

# Religious Institutions and Political Participation in America

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*Previous research on religious institutions and political participation finds that churches can increase participation among their members through the development of civic skills and the distinct political histories of religious traditions. This paper examines the various ways religious institutions promote the political participation of their members. We utilize the 1990 Citizen Participation Study to test seven hypotheses about the connections between religious institutions and political participation. We find, contrary to previous work, that church-gained civic skills and religious tradition do not directly affect political participation among those currently active in religious institutions. Rather, churches bring their parishioners more effectively into the political process through the recruitment of members to politics and when members come to see their church activity as having political consequences.*

## INTRODUCTION

There has been increased attention lately to religious institutions as purveyors of civility and civic responsibility. In this paper, we explore the ways that religious institutions promote political participation in the United States. While there are many types of groups in America, we focus on the role of religious institutions, especially churches. We do so for two reasons. First, unlike citizens of other western nations, most Americans, at both the elite and mass levels, have consistently claimed to be a part of some religious group (Kosmin and Lachman 1993; Wald 1997). Second, religion and churches have shown a great potential to affect American politics and have consistently intertwined with politics throughout American history (Gusfield 1963; Morris 1984; Noll 1990; Findlay 1993; Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996; Wald 1997; Fowler, Hertzke, and Olson 1999). For example, churches formed the base for significant social and political movements (Zald and McCarthy 1987; Salisbury 1992), such as temperance (Gusfield 1963), civil rights (Morris 1984; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Findlay 1993), and, most recently, the Christian conservative movement (Liebman and Wuthnow 1983; Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996; Martin 1996).

A large literature has developed to explain the nature of the religious connection to political action, a connection largely, though not exclusively, rooted in the metaphor of religious for political activity. For instance, Peterson (1992) suggests that religious activity can spill over to political activity due to the similarities of the tasks. We suggest that the connection is more intentional, that conscious efforts to derive political benefit from religious activity are necessary or that someone must link the sacred and political for adherents. That is, there is little direct, automatic connection of religious and political activities for religious adherents, though church-gained skills can be and are mobilized into the public sphere on a regular basis when religious adherents see or are made to see the connection.

Using data taken from the Citizen Participation Study (CPS) (Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1990) we assess directly the roles religion can play in promoting political participation. The

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CPS includes several measures of political participation that could be used to create our dependent variable, including voter turnout, campaign work, contacting governmental officials, protesting, and participating in community politics. We are interested in whether a parishioner participates in *any* activity beyond voting. Thus, we use a dichotomous measure—participates or does not participate in politics.

Because we are interested in the effect of churches on their affiliates, we include only those respondents whom we confidently can identify as affiliated with a church. Regular involvement with a church is the best indicator of such affiliation, so we exclude those who attend church less than once a month. Less frequent attendees are observed to hold attitudes and exhibit behaviors equivalent to those of seculars (Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996).<sup>1</sup> Importantly, this procedure retains 70 percent of the sample, a sure testament to American religious exceptionalism.

In the next section we discuss the various ways that churches can affect political participation. We then estimate a multivariate model of political participation and conclude with a discussion of our findings and their impact on both theories of participation and religion and politics.

### THE CHURCH AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Clergy often exhort their parishioners not to segment their religion to one day a week, but instead to live their religion. Religion and churches offer opportunities for their followers and members to develop the necessary resources and to find inspiration to participate in the political process, essentially to live their religion in politics. It is for these reasons, and because of the large number of Americans involved in religious institutions, that social and political movements in the United States have often taken on a spiritual tinge. However, while churches may supply the necessary ingredients for the flowering of civic voluntarism, it may take the conscious desire of members to connect their church-gained resources to political activity. Therefore, we investigate the nature of the “spill over” of religion to political activity (Peterson 1992), considering both the role of churches and religion in training members in the art of citizenry and providing them with the orientation to politics and instigation necessary to take their civic resources into the political sphere.

In this section we discuss the various ways churches can increase the probability that religious people will become involved in politics. Specifically, these include the church’s ability to provide opportunities for the development of civic skills, mobilization by church leaders, recruitment from coreligionists, political orientations shaped by religious traditions, the political nature of the church, and citizen orientations toward political activity.

