in the world to ideological principles, the effects on public opinion will differ from typical framing models. More specifically, I hypothesize that rather than simply reinforcing ideological predispositions, civil religious framing will exacerbate these tendencies, resulting in higher levels of polarization.

Although civil religious scholarship dates back to Rousseau and experienced a revival in the latter half of the 20th century, no serious empirical effort has been made to determine whether it actually has a significant effect upon public opinion (or is merely superfluous) and if so, whether it acts as a unifying or polarizing force. Despite a multitude of case studies purporting to illustrate that Civil Religious discourse has been utilized by Presidents (Adams, 1987; Gorski, 2011; Pierard & Linder, 1988; Roof, 2009) and other social movements (Williams & Alexander, 1994), these accounts don't tell us whether it is *actually* a useful resource to be manipulated by political actors. As Cristi notes, "scant attention has been given to the ideological divide which is likely to develop when values are interpreted by different groups in terms of their own political interests and agendas" (Cristi, 1997). Does this rhetoric have the capacity to influence public opinion? If so, will it serve to unify the populace or further polarize ideological warriors?

This question acquires particular relevance at a time when reaching consensus on most policy issues has become a herculean task due to the growing ideological divide in the halls of Congress and around coffee tables throughout the nation. Operating in this context, political actors often rely upon civil religious rhetoric to unite the polity around a common identity and purpose such that their preferred political action appears to transcend these ideological differences. In his 2012 nomination address, President Barack Obama prefaced his call for more government intervention to address issues of poverty and inequality with the following:

> As Americans, we believe we are endowed by our Creator with certain, inalienable rights, rights that no man or government can take away. We insist on personal responsibility, and we celebrate individual initiative. We're not entitled to success; we have to earn it. We honor the strivers, the dreamers, the risk takers, the entrepreneurs who have always been the driving force behind our free enterprise system, the greatest engine of growth and prosperity that the world's ever known. But we also believe in something called citizenship. Citizenship: a word at the very heart of our founding, a word at the very essence of our democracy, the idea that this country only works when we accept certain obligations to one another and to future generations (Obama, 2012).

In this excerpt, President Obama has invoked civil religious themes to assert the existence of citizen obligations; which are subsequently relied upon to legitimize his ideological platform. Conversely, his opponent in that election, Governor Mitt Romney, drew upon similar civil religious themes to legitimize his plan to encourage economic growth by reducing the role of government:

> America is rightly heralded as the greatest experiment in self-governance in world history. We are all here today because of a startling conviction that free individuals could join together to decide their fate and that more freedom made us all stronger. Our example – and commitment – to freedom has changed the world. But along with the genius of our Declaration of Independence, our Constitution, and our Bill of Rights, is the equal genius of our economic system. Our Founding Fathers endeavored to create a moral and just society like no other in history, and

out of that grew a moral and just economic system the likes of which the world had never seen. Our freedom, what it means to be an American, has been defined and sustained by the liberating power of the free enterprise system (Romney, 2012).

Both men aimed to use this rhetoric to unite the nation such that their platforms were not viewed as simple reflections of ideology, but rather as consistent with what it means to be an American. However, most pundits have argued that the 2012 presidential election only served to further polarize our political system and foster resentment between liberals and conservatives. While there are many reasons for why this may be the case, and while we cannot know for sure whether such actors were aware of the consequences of their rhetoric, this chapter will illustrate that the employment of civil religion serves to exacerbate ideological polarization on policy opinions. In the pages that follow I will review the literature on political framing and then incorporate those insights with civil religion to postulate a series of theoretical expectations. I will then provide a detailed account of the survey experiment conducted and its results.

Ideological Framing and Civil Religion

As an abstract principle, we know that opinions can be dramatically influenced by the manner in which information is presented. Perhaps the most cited illustration of this proposition is Tversky & Khaneman's (1981) disease outbreak experiment[1] where differences in question wording led participants to support different responses with the exact same outcome. One prominent school of thought in the political communications

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[1] Participants in the study were asked to state their preference over alternative government responses to a hypothetical disease outbreak. Presented with the option of "saving" 200 people out of 600 or "not saving" 400 people out of 600, 72% of respondents choose the former despite both options producing the same results (Tversky & Khaneman, 1981).

literature posits that, with a requisite amount of political knowledge[2], framing recipients will express opinions that reflect considerations which happen to be "on the top of their head" (Zaller, 1992). Accordingly, the effectiveness of a frame is theorized to be a function of the extent to which Availability and Accessibility mental processes can be engaged. The former reflects the extent to which an individual understands the considerations raised in the frame while the latter refers to the capacity of the receiver to retrieve that information when called upon to provide an opinion. (Chong and Druckman, 2007) Following this logic, it is reasonable to assume that civil religious frames (which reflect a set of beliefs and symbols broadly shared by the public and constitutive of the national identity), would be quite effective given the ease with which they could satisfy these requirements for comprehension and information retrieval.

However, this "Passive Receiver" (Brewer, 2001) model of framing has come under criticism for ignoring the potential for recipients to engage applicability processes whereby they evaluate whether the considerations raised are appropriate (Brewer, 2001, 2002; Brewer & Gross, 2005; Druckman, 2004; Chong & Druckman, 2007, 2010). Research on value frames[3] has shown that individuals are not only capable of rejecting the frames provided (Brewer, 2001; Barreto, Redlawsk & Tolbert, 2009), but that they can use the values provided to oppose the stated goal of the frame in favor of an alternative position (Brewer, 2002). These applicability processes are theorized to occur when the individual is sufficiently motivated to expend the energy required to engage in

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[2] Higher levels of political knowledge have been found to assist information comprehension (Availability) and retrieval (Accessibility) because individuals are more likely to understand the frames and their implications along with having more experience utilizing these concepts (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Zaller, 1992).

[3] Value frames are defined as frames which present one position on an issue as right by linking it to a core value (Brewer, 2001). Core values may in turn be defined as "desirable modes of behavior or end-states

these more taxing mental operations. While Chong and Druckman (2007, 2010)

convincingly demonstrate that such processes occur when participants are exposed to

competing frames[4], Brewer (2002) found that participants in a non-competitive framing

context utilized the values provided in conflicting ways; thus suggesting that applicability

is at work.

When applicability processes are engaged ("Active Receiver" experimental models)

we can expect a variety of potential confounds to emerge which may influence the

effectiveness of a frame. Source credibility[5] (Druckman, 2001), political predispositions

(Brewer, 2001; Cohen, 2003), and relationship to consensus values (Feldman, 1988; Shen

& Edwards, 2005; Shemer et al, 2012) are all posited to be critical in the development of

"strong frames" (Chong & Druckman, 2007). Although there is great variability in the

extent to which the public can correctly identify the ideological undertones of a political

goal, value, or policy (Converse, 1964), Petersen et al (2010) demonstrate that political

parties develop a value reputation over time which may make it easier for the public to

recognize them even when the partisanship of the messenger is not clear. Similarly,

Graham et al (2009) found that ideological groups vary in their responses to different

values. Thus, we can expect that acceptance or rejection of the frame will largely depend

upon the receiver's political predispositions when source credibility and consensus values

remain constant.

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that has a transcendental quality to it, guiding actions, attitudes, judgments, and comparisons across
specific objects and situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate goals." (Doherty, 2008)
[4] Chong and Druckman's experiments (2007, 2010) show that exposure to strong competing frames tends
to moderate public opinion.
[5] Source credibility reflects the extent to which participants believe that (1) the messenger has knowledge
about the issue and (2) the messenger can be trusted to reveal what they know (Druckman, 2001).

The literature thus far presented suggests that when applicability processes are engaged, frame effectiveness is highly contingent upon the consistency of the frame with the ideological predispositions of the receiver. Accepting the frame (due to ideological consistency) can be expected to produce the anticipated effect (i.e. public opinion moves in the direction intended by the frame's creator), while rejection results in a countervailing outcome. Under either condition, the receiver is expected to register an opinion that conforms to their ideological predispositions (i.e. liberals reject the conservative frame and register typical levels of opposition to the associated conservative policy; and vice versa.)

However, I theorize that civil religious frames differ in that those exposed not only consider its consistency with ideological predispositions but also whether the frame serves to legitimize or delegitimize those predispositions. These frames aim to engage a participant's sense of national identity and wed them to a particular ideological policy goal; such that ideological debates are recast as a battle for the soul and future of America. Lipset argues that because America was founded upon "core values[6]" our identity as Americans requires an ideological commitment; "It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American" (Lipset, 1996). Civil religious framing goes beyond a simple recitation of these core political values by incorporating an explicit connection of them to our history and national identity; and an implicit (and sometimes explicit) belief that adherence to them is a primary factor in explaining the success of the nation in a global, historical context (i.e. notions of American Exceptionalism and a Divine Covenant).

When delivered by a known partisan or reflecting a recognizable ideological orientation, those who share that party affiliation/ideology may be expected to rally behind the call for action with more vigor and conviction than before given that the policy battle has now evolved into a conflict over the national identity and its future. The civil religious frame has not only legitimized their ideological predispositions, it has also increased the salience of the policy debate. Conversely, partisan/ideological opponents can be expected to more forcefully reject the proposed action because acceptance would indicate that their previous policy preferences were not conducive to the American identity. Such conditions produce an existential crisis whose resolution would require abandoning long standing ideological predispositions; an uncommon occurrence in American politics. (Campbell et al, 1960) Instead, opposition is likely to be accentuated by those ideologically predisposed against the frame.

Civil religious framing is therefore postulated to exacerbate political differences in public opinion beyond the effects of purely ideological framing. When employed in such a way that applicability processes are engaged, it is expected that ideological predispositions will serve as a key independent variable in determining subsequent public opinion (as it does in typical ideological framing). However, (in contrast to typical ideological framing) evaluations of the civil religious frame will also serve as a partial mediating variable between these ideological predispositions and public opinion; meaning that while frame evaluation and ideological predispositions have their own direct effects, the latter also has an effect upon the former. Formally stated:

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[6] Core values may in turn be defined as "desirable modes of behavior or end-states that has a transcendental quality to it, guiding actions, attitudes, judgments, and comparisons across specific objects and situations and beyond immediate goals to more ultimate goals." (Doherty, 2008)

Hypothesis 10: Ideological predispositions will have a significant effect upon the acceptance or rejection of the civil religious frame and subsequent policy evaluations. Evaluations of the civil religious frame will serve as a partial mediator between these ideological predisposition and policy evaluation.

Hypothesis 11: Those who are exposed to and agree with the civil religious frame will exhibit a significantly higher frequency of generally positive evaluations of the proposed policy (i.e. "very positive" and "somewhat positive") compared to the control group.

Hypothesis 12: Those who are exposed to and disagree with the civil religious frame will exhibit a significantly higher frequency of generally negative evaluations of the proposed policy (i.e. "very negative" and "somewhat negative") compared to the control group.

Hypothesis 13: Exposure to the civil religious frame will significantly increase ideological polarization on evaluations of the proposed policy compared to the control group. Liberals and Conservatives in the treatment groups will exhibit more extreme opinions on the policy than their counterparts in the control group and the opinion gap between them will be larger in the treatment group than the control group.

Data and Methods

The experiment was embedded within an Eagleton Institute Telephone poll of 1191 New Jersey registered voters conducted between May 31 and June 4, 2012. The survey had a land line and cell phone response rate of 16.1% and 12.6% respectively. The Civil Religion treatment and policy evaluation questions were presented near the end of the survey after a series of demographic and ideological identification questions[7]. Table 1 illustrates that the unweighted mean of the sample is white, female, in their 30s, and with some college education. It was also somewhat religious (indicating they attended

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[7] For the purposes of this experimental analysis, I have chosen to exclude Party Identification as an independent variable. Although Party Identification and Ideology are similar constructs who are often highly correlated, some questions are better addressed through one over the other. In this case, I felt that the text in this experiment were more consistent with ideology since they provide no explicit partisan cues and aim to influence participants by invoking values that can have cross-party appeals.

religious services at least once a month) of moderate income ($50-75k/year) and

ideologically moderate[8].

Table 1: Summary Statistics of Independent Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	N
Education	5.60	2.02	1	8	1175
Age	4.25	1.58	1	6	1146
Religiosity	2.91	1.47	1	5	1152
White	0.79	0.40	0	1	1149
Income	3.65	1.60	1	6	963
Female	0.52	0.49	0	1	1191
Ideology	0.03	0.67	-1	1	1159

Notes: Education was scaled from 1-8 (1 = 8th grade or less; 5 = Some college; 8 = Graduate work). Age was scaled from 1-8 (1 = 18-20; 4 = Thirties; 8 = 65 or over). Religiosity was scaled from 1-5 (1 = attend service once a week; 3 = once a month; 5 = never.) White and Female were binary coded. Income was scaled from 1-6 (1 = <25k; 3 = 50-75k; 6 = >150k). Ideology was scaled from -1 to 1 (-1 = Liberal; 1 = Conservative).

The study employed a 3 x 2 between-subjects design (Figure 1). Participants were

randomly assigned to one of two "policy groups" each focused on a different

hypothetically proposed bill before Congress and then randomly assigned again into one

of three "treatment groups". The text of these policy evaluation questions was

intentionally left somewhat vague to avoid potential confounds associated with particular

government programs[9]. The "Entitlement" policy group was asked for their impression

on legislation that we would typically associate with Conservatives:

> Now I'd like to ask for your impression on a bill before the United States
> Congress. Congressmen Sam Hayes says tax policies unfairly punish
> those who work hard in order to provide benefits to those who do not. He
> proposes to cut taxes on hard working Americans and increase
> requirements for receiving government benefits. Even though you do not
> know much about this proposal, is your initial impression very positive,
> somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

The "Inequality" policy group was asked to evaluate legislation that we would typically

associate with Liberals:

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[8] The sample was somewhat whiter and older than the NJ average.

Now I'd like to ask your impression of a bill before the United States Congress. Congressmen Sam Hayes says the wealthy have not been paying their fair share of taxes, limiting the ability of government to pursue policies for other Americans. He proposes to increase taxes on the wealthy to pay for programs that benefit hard working Americans who are struggling. Even though you do not know much about this proposal, is your initial impression very positive, somewhat positive, somewhat negative, or very negative?

Figure 1: Experimental Groups

Control Group		Passive Group		Active Group	
Inequality	Entitlement	Inequality	Entitlement	Inequality	Entitlement
-	-	Frame Exposure	Frame Exposure	Frame Exposure	Frame Exposure
-	-	-	-	Frame Evaluation Question	Frame Evaluation Question
Policy Question	Policy Question	Policy Question	Policy Question	Policy Question	Policy Question
N = 188	N = 188	N = 239	N = 203	N = 187	N = 186

Chapter 4 – Experimental Procedures Flow Chart

_____
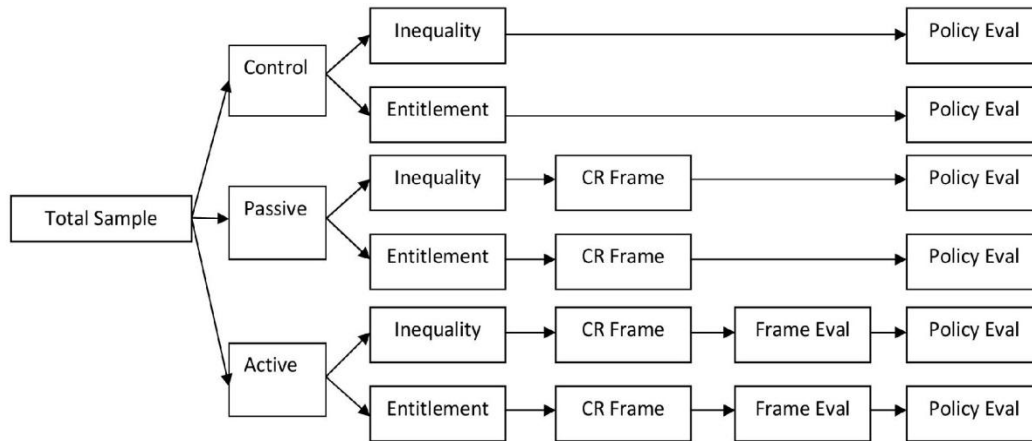
[9] For example a question asking whether "welfare" should be limited may conjure up racial stereotypes which would cloud the analysis.

Participants within these two policy groups were then randomly assigned[10] again into one of three "treatment" groups (Control, Passive, and Active). The "Passive" group label reflects Brewer's (2001) reference to models that only consider accessibility and availability while the "Active" group label reflects the engagement of applicability processes that stand in contrast to the passive receiver model. The passive and active treatment groups from each frame group were read a short ideological essay that incorporates civil religious language consistent with the conceptualization articulated in the literature review. These essays begin by arguing that American Exceptionalism is the result of adherence to the sacred principles our nation was founded upon. They note that we are currently experiencing a national crisis because of our failure to live up to these ideals and that the only way to regain our prominence is to recommit ourselves to them[11].

The essays differ in that the one read to the "Entitlement" frame group (see below) explicitly suggests that American policy has been geared towards punishing those who have worked hard while rewarding those who have not and that the solution to our problems lies in a recommitment to values of individual self-reliance and personal liberty.

> Next, I'd like to ask your impression of part of a recent speech. Here it is:
> Our founding fathers created a nation built on the idea that all are created
> equal with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These were
> not just empty words, but sacred principles that made us the envy of the
> world. But we've gotten off track. The economic crisis is just one

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[10] Randomization tests were successful; indicating that the variable means did not significantly differ across categories of random assignment. Details are available upon request from the author.

[11] Most studies of Civil Religious beliefs have utilized rather overt references to religion in their surveys to highlight the religious aspect of the concept. However, this has often been done at the expense of invoking "tradition" or "national mythology", which are equally important conceptual components of Civil Religion. I have tried to bridge the gap in my frame by making explicit reference to the "Founding Fathers" and utilizing the term "sacred" as a religious cue to describe the text from the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, this structure bears similarities to Jeremiads (Murphy, 2009) typically found in "Prophetic" civil religion (Pierard & Linder, 1988).

> example of a trend towards decline. Increasingly, we punish those who have worked hard while rewarding those who take advantage of the system. Our government has forgotten that individual self-reliance and personal responsibility are fundamental American values that must be promoted.

In contrast, the "Inequality" frame (see below) explicitly argues that policies have been geared towards benefiting the rich and powerful at the expense of the majority and that the solution lies in a recommitment to democratic values which prioritize the public good over the interests of the privileged.

> Next, I'd like to ask your impression of part of a recent speech. Here it is: Our founding fathers created a nation built on the idea that all are created equal with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These were not just empty words, but sacred principles that made us the envy of the world. But we've gotten off track. The economic crisis is just one example of a trend towards decline. Increasingly, we benefit the rich and powerful at the expense of the rest of us. Our government has forgotten that equality and fairness are fundamental American values that need to be promoted.

These two themes (entitlement and inequality) were reflected in the legislative proposals presented to the entitlement and inequality frame-groups (respectively). For the entitlement group both the policy and frame emphasized the theme that there is something unfair about punishing those who work hard and become successful with higher taxes. The primary difference between the policy and frame is that the latter includes civil religious references which serve to legitimize this ideological perspective. The civil religious language operates in a similar manner in the inequality group texts which emphasize the theme that the wealthy are not paying their fair share of taxes. Therefore, if it is found that differences of opinion exist between the treatment groups they can be attributed to the inclusion of civil religious rhetoric.

Finally, subjects assigned to the Active Treatment Groups were asked how much they agreed with the essay[12] while those in the Passive Treatment Group were not asked this question. Separating the treatment groups in this way provided a means of evaluating the merits of the distinction between Active and Passive Receiver experimental models, along with providing a key independent variable (Frame Agreement) in the Active Treatment group[13]. Barreto, Redlawsk, and Tolbert (2009) have argued that researchers employing experiments which reflect that passive receiver model often inaccurately assume that everyone exposed to a frame will be equally affected by it. This assumption is critical in establishing causality in an experiment (Morton & Williams, 2009) but is difficult to justify if the treatment itself reflects a partisan/ideological issue where participants are likely to either accept or reject the frame based on political predispositions. In other words, individuals who agree with the content of the frame may exhibit a different reaction than those who disagree, even though both were exposed to the treatment. This variance in the treatment effect within the group may produce null results which mask the very significant effects on public opinion that occur between those who accept and reject the frame (albeit in opposing directions).

Results

Overall, evaluations of both policies were more positive than negative and generated at least 60% support regardless of the policy or treatment group (Table 2). However, the

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[12] The exact question wording was "How much do you agree with this speech? Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, or Strongly Disagree." Reponses were then recoded along a -1 to +1 range (-1 = Strongly Disagree, -.5 = Disagree, 0 = Ambivalence, +.5 – Agree, and +1 = Strongly Agree) for some of the following analysis, and as binaries (Frame Agreement, Frame Rejection, or Ambivalence) for other parts of the analysis.

