Religious Affiliation as a Descriptive Voting Cue

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Abstract

Does the religious affiliation of candidates act as a voting cue? Prior research suggests that voters choose which candidate to support under low-information circumstances where the media chooses to report the "horse-race" of politics and candidates choose to maximize votes by keeping their political positions ambiguous (Downs 1957; Page1976). Therefore, voters use candidate characteristics as a means of placing candidate's positions. I offer a theoretical model where religion is an informative voting cue, which reaps both substantive and descriptive representation. I argue that when the religious affiliation of a candidate matches the religious affiliation of the voter, the voter should be more likely to vote for "one of their own" when all other variables are controlled. I test these hypotheses by analyzing the vote choice of respondents to the ANES 2004 election survey to ascertain whether the religion of candidates, both challengers and incumbents, affects respondents' electoral decisions. Using logistic regression, I find that a candidate's religious affiliation influences a respondent's vote choice and is useful to voters as an electoral cue with descriptive representational qualities.

Introduction

The debate over the value of descriptive representation has important implications for congressional representation. Descriptive representatives are those members of congress (MCs) who "in their own backgrounds mirror some of the more frequent experiences and outward manifestations of belonging to a group," (Mansbridge 1999: 628). A more descriptive body of representatives may improve substantive representation because it enriches the quality of deliberation within Congress (Mansbridge 1999; Phillips 1998). It may also improve Congress' credibility among ethnic and racial minorities and women voters, thereby increasing their trust and participation in government (Dovi 2002). Descriptive representation or the so called, "politics of presence," holds that having one group look after the interest of another group is unwise based on past injustice associated with dyadic representation, which tends to exclude candidates displaying certain characteristics (Sapiro 1981; Phillips 1998). Candidate characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender have been tested for their descriptive representational capacities with great promise.[1] However, religion has been largely overlooked in its value as a descriptive voting cue. Religion, a shared experience, may be a logical descriptive voting cue, although it remains empirically untested. It allows religious voters to elect "one of their own" to Congress in the hopes of achieving substantive policy outcomes when MCs cast roll call votes, especially when cast introspectively in the absence of crystallized public opinion (Mansbridge 1999).

The role of religion as a descriptive voting cue, hinges on the importance Americans place on religion and religious affiliation. American's high level of religious indicators suggest that religion and related issues may be salient to voters (Fowler et al

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[1] See, for example, Canon 1999; Lublin 1997; Welch and Hibbing 1984; Kerr and Miller 1997; Rocca, Sanchez and Uscinski 2008; Welch 1985; Swers 1998

2004). In addition, a majority of Americans believe that religion should impart some level of influence on politics (Fowler et al. 2004: 27; Religious Influence on Politics 2006). Based on Americans' attitudes toward the intersection between religion and politics and their high level of religiosity, religious majorities are capable of delivering influential electoral benefits to members of Congress (MCs) with whom they identify (Barone and Cohen 2005).

Exploring the descriptive capabilities of religious affiliation also assumes that religious topics receive sufficient visibility from the media. Despite voters' necessity to make most electoral decisions under low-information circumstances, religion enjoys relatively high visibility in the media. A recent Pew Forum for Religion and Public Life report found that religion received the same amount of media attention as immigration, education, race and gender issues (Religion 2009). These topics are not trivial company for an issue considered wholly or at least partially "separate" from politics. Moreover, much of religion's media attention focused on the various aspects, including scandal, related to the religious affiliation of governmental candidates (Religion 2009). Although religious affiliation may seem an unlikely issue to gain extensive coverage during elections, media attention for candidates based on their religion is not a new phenomenon. Religion has played a key role in elections ranging from the Revolutionary War period, to Machine Politics, up through today's elections.[2]

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[2] Controversy over religious affiliation in the United States began before Independence and was relegated to local offices. Interestingly, the effect of religion on elections began at the local level and worked its way up to presidential elections, which are today the most visible manifestation of religious influence on elections. The issue of religious affiliation for presidential elections began relatively recently in 1928 and has not disappeared since. Religion has played a major role in the elections of John F. Kennedy in 1960, a Roman Catholic; Ronald Regan in 1980, a "born-again" Christian; Mitt Romney in 2008, a Mormon; and George W. Bush in 2000, a United Methodist (Wald

Because religious affiliation receives visibility through the media and Americans expect religion to play a role in politics, the religious affiliation of MCs, like race and ethnicity, may be used by voters as a descriptive voting cue. Americans may use religious affiliation to predict and achieve substantive policy outcomes congruent with their own personal religious beliefs (Fowler et al. 2004). The intent of this paper is to illuminate the link between the religious affiliations of Congressional candidates on voters' electoral decisions, deriving from a wish for religious descriptive representation. In particular, it asks: what is the effect of a candidate's religious affiliation on the vote choice of their constituents/ prospective constituency? This question exerts a substantial impact on (1) the voting calculus of voters for Congressional seats, (2) which candidates are elected (3), their activities within Congress, and (4) on public opinion/ public policy on political issues with "moral" overtones. These implications shape the social and political landscape under which the United States achieves representation and makes public policy and therefore, warrants further exploration.

Literature Review

A surprisingly small amount of research has focused on the effect of candidate religious affiliation on individual vote choice. Of those conducted, the majority of studies focus on the alignment between party affiliation and religious affiliation in the aggregate (Layman 1997; Green, Guth, and Hill 1993). These studies have a tendency to focus on the alignment between religion and party identification within presidential elections. In

1987; Barone and Cohen 2005). These are only a few of the most visible and recent elections where candidates faced scrutiny for their religious affiliations. They represent the "tip of the iceberg" in terms of the effect of a candidate's religious affiliation on voting. In particular, the effect of religious affiliation on down-ballot elections has been largely overlooked.

the area of religion as a voting cue there are even fewer studies, and none that discuss the possibilities for descriptive representation arising from the use of religious voting cues.