Churches, as organizations, give parishioners a greater ability to participate in politics through the development of civic skills. Formal organizational activities of the church, such as a Bible study, choir, or governing board, allow people to become involved in churches beyond the attendance of religious services. In the normal course of these activities within local houses of worship, we find the forging of an activist corps (Houglund and Christenson 1983; Leege 1988; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wald 1997). Whether serving in the soup kitchen, writing newsletter articles, leading a Bible study, or speaking out at the church’s general assembly, parishioners acquire the basic civic skills necessary to participate in the political process (Verba et al. 1993, 1995). But unlike skills gained through higher education, a desk job, or in political organizations, church participation is open to anyone—church choirs do not necessarily sing with an upper-class accent.<sup>2</sup> We construct a five-point index of church-based civic skills included in the CPS, including letter-writing, public speaking, organizing and attending meetings, and contacting governmental officials (see Appendix for more). Table 1 suggests that church-based skill development is related to political participation. Of those who were not active practicing civic skills in church, only 53 percent participated in at least one political activity. In contrast, 75 percent of active church members participated in politics.

**TABLE 1**  
**INITIAL TESTS OF RELIGIOUS FACTORS OF INTEREST**  
**HYPOTHESES—PERCENT ACTIVE IN POLITICS BY SELECTED ATTRIBUTES**

Hypothesis	Variable of Interest	Percent Active in Politics
1. <i>Skill Building in Church</i>	Practiced a civic skill in church	74.8**
	Didn't practice a civic skill in church	53.3
2. <i>Recruitment to Politics</i>	Recruited to politics by coreligionist	83.4**
	No recruitment from a coreligionist	51.7
3. <i>Clarity of Political Expectations</i>	Could identify church partisanship	65.9**
	Couldn't identify church partisanship	40.4
4. <i>Political Clergy</i>	Church held political meetings	82.2**
	Church didn't hold political meetings	56.4
5. <i>Preferred Activity</i>	Prefer political activity to religious	70.9**
	Prefer religious activity to political	52.7
6. <i>Orientation to Church Activity</i>	Active to better nation	69.8**
	Not active to better nation	56.5
	Active to affect government	78.6**
	Not active to affect government	58.3
7. <i>Religious Tradition</i>	Catholic	54.4**
	African-American Protestant	54.9 n.s.
	Evangelical Protestant	60.5 n.s.
	Mainline Protestant	74.5**

Source: 1990 Citizen Participation Study. See Appendix for variable descriptions.

\*\* $p < 0.01$ . For each variable, a  $t$ -test compared the political activity means between the treatment (recruited, practiced skills, Catholic, etc.) from the nontreatment (didn't have political meetings, couldn't identify church partisanship, non-Catholic, etc.). For simplicity, we present only the significance level of the statistic. All variables produced significant differences except for African-American and Evangelical Protestant.

**HI:** *Parishioners who are active in their churches will have a greater probability of participating in politics because of civic skill advantages.*

In the process of providing opportunities for developing civic skills, religious institutions also “serve as the locus for requests for involvement . . . by incubating the social networks through which solicitations for activity are mediated” (Verba et al. 1995:369; see also Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). In addition to the interpersonal connections made within church groups, ties with coreligionists can be established through common group memberships outside of the church, especially religiously-based public interest groups. Of course, one of the important functions of membership interest groups is to recruit their members to participate in the political process. It may be appropriate to consider these two facets of religious organization as more intertwined than separate, primarily because many religiously-based interest groups have local chapters run through and led by members of a local church. The importance of these connections is that a personal request to participate, particularly one from a person who shares the same faith, can be a potent invitation to engage in some political activity and “institutionally-based

requests for political activity are somewhat more likely to arise in church than in other non-political institutions of adult life" (Verba et al. 1995:375). Table 1 shows that 32 percent more of those who were recruited by coreligionists participated in politics than of those who were not recruited.