[13] Although this particular experiment does not expose participants to competing frames, it can be reasonably assumed that they would have engaged in similar mental processes (accessibility) because of this question. I do not argue that the presence of this question eliminates the need for competitive framing

inequality policy generated more extreme responses (more "very positive" and "very negative" responses than "somewhat positive" and "somewhat negative") than entitlement, suggesting that the former is inherently more polarizing than the latter. Similarly, the evaluations of the frame in the active treatment groups generated 69.2% agreement ("Agree" or "Strongly Agree") with the inequality frame and 79.3% agreement with the entitlement frame; suggesting the relative popularity of the conservative interpretation. Given the small size of "Don't Know" responses (between 3% and 7% for all questions in all groups) and their potential to confound subsequent statistical analysis, they have been removed from the remaining models presented in this paper.

Table 2: Response Distribution

Response	Inequality Control	Inequality Passive	Inequality Active	Entitlement Control	Entitlement Passive	Entitlement Active
Evaluation	n = 188	n = 239	n = 182	n = 187	n = 202	n = 183
Very Neg.	18.6%	15.1%	17.0%	9.6%	14.9%	12.0%
Somewhat Neg.	13.3%	13.0%	12.1%	18.7%	15.8%	14.8%
Don't Know	4.3%	5.4%	3.3%	7.0%	7.4%	6.6%
Somewhat Pos.	26.6%	31.0%	30.2%	37.4%	34.7%	38.3%
Very Pos.	37.2%	35.6%	37.4%	27.3%	27.2%	28.4%
Agree with Frame			n = 185			n = 184
Str. Disagree			9.2%			7.1%
Disagree			15.1%			10.3%
Don't Know			6.5%			3.3%
Agree			35.1%			37.5%
Str. Agree			34.1%			41.8%

Notes: Figures in columns represent within group percentages.

ANOVA contrasts of the estimated marginal means between the experimental groups within each frame (Control vs. Active; Control vs. Passive; and Active vs. Passive) were

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experiments; only that it is a reasonable proxy when budgetary restrictions preclude exposing participants to competitive frames (as was the case in this study).

conducted to determine whether exposure to the frame had a significant effect upon
policy evaluation. (Table 3a and 3b) No significant differences were found in these
comparisons[14] which suggests that exposure to the civil religious frame did not have an
effect upon policy evaluation. However, because both the civil religious frames and
policy questions carry implicit ideological connotations, and since ideological orientation
is randomly distributed within each group, it is possible (and was anticipated) that
positive policy evaluations generated by frame agreement in the treatment groups was
offset by negative policy evaluations derived from frame rejection; resulting in no
discernible change overall. In other words, this suggests that frame evaluation serves as a
mediating variable explaining the relationship between ideological predispositions and
policy evaluation.

   Before examining this potential mediated relationship, it is worth remarking on the
methodological importance of the lack of a significant difference between the means for
the Active and Passive groups. This finding indicates that simply being asked to voice an
opinion about the frame had no independent effect upon the policy evaluation question
that followed. Although this finding needs to be replicated in different experimental
contexts, it is preliminary evidence that survey researchers need not employ "passive
groups" in "active processing" models to control for the act of expressing an opinion on
the frame; that relying on a typical "control" group which isn't exposed to the frame will
be sufficient.

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[14] However, it may be worth noting that nearly significant (.059) differences exist between the Control and
Active group for the Inequality policy area.

Table 3a: ANOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means By Group

| | Inequality | | | Entitlement | |
	Mean(SE)	N		Mean (SE)	N
Control	.253	188	Control	.270	187
	(.062)			(.050)	
Passive	.295	239	Passive	.218	202
	(.055)			(.048)	
Active	.420	187	Active	.281	183
	(.063)			(.051)	

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Table 3b: ANOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Mean Differences by Group

| | Inequality | | | Entitlement | |
	Passive	Active		Passive	Active
Control	-.042	-.167	Control	.052	-.011
	(.084)	(.088)		(.069)	(.071)
Passive	-	-.125	Passive	-	-.064
		(.084)			(.070)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.

As a first step towards verifying that frame evaluation mediates the relationship between ideology and policy evaluation, I ran a simple regression on Active group participants to investigate the influence of frame evaluation, ideology, and other typical covariates on policy evaluations (Table 4). The results clearly illustrate the strong positive effect frame evaluation[15] has upon policy evaluations for both frame groups. Although Ideology[16] was only marginally significant in the Entitlement frame group (.067), it was shown to have a significant effect upon policy evaluation for those exposed to the Inequality frame. Furthermore, the effect of ideology in both groups behaved as anticipated with conservatives opposing the liberal policy proposed in the inequality frame and supporting the conservative policy in the entitlement frame (and vice versa). Together, these results provide initial support for the assertion that evaluations of the frame impact evaluations of the policy (Hypothesis 10). Also worth noting is the lack of

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[15] Frame Evaluation was coded as an ordinal scale variable: -1 = Strong Disagreement, -.5 = Disagreement, 0 = Don't Know, .5 = Agreement, 1 = Strong Agreement.

significance for the other typical covariates with the exception of education in the

inequality frame.

Table 4: Role of Frame Evaluation and Ideology in Policy Evaluation

Variable	Inequality		Entitlement	
	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
(Constant)	.797	(.361)	.062	(.337)
Education	-.077*	(.038)	-.009	(.034)
Age	.059	(.047)	-.025	(.043)
Religiosity	-.048	(.041)	.020	(.038)
White	-.263	(.160)	.204	(.156)
Income	-.036	(.053)	.003	(.042)
Female	.129	(.128)	-.085	(.112)
Ideology	-.351***	(.100)	.163	(.088)
Frame Evaluation	.429***	(.098)	.420***	(.090)

Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. In the Inequality model N =134 and the Adj R^2 = 282. In the Entitlement model N = 131 and the Adj R^2 = .174. Ideology had a significance of .067 in the Entitlement model.

If Frame Evaluation is a mediator in this model, it behooves us to identify variables

that influence this opinion. A simple regression on Frame Evaluation with typical

political covariates found that ideological predispositions are the dominant factor. (Table

5) Ideology had a positive relationship to frame evaluation in both policy groups but was

only marginally significant in the inequality group (.056). No other variables had a

significant (or marginally significant) effect.

Table 5: Regression Analyzing Agreement with Active Group Treatment Frame

Variable	Entitlement		Inequality	
	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
(Constant)	.850	(.328)	.821	(.317)
Education	-.048	(.033)	-.024	(.034)
Age	.005	(.043)	-.078	(.042)
Religiosity	-.031	(.038)	.024	(.037)
White	-.029	(.156)	.041	(.144)
Income	.013	(.042)	-.033	(.047)
Female	-.063	(.111)	.191	(.114)
Ideology	.181*	(.087)	-.171	(.089)

Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. In the Inequality model N = 134 and the Adj. R^2 = .050. In the Entitlement model N = 131 and the Adj. R^2 = .039. Ideology had a significance of .056 in the Inequality model.

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[16] Ideology was coded as an ordinal scale variable: -1 = Liberal, 0 = Moderate, 1 = Conservative.

The final step in investigating whether Frame Evaluation operates as a mediating variable for Ideology and Policy Evaluation (Hypothesis 10), I utilized the "Process" macro for SPSS developed by Hayes (2013). This macro combines a variety of tools he developed over the years to accomplish specific tasks related to meditational analysis into one user-friendly package. It estimates model parameters using ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, such that parameter estimates for direct and indirect effects are computed through a series of regression statements. While these computations could be accomplished through a series of regression equations, the benefit of this macro is that it simplifies this process while providing bootstrap confidence intervals for the products of parameters (a method Hayes advocates for inference in meditational analysis.)

Tables 6a and 6b present the results of this analysis on those in the Active treatment group. We can see that Ideology has a significant negative direct effect on policy evaluation in the inequality model and a significant positive direct effect on policy evaluation in the entitlement model. These findings are largely consistent with those of Table 4, but differ slightly because those earlier regressions did not account for the effects of ideology mediated through frame agreement. These results also demonstrate that ideology had a significant negative effect upon frame evaluation in the inequality model and a significant positive effect upon frame evaluation in the entitlement model (consistent with the results presented in Table 5). Substantively, this means that as levels of conservatism increase, agreement with the liberal frame decreases and agreement with the conservative frame increases. Furthermore, we can see that agreement with the frame itself has a significant positive effect upon policy evaluation in both models. In sum, these models illustrate that even after controlling for the significant direct effect that

Identifying Frame Evaluation as a mediating variable is also consistent with a more detailed analysis of the response rates in the Active group (Table 7). In the inequality group, 11% agreed with the frame but did not support the policy while 8% rejected the frame but supported the policy. Similar rates were found in the entitlement group with 15% in agreement with the frame but not the policy and 6% rejecting the frame but supporting the policy. Among those who agreed with the frame but not the policy, we might argue that that this indicates the difficulty of attaching a civil religious belief to a particular policy option; that despite the appeal of the rhetoric, ideology simply precludes its acceptance. In the case of those who reject the frame but support the policy, we get a sense that although there is support for the policy, the manner in which it is justified was seen as problematic (presumably for the ideological implications of the Civil Religious frame provided). Both interpretations are consistent with a mediation model where policy evaluation was determined by both the direct effect of ideology and the indirect effect of ideology mediated through frame evaluation.

Table 7: Frame Evaluation Response Rates

Response	Inequality Active	Entitlement Active
Sample Size	n = 187	n = 186
Frame Agreement/Policy Disapproval	22 (11%)	28 (15%)
Frame Rejection/Policy Approval	16 (8%)	12 (6%)
Total Frame Confusion	38 (20%)	40 (21%)

The results presented thus far clearly illustrate the ideological nature of the inequality and entitlement themes invoked by both the treatments and the policy to be evaluated. Therefore, it is equally clear that determining the effects of the treatments requires more than the standard comparison of marginal means typical to experimental research. The

following tables (8a and 8b) present the results of an ANCOVA whereby I compare the

means of the treatment groups (within each policy area) while using Ideology as a

covariate. They focus on the differences between each treatment group among

ideological entities (i.e. comparing liberals across the treatment groups). The only

significant difference in this analysis was that there was more support for the inequality

policy among ideological moderates in the Active group compared to the control.

However, despite the lack of significance, the trends in these results are broadly

consistent with Hypothesis 11 and 12: Liberals and Conservatives that were exposed to

civil religious frames consistent with their ideological predispositions registered more

agreement with the policy than those in the other groups. Conversely Liberals that were

exposed to a Conservative civil religious frame expressed less support for the policy than

Liberals in the other groups. Curiously, Conservatives that were exposed to the liberal

civil religious frame express more support (though still opposed the policy) than their

counterparts

Table 8a: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means By Ideology and Group (Covariate = Ideology)

	Inequality					Entitlement			
	Lib	Mod	Con	N		Lib	Mod	Con	N
Control	.719	.242	-.235	179	Control	.163	.259	.355	184
	(.099)	(.058)	(.109)			(.101)	(.051)	(.081)	
Passive	.720	.291	-.137	233	Passive	.058	.214	.369	200
	(.092)	(.051)	(.091)			(.087)	(.047)	(.082)	
Active	.937	.414	-.109	184	Active	.016	.270	.523	175
	(.107)	(.057)	(.101)			(.095)	(.051)	(.087)	

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors with Ideology as a covariate.

Table 8b: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Mean Differences by Ideology and Group (Covariate = Ideology) – Comparing Ideological Orientations Across Groups

	Liberal			Inequality Moderate			Conservative	
	Passive	Active		Passive	Active		Passive	Active
Control	-.001	-.219	Control	-.049	-.172*	Control	-.098	-.126
	(.136)	(.146)		(.078)	(.082)		(.142)	(.149)
Passive	-	-.217	Passive	-	-.123	Passive	-	-.028
		(.141)			(.077)			(.136)
	Liberal			Entitlement Moderate			Conservative	
	Passive	Active		Passive	Active		Passive	Active
Control	.105	.147	Control	.046	-.010	Control	-.014	-.168
	(.133)	(.138)		(.070)	(.072)		(.115)	(.119)
Passive	-	.042	Passive	-	-.056	Passive	-	-.154
		(.129)			(.070)			(.120)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors with ideology as a covariate. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.

Delving deeper, the following tables (9a and 9b) present the results of an ANCOVA whereby I compare the means of the ideological groups (within each policy area) while using treatment groups as a covariate. They focus on the differences between each ideological group within each treatment group (i.e. comparing liberals to conservatives in the control group). The results demonstrate that Liberals registered significantly more support for the inequality policy than both moderates and conservatives and that moderates also expressed significantly more support for this policy than conservatives. However, in the entitlement group, Liberals consistently registered significantly less support for the entitlement policy than conservatives, but only expressed less support than moderates in the Passive and Active treatment groups.

Table 9a: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means By Ideology and Group (Covariate = Group)

	Inequality					Entitlement			
	Control	Passive	Active	N		Control	Passive	Active	N
Lib.	.767	.716	.741	135	Lib.	.087	-.099	-.006	103
	(.105)	(.102)	(.067)			(.114)	(.096)	(.067)	
Mod.	.308	.379	.343	329	Mod.	.289	.326	.308	305
	(.072)	(.064)	(.043)			(.061)	(.059)	(.038)	
Con.	-.219	-.173	-.196	132	Con.	.383	.309	.346	151
	(.118)	(.100)	(.069)			(.083)	(.087)	(.054)	

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Table 9b: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Mean Differences by Ideology and Group (Covariate = Group) – Comparing Ideological Orientations within Groups

	Inequality								
	Control			Passive			Active		
	Mod.	Con.		Mod.	Con.		Mod.	Con.	
Lib.	.459***	.986***	Lib.	.338**	.890***	Lib.	.398***	.938***	
	(.127)	(.158)		(.120)	(.142)		(.080)	(.096)	
Mod.	-	.527***	Mod.	-	.552***	Mod.	-	.539***	
		(.138)			(.118)			(.081)	
	Entitlement								
	Control			Passive			Active		
	Mod.	Con.		Mod.	Con.		Mod.	Con.	
Lib.	-.202	-.296*	Lib.	-.425***	-.408**	Lib.	-.314***	-	
	(.129)	(.141)		(.113)	(.129)		(.077)	.352***	
								(.086)	
Mod.	-	-.094	Mod.	-	.017	Mod.	-	-.038	
		(.103)			(.105)			(.066)	

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.

The following tables (10a and 10b) more directly explore the effect of frame acceptance and rejection through an ANCOVA whereby I compare the means of the those in the Active Treatment group that either Accepted or Rejected the frame (within each policy area) while using Ideology as a covariate. They focus on the differences between those that Accept and Reject among ideological entities (i.e. comparing liberals that accept the frame to liberals that reject the frame.) The results demonstrate significant differences in policy evaluation among those that accept and reject the frame within

ideological categories. The sole exception was among Liberals in the inequality

condition where even those that rejected the frame still supported the policy in high

numbers.

Table 10a: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means By Ideology and ACCEPT/REJECT (Covariate = Ideology)

	Inequality					Entitlement			
	Lib.	Mod.	Con.	N		Lib.	Mod.	Con.	N
Accept	.832	.596	.360	126	Accept	.157	.375	.593	138
	(.135)	(.078)	(.148)			(.105)	(.054)	(.090)	
Reject	.605	-.063	-.730	45	Reject	-.366	-.112	.141	31
	(.315)	(.145)	(.204)			(.177)	(.113)	(.210)	

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors with ideology as a covariate..

Table 10b: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Mean Differences by Ideology and ACCEPT/REJECT (Covariate = Ideology) – Comparing Ideological Orientations Across Those in Active group that Accepted or Rejected the Civil Religious Frame.

	Inequality				
	Liberal Reject		Moderate Reject		Conservative Reject
Accept	.227	Accept	.659***	Accept	1.091***
	(.343)		(.164)		(.252)
	Entitlement				
	Liberal Reject		Moderate Reject		Conservative Reject
Accept	.522*	Accept	.487***	Accept	.452*
	(.206)		(.125)		(.228)

*Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors with ideology as a covariate. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.*

Similarly, the following tables (11a and 11b) present the results of an ANCOVA

whereby I compare the means of the ideological groups while using

Acceptance/Rejection of the Active Treatment frame as a covariate). They focus on the

differences between ideological entities that either accept or reject the frame. (i.e.

comparing liberals that accept the frame to conservatives that accept the frame.)

Beginning with the Inequality groups, we can see that Liberals and Moderates that

rejected the frame expressed significantly more positive evaluations than Conservatives. Liberals that accepted the frame also expressed more positive evaluations of the policy than moderates and conservatives although they failed to reach significance (.051 and .064 respectively). Moving to the Entitlement policy we can see that the only significant relationship was between Liberals and Conservative that accepted the frame; however, the trends demonstrated in the table are consistent with Hypotheses 11 and 12.

Table 11a: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means By Ideology and ACCEPT/REJECT (Covariate = Accept/Reject)

	Inequality				Entitlement		
	Accept	Reject	N		Accept	Reject	N
Liberal	.903	.667	34	Liberal	.159	-.400	32
	(.157)	(.503)			(.133)	(.197)	
Moderate	.535	-.077	98	Moderate	.373	-.067	94
	(.103)	(.171)			(.070)	(.161)	
Conservative	.457	-.719	39	Conservative	.595	.083	43
	(.182)	(.218)			(.103)	(.255)	

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Table 11b: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Mean Differences by Ideology and ACCEPT/REJECT (Covariate = Accept/Reject) – Comparing Ideological Groups that Agreed with the Frame and Ideological Groups that Rejected the Frame.

Inequality					
	Accept			Reject	
	Moderate	Conservative		Moderate	Conservative
Liberal	.369	.447	Liberal	.744	1.385*
	(.187)	(.240)		(.531)	(.548)
Moderate	-	.078	Moderate	-	-.642*
		(.209)			(.277)
Entitlement					
	Accept			Reject	
	Moderate	Conservative		Moderate	Conservative
Liberal	-.214	-.436**	Liberal	-.333	-.483
	(.150)	(.168)		(.255)	(.135)
Moderate	-	-.221	Moderate	-	-.150
		(.124)			(.301)

*Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.*

Alternative Analysis

The analysis thus far presented provides only modest support for the hypothesized polarizing effect of civil religious frames on policy evaluation. However, the preceding ANCOVAs did not offer a comparison of those that accept or reject the frame to those in the passive or control treatment groups. While it could be argued that such an analysis is problematic because it essentially treats those that accept or reject the frame as their own treatment groups (even though they were all part of the same active treatment group originally), I believe that this analysis is best positioned to address the central question of this chapter: how do policy evaluations of those that react differently to the civil religious frame compare to those who (a) were not presented with the opportunity to react (passive group) and (b) those who were not exposed to a civil religious frame (control group)? It is with such an analysis that we find support for Hypothesis 13 on the polarizing effects of civil religious framing.

Table 12a presents the parameter estimates of such an analysis with the treatment groups broken down into a series of binary independent variables representing Frame Acceptance, Frame Rejection, and participation in the Passive Treatment Group or Control. As we can see, even after controlling for the significant effect of ideology, group membership still had a significant positive effect upon policy evaluation. It is also worth noting that being white had a significant negative effect upon inequality policy evaluation which suggests that racial identity remains a significant factor in this issue area.

Table 12a: ANCOVA – Parameter Estimates of Variables Predicting Policy Evaluation

Variable	Inequality B	Inequality (SE)	Entitlement B	Entitlement (SE)
(Constant)	.228	(.202)	-.310	(.241)
Education	-.022	(.018)	-.004	(.020)
Age	-.008	(.022)	-.022	(.023)
Religiosity	-.002	(.022)	.032	(.025)
White	-.201*	(.082)	.003	(.090)
Income	-.002	(.023)	.037	(.025)
Female	-.149*	(.065)	-.002	(.069)
Ideology	-.446***	(.049)	.180***	(.052)
Control	.279*	(.131)	.427**	(.160)
Passive	.332**	(.128)	.420**	(.160)
Accept	.504***	(.135)	.621***	(.164)
Reject	-	-	-	-

Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. Reject Response Group was excluded from this estimate as a reference group. In the Inequality Model, N = 439 and Adj. R^2 = .219. In the Entitlement Model, N = 418 and Adj. R^2 = .056.

Further confirmatory evidence of the hypothesized influence of the frame is demonstrated by Tables 12b and 12c which report the comparisons of the marginal means between each group. Even after controlling for ideology and political covariates, those who accepted the frames (in either frame group) were significantly more likely than those in the Control and Passive groups to positively evaluate the policy proposed; while those who rejected the frame were significantly more likely than those in the Control and Passive groups to negatively evaluate the policy proposal (Hypothesis 11 and 12). No significant differences from the control group were found for those in the Passive group. This demonstrates that agreement/disagreement with the frame produces significant differences in policy evaluation compared to those who were simply exposed to the frame (but did not register an opinion) and those who were not exposed to the frame.

Table 12b: ANCOVA – Estimated Marginal Means on Policy Evaluation

| | Inequality | | | Entitlement | |
	Mean(SE)	N		Mean (SE)	N
Control	.280 (.057)	139	Control	.249 (.058)	140
Passive	.332 (.052)	167	Passive	.242 (.056)	153
Accept	.505 (.067)	100	Accept	.443 (.068)	103
Reject	.001 (.117)	33	Reject	-.178 (.149)	22

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated as the following values for Inequality/Entitlement: Education = 5.605/5.696, Age = 4.314/4.095, Religiosity = 2.977/2.980, White = 0.776/0.806, Income = 3.576/3.823, Female = 0.523/0.521, Ideology = -0.050/0.067.

**Table 12b: ANCOVA – Mean Difference Between Groups**

| **Inequality Treatment Group** | | | |
	Passive	**Accept**	**Reject**
Control	-.052	-.225**	.279*
	(.077)	(.087)	(.131)
Passive		-.172*	.332**
		(.084)	(.128)
Accept			.504***
			(.135)

| **Entitlement Treatment Group** | | | |
	Passive	**Accept**	**Reject**
Control	.007	-.194*	.427**
	(.081)	(.090)	(.160)
Passive		-.201*	.420**
		(.088)	(.160)
Accept			.621***
			(.164)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated as the following values for Inequality/Entitlement: Education = 5.605/5.696, Age = 4.314/4.095, Religiosity = 2.977/2.980, White = 0.776/0.806, Income = 3.576/3.823, Female = 0.523/0.521, Ideology = -0.050/0.067.

This analysis has thus far illustrated that Civil Religious frames do have a significant, positive effect upon policy evaluation once we account for ideological predispositions and frame evaluation. Conservatives are more likely to agree with the conservative frame and subsequently positively evaluate the conservative policy option (vice versa for liberals). Although this implies polarization (Hypothesis 13) a formal test is warranted to verify that it is occurring and determine the manner by which it is happening (Figure 2). If polarization is occurring, we should expect to find that liberals/conservatives are expressing greater support for the inequality/entitlement policy with acceptance of the

frame as compared to liberals/conservatives in the control or passive group. (Polarization Type 1) We should also expect to find that the gap in policy opinion between liberals and conservatives has grown significantly among those who accept and reject the frame compared to those in the control or passive group. In other words, the mean difference between liberals who accept the inequality frame and conservatives who reject it should be significantly larger than the difference between liberals and conservatives in the control or passive group. (Polarization Type 2)

Figure 2: Types of Polarization
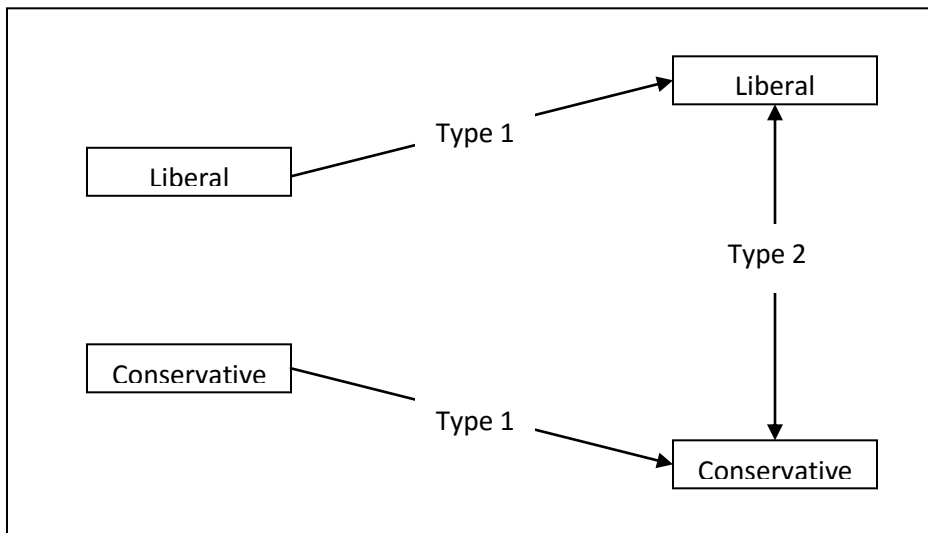
To address these questions, I ran another Analysis of Covariance with an interaction term between ideology and treatment group/response type. This is in contrast to the previous model which simply included ideology as a covariate. Table 13a provides the estimated marginal means and Ns for Liberals and Conservatives by treatment group/response type, while tables 13b and 13c provide the estimated marginal mean differences between these entities. Beginning with Polarization type 1 (table 13b), we can see that there are significant differences between conservatives who agreed with the

entitlement frame compared to those in the control or passive group. Substantively, this mean difference of about .4 suggests that acceptance of the frame leads conservatives to jump nearly a full category in support (from "somewhat positive" to "very positive".) Although liberals in the inequality frame exhibited similar behavior, the differences were not significant. This is likely largely attributable to the high level of support for the policy in the control group such that there was comparatively less room to increase support for liberals in the inequality frame than conservatives in the entitlement frame.

Table 13a: Polarization ANCOVA – Estimated Marginal Means

	Inequality Mean(SE)	N		Entitlement Mean (SE)	N
Lib. Control	.707 (.108)	47	Lib. Control	.046 (.153)	28
Lib. Passive	.623 (.106)	51	Lib. Passive	-.133 (.117)	42
Lib. Accept	.809 (.129)	31	Lib. Reject	-.343 (.230)	10
Con. Control	-.260 (.130)	35	Con. Control	.314 (.109)	56
Con. Passive	-.262 (.114)	53	Con. Passive	.278 (.109)	50
Con. Reject	-.536 (.225)	16	Con. Accept	.710 (.133)	38

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated as the following values for Inequality/Entitlement: Education = 5.605/5.696, Age = 4.314/4.097, Religiosity = 2.977/2.980, White = 0.776/0.806, Income = 3.576/3.823, Female = 0.523/0.521.

Table 13b: Polarization Type 1 – Estimated Marginal Means and Differences on Policy Evaluation

	Control	Passive	Accept	Difference
Inequality				
Liberal vs. Liberal	.707 (.108)		.809 (.129)	-.102 (.167)
		.623 (.106)	.809 (.129)	-.186 (.166)
	.707 (.108)	.623 (.106)		.084 (.402)
Entitlement				
Conservative vs. Conservative	.314 (.109)		.710 (.133)	-.395* (.169)
		.278 (.109)	.710 (.133)	-.432* (.170)
	.314 (.109)	.278 (.109)		.036 (.153)

Notes: Figures in columns (Control, Passive and Accept) represent estimated marginal means and their standard errors. Figures in the "Difference" column represent the estimated marginal mean difference (and standard error) for groups under comparison. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated as the following values for Inequality/Entitlement: Education = 5.605/5.696, Age = 4.314/4.097, Religiosity = 2.977/2.980, White = 0.776/0.806, Income = 3.576/3.823, Female = 0.523/0.521. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.

With respect to the second type of polarization, Table 13c illustrates that differences in policy evaluation between liberals and conservatives were significant across all conditions with the exception of the entitlement frame control group. The entitlement policy opinion gap was significantly larger between conservatives that accepted the frame and liberals that rejected it than conservatives and liberals in the control or passive groups. Although similar tendencies were on display for the inequality frame, the differences between the groups were not significant. This is likely attributable to the significant gap between liberals and conservatives in the control; although that gap grew with frame evaluation, there was comparatively less room for it to grow compared to the entitlement policy. In other words, the inequality frame appears to be inherently more polarizing than entitlement.

Table 13c: Polarization Type 2 – Estimated Marginal Means and Differences on Policy Evaluation

	Control	Passive	Accept/Reject	Difference
Inequality Liberal vs. Conservative	.967*** (.170)		1.345*** (.241)	-.378 (.289)
		.886*** (.156)	1.345*** (.241)	-.459 (.283)
	.967*** (.170)	.886*** (.156)		.081 (.232)
Entitlement Liberal vs. Conservative	-.269 (.189)		-1.053*** (.285)	.784* (.330)
		-.411** (.161)	-1.053*** (.285)	.642** (.303)
	-.269 (.189)	-.411** (.161)		.142 (.247)

*Notes: Figures in columns (Control and Passive) represent the estimated marginal mean difference between liberals and conservatives within the group and their standard errors. Figures in the "Accept/Reject" column represent the estimated marginal mean difference (and standard error) between liberals/conservatives who reject/accept the entitlement frame and vice versa for the inequality frame. Figures in the "Difference" column represent the estimated marginal mean difference (and standard error) for groups under comparison. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated as the following values for Inequality/Entitlement: Education = 5.605/5.696, Age = 4.314/4.097, Religiosity = 2.977/2.980, White = 0.776/0.806, Income = 3.576/3.823, Female = 0.523/0.521. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.*

<u>Conclusion</u>

This chapter posited a theoretical model of civil religious framing and found empirical support for its hypothesized effects upon public opinion and ideological polarization. The results confirm that civil religious frames serve as a partial mediator between ideological predispositions and public opinion, and that exposure to civil religious frames leads to more extreme policy preferences and increases the opinion gap between ideological opponents. These results clearly add to the credibility of the conceptualization of civil religion as a political tool for ideological conflict articulated in the previous chapter and by others in the field. (Cristi, 1997; Demerath & Williams, 1985; Williams & Alexander, 1994; Wuthnow, 1988).

In the next chapter I will elaborate upon these findings to examine alternative ideological issues (Affirmative Action in College Admissions and the Imposition of a Flat Tax) and explore the predictors of civil religious beliefs. The search for answers to these research questions acquires a profound significance at a time when both the prevalence of civil religious rhetoric has increased and the ideological polarization of American politics has rendered the task of governing more difficult. As my introductory comparison of President Obama and Governor Romney indicates, reliance upon civil religion is a bipartisan affair that is unlikely to disappear in the near future. It therefore behooves the academic community to better understand the role of civil religion in this process.

Chapter 5 – Civil Religious Framing Reconsidered

In the previous chapter, I argued that when civil religious framing weds notions of the American identity, meaning, and purpose in the world to ideological principles, public opinion becomes more ideologically polarized. The results demonstrated that ideological predispositions not only had a direct effect upon policy evaluation, but also an indirect effect that was mediated through frame agreement. In other words, the ideological orientation of the participant influenced whether they agreed or disagreed with the contents of the frame, and their level of agreement with the frame had a significant effect upon their policy opinions even after controlling for the direct effects of their ideological predispositions. The results then show that those who agreed/disagreed with the frame expressed higher/lower levels of support for the policy compared to those in the control group. Most importantly, it was also shown that liberals/conservatives in the treatment group registered more support for the liberal/conservative policy than their counterparts in the control group and that the gap in policy opinion between liberals and conservatives was significantly greater among those in the treatment group compared to those in the control.

While this analysis served to confirm many of the assumptions and hypotheses articulated in my dissertation, there are still unanswered questions and methodological critiques to overcome. Because my experimental frames do not employ an explicit reference to "God" there are those who may challenge their validity to suggest that they are not sufficiently invoking civil religion. Although Chapter 2 provides a theoretical rationale for this exclusion, the literature review and subsequent analysis presented in this chapter will provide empirical evidence to mollify these concerns.

Another line of potential critique might suggest that the results from my previous experiment are not reliable. Recall that both the treatment and control groups responded to a policy question that contained an "inequality" or "entitlement" value cue, however, only those in the treatment were exposed to a speech linking those values to civil religious beliefs. Therefore, it could be argued that the results conflate the effects of both civil religious rhetoric and ideological value framing. Although I have defended the experimental design and have confidence in the results presented in the last chapter, I have erred on the side of caution to make modifications to the survey experiment presented here. While this will not be a direct replication, the consistency between the results of this survey and the last add credence to the conclusions drawn in the previous chapter.

Beyond these methodological concerns, the survey experiment described in this chapter explores the nature of civil religious beliefs and the attributes associated with them on a national sample. This not only enables me to revisit the question of "Who is Civil Religious?" (which has seldom been explored over the last several decades), but also allows for an investigation into the interplay between the activation of a civil religious identity and policy evaluations.

In sum, the purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the validity of the civil religious frames employed, examine the attributes of individuals who hold civil religious beliefs, and replicate/expand upon the results of the survey experiment conducted in the previous chapter. I begin with a short literature review on civil religious identity before describing the methods employed for this study and its results. Because much of the methodological and theoretical expectations for this survey experiment mimic that of the last chapter I

will refrain from repeating myself and simply focus on the relevant literature which has thus far not been addressed.

Civil Religious Beliefs

The previous chapter demonstrates that exposure to civil religious rhetoric that is coupled with ideological undertones exacerbates policy opinions, and yet, we still know very little empirically about who holds civil religious beliefs and the characteristics of those who are perhaps most susceptible to this type of rhetoric. In other words, who is civil religious? This research question inspired a small cottage industry of research in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Christenson and Wimberly, 1978; Wimberly et al, 1976; Wimberly, 1979; Wimberly, 1980; Wimberly and Christenson, 1982) but has since been reduced to a few sporadically released, but quality studies (Chapp, 2012; Flerie and Lavric, 2007). The survey presented in this chapter seeks to reexamine the insights of the past and evaluate the validity of the particular civil religious frames employed in my dissertation.

Chistenson and Wimberly (1978) contend that while civil religious beliefs are correlated with certain religious, political, and demographic attributes they are broadly held and not meaningfully associated with any particular group. Employing a statewide survey of over 3000 North Carolina residents in 1975, they found that religious conservatives and those with high levels of religiosity (operationalized through church attendance) had a stronger association with civil religious beliefs than their counterparts but that religious liberals still scored above the mid-point on their belief scale. Similarly, although the poor, least educated, and elderly were found to be particularly civil religious, their multivariate analysis determined that the confluence of these factors

account for less than 20% of the variation in belief. As such "civil religion is not determined by the configuration of particular religious, political, or social categories, but tends to cross over social and culture identities." (Christenson and Wimberly, 1978) Although I accept their interpretation regarding the breadth of civil religious beliefs across segments of American society, I think these authors have downplayed the extent to which certain social groups may be more or less civil religious and therefore more or less receptive to civil religious political communication.

Indeed, Chapp's (2012) more recent study threads the needle by acknowledging variation in the intensity of civil religious beliefs among certain groups while still concluding that its tenets are broadly shared throughout American society. Although Chapp's survey uncovered similar demographic correlations as Christenson and Wimberly (1978), it differs in attributing a high degree of significance to one's religious affiliation. More specifically, Christians more strongly identified with American civil religion than other religious groups (including agnostics and atheists) leading Chapp to conclude that "regardless of whether civil religious rhetoric is trending toward universal inclusivity, Americans who are non-Christian certainly do not feel included." (Chapp, 2012) Consistent with these findings, I hypothesize the following relationships:

> **Hypothesis 14a** – Civil religious beliefs will be positively associated with Republican Party and Conservative ideological affiliation, age, higher levels of religiosity, and religious identification with Christianity (including related denominations).

> **Hypothesis 14b** – Civil religious beliefs will be negatively associated with Income, Education and Political Knowledge.

Although it seems reasonable to assume that Christians may be more likely to ascribe to civil religious beliefs, I do not believe that agnostics and atheists are inherently excluded. Weller (2013) argues that:

> Many of the more 'spiritually' or 'religiously' minded non-theists may already feel relatively comfortable amid the traditional theistic language of American civil religion. For them, references to God may appear merely symbolic, and they may be entirely unconcerned with the connection between theistic language and gestures of national membership. (Weller, 2013)

He further argues that although such individuals are uncomfortable with doctrinal understandings of God, they are no less likely to feel committed to fundamental moral values and principles or to "locate those principles within a civil religious framework that is supported by the weight of history and that is deeply embedded in one's sense of national identity." (Weller, 2013) As I have argued in Chapter 2, I submit that civil religious rhetoric can (and often has) employed language which is less offensive to those who lie outside of the American religious mainstream. Although we cannot disentangle the historical connections between Protestantism and the development of American civil religion, I believe that emitting the word "God" from such rhetoric allows us to successfully reach all members of American society while also staying true to the fundamental beliefs of our civil religion. As such, I propose the following hypothesis:

> **Hypothesis 15** – Civil religious beliefs that include the term "God" will be negatively associated with self-identified atheists and agnostics but not for beliefs that include the term "Sacred".

However, exploring this hypothesis and omitting the term "God" opens my research up to the criticism that I am no longer accurately measuring civil religion. Perhaps the most logical place to address this concern is with a review of how civil religious beliefs have been operationalized by researchers thus far.

Table 1: Civil Religious Phrases Employed in Survey Research (1976 – 1982)

Phrase	Author(s)
1. We should respect the president's authority since his authority is from God.	Wimberly et al (1976), Wimberly (1979), Wimberly (1980)
2. National leaders should not only affirm their belief in God but also their belief in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.[1]	Wimberly et al (1976), Wimberly (1980)
3. Good Christians aren't necessarily good patriots.	Wimberly et al (1976)
4. God can be known through the experience of the American people.	Wimberly et al (1976), Wimberly (1979), Wimberly (1980)
5. The founding fathers created a blessed and unique republic when they gave us the Constitution.	Wimberly et al (1976)
6. If the American government does not support religion, it cannot uphold morality.[2]	Wimberly et al (1976), Christenson & Wimberly (1978), Wimberly (1980), Wimberly & Christenson (1982)
7. It is a mistake to think that America is God's chosen nation today.[3]	Wimberly et al (1976), Christenson & Wimberly (1978), Wimberly & Christenson (1982)
8. To me, the flag of the United States is Sacred.[4]	Wimberly et al (1976), Christenson & Wimberly (1978), Wimberly (1979), Wimberly (1980), Wimberly &Christenson (1982)
9. Human rights come from God and not merely from laws.[5]	Christenson & Wimberly (1978), Wimberly (1979), Wimberly & Christenson (1982)
10. In this country, people have equal, divinely given rights to life, freedom, and the search for happiness.	Wimberly (1979)
11. I consider holidays like the fourth of July religious as well as patriotic	Wimberly (1980)

[1]Wimberly (1980) used similar language: "National leaders should affirm their belief in God."

[2]Wimberly (1980) used similar language: "We need more laws on morals"

[3] Christenson and Wimberly (1978) and Wimberly and Christenson (1982) used similar language: "America is God's chosen nation today."

[4] Christenson and Wimberly (1978) and Wimberly and Christenson (1982) used similar language: "The flag of the United States is Sacred." Wimberly (1979) also used similar language: "The flag of the United States is a sacred symbol."

[5]Wimberly (1979) used similar language: "In America, freedom comes from God through our system of government by the people."

For ease of reference, Table 1 provides an overview of the civil religious phrases that were used in survey research during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Wimberly et al (1976) explain that items 1, 4, 6, and 7 were inspired by claims made in Bellah's (1967) landmark essay on the topic, while 5 and 8 reflect objects considered sacred to American civil religion. Items 2 and 3 were incorporated as a test to examine distinctions between civil religion and organized religion in general and have not been used in contemporary studies. Wimberly (1979) explains that item 9 was derived from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, while Items 10 and 11 are meant to also tap into sacred objects (with the former making an oblique reference to the constitution).

A quick perusal of the list illustrates that it is roughly split between those phrases which employ explicit religious references (i.e. "God", "Christian", "Jesus Christ") and those where the religious connection is more implicit (i.e. "Sacred", "Divine", Chosen"). A potential critique of the experimental treatments of my last chapter is that without the inclusion of the word "God", we cannot be sure that they are actually tapping into American civil religion (rather than some of construct like patriotism or nationalism). Although the connection between American civil religion and Christianity cannot be disputed, a wealth of research has clearly documented that they are in fact separate entities. (Coleman, 1970; Flerie and Lavric, 2007; Wimberley et al 1976; Wimberley, 1979) While it is obvious that those phrases with more explicit religious language will be more likely to garner Christian support, I do not believe that those utilizing implicit religious language are any less capable of conjuring up notions of American Exceptionalism and a covenant with God. Furthermore, it could be argued that those of the latter category are perhaps more akin to civil religion rightly understood (as a set of

non-denominationally specific understandings about the relationship between the nation

and god) because they have the potential to elicit these ideas among those who do not

personally ascribe to mainline monotheistic organized religions.