*H2: Parishioners who are recruited to politics by coreligionists will have a greater probability of participating in politics.<sup>3</sup>*

In addition to the direct influence of social networks through recruiting to politics, church social networks can both encourage and support political action by conveying behavioral expectations and norms to parishioners through a social contagion process (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988; Gilbert 1993; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Wald 1997) or through direct conversation (Erickson and Nosanchuk 1990). In secular contexts, social interaction has been shown to promote political acts that are both individually (Huckfeldt 1979; Zipp and Smith 1979; Giles and Dantico 1982) and socially based (Leighley 1990; Kenny 1992), and hence should influence our general measure of participation. The CPS asked each church member the partisanship of his or her congregation. We expect that those who could clearly perceive the partisanship of the church membership would be more likely to engage in political activity. We interpret the respondent's clear perception of the church's partisanship to mean that he or she understood the political norms and expectations of the church. While it is not a direct measure of social network behavioral expectations, it is not a stretch to think that the clear perception of attitudinal norms will carry behavioral consequences. Of those who could identify the partisan orientation of the church, 66 percent were active in politics. Of those who did not know the partisanship of their congregation, only 40 percent were involved in a political activity (see Table 1).

*H3: Those with a clearer perception of the political orientations of the church will be more likely to participate in politics.*

A related impetus of the political participation of church members is the political mobilization provided by church leaders. Religious leaders can, as can any group leader, provide to their members information about and opportunities for participation in politics. Unlike other leaders, however, religious leaders also have a spiritual and moral authority in most (if not all) religious traditions. While we would expect that religious leaders have a special effect on their followers, most clergy also are responsive to the political and religious concerns of their congregations, which may inhibit their activism (Quinley 1974; Guth et al. 1997; Djupe and Gilbert 1999).

One way clergy can mobilize their congregations into politics is through holding political meetings. In our sample, 82 percent of parishioners participated in politics who attended churches that held meetings with reported political content, compared with only 56 percent who participated while attending churches without such meetings (see Table 1). Calhoun-Brown (1996) found a similarly significant effect of church political meetings on the political activity of African-Americans. This finding is unlikely to surprise those in religious-political organizations attempting to build organizations from the grassroots and who often take advantage of the organizational prowess of churches. For example, the strategy of the Moral Majority was to target clergy, with the hope that their flocks would surely follow (Liebman 1983). The Catholic Church, among others, provided funding, meeting places, and leadership to the prolife movement (NCCB 1975). Clergy activity was also important in the civil rights movement (Wuthnow 1988), particularly in African-American denominations, in which the clergy often play a more prominent role (Morris 1984; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990).

*H4: Clergy-sponsored political meetings in church will increase the probability of a member participating in politics.*

In the wide range of associations and other opportunities for involvement in the United States, the political variety occupy only a small space. One potential pitfall in political participation research is to see political participation as the natural outcome of skill building, engagement, and recruitment in any context. It is entirely possible, and perhaps probable, in thinking about the religious sphere that some choose not to participate in politics because they value other activities, in this case religious activities, more than political ones. They would not then translate their church-gained resources naturally nor easily to political action. Therefore, we must be concerned with the orientations of parishioners toward politics as well as how they approach involvement in the church.

Fortunately, we can measure this prioritization. The CPS includes a question asking whether the respondent favored religious or political activity and by how much, a bit more or a lot more. The responses are a bit lopsided—26 percent prefer to be active in politics, 54 percent prefer religious activity, and 20 percent admire them both. While we would not expect religious preferentialists to abstain from politics completely due to the strong civic traditions of the United States, we would expect a lower percentage to engage in political activity. Approximately seven out of ten parishioners who valued political action over religious action were involved in politics, compared to just over half of those who value religious activity over political activity.

*H5: Valuing religious activities more than political activities will decrease the probability of a person participating in politics.*

Of course, religious and political activity need not be exclusive. The CPS also asks respondents about the reasons they are active in church. We employ two of these measures, which reveal the ends respondents have in mind as they approach their church activity. Those with political goals may look for resources in church that they can then employ in the political sphere, whereas those who do not may ignore or devote toward nonpolitical ends the skills and contacts they make through church activity. Twelve percent of the sample stated that they were active in church in order to change government policy. Another 32 percent were active to better the nation (and not public policy). These orientations appear, from the evidence in Table 1, to have connections to political activity, since those who approached their church activity with civic goals in mind participated 15 to 20 points more often than those who did not tie their civic and spiritual pursuits.