Although this argument has not been formally tested in the past, an analysis

conducted by Wimberly et al (1976) demonstrated high order correlations between civil

religious phrases that include and exclude explicit references to "God[1]." Furthermore,

Chapp's (2012) study of civil religious beliefs found a very high level of reliability

among the following phrases where only one of the six contained the word "God":

> (1) "America, as a nation, holds a special power", (2) "The U.S.
> Constitution is a holy document", (3) "Being an American citizen is a
> sacred responsibility", (4) "The United States has a special covenant with
> God", (5) "The office of the Presidency is a sacred position" and (6) "As
> Americans, we are bless with special opportunities" (Chapp, 2012)

These studies provide solid empirical precedent for the conceptualization and

operationalization of civil religion employed in my dissertation. More specifically, they

suggest that we can evoke ideas about the national identity, meaning, and purpose in a

religious context without explicit reference to "God". However, suggestions and

precedent are not enough. In this chapter I will evaluate whether significant differences

exist between civil religious questions that employ the term "God" and "Sacred".

> **Hypothesis 16** – There will be sufficient correlation between responses to
> civil religious belief questions that employ the terms "God" and "Sacred"
> such that we can reasonably conclude that both measure civil religious
> beliefs. Substantively, this means that the word "God" is not a
> requirement to classify content as civil religious.

Beyond these demographic considerations, it is also worth exploring whether

exposure to civil religious language will serve to prime a civil religious identity

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[1] More specifically, items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 from Table X. Wimberly (1979) returned to this question and his analysis found high levels of correlation between items 1, 4, 8, 9, and 10 (which also feature a roughly even split between those that do and do not feature an explicit reference to "God".

(operationalized by agreement with civil religious beliefs). Christopher Chapp (2012) argues that civil religion should be approached as an "individual religious orientation" rather than a type of political rhetoric. He defines a civil religion identity as a "self-awareness of membership in the civil religion tradition and a sense of attachment to this tradition." (Chapp, 2012) Although I have issues with conceptualizing civil religion as a social group in the same way organized religious denominations are[2], I do think the language of a civil religious identity is useful in conveying the idea that exposure to such rhetoric conjures up a sense of belonging to a community that share similar beliefs. However, because the civil religious language provided in my experimental treatments is placed in the context of ideological policy arguments, it is possible that ideological predispositions may have an effect upon the extent to which this civil religious identity is activated. In other words, if you are exposed to civil religious language that is used in the context of an ideological position that you support, we might expect civil religious identity to be more likely to be activated since it is used in a manner that you favor. Conversely, if you are exposed to civil religious language that is used to legitimize an ideological position you oppose, we might expect civil religious identity to remain dormant because this exposure makes you question the manner in which civil religion is being used. The following hypothesis should be considered to be rather exploratory in nature:

> **Hypothesis 17** – Exposure to the civil religious treatment will result in greater agreement with civil religious beliefs among those who agree with the contents of the frame compared to those who reacted with ambivalence or disagreement and those in the control group.

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[2] Chapp himself acknowledges that this conceptualization is problematic since civil religion lacks an institutional structure

<u>Polarizing Effects of Civil Religion Reconsidered</u>

Once we have established who is civil religious the next step is to reexamine the effects of exposure to this rhetoric on policy opinion. As with the previous chapter, this survey experiment examines the effects of treatment exposure on both the direction and intensity of policy opinion after controlling for typical political covariates and frame agreement.

To briefly reiterate the theoretical argument from the last chapter: Civil religious framing is postulated to exacerbate political differences in public opinion beyond the effects of purely ideological framing. When employed in such a way that applicability processes are engaged, it is expected that ideological predispositions will serve as a key independent variable in determining subsequent public opinion (as it does in typical ideological framing). However, (in contrast to typical ideological framing) evaluations of the civil religious frame will also serve as a partial mediating variable between these ideological predispositions and public opinion; meaning that while frame evaluation and ideological predispositions have their own direct effects, the latter also has an effect upon the former. Formally stated:

> **Hypothesis 18:** Those who are exposed to and agree with the civil religious frame will exhibit a significantly higher frequency of generally positive evaluations of the proposed policy (i.e. "very positive" and "somewhat positive") compared to the control group.
>
> **Hypothesis 19:** Those who are exposed to and disagree with the civil religious frame will exhibit a significantly higher frequency of generally negative evaluations of the proposed policy (i.e. "very negative" and "somewhat negative") compared to the control group.
>
> **Hypothesis 20:** Exposure to the civil religious frame will significantly increase ideological polarization on evaluations of the proposed policy compared to the control group. Those who agree/disagree with the civil religious frame will express more extreme policy positions (i.e. "very

positive"/"very negative") than those who remain ambivalent towards the frames and those in the control group.

Data and Methods

The experiment was embedded within the 2016 Rutgers University Center for the Experimental Study of Psychology and Politics Omnibus Survey. Four graduate students from the Rutgers University Political Science Department contributed experiments[3] and the order of their presentation was randomized for survey participants[4]. It was administered online to a national sample of 1,889 adults by Survey Sampling International between March 2 and March 8, 2016. From that sample, 1,433 individuals participated in my portion of the survey.

Table 2a illustrates that the unweighted sample is a fairly good representation of national demographic patterns. Participants were predominantly white, slightly female, in their 40s, and with some college education. On average, they are not very religious (seldom attend religious services), are of moderate income ($50-75k/year) and not inclined to trust the Federal Government. Finally, they score relatively high on a political knowledge scale (4.5 out of 6), are ideologically moderate, and over 90% of the sample were registered voters.

Table 2b provides summary statistics on the religious affiliations of the sample. Compared to the 2015 Pew Report on "America's Changing Landscape"[5], the percentage of Christians is roughly 15% lower than the national average while the share of "Other"

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[3] Henceforth, when I refer to "the study" or "experiment" I am referring to my portion of this omnibus survey.

[4] The total survey time was approximately 25 minutes of which my experiment took approximately 5 minutes to complete.

[5] Pew Research Center, May 12, 2015, "America's Changing Religious Landscape"

faiths is about 10% higher. However, the share of non-believers and unaffiliated in the

sample is on par with those found in the Pew report.

Table 2a: Summary Statistics of Independent Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	N
Female	0.56	0.49	0	1	1433
Age	5.31	1.80	1	8	1433
Pol. Know.	4.54	1.55	0	6	1433
Education	4.87	1.69	1	7	1413
Income	3.08	1.51	1	6	1411
White	0.79	0.40	0	1	1413
Religiosity	2.76	1.52	1	5	1413
Fed. Trust	-0.23	0.56	-1	1	1433
Ideology	0.39	2.04	-3	3	1433
Party	0.15	2.31	-3	3	1433

Notes: Female and White were binary coded. Age was scaled from 1-8 (1= 18-20; 4 = Thirties; 8 = 65 or over). Pol. Know. Reflects number of correct answers (0-6). Education was scaled from 1-7 (1=Some High School; 4 = Some College; 7 = Graduate Work).   Income was scaled from 1-6 (1 = <25k; 3 = 50-75k; 6 = >150k). Religiosity was scaled from 1-5 (1 = Never attend religious services; 3 = About once a month; 5 = At least once a week). Fed. Trust was scaled from -1 to 1 (-1 = No trust at all; -.5 = Not very much trust, 0 = Indifferent; .5 = Fair amount of trust; 1 = Great deal of trust). Ideology was scaled from -3 to 3 (-3 = Strong Liberal; -2 = Moderate Liberal; -1 = Weak Liberal; 0 = Moderate; 1 = Weak Conservative; 2 = Moderate Conservative; 3 = Strong Conservative). Party was scaled from -3 to 3 (-3 = Strong Democrat; -2 = Moderate Democrat; -1 = Weak Democrat; 0 = Independent; 1 = Weak Republican, 2 = Moderate Republican; 3 = Strong Republican).

Table 2b: Summary Statistics of Religious Affiliation

Variable	Mean	SD	N	Freq.	% of N
Catholic	.218	.413	1413	308	21.8
Protestant	.140	.347	1413	199	14.1
Born Again	.209	.407	1413	296	20.9
Christian	.568	.495	1413	803	56.8
Jewish	.036	.186	1413	51	3.6
Muslim	.011	.105	1413	16	1.1
Some Other	.123	.329	1413	175	12.4
Other	.171	.376	1413	242	17.1
Atheist	.048	.214	1413	68	4.8
Agnostic	.043	.204	1413	62	4.4
Non Belief	.092	.289	1413	130	9.2
Unaffiliated	.154	.361	1413	218	15.4
Don't Know	.014	.118	1413	20	1.4

Notes: All variables are binary coded with "1" indicating membership in that category. Those indicating affiliation as Catholic or Protestant were subsequently asked if they considered themselves to be "Born Again." Catholic and Protestant therefore exclude those who indicated they considered themselves to be "Born Again." The Christian category reflects those affiliated as Catholic, Protestant, or Born Again. The Other category reflects those affiliated with Jewish, Muslim, or Some Other Religion. The Non Belief category reflect those affiliated with Atheist or Agnostic.

The study employed a 4 x 2 between-subjects design (Figure 1). After answering a

series of politically oriented demographic questions[6], participants were randomly

assigned to one of two "policy groups" each focused on a different hypothetically

proposed bill before Congress (Affirmative Action in College Admissions or Tax

Reform). Participants within these two policy groups were then randomly assigned[7]

again into either a Liberal Control group, a Liberal Treatment group, a Conservative

Control group, or a Conservative Treatment group (8 groups in total). All groups were

tasked with reading a short political statement reflecting either a liberal or conservative

argument in favor of the proposed policy. However, the treatment condition replaced

extraneous text from the control with civil religious language. (Full text of all political

statements can be found in the appendix.)

Figure 1: Experimental Groups

Liberal Control		Liberal Treatment		Conservative Control		Conservative Treatment	
Tax Reform	Aff. Action	Tax Reform	Aff. Action	Tax Reform	Aff. Action	Tax Reform	Aff. Action
166	180	186	166	194	177	182	182

All statements began with the following passage:

"Congressman Sam Hayes has made a number of speeches on the topic of (Tax Reform/Affirmative Action in College Admissions). Please read the following excerpt from one of his recent speeches:"

The subsequent passage was manipulated depending on whether participants were

assigned into the treatment or control groups:

[6] Politically oriented demographic questions (Party and Ideological identification, Political Knowledge, Trust in Government) were administered prior to the survey experiments while other demographic questions were asked at the end of the survey after all experiments were completed.
[7] Randomization tests were successful; indicating that the variable means did not significantly differ across categories of random assignment. Details are available upon request from the author.

[Control] "The issue of (tax reform/affirmative action in college admissions) is a hot topic in American politics today. My constituents are complaining that congress has dragged their feet for far too long and that something needs to be done about it before things get any worse. I couldn't agree more."

[Treatment] "Our founding fathers created a nation built on the idea that all are created equal with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These were not just empty words, but sacred principles that made America the envy of the world. But we've gotten off track."

The control group language functions as a place holder to control for length of text effects and is rather insignificant. The treatment language represents a civil religious jeremiad where participants are reminded of the exceptional and sacred nature of the American founding coupled with a lament that we have "gotten off track." It should also be noted while both the control and treatment serve to highlight the salience of the issues under consideration, the intent of the latter was to prime civil religious sentiments and form an association between these ideas and the ideological argument that follows:

[Tax Reform Liberal] "Our current tax system sends the wrong message. The rich and powerful are rewarded with tax breaks while the working poor barely make ends meet. This not only stifles economic growth but it's also terribly unfair. Equality of opportunity means that everyone has a chance to reach their potential. We must reform the tax code so that it provides that opportunity to everyone."

[Tax Reform Conservative] "Our current tax system sends the wrong message. We punish those who work hard and become successful with higher tax rates than the rest of our population. This not only stifles economic growth but it's also terribly unfair. Our tax policies should be based on the principle of equality and it is for that reason that we must institute reforms in which everyone pays the same tax rate as everyone else."

[Affirmative Action Liberal] "Efforts to eliminate considering a college applicant's race and ethnicity send the wrong message. We simply cannot ignore the effects of historical and contemporary discrimination on an individual's ability to compete equally with other applicants. Admissions should be based on the principle of equality and that means that special

> efforts must be made to ensure that qualified students who have experienced these disadvantages have an opportunity to attend college."

> [Affirmative Action Conservative] "Considering a college applicant's race and ethnicity sends the wrong message. Students should be accepted into college based on their own academic merits and nothing more. At best, considering race and ethnicity is terribly unfair and at worst, it constitutes reverse discrimination. Admissions should be based on the principle of equality. Everyone should have an equal chance of getting into the college of their choice based on their own academic record."

Each of the preceding passages offers an ideological justification for policy reform (or to maintain the status quo in the case of the liberal affirmative action policy). All of the policy frames are centered on the principle of equality and posit that the status quo violates that principle (with the exception of liberal affirmative action policy which notes that reforms would violate that principle). Importantly, although each passage references salient values/principles, no explicit civil religious themes were mentioned. Thus, any differences between the control and treatment groups can be solely attributed to the incorporation of civil religious language in the second and final passages:

> [Control] In the coming weeks, I will propose such a bill in the US Congress and I hope that my colleagues will give it the attention that it deserves. The inequality of our (tax policy/college admissions process) hurts everyone and is simply too important to ignore."

> [Treatment] This issue is not just about dollars and cents but whether our government stays true to our founding values. Equality is a bedrock principle of our great nation. (Our tax policies are not/Reforming our college admissions process is not/Our college admissions process is not) just unfair, they are un-American."

As with the second passage, the civil religious text of the treatment replaced extraneous language in the control that is presumably inconsequential. The purpose of this passage was to reinforce the salience of this issue and, in the case of the treatment conditions, to provide another civil religious queue. After concluding their assigned political

statements participants were then asked to indicate their level of agreement with its contents[8].

As a distracter task, participants were then asked to read another speech excerpt honoring American firefighters that was similar in length to the aforementioned political statement (Full text can be found in the appendix). This passage contained no civil religious or ideological language and was actually derived from speeches delivered by President George W. Bush and Barack Obama. To avoid arousing suspicion that this was a distracter task, participants were also asked to register their level of agreement with the passage before answering an innocuous question about building a monument for firefighters[9].

Participants were next asked to respond to questions that lie at the heart of this analysis. Participants in the Tax Reform groups were asked three policy questions[10] regarding the issue and likewise for those in the Affirmative Action groups[11]. To simplify the analysis, I recoded the response options such that answers we would

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[8] "How much do you agree with this speech excerpt?" (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree.)

[9] "How much do you agree with the following sentiment: There should be a monument to firefighters on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.?" (Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly agree.)

[10] Each participant was asked "how much do you agree with the following sentiment?" with response the following response options: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree. Question 1 states "Everyone should pay the same tax rate regardless of income"; Question 2 states "We should raise taxes on the wealthy to expand programs for the poor"; and Question 3 states "We should lower taxes on the wealthy to encourage economic growth."

[11] Each participant was asked "how much do you agree with the following sentiment?" with response the following response options: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree. Question 1 states "An individual's race and ethnicity should be considered as one factor among many in the college admissions process"; Question 2 states "Considering a candidate's race and ethnicity as one factor among many in college admissions is unfair to white students"; and Question 3 states "Considering a candidate's race and ethnicity as one factor among many in college admissions is necessary to ensure equality."

associate with traditionally conservative policy positions had positive values and created an index representing the mean response to all tax and affirmative action questions[12].

After all four of the survey experiments in this omnibus survey were concluded, participants were asked to register their level of agreement[13] with a series of civil religious statements. These statements were inspired by previous studies of civil religious belief (Wimberly et al, 1976; Chapp, 2012) but modified to reflect my own conceptualization of civil religion. Most studies have utilized rather overt references to religion to highlight the religious aspect of the concept. However, this has often been done at the expense of invoking a sense of tradition or national mythology which are equally important conceptual components for American civil religion. I have sought to bridge that gap by in my experimental frames by making explicit reference to the "Founding Fathers" and utilizing the term "sacred" as a religious cue. To test the reliability of these frames and my "bridge", two of my civil religious belief questions employed the word "God" in their phrasing while the other two used the word "Sacred":

> CRQ1 - How much do you agree with the following statement: "The Founding Fathers instilled sacred values that have made America a great nation.

> CRQ2 – How much do you agree with the following statement: "America is God's chosen nation."

> CRQ3 - How much do you agree with the following statement: "It is the will of God that America be an example of freedom and equality for all nations."

> CRQ4 - How much do you agree with the following statement: "Americans and our representatives in government ought to rededicate themselves to the sacred values of America."

---

[12] The Tax Reform Index had a Cornbach's Alpha score of .576 while the Affirmative Action Index scored a .622.

[13] Responses were coded on a 5-point scale (-1 = Strongly Disagree, -.5 = Disagree, 0 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, .5 = Agree, 1 = Strongly Agree).

As with the policy evaluation questions, I also created an index of all four questions, an index for just those questions which mention "God" and an index for just those questions which mention "Sacred" [14].

Who is Civil Religious: Results

As can be seen from Table 3, there was a considerable difference in levels of agreement between questions that included the word "god" (CRQ2 and CRQ3) and those which included "sacred" (CRQ1 and CRQ4). The mean of those in the latter category was just north of .5 (Agree) while those of the former hovered around 0 (Neither Agree nor Disagree). As can be seen from the graphs in figure 2, the civil religious questions that employed the word "sacred" received overwhelming levels of agreement while CRQ2 was largely met with ambivalence and CRQ3 fared little better. This suggests that while the sample had little opposition to civil religious ideas when God retained an implicit connection, once God was made explicit, support declined precipitously. To evaluate whether both the "God" and "Sacred" questions accurately reflect civil religious beliefs, I constructed an index containing all four questions and evaluated their internal consistency and reliability [15]. The index received a Cornbach Alpha score of .801 which is generally considered to be above the minimum threshold required to assert reliability. These results support my contention that civil religious language need not include the word "god" (Hypothesis 16) and that its inclusion limits the manner in which it can be successfully employed in political rhetoric.

[14] The CRQ Index (all 4 questions) had a Cornbach's Alpha score of .801, the CRQ God Index (Questions 2 and 3) had a score of .766, and the CRQ Sacred Index (Questions 1 and 4) had a score of .878.
[15] This index was constructed by calculating the mean of all available scores for each case with a minimum of three scores required for the CRQ index and minimum of one score required for the CRQ God and Sacred indexes.

Table 3: Civil Religious Belief Questions: Overview

Variable	Mean (Std. Dev.)
CRQ1	.551 (.461)
CRQ2	-.011 (.667)
CRQ3	.112 (.659)
CRQ4	.510 (.499)
CRQ Index	.290 (.458)
CRQ God Index	.050 (.626)
CRQ Sacred Index	.530 (.433)

Notes: Variables are coded on a 5 point scale (-1, -.5, 0, .5, 1) from Strong Disagreement to Strong Agreement. The sample size for all groups was 1429.

Figure 2: Civil Religious Belief Questions: Graphs
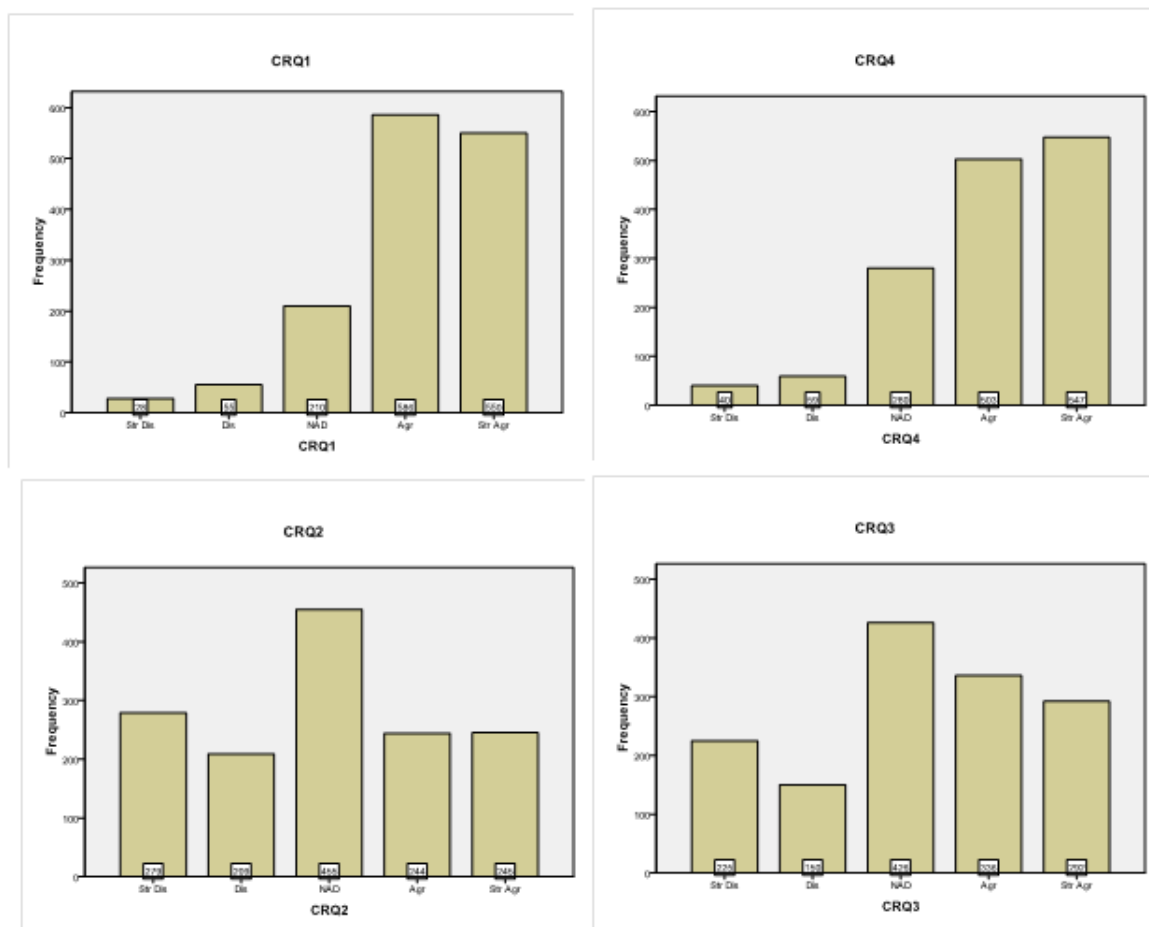
The next step was to dissect the data to determine what demographic and political

attributes can help to explain opinions regarding these civil religious beliefs. Because

these questions appeared in the survey after the experimental manipulations, it is

necessary to explore the effect that exposure to a civil religious treatment would have on responses. Tables 4a and 4b provide the results of a regression evaluating civil religious beliefs. Consistent with Hypothesis 14a, we can see that age has a significant positive effect upon civil religious questions that incorporate the term "sacred" but not "god." While it is not terribly surprising to find that older Americans are more likely to hold civil religious beliefs, the absence of a significant relationship with "god" questions was unexpected; particularly since explicit references to "god" in political rhetoric were more likely in the past than the present. Consistent with Hypothesis 14b, Political knowledge and educational attainment had significant negative effects upon civil religious beliefs for most of the models (CRQ1 and Sacred Index were not significant for Political Knowledge.) While income failed to register a significant effect, being white had a significant positive effect for CRQ1 and the sacred index but a negative effect upon CRQ2.

Table 4a: Regression Analyzing Civil Religious Beliefs

Variable	B(SE)			
	CRQ1	CRQ2	CRQ3	CRQ4
(Constant)	.136 (.069)	.558 (.096)	.526 (.092)	.475 (.074)
Female	.019 (.023)	-.041 (.032)	.043 (.031)	.004 (.025)
Age	.042 (.007)***	.007 (.010)	-.008 (.009)	.028 (.007)***
Pol. Know.	.009 (.008)	-.093 (.011)***	-.076 (.011)***	-.030 (.009)***
Education	-.024 (.007)***	-.042 (.010)***	-.053 (.010)***	-.028 (.008)***
Income	.014 (.008)	-.001 (.011)	.010 (.011)	.005 (.009)
White	.135 (.029)***	-.091 (.041)*	-.040 (.039)	.005 (.032)
Religiosity	.032 (.009)***	.062 (.012)***	.087 (.012)***	.045 (.009)***
Party ID	.028 (.006)***	.037 (.009)***	.024 (.009)**	.028 (.007)***
Ideology	.030 (.007)***	.047 (.010)***	.063 (.010)***	.045 (.008)***
Fed. Trust	.053 (.023)*	.199 (.032)***	.155 (.030)***	.005 (.024)
Christian	.011 (.031)	.043 (.044)	.073 (.042)	.019 (.034)
Non-Belief	-.113 (.048)*	-.349 (.067)***	-.347 (.065)***	-.147 (.110)**
Unaffiliated	-.004 (.041)	-.140 (.057)*	-.163 (.054)**	-.077 (.044)
Treatment	.033 (.023)	-.011 (.032)	-.014 (.030)	.008 (.024)
Adj. R²	.186	.239	.289	.188
N	1387	1390	1387	1387

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. Religious variables were binary coded. Christian includes those who identified as "Catholic" or "Protestant". Non-Belief includes those who identified as "Atheist" or "Agnostic". Unaffiliated were those who identified as "Unaffiliated".

Table 4b: Regression Analyzing Civil Religious Beliefs

Variable	B(SE)		
	CRQSCALE	CR-GOD	CR - SACRED
(Constant)	.427 (.063)	.544 (.087)	.310 (.063)
Female	.005 (.021)	.000 (.029)	.009 (.021)
Age	.017 (.006)**	-.001 (.009)	.035 (.006)***
Pol. Know.	-.047 (.007)***	-.084 (.010)***	-.010 (.007)
Education	-.037 (.007)***	-.048 (.009)***	-.027 (.007)***
Income	.007 (.007)	.005 (.010)	.010 (.007)
White	.003 (.027)	-.065 (.037)	.069 (.027)*
Religiosity	.056 (.008)***	.075 (.011)***	.039 (.008)***
Party ID	.030 (.006)***	.031 (.008)***	.028 (.006)***
Ideology	.046 (.007)***	.055 (.009)***	.037 (.007)***
Fed. Trust	.104 (.021)***	.177 (.029)***	.029 (.021)
Christian	.036 (.029)	.058 (.040)	.015 (.029)
Non-Belief	-.236 (.044)***	-.346 (.061)***	-.129 (.044)**
Unaffiliated	-.096 (.038)*	-.152 (.052)**	-.040 (.038)
Treatment	.005 (.021)	-.014 (.028)	.021 (.021)
Adj. R²	.303	.292	.219
N	1389	1390	1390

*Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. Religious variables were binary coded. Christian includes those who identified as "Catholic" or "Protestant". Non-Belief includes those who identified as "Atheist" or "Agnostic". Unaffiliated were those who identified as "Unaffiliated". "Other" served as my reference category and includes those who identified as "Jewish", "Muslim", or "Some other Religion". Those that responded to the religious affiliation question with "Don't Know" where excluded from this analysis.*

Perhaps the most interesting results however are the effects of religion/religiosity and political orientations upon civil religious belief. Starting with the latter, we see that Republicans and Conservatives had significant positive effects upon civil religious beliefs across the board (Hypothesis 14a) along with those that expressed higher levels of trust in the federal government. The former finding was expected given that in contemporary political culture, Republicans and Conservatives are generally more likely to explicitly discuss American Exceptionalism and the religious nature of our nation. Furthermore, it is not terribly surprising that those with high levels of trust are also most likely to express civil religious beliefs. Strong beliefs about the national identity, meaning, and purpose in

the world should result in a high level of faith in our government as the political representative of our nation.

In these models, members of "other" religions (Judaism, Islam, or some other religion) were chosen to serve as the reference group to provide meaningful comparisons to the remaining religious affiliations. These "other" religions all share a belief in God and therefore provide a good comparison to both Christians (who share their belief in God) and Non-Believers (who do not share this belief in God). Furthermore, relying on the "other" category as a reference group provides an interesting comparison against the "unaffiliated" who seem to reject the notion of organized religion while likely exhibiting a high degree of variability in their belief in a higher power (i.e. it is entirely possible that agnostics could also fall into this category.) For the purposes of this analysis, those who responded with "Don't Know" on the religious affiliation question were excluded.

While heightened religiosity predictably had a significant positive effect upon civil religious beliefs (Hypothesis 14a), it is interesting to note that identifying as a Christian had no significant effect whatsoever. Evidently, Christians were no more likely to express civil religious beliefs than members of these "other" religions. This suggests that the civil religious questions employed (and civil religious beliefs in general) are not the exclusive domain of Christian America. Although non-believers exhibited significantly less belief in civil religious tenets than "other" religions, it is interesting to note that both the level of significance and coefficients were smaller for questions utilizing the term "Sacred". Although this finding runs counter to Hypothesis 15, the trends are worth further exploration in the future. Finally, it is worth noting that the "Unaffiliated" exhibited the patterns predicted by Hypothesis 15 for non-believers. Compared to

members of "other" religions, being unaffiliated only produced a significant negative effect on civil religious beliefs for those questions that included the word "God". Given the growing number of such individuals in America society, this finding is incredibly significant as it underscores my argument that civil religious language need not alienate individuals in society. Replacing "god" with "sacred" and other such implicit religious language allows one to successfully appeal to everyone while maintaining the essence that is civil religion.

While being exposed to the civil religious treatment did not have a significant effect upon civil religious beliefs in these models it is possible that the effects of this treatment may be mediated by frame agreement. In other words, the act of agreeing/disagreeing with the civil religious frame should help to prime a civil religious identity (Hypothesis 17). To evaluate this, I have created dummy variables to represent (a) those who were exposed to the treatment and expressed agreement with the frame – TREAT-ACCEPT, (b) those who were exposed to the treatment and expressed disagreement with the frame – TREAT-REJECT, (c) those whose were exposed to the treatment and expressed ambivalence with the frame – TREATMENT-AMBIV, and (d) those in the control group who were not exposed to civil religious language. While it could be argued that such an analysis is problematic because it essentially treats those that accept or reject the frame as their own treatment groups (even though they were all part of the same treatment group originally), I believe that such an analysis is the only way in which to assess the true effects of the treatment.

Table 5a: CIVIL RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS REGRESSION

Variable	B(SE)			
	CRQ1	CRQ2	CRQ3	CRQ4
(Constant)	.164 (.068)	.552 (.096)	.552 (.092)	.496 (.074)
Female	.020 (.023)	-.041 (.032)	.043 (.031)	.005 (.025)
Age	.041 (.007)***	.007 (.010)	-.008 (.009)	.027 (.007)***
Pol. Know.	.007 (.008)	-.091 (.011)***	-.074 (.011)***	-.031 (.009)***
Education	-.024 (.007)**	-.041 (.010)***	-.052 (.010)***	-.028 (.008)***
Income	.013 (.008)	-.002 (.011)	.009 (.011)	.005 (.009)
White	.133 (.029)***	-.089 (.041)*	-.039 (.039)	.004 (.031)
Religiosity	.029 (.009)**	.059 (.012)***	.084 (.012)***	.043 (.009)***
Party ID	.028 (.006)***	.037 (.009)***	.024 (.009)**	.028 (.007)***
Ideology	.029 (.007)***	.046 (.010)***	.062 (.010)***	.044 (.008)***
Fed. Trust	.044 (.022)*	.195 (.032)***	.151 (.030)***	-.003 (.024)
Christian	.006 (.031)	.045 (.044)	.075 (.042)	.015 (.034)
Non-Belief	-.120 (.048)*	-.349 (.067)***	-.346 (.064)***	-.153 (.052)**
Unaffiliated	-.013 (.040)	-.150 (.057)**	-.173 (.055)**	-.085 (.044)
Treatment – AMBIV	-.151 (.040)***	-.009 (.056)	-.017 (.053)	-.137 (.043)**
Treatment – ACCEPT	.255 (.041)***	.031 (.058)	.035 (.056)	.207 (.045)***
Treatment – REJECT	.114 (.054)*	-.135 (.076)	-.123 (.073)	.068 (.058)
Adj. R²	.209	.241	.292	.202
N	1387	1390	1387	1387

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. Religious variables were binary coded. Christian includes those who identified as "Catholic" or "Protestant". Non-Belief includes those who identified as "Atheist" or "Agnostic". Unaffiliated were those who identified as "Unaffiliated". "Other" served as my reference category and includes those who identified as "Jewish", "Muslim", or "Some other Religion". Those that responded to the religious affiliation question with "Don't Know" where excluded from this analysis. Those in the Control treatment group served as the reference group in these models.

Tables 5a and 5b present the results of such an analysis. Looking now to whether exposure to and agreement with the civil religious frames primes a civil religious identity (Hypothesis 17), we can see that significant differences in civil religious beliefs exist with respect to the "sacred" questions, but not those which include the word "god". Those who agreed with the frame expressed significantly more agreement with civil religious belief questions that incorporate the term "sacred." Surprisingly, (an in contrast to Hypothesis 17) those who disagreed with the contents of the frame also expressed more agreement with sacred civil religious belief questions, though this relationship was not significant. However, those who registered ambivalence towards the civil religious frame were significantly less likely than those in the control to agree with civil religious

beliefs that include the word "God". This suggests that when a civil religious frame

elicits a reaction (either positive or negative) it serves to prime a civil religious identity as

expressed in greater agreement with these tenets of civil religion. On the other hand, the

results clearly demonstrate that this does not happen for civil religious questions that

incorporate the word "god"; which adds further credence to my contention that civil

religious framing is more effective with implicit rather than explicit religious language.

Table 5b: CIVIL RELIGIOUS INDEX REGRESSION

Variable	B(SE)		
	CRQSCALE	CR-GOD	CR - SACRED
(Constant)	.436 (.063)	.539 (.087)	.334 (.062)
Female	.006 (.021)	.000 (.029)	.011 (.021)
Age	.016 (.006)**	-.001 (.009)	.034 (.006)***
Pol. Know.	-.047 (.007)***	-.082 (.010)***	-.012 (.007)
Education	-.036 (.007)***	-.047 (.009)***	-.026 (.007)***
Income	.006 (.007)	.004 (.010)	.010 (.007)
White	.003 (.027)	-.063 (.037)	.068 (.027)*
Religiosity	.054 (.008)***	.072 (.011)***	.036 (.008)***
Party ID	.030 (.006)***	.031 (.008)***	.028 (.006)***
Ideology	.045 (.007)***	.054 (.009)***	.037 (.007)***
Fed. Trust	.098 (.021)***	.173 (.029)***	.020 (.021)
Christian	.035 (.029)	.061 (.040)	.011 (.028)
Non-Belief	-.239 (.044)***	-.346 (.061)***	-.135 (.044)**
Unaffiliated	-.106 (.037)**	-.162 (.052)**	-.049 (.037)
Treatment - AMBIV	-.078 (.037)*	-.014 (.051)	-.144 (.036)***
Treatment – ACCEPT	.132 (.038)***	.032 (.053)	.231 (.038)***
Treatment – REJECT	-.019 (.050)	-.129 (.069)	.092 (.049)
Adj. R^2	.313	.295	.241
N	1389	1390	1390

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. Religious variables were binary coded. Christian includes those who identified as "Catholic" or "Protestant".   Non-Belief includes those who identified as "Atheist" or "Agnostic". Unaffiliated were those who identified as "Unaffiliated". "Other" served as my reference category and includes those who identified as "Jewish", "Muslim", or "Some other Religion". Those that responded to the religious affiliation question with "Don't Know" where excluded from this analysis. Those in the Control treatment group served as the reference group in these models.

Polarizing Effects of Civil Religion Reconsidered: Results

The first step in this analysis is to conduct simple ANOVA comparison among the

groups to determine if any significant differences exist with respect to policy evaluation.

Recall that the expectation is for no significant difference to emerge without considering

the effects of ideology and frame agreement. Table 6 presents the results of such an

analysis and reports the group means for the policy questions under consideration. As

suspected, no significant differences were found and no discernible pattern emerges from

this simple comparison of the group means.

Table 6: Policy Evaluation by Experimental Groups

Variable	Mean (Std. Dev.)			
	Tax Lib Control	Tax Lib Treatment	Tax Con Control	Tax Con Treatment
Tax Q1 – Flat Tax	-.054 (.676)	.002 (.696)	-.018 (.685)	-.022 (.692)
Tax Q2 – Tax Wealthy	-.192 (.641)	-.174 (.645)	-.075 (.696)	-.118 (.655)
Tax Q3 – Tax Cut for Wealthy	-.442 (.583)	-.325 (.651)	-.244 (.669)	-.228 (.688)
Tax Q Scale	-.229 (.432)	-.165 (.464)	-.113 (.526)	-.122 (.523)
	AA Lib Control	AA Lib Treatment	AA Con Control	AA Con Treatment
AA Q1 – Race One Factor	.292 (.694)	.367 (.644)	.372 (.692)	.417 (.672)
AA Q2 – Race Unfair to Whites	.180 (.638)	.084 (.688)	.240 (.646)	.222 (.653)
AA Q3 – Race Necessary/Equal	.175 (.667)	.201 (.658)	.271 (.690)	.214 (.646)
AA Q Scale	.217 (.495)	.217 (.473)	.294 (.539)	.284 (.499)

Notes: Variables are coded on a 5 point scale (-1, -.5, 0, .5, 1) such that conservative preferences are positive and liberal preferences are negative. (I.e. Agreement that we should raise taxes on wealthy was negative while agreement that we should lower taxes on wealthy was positive). The sample size for each group are: Tax Lib Control = 166; Tax Lib Treat = 186, Tax Con Control = 194, Tax Con Treat = 182; AA Lib Control = 180; AA Lib Treat = 166; AA Con Control = 177; AA Con Treat = 182.

As was the case in the last chapter, I argue that in order to explore the true effects of

the experimental manipulations, it is necessary to explore the indirect effects of ideology

as mediated through frame agreement. As such, I have constructed ANCOVA models

that examine differences among those that accept, (Treatment – Accept) reject,

(Treatment – Reject) or expressed ambivalence (Treatment-Ambiv) towards the treatment

frame along with similar variables for those in the control group who accepted (Control-

Accept) and rejected (Control-Reject) the frame that did not include civil religious

language. Those in the control group who expressed ambivalence towards the frame

serve as the reference group in these analyses. In an effort to simplify an already

complex analysis, I have opted to rely upon the policy question indices as my dependent

variables rather than reporting the results of separate analyses on each policy question.

Table 7a: ANCOVA Predicting Policy Evaluations

Variable	B(SE)			
	TRL	TRC	AAL	AAC
(Constant)	-.138 (.141)	-.355 (.138)**	-.011 (.137)	.269 (.150)
Female	-.057 (.043)	-.067 (.043)	.040 (.046)	.071 (.044)
Age	-.032 (.013)*	-.012 (.013)	-.004 (.014)	.006 (.013)
Pol. Know.	-.019 (.015)	.000 (.016)	.029 (.015)	.018 (.016)
Education	.030 (.014)**	.022 (.014)	-.018 (.015)	-.017 (.014)
Income	.004 (.016)	.043 (.015)**	.011 (.016)	.002 (.016)
White	.073 (.056)	-.055 (.054)	.151 (.056)**	.000 (.062)
Religiosity	.048 (.015)**	.010 (.014)	-.017 (.016)	-.061 (.015)***
Party ID	.025 (.013)*	.028 (.012)*	.012 (.013)	.042 (.013)***
Ideology	.040 (.014)**	.060 (.013)***	.046 (.014)***	.024 (.015)
Fed. Trust	.085 (.044)	-.039 (.041)	-.114 (.045)*	-.198 (.045)***
Treatment – Accept	-.185 (.092)*	.247 (.092)**	-.050 (.079)	.147 (.097)
Treatment – Reject	.320 (.141)*	-.307 (.104)**	.299 (.099)**	-.494 (.137)***
Treatment – Ambiv.	.055 (.103)	.139 (.117)	.065 (.090)	-.040 (.123)
Control – Accept	-.188 (.092)*	.259 (.090)**	-.082 (.079)	.135 (.097)
Control – Reject	.188 (.140)	-.330 (.105)**	.230 (.085)**	-.559 (.133)***
Adj. R²	.250	.436	.293	.390
N	346	371	338	356

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. TRL and TRC refer to the tax policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. AAL and AAC refer to the Affirmative Action policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. CRQ Scale refers to the Index of Civil Religious Belief described earlier. Treatment-Accept is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed agreement with the frame. Treatment-Reject is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed disagreement with the frame. Treatment-Ambiv is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who neither agree nor disagree with the frame. Control-Accept is a binary coded group representing those in the Control group who expressed agreement with the frame. Control-Reject is a binary coded group representing those in the Control group who expressed disagreement with the frame.

As table 7a demonstrates, the hypothesized influence of the treatment is largely

confirmed. Hypotheses 18 and 19 state that those who agree/disagree with the civil

religious frame will express significantly different policy opinions than those in the

control group. In the Tax Reform groups, we can see that acceptance of the treatment

frame produced significantly more liberal/conservative policy opinions for the

liberal/conservative groups compared to those in the control who expressed ambivalence

(reference group in these models). While in the Affirmative Action groups only

treatment frame rejection resulted in significant differences (more conservative policy opinions in the liberal condition and more liberal policy opinions in the conservative condition). However, the substantive power of these results is diluted by the fact that identical relationships occurred among those that accepted or rejected the control frames. The sole exception was in the Tax Reform Liberal group where rejection of the control frame did not have a significant effect.