*H6: Viewing church activity as a way to have a political impact will increase the probability of participating in politics.*

The differences between religious groups may extend beyond that of clergy activity or the opportunities to develop civic skills in church. The difference in levels of participation also may be rooted in religious traditions, especially between Protestants and Catholics, and surely within Protestantism. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) attribute the difference between Protestant and Catholic political activity to the fact that Catholic churches often provide fewer opportunities for lay involvement. However, certain religious traditions have developed over time a closer connection to politics than others, some to fight for equal treatment, some in order to press for the enactment of a particular moral vision for society (Martin 1996), and some to remain aloof, focused on rewards to come after this life. We include controls for the four major religious traditions in the United States: Roman Catholicism, Mainline Protestantism, Evangelical Protestantism, and African-American Protestantism.<sup>4</sup> Each tradition exhibited different degrees of political activity in the CPS. By far, the most active tradition was the Mainline with 75 percent of members participating, which was 14 percentage points higher than Evangelicals. African-American Protestants and Catholics were the least active with each having only about 55 percent of their members active

**TABLE 2**  
**SELECTED REASONS FOR CHURCH ACTIVITY AND ACTIVITY PREFERENCE**  
**BY RELIGIOUS TRADITION (IN %)**

Religious Tradition	Active to Better the Nation <sup>1</sup>	Active to Influence Gov't <sup>2</sup>	Prefer Religious Activity over Political <sup>3</sup>
African-American Protestant	36.6	17.4	65.6
Evangelical Protestant	37.5	14.6	69.4
Mainline Protestant	38.3	9.4	45.3
Catholic	18.2	7.6	41.4

Source: 1990 Citizen Participation Study. See Appendix for variable descriptions.

<sup>1</sup> The percentage of respondents who claimed it is very important that they are active in church to make the nation better (but not influence policy)—not all were active in church.

<sup>2</sup> The percentage of respondents who claimed it is very or somewhat important that they are active in church to influence government—not all were active in church.

<sup>3</sup> The percentage who claimed they preferred religious over political activity a bit more or a lot more.

in politics. The question, however, is whether these differences will remain when controlling for demographic differences, political orientations, civic skills, and other causal factors.

On the other hand, religious tradition may be a root cause for some of the more proximate causes of political participation. For instance, a respondent's view of the political nature of his or her church activity (Hypothesis 6) would seem to flow naturally from the historic connections between religion and politics inherent in a religious tradition. Table 2 presents the relationship between the perceived political connections of church activity and religious tradition. It is not surprising to note that Evangelicals and African-American Protestants are the most likely to see a civic connection to their church activity, but it is interesting to note that these groups also strongly prefer religious to political activity. Although this may be a barrier to political participation, it is more likely that the politics of African-American and white Evangelical Protestant politics must be infused with religious symbolism and rhetoric (Hertzke 1993) to draw them into the public sphere. In any event, religious tradition appears to structure these attitudes in plausible and meaningful ways.

*H7: Members of different religious traditions will differ in their probabilities of participating in politics.*

Based on this last hypothesis, our thought was to test the model separately for each of the hypothesized groups of interest, especially for each religious tradition. However, a log-likelihood test (Greene 1997) indicated that none of these separations was warranted—the traditions do not exhibit significantly different sets of explanatory factors. Hence, in the next section we estimate and discuss one model to test our hypotheses about the religious factors promoting political participation.