To better illustrate these relationships, tables 7b and 7c present the estimated marginal means and marginal mean differences for this ANCOVA model. We can see that significant differences exist to varying degrees between those that Agree, Disagree or were ambivalent towards the frame within the treatment and control groups. In the Tax Reform Liberal group, those that agreed with the civil religious and control frame were significantly different than those who rejected it and were ambivalent; and in the case of the civil religious frame, those that rejected the frame were significantly different than the ambivalent group but this was not the case in the control condition. In the Tax Reform Conservative group, those that agreed with the civil religious and control frame were significantly different than those that disagreed and those that disagreed were significantly different from those that were ambivalent. While those who agreed with the control frame significantly different from those that disagreed, the same cannot be said for the civil religious condition.

In the Affirmative Action Liberal group, those that agreed with the civil religious and control frame significantly differed from those that disagreed but not those that were ambivalent; however in both conditions those that disagreed were significantly different from those that were ambivalent. Finally, in the Affirmative Action Conservative group,

those that agreed with the civil religious and control frames were significantly different from those that disagreed with the frame and those that disagreed with the frame were significantly different from those that were ambivalent to the frame. However, in the civil religious condition, those that agreed were also significantly different from those that were ambivalent; this was not the case with the control.

Table 7b: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means By Frame Agreement and Group

TRL	Mean(SE)	TRC	Mean (SE)
Treat-Accept	-.271 (.036)	Treat-Accept	.050 (.039)
Treat-Reject	.235 (.110)	Treat-Reject	-.504 (.058)
Treat – Ambiv	-.030 (.058)	Treat – Ambiv	-.059 (.081)
Control-Accept	-.274 (.035)	Control – Accept	.061 (.036)
Control-Reject	.103 (.112)	Control-Reject	-.528 (.060)
Control – Ambiv	-.085 (.085)	Control - Ambiv	-.198 (.084)
AAL	Mean (SE)	AAC	Mean (SE)
Treat-Accept	.123 (.045)	Treat-Accept	.385 (.035)
Treat-Reject	.473 (.074)	Treat-Reject	-.256 (.102)
Treat – Ambiv	.238 (.065)	Treat – Ambiv	.198 (.084)
Control-Accept	.091 (.048)	Control-Accept	.373 (.036)
Control-Reject	.403 (.056)	Control-Reject	-.321 (.095)
Control - Ambiv	.173 (.064)	Control - Ambiv	.238 (.090)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Unfortunately, no significant differences exist between comparable groups (i.e. those that agreed with the treatment and those that agreed with the control); however, it is clear that frame agreement remains an important factor in this analysis as it was in the previous chapter. Although the inclusion of civil religious language did not have an independent impact beyond that which occurs with the inclusion of ideological language, the methodological argument that frame agreement matters is validated.

Table 7c: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means Differences By Frame Agreement and Group

TRL	**Treat-Reject**	**Treat-Ambiv**	**Control-Accept**	**Control-Reject**	**Control-Ambiv**
Treat-Accept	-.505 (.117)***	-.240 (.068)**	.003 (.051)	-.374 (.118)**	-.185 (.092)*
Treat-Reject	-	.265 (.124)*	.508 (.116)***	.132 (.155)	.320 (.141)*
Treat-Ambiv	-	-	.243 (.068)***	-.133 (.125)	.055 (.103)
Control – Accept	-	-	-	-.377 (.118)**	-.188 (.092)*
Control – Reject	-	-	-	-	.188 (.140)
TRC	Treat-Reject	Treat-Ambiv	Control-Accept	Control-Reject	Control-Ambiv
Treat-Accept	.554 (.071)***	.108 (.090)	-.012 (.053)	.577 (.072)***	.247 (.092)**
Treat-Reject	-	-.445 (.100)***	-.565 (.069)***	.024 (.082)	-.307 (.104)**
Treat-Ambiv	-	-	-.120 (.089)	.469 (.101)***	.139 (.117)
Control – Accept	-	-	-	.589 (.071)***	.259 (.090)*
Control – Reject	-	-	-	-	-.330 (.105)**
AAL	Treat-Reject	Treat-Ambiv	Control-Accept	Control-Reject	Control-Ambiv
Treat-Accept	-.349 (.088)***	-.115 (.080)	.032 (.066)	-.280 (.074)***	-.050 (.079)
Treat-Reject	-	.234 (.099)*	.382 (.091)***	.069 (.090)	.299 (.099)**
Treat-Ambiv	-	-	.148 (.081)	-.165 (.087)	.065 (.090)
Control – Accept	-	-	-	-.312 (.075)***	-.082 (.079)
Control – Reject	-	-	-	-	.230 (.086)**
AAC	Treat-Reject	Treat-Ambiv	Control-Accept	Control-Reject	Control-Ambiv
Treat-Accept	.641 (.108)***	.187 (.091)*	.012 (.050)	.706 (.102)***	.147 (.097)
Treat-Reject	-	-.454 (.132)**	-.629 (.109)***	.064 (.135)	-.494 (.137)***
Treat-Ambiv	-	-	-.175 (.092)	.519 (.126)***	-.040 (.123)
Control – Accept	-	-	-	.694 (.103)***	.135 (.097)
Control – Reject	-	-	-	-	-.559 (.133)***

*Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.*

Polarizing Effects of Civil Religion Reconsidered: Alternative Analysis

While the preceding analysis failed to demonstrate significant differences between

comparable groups (i.e. those in the treatment that agreed with the frame and those in the

control that agreed with the frame), it could be argued that such a comparison is not vital

to my hypotheses. The core of my argument has been that those who are exposed to and

agree/disagree with a civil religious frame will respond differently than those who are not

exposed to a civil religious frame (i.e. the control). Tables 8a, 8b, and 8c present the

results of a similar ANCOVA as was just conducted except that the Control group is not

subdivided according to frame agreement and serves as the reference group. Therefore,

the treatment group results represent differences between responses to the civil religious

treatment compared to those who are exposed to a non-civil religious frame.

Table 8a: ANCOVA Predicting Policy Evaluations – Alternative Model

Variable	B(SE)			
	TRL	TRC	AAL	AAC
(Constant)	-.268 (.123)*	-.194 (.131)	-.073 (.129)	.354 (.138)*
Female	-.062 (.044)	-.085 (.047)	.045 (.047)	.086 (.047)
Age	-.028 (.013)*	-.009 (.014)	.000 (.014)	.008 (.014)
Pol. Know.	-.024 (.015)	-.024 (.017)	.040 (.016)*	.003 (.017)
Education	.034 (.014)*	.028 (.016)	-.014 (.016)	-.030 (.015)*
Income	-.002 (.016)	.045 (.016)**	.014 (.017)	.009 (.017)
White	.066 (.057)	-.085 (.059)	.159 (.057)**	.048 (.065)
Religiosity	.049 (.015)**	.015 (.015)	-.021 (.016)	-.063 (.016)***
Party ID	.027 (.013)*	.031 (.013)*	.013 (.013)	.044 (.013)**
Ideology	.047 (.015)***	.067 (.014)***	.053 (.015)***	.042 (.016)**
Fed. Trust	.085 (.045)	-.047 (.045)	-.126 (.046)*	-.190 (.047)***
Treatment – Accept	-.054 (.049)	.162 (.053)**	-.083 (.057)	.107 (.049)*
Treatment – Reject	.450 (.117)***	-.369 (.071)***	.233 (.082)**	-.485 (.113)***
Treatment - Ambiv	.184 (.067)*	.051 (.094)	.031 (.074)	-.063 (.095)
Adj. R^2	.225	.325	.258	.311
N	346	371	338	356

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. TRL and TRC refer to the tax policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. AAL and AAC refer to the Affirmative Action policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. Treatment-Accept is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed agreement with the frame. Treatment-Reject is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed disagreement with the frame. Treatment-Ambiv is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who neither agree nor disagree with the frame. Control is a binary coded group representing everyone in the control group.

The results of this analysis confirm the hypothesized relationships. Those who agreed with the treatment frame in the conservative policy groups were significantly more likely than those in their respective control group to register conservative policy preferences (Hypothesis 18). However, those who agreed with the treatment in the liberal policy groups failed to register significant differences. With respect to Hypothesis 19, those who reject the treatment expressed significantly different policy opinions than those in the control across all conditions. Those that reject the liberal treatment express more conservative policy preferences compared to the control group and vice versa. Interestingly, in the liberal tax reform policy group, ambivalence to the frame had a significant positive (conservative) effect on policy preferences compared to the control group. Broadly speaking, these results confirm the hypothesized relationships regarding direction of policy opinion. Even after controlling for ideology, levels of civil religious beliefs (whether inherent or reflective of frame exposure), and other known political covariates, exposure to the civil religious treatments had a significant impact on policy evaluation.

Table 8b: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means by Frame Agreement and Group – Alternative Model

TRL	Mean(SE)	TRC	Mean (SE)
Treat-Accept	-.271 (.037)	Treat-Accept	.046 (.042)
Treat-Reject	.233 (.112)	Treat-Reject	-.485 (.064)
Treat – Ambiv	-.033 (.058)	Treat – Ambiv	-.064 (.089)
Control	-.217 (.032)	Control	-.116 (.031)
AAL	Mean (SE)	AAC	Mean (SE)
Treat-Accept	.130 (.047)	Treat-Accept	.380 (.037)
Treat-Reject	.446 (.076)	Treat-Reject	-.213 (.108)
Treat – Ambiv	.244 (.066)	Treat – Ambiv	.210 (.089)
Control	.213 (.032)	Control	.273 (.033)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Table 8c: ANCOVA – Policy Evaluation Marginal Means Differences by Frame Agreement and Group – Alternative Model

	Tax Reform Liberal		
	Treat–Reject	Treat – Ambiv	Control
Treat – Accept	-.504 (.118)***	-.238 (.070)**	-.054 (.049)
Treat – Reject		.266 (.126)*	.450 (.117)***
Treat - Ambiv			.184 (.067)**

	Tax Reform Conservative		
	Treat-Reject	Treat – Ambiv	Control
Treat – Accept	.531 (.077)***	.111 (.099)	.162 (.053)**
Treat – Reject		-.420 (.109)***	-.369 (.071)***
Treat - Ambiv			.051 (.094)

	Affirmative Action Liberal		
	Treat–Reject	Treat – Ambiv	Control
Treat – Accept	-.316 (.090)**	-.114 (.082)	-.083 (.057)
Treat – Reject		.202 (.101)*	.233 (.082)**
Treat - Ambiv			.031 (.074)

	Affirmative Action Conservative		
	Treat-Reject	Treat – Ambiv	Control
Treat – Accept	.592 (.114)***	.170 (.097)	.107 (.049)*
Treat – Reject		-.422 (.140)**	-.485 (.113)***
Treat - Ambiv			-.063 (.095)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.

Does Civil Religious Rhetoric Exacerbate Extremism in Policy Opinion?

While it has now been demonstrated that exposure and agreement/disagreement with civil religious rhetoric results in significantly different policy evaluations than those who are not exposed, it remains to be seen whether these differences can be categorized as reflecting heightened opinion polarization (Hypothesis 20). To explore this question, I created a new set of dependent variables that reflect policy preference extremism; those who strongly agree and strongly disagree with the proposed policy are at one extreme and those who are ambivalent towards the policy are at the other. (Strongly Agree/Strongly Disagree = 1; Agree/Disagree = 0.5; Neither Agree nor Disagree = 0.) The higher the score on this variable, the more extreme the policy preferences expressed. As before, I created an index for this extremism variable to simplify the analysis and have created

binary variables to reflect group membership and acceptance/rejection/ambivalence towards the frame for both the treatment and control. In contrast to previous ANCOVAs in this chapter, I have not run separate analysis on the liberal and conservative variants of the frames as the ideological slant of each should have no effect on the levels of extremism as was the case when looking at policy evaluation.

Table 9a: ANCOVA – Predicting Policy Extremism

Variable	B(SE)	
	Tax Reform	Affirm. Action
(Constant)	.337 (.064)***	.494 (.068)***
Female	-.026 (.020)	.013 (.022)
Age	.015 (.006)*	-.010 (.007)
Pol. Know.	.007 (.007)*	-.005 (.008)
Education	-.004 (.006)	.004 (.007)
Income	.000 (.007)	.007 (.008)
White	.013 (.025)	.014 (.028)
Religiosity	.004 (.007)	-.013 (.007)
Party ID	-.014 (.006)**	.002 (.006)
Ideology	-.006 (.006)	.021 (.007)**
Fed. Trust	-.032 (.019)	-.039 (.021)
Treatment – Accept	.188 (.042)***	.188 (.040)***
Treatment – Reject	.228 (.051)***	.142 (.054)**
Treatment – Ambiv	-.037(.049)	.022 (.050)
Control-Accept	.166 (.042)***	.180 (.040)***
Control-Reject	.251 (.052)***	.222 (.048)***
Adj. R^2	.117	.078
N	717	694

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. TRL and TRC refer to the tax policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. AAL and AAC refer to the Affirmative Action policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. Treatment-Accept is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed agreement with the frame. Treatment-Reject is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed disagreement with the frame. Treatment-Ambiv is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who neither agree nor disagree with the frame. Control-Accept is a binary coded group representing those in the Control group who expressed agreement with the frame. Control-Reject is a binary coded group representing those in the Control group who expressed disagreement with the frame.

The results of an ANCOVA with policy extremism as the dependent variable can be found in Table 9. For both Tax Reform and Affirmative Action policies we see that frame agreement and rejection have a significant positive relationship to policy extremism compared to those in the control group who expressed ambivalence.

However, as was the case with the earlier analysis, acceptance and rejection of the control frame also had a similar effect.

The following tables present the estimated marginal means and mean differences for policy extremism. We can see that those that agreed with the treatments (both in tax reform and affirmative action policy) were slightly (but not significantly) more extreme in their opinions than those that agreed with the control. The opposite was true for those that rejected the frame, with those who rejected the control expressing slightly more extreme opinions than those who rejected the treatment. However, the difference between those that agree/reject the frame and those who were ambivalent towards it is larger among those in the treatment than the control for the tax policy group; and this gap was smaller for the treatment in the affirmative action policy group. For all groups, agreement and rejection of the frame produced more extreme policy opinions than those who expressed ambivalence. Although the differences were not significant, it is also worth nothing that those who expressed ambivalence towards the treatment registered less extreme policy opinions than those who expressed ambivalence in the control.

Table 9b: ANCOVA – Policy Extremism Marginal Means By Frame Agreement and Group

Tax Reform	Mean(SE)	Affirmative Action	Mean (SE)
Treat-Accept	.629 (.017)	Treat-Accept	.654 (.019)
Treat-Reject	.669 (.033)	Treat-Reject	.608 (.040)
Treat-Ambiv	.404 (.030)	Treat-Ambiv	.488 (.035)
Control-Accept	.607 (.016)	Control-Accept	.646 (.019)
Control-Reject	.692 (.034)	Control-Reject	.688 (.032)
Control-Ambiv	.441 (.039)	Control-Ambiv	.466 (.036)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Table 9c: ANCOVA – Policy Extremism Marginal Means Differences By Frame Agreement and Group

| | Tax Reform | | | | |
	Treat-Reject	Treat-Ambiv	Control-Accept	Control-Reject	Control-Ambiv
Treat-Accept	-.040 (.037)	.225 (.035)***	.021 (.024)	-.064 (.038)	.188 (.042)***
Treat-Reject	-	.265 (.045)***	.062 (.037)	-.023 (.047)	.228 (.051)***
Treat-Ambiv	-	-	-.204 (.035)***	-.288 (.046)***	-.037 (.049)
Control – Accept	-	-	-	-.085 (.037)*	.166 (.042)***
Control – Reject	-	-	-	-	.251 (.052)***
	Affirmative Action				
	Treat-Reject	Treat-Ambiv	Control-Accept	Control-Reject	Control-Ambiv
Treat-Accept	.046 (.044)	.166 (.040)***	.008 (.027)	-.034 (.038)	.188 (.040)***
Treat-Reject	-	.120 (.054)*	-.037 (.045)	-.080 (.051)	.142 (.054)**
Treat-Ambiv	-	-	-.158 (.040)***	-.200 (.048)***	.022 (.050)
Control – Accept	-	-	-	-.042 (.038)	.180 (.040)***
Control – Reject	-	-	-	-	.222 (.048)***

Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.

Extremism Exacerbated: Alternative Analysis

For similar reasons as previously described with the Alternative Policy Opinion ANCOVA models I will once again proceed with an alternative model that compares those that expressed acceptance, rejection, and ambivalence towards the civil religious frame to those in the control group. Tables 10a, 10b, and 10c report the results of this analysis. We can see that age had a significant positive effect upon policy extremism for the tax policy groups. Identifying as a Republican had a significant negative effect upon tax policy extremism while ideological conservatives were significantly more extreme with regards to affirmative action policy preferences.

Table 10a: ANCOVA – Predicting Policy Extremism – Alternative Model

Variable	B(SE)	
	Tax Reform	**Affirm. Action**
Constant	.471 (.056)***	.620 (.062)***
Female	-.028 (.020)	.006 (.022)
Age	.015 (.006)*	-.008 (.007)
Pol. Know.	.013 (.007)	-.002 (.008)
Education	-.004 (.006)	.005 (.007)
Income	.001 (.007)	.011 (.008)
White	.009 (.025)	.012 (.029)
Religiosity	.004 (.007)	-.014 (.008)
Party ID	-.014 (.006)**	-.002 (.006)
Ideology	-.008 (.006)	.022 (.007)*
Fed. Trust	-.030 (.020)	-.038 (.022)
Treatment – Accept	.028 (.022)	.031 (.025)
Treatment – Reject	.065 (.036)	-.020 (.044)
Treatment - Ambiv	-.195 (.034)***	-.132 (.039)**
Adj. R^2	.089	.047
N	717	694

*Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. TRL and TRC refer to the tax policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. AAL and AAC refer to the Affirmative Action policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. Treatment-Accept is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed agreement with the frame. Treatment-Reject is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who expressed disagreement with the frame. Treatment-Ambivalence is a binary coded group representing those in the Treatment group who neither agree nor disagree with the frame. Control is a binary coded group representing everyone in the control group.*

While acceptance and rejection of the civil religious treatment did not significantly affect policy extremism they did behave as hypothesized producing elevated levels of extremism compared to the control (except in the Affirmative Action condition where rejection had a slightly lower mean than in the control). Furthermore, frame acceptance and rejection did produce significantly higher levels of extremism compared those who expressed ambivalence in the treatment groups. Perhaps most interesting is that ambivalence to the civil religious treatments had a significant negative effect upon policy extremism compared to the control. The different relationship between accept/reject and ambivalence compared to the control group suggests that when the participant is able to make a connection between civil religious language and policy, their positions are

exacerbated, but when they do not (as indicated by an ambivalent reaction), civil religion

works as traditionalists would assume (it minimizes ideological extremism).

Table 10b: ANCOVA – Policy Extremism Marginal Means by Frame Agreement and Group – Alternative Model

Tax Reform	Mean(SE)	Affirmative Action	Mean (SE)
Treat-Accept	.629 (.017)	Treat-Accept	.654 (.019)
Treat-Reject	.665 (.034)	Treat-Reject	.603 (.041)
Treat – Ambiv	.405 (.031)	Treat – Ambiv	.491 (.036)
Control	.600 (.014)	Control	.623 (.015)

Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal means of the groups and their standard errors.

Table 10c: ANCOVA – Policy Extremism Marginal Means Differences by Frame Agreement and Group – Alternative Model

	Tax Reform		
	Treat–Reject	**Treat – Ambiv**	**Control**
Treat – Accept	-.036 (.038)	-.223 (.035)***	.028 (.022)
Treat – Reject		.260 (.046)***	.065 (.036)
Treat - Ambiv			-.195 (.034)**

	Affirmative Action		
	Treat-Reject	**Treat – Ambiv**	**Control**
Treat – Accept	.051 (.045)	.163 (.041)***	.031 (.025)
Treat – Reject		.112 (.055)*	-.020 (.044)
Treat - Ambiv			.132 (.039)**

*Notes: Figures in columns represent estimated marginal mean difference between groups and their standard errors. Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001.*

Two Stage Least Squares Regression

While the preceding analyses demonstrated the influence of frame agreement upon subsequent policy evaluations, an argument could be made that the former is an inappropriate predictor of the latter. Recall that the purpose of the frame is to legitimize the policy. As such, it is possible that the reasons why one would agree or disagree with the frame are similar to the reasons why one would support or oppose the policy. If this is true, then the errors terms of these two variables would be correlated and the results biased.

To address this concern, this section presents the results of a Two-Stage Least Squares Regression (2SLS). This procedure utilizes an "instrument" to serve as a proxy for the independent variable that is of concern. This instrument must not only be highly correlated with the problematic independent variable (in this case Frame Agreement), but its error terms must not be correlated with those of the dependent variable (Policy Evaluation).