## ANALYSIS

Our model of political participation incorporates the hypotheses we laid out in the previous section. No model of the political participation of church members is complete, however, without including the resources and recruitment into politics received from outside the church. We therefore include a set of controls, such as civic skills and recruitment gained in an organizational and job setting, and expect these factors to be powerful predictors of participation (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). In addition, we generally expect a positive relationship between factors such as education, income, age, and political participation (Verba and Nie 1972; Milbrath and Goel

**TABLE 3**  
**LOGIT MODEL OF RELIGIOUS EFFECTS ON**  
**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Hypothesis	Variable	Coeff.	(s.e.)	Change in Probability
<i>Hypothesis 1 Skill Building in Church</i>				
	Church Civic Skills	0.066	(0.078)	
<i>Hypothesis 2 Recruitment to Politics</i>				
	Other Religious Recruitment	0.350	(0.133)**	0.06 <sup>1</sup>
<i>Hypothesis 3 Clarity of Political Orientations</i>				
	Clarity of Congregation's Politics	0.293	(0.114)**	0.08 <sup>2</sup>
<i>Hypothesis 4 Political Clergy</i>				
	Church Holds Political Meetings	0.454	(0.219)*	0.05 <sup>2</sup>
<i>Hypothesis 5 Preferred Activity</i>				
	Priority of Actions	-0.168	(0.059)**	0.05 <sup>1</sup>
<i>Hypothesis 6 Orientation to Church Activity</i>				
	Active to Better Nation	0.232	(0.190)	
	Active for Policy Reasons	0.548	(0.275)*	0.06 <sup>2</sup>
<i>Hypothesis 7 Religious Tradition</i>				
	Mainline Protestant	0.469	(0.302)	
	Evangelical Protestant	0.484	(0.280)	
	African-American Protestant	0.448	(0.309)	
	Catholic	-0.160	(0.281)	
<i>Control Variables</i>				
	Secular Recruitment	0.589	(0.095)**	0.16 <sup>1</sup>
	Secular Civic Skills	0.146	(0.037)**	0.11 <sup>1</sup>
	Party Strength	0.162	(0.087)	
	Family Income	0.084	(0.024)**	0.08 <sup>1</sup>
	Education	0.137	(0.033)**	0.09 <sup>1</sup>
	Gender	-0.330	(0.149)*	0.06 <sup>2</sup>
	Age	0.027	(0.005)**	0.11 <sup>1</sup>
	Constant	-4.320	(0.709)**	

Source: 1990 Citizen Participation Study. See Appendix for variable descriptions. Logit model. N = 1355. 78.7% of cases correctly predicted.

\* $p < 0.05$

\*\* $p < 0.01$

<sup>1</sup> Change in probability at mean minus one standard deviation from mean plus one standard deviation. If change in value exceeded high or low value, value set at high or low respectively.

<sup>2</sup> Change in probability from low value to high value.

1977). Table 3, then, presents our logit model of parishioner political participation. It is clear from the evidence that these secular resources are compelling influences on participation. That is, a good part of parishioner political activity is due to effects from nonreligious sources.

It is also clear, however, that religious people are not politically active solely due to the secular resources they happen to bring to church. What religious factors influence political participation among religious people in America? We find no support for two of our hypotheses. First, we find that church-gained civic skills do not increase political participation. This

is surprising given previous research suggesting and showing the importance of churches as skill-building institutions. Churches may in fact serve in such a capacity, but, for most, the opportunity to gain civic skills in church is superfluous and becomes a chance merely to practice skills gained elsewhere. We also find no support for Hypothesis 7, that religious traditions directly promote differing probabilities of participation. Clearly, the differences between the political activity levels of the religious traditions noted earlier is not due to the different foundational religious beliefs taught in each tradition, but rather due to the concrete ways they connect their religious practice and political life. We suspect that the differences seen in the bivariate analysis were due to the sum of differences between the traditions in such things as education, secular skills, and recruitment, but also, and more importantly, the extent of church political meetings, and different orientations toward combining religious and political ends.

Another difference between traditions could be the varying levels in recruitment of members into political activities, either by members or through clergy-sponsored activities in church. That is, we find that the several included measures of religious recruitment to politics serve to increase the probability of participation in politics. Recruitment by a coreligionist is a significant and positive predictor of political participation (Hypothesis 2). By holding political meetings in church (Hypothesis 4), religious leaders similarly increase the probability that their members will become active in the political process.

Interestingly, we find support for Hypothesis 3, which captures whether parishioners perceive clearly the political norms and expectations of the church, operationalized as having a clear perception of the church's aggregate partisanship. Those who perceive the church's partisanship are 8 percent more likely to participate than those who do not—the strongest religious effect in the model. While we do not wish to make too much of this effect, we do wish to assert that the social context, from which political participation often stems, is a crucial consideration when evaluating the political activity of an individual. The effect of perceived norms and expectations, taken together with church-based political recruitment, suggests that an encouraging and supportive religious context can subsidize a deficit of civic skills and other civic resources. More likely, however, a supportive social context works in tandem with the resourceful individual to inspire and guide the political activity of the member.

It is not surprising that those members who value church activity more than political activity are going to be less likely to participate in politics (Hypothesis 5). This finding may put religious leaders who desire to see their parishioners active in the political process in a predicament. Religious leaders will likely agree that religious people should value religious activity over political activity, even though that view leads people away from the political process. As a result, the people that religious leaders might likely want to be involved in politics are less likely to do so. Religious people can become involved in the political process if their political activity becomes infused with religious motivations and symbols, which is a view not shared by many among American religionists in 1990 (see Table 2), although it is one that has been widespread at times throughout U.S. history, manifested in potent social and political movements.

Lastly, members are more likely to become politically active if they view their church activity as a vehicle to influence the political process (Hypothesis 6). We tested this hypothesis with two measures. First, we find that those who are active in church to better the nation but not to influence policy are not more likely to participate than those who are not active for such a purpose. That is, a mere civic, but not policy, orientation does not motivate people to become involved politically. Second, we find that those who are active in church in part to influence government policy are more likely to be active in the political arena. These parishioners are likely to engage the political process directly, no doubt as a natural extension of their church involvement, or perhaps *only* because their political activity is tied closely to church activity (recall Table 2).



## DISCUSSION

The curious result of politically active members of quiescent religious traditions and less politically active members of traditions that are known to be more politically engaged (seen in Table 1) raises the question of why some churches are catalysts for political participation and others are not. Is the cause the varying opportunities to develop civic skills in church, the motivation and encouragement supplied by fellow members and institutional leaders, or religious motivations stemming from a tradition of political involvement in that religion? Or, are participation levels merely reflections of the essentially secular characteristics of individual parishioners?

We find support for several of these notions. Secular resources that individuals bring to church no doubt supply the largest portion of the impetus that brings citizens into the political process. This might certainly explain the high degree of political participation among Mainline Protestants (see Table 1). The church, however, can supply encouragement in several ways. Most prominently, the church can recruit parishioners to participate in politics, whether those requests come from fellow members or from the church leadership. In addition, we find evidence that members perceiving the political norms and expectations of their church clearly participate at higher levels, suggesting a social contagion process at work (Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988; Jelen 1992; Gilbert 1993).

While we did not find evidence that religious traditions directly shape the political activity of their adherents, we did find that the orientation to politics with which parishioners approach their religious activity is shaped by their religious tradition. That is, some are more likely to see political activity as a natural extension of religious activity, most likely because of the ties between the two that have developed over time for reasons specific to each tradition (see Moore 1986; Martin 1996).

How should we view the lower political activity levels of African-American Protestants and white Evangelicals? Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995:280) evaluate the evidence about nonparticipants and suggest:

if individuals are not involved in politics because they do not care or because they prefer to devote themselves to private rather than public pursuits, then we are apt to be less concerned about disparities in participation than if their lack of involvement derives from resource constraints that make it difficult or impossible to take part in political life even if they are motivated to do so.

We concur; the reason Evangelicals and African-American Protestants are not highly involved in the political process mostly is not due to the resource inequalities between the different traditions, which have been lessening (Roof and McKinney 1987). Instead, there is a tendency in both traditions to prefer religious activity to political, but also a countervailing tendency to be active in church to influence governmental policy, a style of involvement that may grow or evolve under certain conditions (Martin 1996). That is, each tradition should be understood as possessing citizens with latent political resources prepared for mobilization to politics given the right circumstances, which would occur when political activity is made to resonate with religious values.