I have decided to utilize the CRQScale (described earlier) as my instrument for this analysis. Recall that this is an index of responses to four civil religious belief questions administered towards the end of the survey and well after respondents evaluated the policy. As such, the error terms of both the index and policy evaluations are unlikely to be correlated. Furthermore, because the treatment frames incorporated civil religious language and agreement with them suggests the priming of civil religious beliefs, I believe that this index will be highly correlated with it. However the first step in a 2SLS procedure is to determine whether this is the case.

The first stage in a 2SLS procedure is to run a regression whereby the problematic term (Frame Agreement) is the dependent variable and the instrument (CRQScale) is included as an independent variable along with the other political/demographic control variables of previous models. This process determines whether your instrument in conjunction with the other independent variables can accurately model the behavior of the problematic variable and reliably serve as its proxy in subsequent analysis. If this is the case, then the predicted values from this first stage regression are entered into the second stage regression that evaluates your dependent variable of interest (Policy Evaluation).

Table 11a provides the results of the first stage of the 2SLS procedure whereby Frame

Agreement is the dependent variable and all of the independent variables employed in

previous models are included. However, this model differs in that CRQScale is included

as an independent variable and the binary variable representing the Treatment condition

is excluded. This exclusion was necessary because in the second stage of this analysis

this Treatment variable will be interacted with the predicted values from this first stage

equation. Therefore it was necessary to avoid incorporating the effect of exposure to the

treatment on frame agreement during the first stage. As we can see, CRQScale not only

has the largest effect upon Frame Agreement but this effect is consistently, highly

significant. As in other models, Conservatives and Republicans were less likely to agree

with the liberal frames and more likely to agree with the conservative frames, but the

effects of Party ID and Ideology were not always significant. Interestingly, trust in the

federal government had a significant positive effect upon policy evaluation in the

affirmative action liberal condition and significant negative effects for both conservative

conditions.

Table 11a: First-Stage Regression Predicting Frame Agreement

Variable	B(SE)			
	TRL	TRC	AAL	AAC
(Constant)	.353 (.144)*	.280 (.166)	.645 (.161)***	.438 (.143)**
Female	.003 (.053)	-.052 (.060)	-.054 (.059)	.066 (.049)
Age	.007 (.016)	-.022 (.017)	-.033 (.018)	-.029 (.014)*
Pol. Know.	.020 (.019)	-.056 (.021)**	-.036 (.020)	.020 (.018)
Education	-.018 (.017)	.027 (.020)	-.028 (.020)	-.035 (.016)*
Income	.014 (.019)	.036 (.021)	-.002 (.021)	.031 (.018)
White	.041 (.067)	-.068 (.075)	-.073 (.072)	.094 (.068)
Religiosity	-.014 (.019)	-.009 (.020)	.009 (.021)	-.036 (.017)*
Party ID	-.045 (.016)**	.020 (.016)	-.028 (.017)	.004 (.014)
Ideology	-.040 (.018)*	.033 (.018)	-.048 (.019)*	.040 (.017)*
Fed. Trust	.000 (.054)	-.121 (.058)*	.164 (.058)**	-.123 (.049)*
CRQScale	.196 (.064)**	.463 (.073)***	.241 (.081)**	.433 (.061)***
Adj. R^2	.073	.201	.177	.252
N	344	370	336	355

Notes: Notes: Significance levels are presented as: *<.05, **<.010, ***<.001. TRL and TRC refer to the tax policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. AAL and AAC refer to the Affirmative Action policy group with the former part of the liberal subgroup and the latter part of the conservative subgroup. CRQ Scale refers to the Index of Civil Religious Belief described earlier.

Table 11b provides the results of the second stage of the 2SLS procedure whereby policy evaluation is the dependent variable. With the exception of CRQScale, all of the independent variables employed in the previous model have been included along with the predicted values from the first stage regression. These predicted values are the instrument standing in as a proxy for Frame Agreement. In addition, this model includes a binary variable representing membership in the treatment groups along with an interaction term between Treatment and the Predicted values in the first stage regression. This interaction represents the effect of Frame Agreement on Policy Evaluation among those in the treatment groups. Therefore, the Treatment variable represents the effect of those in the treatment condition that did not agree with the frame, while the Predicted values from the first stage regression represent the effect of frame agreement among those in the control groups.

Table 11b: Second-Stage Regression Predicting Policy Evaluation

Variable	B(SE)			
	TRL	TRC	AAL	AAC
(Constant)	-.353 (.179)*	-.491 (.148)**	.156 (.235)	.174 (.163)
Female	-.053 (.045)	-.055 (.048)	.037 (.049)	.067 (.050)
Age	-.042 (.014)**	.000 (.014)	-.005 (.016)	.008 (.014)
Pol. Know.	-.026 (.017)	.017 (.020)	.023 (.021)	.004 (.017)
Education	.045 (.016)**	.025 (.016)	-.024 (.019)	-.026 (.017)
Income	-.004 (.017)	.028 (.017)	.012 (.017)	-.004 (.018)
White	.064 (.060)	-.030 (.061)	.137 (.064)*	.023 (.070)
Religiosity	.044 (.016)**	.001 (.016)	-.013 (.018)	-.064 (.016)***
Party ID	.051 (.018)**	.018 (.014)	.006 (.014)	.038 (.014)**
Ideology	.062 (.017)***	.036 (.016)*	.043 (.017)*	.035 (.018)
Fed. Trust	.054 (.046)	.013 (.047)	-.086 (.072)	-.196 (.049)***
Treatment	-.035 (.140)	-.024 (.057)	-.018 (.052)	.279 (.099)**
Pred. Val.	.318 (.315)	.609 (.154)***	-.471 (.279)	.472 (.160)**
Treatment*Pred. Val.	.177 (.282)	.141 (.159)	.232 (.178)	-.508 (.177)**
Adj. R²	.172	.295	.235	.279
N	345	370	336	355

We can see that aside from the affirmative action conservative condition, the only significant effect occurs with predictive values from the first stage regression on the tax reform control condition. In this case the instrument from Frame Agreement has a significant positive effect on policy evaluations. In other words, agreeing with the conservative (non-treatment) frame results in significantly more conservative policy evaluations. While this was expected, the treatment and the interaction between treatment and the instrument for frame agreement did not have a significant effect.

Examining the results for the affirmative action conservative condition, we see that all the variables of interest have large significant effects upon policy evaluation. Controlling for the instrument predicting frame agreement, exposure to the civil religious treatment produced significantly more conservative policy opinions. A similar effect occurred among those that agreed with the frame in the control group (as represented by the instrument predicting frame agreement). Meanwhile, the interaction between membership in the treatment group and agreement with the frame had a significant negative effect on policy evaluations (i.e. more liberal policy opinion).

However, properly interpreting these results requires analyzing the total effects of these variables at different levels of measurement.   Beginning first with the Tax Reform Liberal Condition, a one unit increase in the predicted values of frame agreement in the control group resulted in more liberal policy evaluation (-.035) while a one unit decrease resulted in more conservative policy evaluation (.035). However, among those in the treatment group, the total effect of frame agreement displays a positive trend: a one unit

decrease in these predicted values resulted in a liberal policy evaluation (-.035 + -.318 = -.353), while those ambivalent to the frame were fairly conservative (.318), and a one unit increase resulted in even more conservative policy evaluations (-.035 +.318 +.177 = .460).

A similar phenomenon occurs with respect to the Tax Reform Conservative Condition. Among those in the control group, a one unit increase in the predicted values of frame agreement resulted in conservative policy opinions (.609), while a one unit decrease resulted in liberal policy opinions (-.609). Considering those in the treatment group, a one unit decrease in these predicted values resulted in a more liberal policy position than those in the control (-.024 +-.609 = -.633), those ambivalent to the frame expressed slightly liberal policy evaluations (-.024), while a one unit increase in the predicted values produced more conservative evaluations than the control (-.024 +.609 +.141 = .726).

Moving on to consider the Affirmative Action Liberal Condition, we see that a one unit increase in the predicted values of frame agreement among those in the control group resulted in liberal policy opinions (-.471), while a one unit decrease resulted in conservative policy evaluations (.471). Among those in the treatment group, a one unit decrease produced conservative policy opinions (-.018 +.471 = .453), while those that were ambivalent to the frame resulted in slightly liberal policy opinions (-.018), and a one unit increase resulted more liberal policy evaluations (-.018 +-.471 +.232 = -.257).

Finally, among those in the control group of the Affirmative Action Conservative Condition, a one unit increase in the predicted values of frame agreement produced conservative policy opinions (.472) while a one unit decrease resulted in liberal policy

opinions (-.472). Meanwhile, among those in the treatment group, a one unit decrease

resulted in liberal policy opinion (.279 +- .472 = -.193), ambivalence towards the frame

produced conservative opinions (.279), but a one unit increase in the predicted values

resulted in slightly less conservative opinions than those who were ambivalent (.279 +

.472 +- .508 = .243). Aside from this final result, all of the results presented in this

analysis are consistent with the hypothesized relationships. In other words, agreement

with conservative frames produced conservative policy opinion, agreement with the

liberal frames produced liberal policy opinions, and vice versa. Furthermore, among

those in the treatment groups, we see more extreme opinions those in the control (except

for among those that agreed with the Affirmative Action Conservative Treatment Frame),

although these findings were not significant.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to address some of the potential methodological concerns that

could be leveled at the survey research employed in this dissertation along with providing

a quasi replication of the results reported in the previous chapter. The results confirmed

the reliability of the "god-less" language that I have employed in my civil religion

research and my hypotheses regarding the inclusion of non-theists in the civil religious

community. Perhaps most importantly, the results of this more methodologically

rigorous survey experiment were consistent with the findings of the previous chapter; that

exposure to civil religious frames exacerbates ideologically influenced policy opinions.

In my final chapter, I will summarize the results of my dissertation, address some of

the methodological and theoretical limitations, and offer suggestions for how this

research project may proceed in the future. I will also provide some discussion on the

normative implications the conclusions derived from my research have for American

politics.

Appendix

Liberal Tax Reform Control
Congressman Sam Hayes has made a number of speeches on the topic of Tax Reform. Please read the following excerpt from one of his recent speeches:

"The issue of tax reform is a hot topic in American politics today. My constituents are complaining that congress has dragged their feet for far too long and that something needs to be done about it before things get any worse. I couldn't agree more.

Our current tax system sends the wrong message. The rich and powerful are rewarded with tax breaks while the working poor barely make ends meet. This not only stifles economic growth but it's also terribly unfair. Equality of opportunity means that everyone has a chance to reach their potential. We must reform the tax code so that it provides that opportunity to everyone.

Tax Reform Control] In the coming weeks, I will propose such a bill in the US Congress and I hope that my colleagues will give it the attention that it deserves. The inequality of our tax policy hurts everyone and is simply too important to ignore."

Liberal Tax Reform Treatment
Congressman Sam Hayes has made a number of speeches on the topic of Tax Reform. Please read the following excerpt from one of his recent speeches:

"Our founding fathers created a nation built on the idea that all are created equal with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These were not just empty words, but sacred principles that made America the envy of the world. But we've gotten off track.

Our current tax system sends the wrong message. The rich and powerful are rewarded with tax breaks while the working poor barely make ends meet. This not only stifles economic growth but it's also terribly unfair. Equality of opportunity means that everyone has a chance to reach their potential. We must reform the tax code so that it provides that opportunity to everyone.

This issue is not just about dollars and cents but whether our government stays true to our founding values. Equality is a bedrock principle of our great nation. Our tax policies are not just unfair, they are un-American."

Conservative Tax Reform Control
Congressman Sam Hayes has made a number of speeches on the topic of Tax Reform. Please read the following excerpt from one of his recent speeches:

"The issue of tax reform is a hot topic in American politics today. My constituents are complaining that congress has dragged their feet for far too long and that something needs to be done about it before things get any worse. I couldn't agree more.

Our current tax system sends the wrong message. We punish those who work hard and become successful with higher tax rates than the rest of our population. This not only stifles economic growth but it's also terribly unfair. Our tax policies should be based on the principle of equality and it is for that reason that we must institute reforms in which everyone pays the same tax rate as everyone else.

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This issue is not just about dollars and cents but whether our government stays true to our founding values. Equality is a bedrock principle of our great nation. Our tax policies are not just unfair, they are un-American."

Liberal Affirmative Action Control
Congressman Sam Hayes has made a number of speeches on the topic of Affirmative Action in College Admissions. Please read the following excerpt from one of his recent speeches

"The issue of affirmative action in college admissions is a hot topic in American politics today. My constituents are complaining that congress has dragged their feet for far too long and that something needs to be done about it before things get any worse. I couldn't agree with them more.

Efforts to eliminate considering a college applicant's race and ethnicity send the wrong message. We simply cannot ignore the effects of historical and contemporary discrimination on an individual's ability to compete equally with other applicants. Admissions should be based on the principle of equality and that means that special

efforts must be made to ensure that qualified students who have experienced these disadvantages have an opportunity to attend college.

In the coming weeks, I will propose such a bill in the US Congress and I hope that my colleagues will give it the attention that it deserves. The inequality of our college admissions process hurts everyone and is simply too important to ignore."

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Efforts to eliminate considering a college applicant's race and ethnicity send the wrong message. We simply cannot ignore the effects of historical and contemporary discrimination on an individual's ability to compete equally with other applicants. Admissions should be based on the principle of equality and that means that special efforts must be made to ensure that qualified students who have experienced these disadvantages have an opportunity to attend college.

This issue is not just about college admissions, but whether our government stays true to our founding values. Equality is a bedrock principle of our great nation. Reforming our college admissions process is not just unfair, it is un-American."

Conservative Affirmative Action Control

Congressman Sam Hayes has made a number of speeches on the topic of Affirmative Action in College Admissions. Please read the following excerpt from one of his recent speeches:

"The issue of affirmative action in college admissions is a hot topic in American politics today. My constituents are complaining that congress has dragged their feet for far too long and that something needs to be done about it before things get any worse. I couldn't agree with them more.

Considering a college applicant's race and ethnicity sends the wrong message. Students should be accepted into college based on their own academic merits and nothing more. At best, considering race and ethnicity is terribly unfair and at worst, it constitutes reverse discrimination. Admissions should be based on the principle of equality. Everyone should have an equal chance of getting into the college of their choice based on their own academic record.

In the coming weeks, I will propose such a bill in the US Congress and I hope that my colleagues will give it the attention that it deserves. The inequality of our college admissions process hurts everyone and is simply too important to ignore."

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This issue is not just about college admissions, but whether our government stays true to our founding values. Equality is a bedrock principle of our great nation. Our college admissions process is not just unfair, it is un-American."

<u>Firefighter Distracter Task</u>
"Congressman Robert Morgan recently gave a speech honoring American Firefighters. Please read the following excerpt:

"It's hard to think of a more selfless profession than firefighting. There's a reason why firefighting occupies a special place in our imaginations; why little boys and girls say, I want to be a fireman. They understand instinctively that there's something special about it.

Imagine what it takes to put on that heavy coat, and that helmet, and override the natural human instinct for self-preservation, and run into danger as others are running away; to literally walk through fire knowing that you might never make it out because you're trying to save a stranger. And yet, the fallen we honor today would probably have said that they were just ordinary Americans who were doing work they believed in, carrying on a tradition as old as America itself. There's humility that seems to be part of being a firefighter.

Today, with pride and deep gratitude, we honor those who did not come home; those extraordinary Americans who set an example for all of us."

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

Figure 1: "The Forgotten Man" and "One Nation Under God" (JonMcNaughton.com, Accessed 2016)

I stumbled across "The Forgotten Man" (Figure 1) several years ago when researching the Tea Party Movement for a graduate seminar. I was not only struck by the symbolism coursing through it, but also the highly detailed and interactive explanation of the painting provided by the author on his website. Moving your cursor over nearly any element brings up information on the sidebar explaining why they were included in the image. McNaughton captions "The Forgotten Man" with the following:

> Against the background of a darkening sky, all the past presidents of the United States gather before the White House, as if to commemorate some great event. In the left hand corner of the painting sits a man. That man, with his head bowed appears distraught and hopeless as he contemplates his future. Some of the past presidents try to console him while looking in the direction of the Modern Presidents [Obama] as if to say, 'What have you done?' Many of these modern presidents, seemingly oblivious to anything other than themselves, appear to be congratulating each other on their great accomplishments. In front of the man, paper trash is blowing in the wind. Crumpled dollar bills, legislative documents, and like a whisper – the U.S. Constitution beneath the foot of Barack Obama. (www.mcnaughtonart.com)

The painting is not a typical partisan, political critique of the policies and agenda of the Obama presidency; that critique is strengthened and legitimized by positing that important figures in our nation's history would agree with it. President Obama is not

simply vilified as an ideological opponent, but as an enemy to the Constitution and

diametrically opposed to the political traditions of the nation. Perhaps more interesting

than what this image says about the 44th president is what it suggests regarding the

previous forty-three: the great leaders from our past are shown consoling this distraught

man; captioned to represent "every man, woman, and child of every color and creed" that

cannot realize the American dream due to unconstitutional actions by the government[1].

Meanwhile, Democratic presidents subject to the greatest levels of disdain by

conservative America (Bill Clinton and Franklin Roosevelt) are depicted as apathetic to

the problems facing our society. Most importantly, founding fathers, George Washington

and Thomas Jefferson, look upon President Obama with disgust as James Madison

incredulously beckons toward the trampled constitution.

A preliminary interpretation might suggest that McNaughton is simply romanticizing

America's founding and history to make a nationalistic political critique of President

Obama. However, the deeper significance of the image emerges when coupled with his

"One Nation Under God" painting (Figure 1). It depicts Jesus Christ holding the

constitution before the kneeling masses[2] along with venerated presidents and patriots

from our history. The purpose of this work is not to specifically denigrate President

Obama and the Democratic Party (although they are conspicuously absent in the

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[1] This description bears striking similarities to Sumner's (1883) "Forgotten Man". In *What Social Classes Owe to Each Other*, Sumner argued that liberty requires a set of laws and institutions which bring the rights and duties of citizens into equilibrium. Citizens have the right to pursue happiness and use their "own powers exclusively for his own welfare". They also have the duty to take care of themselves so as not to burden others. The Forgotten Man is the voiceless victim of redistributive schemes concocted by social reformers and the state. He is portrayed as the faithful adherent to American values who has played by the rules of society only to be unjustly punished with a financial burden because he has been successful.

[2] The individuals on the bottom left of the image are captioned as "good" Americans (minister, school teacher, farmer, etc) who pay heed to Jesus Christ and the Constitution, while those on the bottom right are depicted as "those who have weakened our country" (Supreme Court justice, politician, lawyer, etc).

imagery), but rather to highlight the sacred and divinely inspired nature of the Constitution and hence, the nation's founding.

On a separate webpage explaining the symbolism of this painting[3] McNaughton describes the exceptional nature of America and our broken covenant with God:

> …the American people entered into a covenant with God in the early years of our nation's founding. This covenant has been broken and unless the American people and our leaders repent, we will not have the protection and blessings of Providence.

This statement reflects long standing cultural beliefs that America serves as the primary agent of God's meaningful activity in history.   The covenant McNaughton speaks of is the belief that the blessings that result from American Exceptionalism (e.g. economic growth, political stability, international influence) are contingent upon the nation's faithful adherence to the promises we made during the founding (the terms of this contract are enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution which are believed to be divinely inspired). In describing this covenant as broken, McNaughton essay become a Jeremiad whereby the challenges faced by contemporary American society are understood as a punishment for failing to fulfill our covenantal commitments. Understood in this way, his paintings and essay reflect a prophetic warning about these dangers and exhortation for the nation to recommit itself to those divine principles which made American exceptional.

While the "Forgotten Man" makes such appeals through national symbols, "One Nation Under God" imbues those symbols with religious significance. In conjunction, these images rather explicitly condemn President Obama for breaking with the divine vision of our founding fathers and documents. What for many may be considered simple

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[3] http://www.jonmcnaughton.com/content/ONUG/ONUG.html

policy disagreements evolves into an existential battle for the soul of the nation. Such symbolism and messaging is not unique to McNaughton; rather it has found expression throughout our history by political actors and citizens of all ideological backgrounds under the guise of civil religion.

I first encountered Bellah's "Civil Religion in America" (1967) about the same time I discovered these paintings. I was enthralled by his argument that the dissonance between our civil religious beliefs and institutional arrangements could play a role in American Political Development. At the time, I was studying the Tea Party Movement and was particularly interested in how they were building legitimacy for their policy goals with rhetoric about the founding fathers and our nation's history. Even then I was struck by the manipulation of these cultural symbols for political gain and how similar processes were at work during some of the great eras of positive change in American political history (i.e. Civil War, New Deal, and Great Society). I remember thinking that I had finally found a concept that put all the pieces together; that perhaps a study of civil religion could help me to better understand how legitimacy for these inspiring changes was constructed and maintained.

In the years that followed, I read all that I could on the concept and learned a great deal about the origins and evolution of civil religious beliefs. There is no shortage of brilliant analysis on their content written from both a theoretical and historical perspective[4]. However, the glaring omission in 50 years of modern research was the lack of quantitative data to verify its assumptions and hypotheses. How do we know that civil religion really exists? How do we know that it has been utilized as a political tool? How do we know that the public is really affected by such rhetoric? In short, how do we know

[4] See Mathisen (1989) for an extensive review of civil religion research

that paintings such as these or the rhetoric espoused by the Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Roosevelt, Martin Luther King Jr. and others was not just superfluous fluff? Despite some admirable efforts to quantitatively address these concerns (Wimberly et al, 1976; Chapp, 2012), the field of political science was understandably skeptical. The ultimate purpose of this research project was to generate some hard data that could allay this skepticism and set the stage for subsequent projects on American Political Development.

The results of my investigation show that modern presidents have employed civil religion strategically as a function of the legislative conflict between the White House and Congress and that (in defiance of traditional assumptions) it is not employed under conditions that would suggest that unification is its purpose. While it is a bit cynical to assert that Presidents have sought to exacerbate political divisions, the evidence suggests that civil religion is deployed to solidify the party base and cajole the opposition to submit to their policy agenda. Similarly, the results of my survey experiments illustrate that civil religious beliefs are widely shared across a variety of social identities. More importantly, civil religious framing was found to exacerbate ideological differences on policy preferences. In sum, my dissertation contributes to the literature by establishing that (a) civil religion is a real phenomenon, (b) that it is a rhetorical tool employed strategically by political actors, (c) and that it does have an effect upon public opinion.

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to not only summarize what I have learned throughout the course of this investigation, but also to discuss the limitations of my work. Perhaps more importantly, I will humbly submit what I consider to be the normative implications for this body of research for American democracy and culture.

<u>Civil Religion and the Presidency</u>

In chapter 3, I noted that scholars have frequently posited the President's role as the "Chief Priest" of American civil religion (Bellah, 1967; Adams, 1987; Pierard and Linder, 1988) but that few had explored the conditions under which such rhetoric was utilized. The central question was whether civil religious rhetoric was deployed strategically (as a reaction to the social and political context) or occurred habitually (as a function of the norms of presidential communication). Answering this question not only filled a quantitative gap in the literature by documenting the frequency and conditions under which such rhetoric has been used but also helps us better understand whether civil religion was seen by political actors as a cultural tool that could be utilized to advance their interests.

The results of my content analysis of modern presidential speeches demonstrated that while established rhetorical norms for particular speeches has an impact on the use of civil religion the variance within speech types across different types of governing contexts suggests that there is a strategic calculation. Consistent with classical assumptions, Inaugural Addresses featured significantly more civil religious language than other speech types and this finding held true even after controlling for a variety of social, economic, and political variables. On the other hand, even after controlling for speech type, the governing context (Unified, Partially Divided, and Divided Government) remained a significant factor in explaining the use of civil religious language. The frequency of such language declined in Nomination Acceptance speeches as partisan opposition in Congress increased and the opposite pattern occurred for State of the Union speeches. However, civil religious rhetoric was at its peak during times of partially divided government for Inaugural Addresses and Major speeches. It is also worth noting

that (with the exception of economic growth for State of the Union Addresses) none of the other contextual variables had a significant effect upon the frequency of civil religious language.

Although I demonstrated that civil religion is often employed as a strategic response to the governing context there are some methodological and analytical limitations that accompany this work. Unfortunately, the coding employed in this project failed to examine the tone and policy context of the civil religious language under investigation. For reasons of time and financial cost, I was unable to code the civil religious language in terms of whether it was used to legitimize ("Priestly") or challenge ("Prophetic") status quo institutional arrangements or policy. In a perfect world, I would also have liked to code whether the civil religious language was employed in the context of discussing foreign or domestic policy (or neither). One can only imagine the interactive possibilities with such data: Is the president more likely to employ civil religious language for foreign policy issues? Do we find that they adopt Prophetic civil religious rhetoric for domestic policy? These and other questions would have been invaluable in bringing us closer to fully understanding whether civil religion is strategically employed to maintain or construct the legitimacy of their actions and agendas.

However, I believe that the great unexplored question of that chapter was whether the use of civil religious language assists presidents in overcoming the well documented limitations on their influence. In my literature review I noted that the president, as our "High Priest" of Civil Religion, is well positioned to articulate such rhetoric to impact public opinion and the political process. However, the literature is clear that the president's capacity to do so is highly constrained (Edwards, 2003). More specifically,

presidential scholars have pointed to the constraints imposed by changes in the media environment (Cohen, 2004), partisan/ideological predispositions of the public and legislators (Lee, 2008), and the general lack of attentiveness towards political matters by much of the public (Converse, 1964; Delli, Carpini, and Keeter, 1996). The logical follow up question is whether presidential appeals that incorporate civil religious language are more likely to accomplish their goals than those that do not. In other words, is civil religious rhetoric capable of increasing issue salience, altering public opinion, and influencing legislative action?

Unfortunately, this question was beyond the scope of what was possible in this dissertation. Any attempt to definitively examine the differences between civil religious and non-civil religious rhetoric on these outcomes would require more precise data than I was able to attain. My data collection was largely confined to that which was available on a quarterly or yearly basis (i.e. Economic Growth, Public Opinion, etc), but parsing out differences between civil religious and non-civil religious speeches on the same policy topic would require less crude measures. Furthermore, I believe that comparative case studies may be the best methodological approach for examining these issues because it would allow the researcher to account for historical idiosyncrasies and external factors that are often lost when doing "Big-N" research.

While I was unable to address these questions directly, I do believe that the results of my survey experiments provide some valuable insights. More specifically, my survey experiments demonstrate that when civil religious language is placed in an ideological context, it serves to exacerbate ideological differences in public opinion. These findings suggest that civil religious rhetoric may not be able to overcome partisan biases and

legislative hostilities. However, given that civil religion's purpose is to transform policy

debates into battles over the national identity, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the issue

salience problem may be overcome.

<div align="center">**Civil Religion and Public Opinion**</div>

In my introductory chapter, I argued that civil religious beliefs (American

Exceptionalism and a Divine Covenant) and symbols (events, heroes, and artifacts of our

founding) occupy a sacred space in our culture and have political resonance among large

swaths of the population. However, I also argued that we must abandon the assumption

that these beliefs and symbols are inherently wedded to any particular ideological project.

Civil religious symbols, like all symbols, can be appropriated and manipulated to serve

whatever purposes a skilled messenger desires. Although I acknowledge that civil

religious rhetoric can (and often has) served an integrative and unifying function in

society, this research project adopted a more political conceptualization with respect to

the potential for this rhetoric to divide the polity.

More specifically, I theorized that the effect of civil religious frames differ from

traditional ideological frames because they validate or denigrate the ideological

predispositions of the receiver in an existential context. Because civil religious frames

engage the receiver's sense of national identity and wed them to a particular policy

preference, those exposed not only make a decision regarding whether to use the frames

to help make a particular policy evaluation, but also to express the validity of their

longstanding predispositions. Those recipients whose predisposition conforms to the

frame can be expected to rally behind the call for action with more vigor and conviction

given that the policy battle has now evolved into a conflict over the national identity.

Conversely, partisan/ideological opponents can be expected to more forcefully reject the
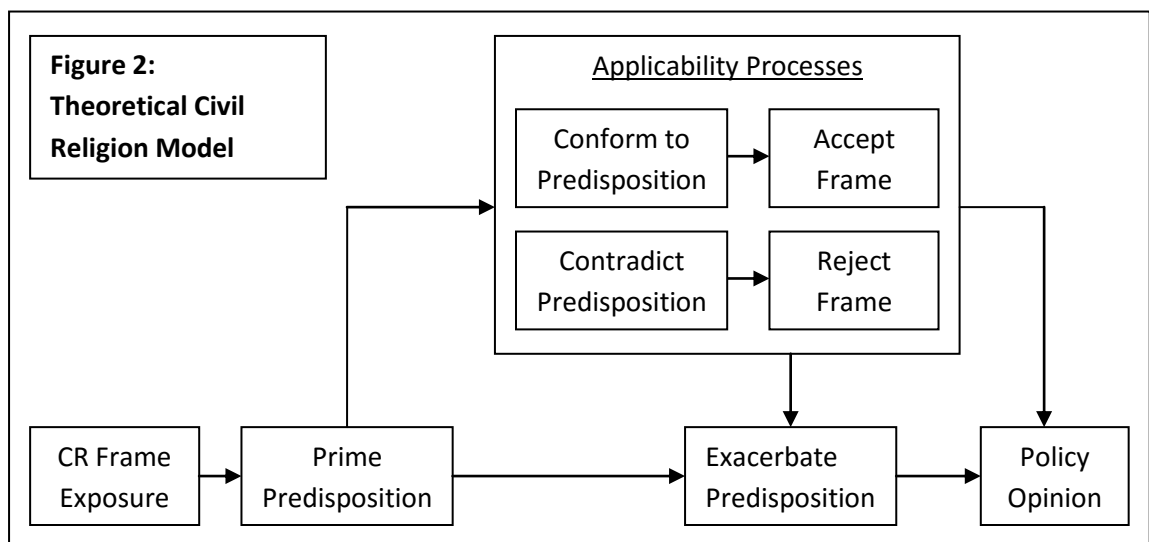
proposed action because acceptance would indicate that their predispositions were a contradiction of the American Identity.

The results of my survey analyses confirm these hypotheses. Frame agreement was found to be a mediating variable between ideological predispositions and policy evaluation. Those who are exposed to and agree or disagree with civil religious frames express significantly more extreme policy opinions that those who were not exposed. Although the last chapter sought to address a variety of methodological criticisms that could be leveled at my research, there remains limitations to this analysis and unanswered questions.

Perhaps the most glaring methodological issue to address is that of competitive framing. Chong and Druckman's (2007) work with experiments where participants are exposed to competing messages has had a dramatic impact on the field. They conclude that under such conditions applicability processes are initiated with the effect of moderating policy opinions as the effects of these dueling frames even out. Although I believe that I have provided a compelling literature review to illustrate that such competition is not required to activate these applicability processes, there is only one way to know for sure: future work on civil religious framing needs to employ competitive framing to evaluate whether my results hold true in that context. Furthermore, future research should evaluate whether these results hold true for other important issue areas such as foreign policy and immigration; policies that have often been the focus of civil religious research in the past (Beasley, 2004; Haberski, 2012; Ungar, 1991).

However, I believe that the most important work that has yet to be done is to examine the role of emotional responses during the applicability process. Because both the direct

effect of predispositions and the mediated effect of predispositions through frame

evaluation were significant and similarly signed for policy evaluations, this particular

result is classified as a case of "Complementary Mediation" (Zhao et al., 2010). In such

cases, it is likely that there is an omitted mediator in the direct path (i.e. between

predispositions and policy evaluation). Although I was unable to identify this omission

in this research project, my theory on civil religious framing leads me to believe that it

may be related to the emotional affect that theoretically occurs during the applicability

process. Because civil religious frames wed broadly shared symbols about our national

identity to ideological policy proposals, when applicability processes are engaged the

participant not only evaluates whether the frames conform/contradict their

predispositions, but uses that decision to reinforce or challenge those predispositions;

such that they are (at least temporarily) exacerbated to produce a stronger direct effect on

policy evaluations (Figure 2). In other words, perhaps the anger, enthusiasm, and/or

anxiety that results from acceptance/rejection of the civil religious frame not only affects

policy evaluation but also our predispositions. I believe that future research into this

emotional component of civil religious framing is warranted.

Figure 2: Theoretical Civil Religion Model

<u>Normative Implications of Civil Religious Rhetoric</u>

At a time when civil religious rhetoric has resurfaced in political communication[5] and

where the evidence suggests that it contributes to a polarized political atmosphere, it is

important to evaluate whether it is normatively good for American democracy. What are

the benefits of civil religious rhetoric and do these benefits outweigh the potential costs?

It is beyond the scope of this project to provide a definitive theoretical argument for or

against the presence of civil religion in American politics. Rather, my goal is simply to

provide some initial thoughts on the matter based on the evidence presented in this

dissertation so as to inspire future research and discussion.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, the motivation to create a civil religion was to

unify the polity and inspire loyalty to the state (Rousseau, 1762). As the concept evolved

so too did the goals; for Durkheim (1915), Myrdal (1944), Bellah (1967) and those that

followed, loyalty was discarded in favor of social integration. In a nation with such

political, religious, ethnic, and geographical diversity as the United States, the importance

of these proposed benefits could not be understated. This is especially true when we

consider our relatively unique history in the world as a nation of immigrants and the

inherent difficulty of uniting a population with little in common. Lipset argues that

because America was founded upon the symbols and beliefs that comprise the American

Creed, our individual identity as Americans is wedded to their adherence; "It is not a

matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American" (Lipset, 1996).

Similarly, Gleason writes that:

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[5] As evidenced by my own work on the Tea Party Movement (Hickel Jr., 2012) and Gorski's (2011) analysis
of President Obama.

> A person did not have to be of any particular national, linguistic, religious, or ethnic background. All he had to do was commit himself to the political ideology centered on the abstract ideals of liberty, equality, and republicanism. Thus the universalistic ideological character of American nationality meant that it was open to anyone who willed to become an American. (Gleason, 1980)

Beyond this integrative function, civil religion has arguably contributed to maintaining peaceful relations among those who exhibit different levels of religiosity and often hostile denominational affiliations. The United States has largely been free of the tumult which has wracked other nations divided on the role of god in government and which denomination reigns supreme. Gorski (2011) has argued that civil religion helps to bridge the gap between secular liberalism and religious nationalism; differences that are largely at the heart of civil wars around the world and which have manifested themselves to a lesser degree in the United States as a "Culture War." Arguably, these non-denominationally specific beliefs about American Exceptionalism and a Divine Covenant allow those with different opinions on the role of religion in government to rely upon a shared cultural repertoire to find a middle ground. As my research has shown, civil religion has the capacity to cut across varying levels of religiosity and different religious faiths; even appealing to non-theists when appropriately phrased.

In sum, civil religion may be interpreted as a normative good for American democracy because it serves these integrative and unifying functions. Accordingly, one might argue that it is precisely during times of heightened polarization that civil religious rhetoric can relieve ideological animosities; that it can help elevate political issues above the partisan fray so that we can build a more inclusive society guided by shared concern for the common good.

Truth be told, I began this research project because I was inspired by these normative conclusions and the "Times of Trial[6]" (Bellah, 1992) which brought about such positive change in American politics. In the end however, I have become more cynical and skeptical of these lofty aspirations than I ever imagined possible. I believe that when examined in totality, civil religious rhetoric is normatively problematic and unlikely to result in the "Kumbaya" moments desired by scholars of the past. Throughout this dissertation I have argued that when civil religion is employed in an ideological/partisan context, it will exacerbate, rather than mitigate, differences between rival camps. While I acknowledge that civil religion is not always employed as such, and therefore not precluded from producing unity and integration, I believe that it is becoming increasingly rare to find political communication that is truly devoid of ideological/partisan implications. In other words, even if it is not the intent of the messenger to employ civil religion to legitimize their ideological agenda, it will be interpreted as such by elites and the public and thus produce the polarizing effects described in my survey experiment chapters.

But while these partisan animosities and the legislative gridlock that ensues is a serious problem for the healthy functioning of our government, the greater problem for civil religious rhetoric is that it is a double-edged sword; capable of inspiring the "better angels of our nature" or playing into our fears for selfish ends. Although he was not speaking explicitly about civil religion, Smith (1997) argues that myths which glorify the nation can be and have been easily manipulated by elites to legitimize inegalitarian elements of our political culture and politics. While it is easy to blame nefarious political elites for these dangerous turns in political culture, it is clear that the masses

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[6] More specifically, the Civil War, New Deal, and Great Society.

share part of the blame. In discussing Smith's theory, Lorzenzo argues that while elites

play on the "identity-related hopes, fears, and appetites" of the masses and take

advantage of the public backlash against liberal reform efforts, the latter are too eager to

"reward those elites who provide them with comfortable, ascriptive account of their

community and narrow, materially advantageous citizenship laws." (Lorenzo, 2002) It is

the self-interested search for existential meaning that makes the polity vulnerable to those

who can manipulate the national identity. In my mind, the potential dangers of civil

religion far outweigh the benefits in contemporary America.

<u>Conclusion</u>

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that civil religious rhetoric has been

employed throughout American history by political actors of all partisan stripes.   Our

history is replete with social movements and political figures which have relied on these

understandings to legitimize their ideological/partisan interests by asserting that their

agenda is consistent with the vision of our founders, their covenant with God, and our

divine role in worldly events. Although there are clear examples from the past, some

may question whether it remains relevant in modern America. As a recent example,

consider Marco Rubio's closing remarks at the 7th Republican Party Primary debate for

the 2016 presidential election:

> The bible commands us to let our light shine on the world. For over 200
> years, America's light has been shining on the world and the world has
> never been the same again. But now, that light is dimming a little, after
> seven years of Barack Obama. And that's why Monday night, what will
> happen here in Iowa is so important. (Rubio, 2016)

What is interesting is not just that Rubio has employed "prophetic" civil religion to

criticize Obama, but that he chooses to employ this rhetoric as his final argument to

persuade voters before the influential Iowa caucuses. After a surprising third place finish

in that caucus, he gave a "victory" speech of sorts that is also worth reviewing:

> After seven years of Barack Obama, we are not waiting any longer to take
> our country back. This is not a time for waiting. For everything that makes
> this nation great now hangs in the balance. This is a time we need a
> president that will preserve, protect the constitution of the United States.
> Not one that undermines, attacks, and ignores the constitution of the
> United States. This is a time for a president who will defend our second
> amendment rights. Not a president who undermines them. This is a time
> for a president that will rebuild the U.S. Military, because the world is a
> safer and a better place, when the United States has the most powerful
> military in the world. This is no ordinary election. 2016 is not just a choice
> between two political parties. 2016 is a referendum. A referendum on our
> identity as a nation and as a people. (Rubio, 2016b)

Although it is ubiquitous for Republicans to criticize President Obama's leadership

and policies, few have done so with civil religious rhetoric and in a manner that is so

reminiscent of "the great communicator", Ronald Reagan. Consider the following

excerpts from his speech, "To Restore America":

> I believe God had a divine purpose in placing this land between the two
> great oceans to be found by those who had a special love of freedom and
> the courage to leave the countries of their birth.

> We're Americans and we have a rendezvous with destiny. We spread
> across this land, building farms and towns and cities, and we did it without
> any federal land planning program or urban renewal.

> If you want to restore government not only of and for but by the people; to
> see the American spirit unleashed once again; to make this land a shining,
> golden hope God intended it to be, I'd like to hear from you.

In these few lines, Reagan invokes civil religious themes that have a long history in

American politics; that we are an exceptional nation, blessed by God, to lead the world as

the "New Israel." Taken in the context of public anxiety about the declining strength of

our economy and influence over international affairs, it is not surprising that such

exultations about the greatness of America found resonance among a large swath of the public. But more importantly, Reagan asserted that the glory days of our past were only possible because of our faithful adherence to the limited government philosophy of our founders; that our current decline was the result of big government run amok; and that we could once again become that "City on a Hill" by returning to those sacred principles. Although Reagan lost the 1976 primary to President Ford, he would win a decisive victory four years later with the same message.

Marco Rubio, like Reagan, has invoked the City on a Hill metaphor to remind the audience of American Exceptionalism. Rubio, like Reagan, has asserted that the perceived decline of our nation is attributable to a political opponent; one whom he not only disagrees with, but denigrates as an existential threat to the nation's identity and survival in the years to come. But most importantly, Rubio, like Reagan, has also articulated a means of restoring the greatness of America; and coincidentally enough, the solution lies in a limited government philosophy and his own rise to power.

I believe that these brief excerpts illustrate that civil religious rhetoric continues to be an important and dangerous component of our political communication. Although Rubio lost the primary, we have seen similar language emerge from the party's standard bearer in the election: Donald Trump. Although he clearly lacks the rhetorical eloquence of great political speakers of the past, his slogan to "Make America Great Again" is clearly tapping into civil religious themes. Furthermore, it is abundantly clear at this stage of the electoral process that his rhetoric has served to exacerbate ideological and racial hostility. It is under such circumstances that I believe the study of civil religious rhetoric is

necessary so that we, as Americans, are more capable of identifying this rhetoric and (hopefully) ignoring it.

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