On the other hand, the preference for religious over political activity can have repercussions beyond the individual member's political activity. Studies of the political activity of the clergy, which would include the mobilization of members, find that clergy often consider and are significantly affected by the desires of their membership (Guth et al. 1997; Djupe and Gilbert 1999). Therefore, only in times of crisis and opportunity, perhaps, will clergy take the risk of attempting to mobilize to politics those who normally eschew political activity.

Moreover, we can be satisfied with what appear to be the small effects of the religious factors. Consider that nearly two-thirds of Americans identify with a church and between 30 and 40 percent of Americans can be found in church during any given week (Wald 1997). Therefore, small changes in the probability of political participation can have significant political effects because of the magnitude of religious adherence in America.

### APPENDIX: INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

#### *Priority of Religious/Political Action*

- 1 = prefer religious over political action a lot more
- 2 = prefer religious action a bit more
- 3 = admire them both
- 4 = prefer political to religious action a bit more
- 5 = prefer political action a lot more

#### *Active in Church to Influence Government Policy*

- 0 = not important
- 1 = somewhat or very important

#### *Active in Church to Better the Nation*

- 0 = not important (or if it was important they were active to influence government as well)
- 1 = somewhat or very important

#### *Could Identify the Partisanship of the Congregation (Clear Political Expectations)*

- 0 = did not know party affiliation of congregation
- 1 = did identify a party affiliation for their congregation (Democrat, Republican, mixed, or independent)

#### *Church Holds Political Meetings*

- 0 = no
- 1 = yes

#### *Coreligionist Recruitment*

Ranges from 0 to 5 depending on respondent reports of being recruited from people of the same religion to contact officials, protest, work in a campaign, become involved in local politics, or vote for a candidate

#### *Church-Gained Civic Skills*

Ranges from 0 to 5 depending on respondent reports of writing letters, making speeches, planning or attending meetings, or contacting officials as part of activities in church

#### *Nonreligious Recruitment*

Ranges from 0 to 10 depending on respondent reports of being recruited from coworkers or fellow group members to contact officials, protest, work in a campaign, become involved in local politics, or vote for a candidate

#### *Nonreligious Civic Skills*

Ranges from 0 to 10 depending on the sum of respondent reports of practicing civic skills (see above) in an organization or on the job

#### *Folded Partisanship*

- 1 = independent
- 2 = leaners
- 3 = weak partisans
- 4 = strong partisans

#### *Family Income*

- 1 = < \$5, 000 to 16 => \$200, 000

#### *Education*

Highest grade of school attained, 0 = 0 years to 17, 1 = 5th year of college or higher.

#### *Age*

Age in years, below 18 set to missing

#### *Gender*

- 1 = male
- 2 = female

#### *Religious Traditions*

See note 4. Specific SPSS code is available from the authors.

## NOTES

The authors wish to thank Robert Salisbury, Chris Gilbert, participants in the 1997 Seminar on Religion and Politics at Wheaton College, and the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

1. In excluding those who do not attend regularly, we are not saying that a person is not a member of that religion. Rather, we are attempting to distinguish between those who are members in name only and those who are active with a local religious organization. As a check on this decision, we re-ran all models with the full sample, and while the effects of religion dim slightly, they remain significant and robust throughout.
2. We ran a *t*-test on the difference in family income when the respondent has been involved in a church activity in the past year or not and if the respondent has practiced a civic skill in church or not. Neither variable produced a significant difference at the 0.05 level.
3. Because the question did not specify whether the contactor was a member of the respondent's local church we cannot be entirely confident about the link of contacting and church activity; thus, we claim that the contactor either stems from a church association or common religious group membership. We presume that it would be difficult for the respondent to identify someone as sharing the same religion without sharing church membership, not that it cannot happen. Even within the two religious traditions in which recruitment is the most likely, African-American Protestantism and, especially, Evangelical Protestantism, however, religious denominationalism and particularism abound (see Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) for African-Americans and Wuthnow (1988) for Evangelicals).
4. We sorted members into the four religious traditions (and excluded others) by incorporating their self-identifications of their denominations, religious beliefs, religious behaviors, and race as employed similarly elsewhere (Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996). Specific SPSS code is available from the authors.

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