There currently exists an extensive literature which expounds on the voter's ability and tendency to use "short cuts" or cues in order to place candidates' issue positions under low information circumstances (Conover and Feldman 1989). The most commonly discussed and empirically tested voting cues are party affiliation and the incumbency advantage. However, two studies have explored the possibility of religion as a voting cue.

Granberg's (1985) analysis of Edward Kennedy's 1980 Presidential bid finds that voters use available and politically relevant voting cues to place candidates issue stances when their positions are not explicitly known. Granberg employs experimental methods in which 180 undergraduates were randomly assigned to groups where either party or religion was made salient to placing candidates' stance on abortion. If religion was made salient, respondents incorrectly placed Catholic Senator Edward Kennedy as a pro-life candidate, instead of accurately placing his pro-choice stance consistent with his Democratic Party affiliation. In the case of abortion, Granberg notes that issue activists are more likely to know and employ the actual abortion stance of a candidate when ideologically placing his beliefs about abortion, thereby voting cues of little importance to vote choice. Granberg's case study is an experimentally sound starting point for understanding under what circumstances religious affiliation becomes a primary voting cue and how accurate perceptions based on voting cues are likely to be.

More recently, McDermott's 2007 study of Catholic candidates proffers that Catholicism acts as a voting cue for non-Catholic voters based on their use of a general "Catholic" stereotype. In addition, McDermott argues that partisan perceptions of

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Catholic candidates, specifically Catholic's longtime tendency to affiliate with the Democratic Party, have changed overtime. She argues that stereotypes of Catholic Candidates began to shift from being perceived as predominately Democratic to increasingly Republican as perceived stereotypes of Catholics in the electorate shifted from largely Democrat to Republican. McDermott finds empirical support for her theory that voters use Catholicism as a voting cue, as well as evidence of a major shift in Catholic candidate stereotyping that began in the 1980s. McDermott's exploration of Catholic voting cues provides the groundwork for an expanded study, which focuses on a plurality of religious denominations and their effects as voting cues.

In addition to studies directly related to candidate religious affiliation as a voting cue, a few studies have established the link between the religious affiliation of Congressmen, their constituencies, and their roll call voting behavior in Congress. Green and Guth (1991) use aggregated religious denomination data from House districts to argue that the religious character of a district dramatically affects the roll call voting behavior of their Congressmen. They find that theologically conservative protestant districts are negatively correlated with liberal roll call voting records. Likewise, non-Protestant and moderate religious majority districts are positively associated with congressional liberalism. Green and Guth provide a useful link between the substantive effects of religious constituencies on religious MCs. However, the study does not explore why particular religious congressmen are elected to begin with. It is the intent of this paper to close the gap between how and for what purpose religious MCs are elected to office and explore what the expectations of religious voters might be once religious MCs are established within Congress through theoretical modeling and empirical testing.

Theory

Religion as a descriptive candidate characteristic is important because it may have profound implications for representation. The use of religion as a descriptive candidate cue influences *who* is elected to congress, but also has important ramifications for how these candidates will change policy once *in* office. Congressional literature currently recognizes several forms of representation including descriptive and substantive representation. A strong case can be made for the possibility of religious descriptive representation on the basis that the religious composition of the United States closely matches the religious composition of the House of Representatives, suggesting that voters may be creating a descriptively representative Congress based on their usage of descriptive religious voting cues. There is evidence to suggest that a match between religious districts and religious congressmen creates powerful substantive representation.[3] In particular, Green and Guth (1991) found strong evidence of religious substantive representation in their study of Congress, which linked religious majorities in a district to the perceived liberalism, or conservatism of their religious MC's roll-call voting record.

In contrast, I approach the topic of religious affiliation and Congressional support by asking how the overlap between the religious affiliation of candidates and voters interact to elect particular candidates and what the expectations of such an interaction achieves for representation. I first assume that voting, especially for down ballot candidates, is conducted under low information circumstances (Conover and Feldman 1987). Voters are often unclear as to the issue stances of their candidates due to three factors. First, candidates interested in winning elections or reelection are concerned with

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[3] Substantive representation refers to the policy outputs that candidates achieve by virtue of acting under direct or dyadic representation where constituency concerns dictate policy outcomes congruent with a MCs district demography and ideology.

maximizing their constituencies in an effort to garner as many votes as possible (Downs 1957; Page 1976). Therefore, they have an incentive to create ambiguous positions in an effort to appeal to the maximum amount of voters while still maintaining a position on any given issue (Downs 1957). Second, the media primarily reports on the "horse-race" of politics rather than the substantive differences between candidates vying for office, leaving voters with little information as to how candidates may act once elected (Graber 1989). Finally, voters are cost sensitive. Voters tend to rely on information that is readily available rather than putting a great deal of effort into seeking out ambiguously framed and difficult to locate information about candidate issue stances (Graber 1989). As a result, voters utilize "short-cuts" or cues that can be used to infer candidate's issue positions (Conover and Feldman 1989). The media readily reports on the various characteristics of candidates such as party affiliation, age, occupation and religion in addition to the observable characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, and race. Party identification is a strong predictor of vote choice both in the electorate and in Congress, but this voting determinate is weakening with time as a result of increased presidential power and the recent decline in political party affiliation (Cox and McCubbins 1993). Therefore, voters turn to candidate characteristics as "shorthand" for policy preference. Voting short-cut literature also posits that voters use candidate characteristic cues because they yearn for concrete outcomes, which are the result of unchanging characteristics, instead of policy abstractions that are highly malleable (Popkin and Gorman 1976). In addition, Granberg (1991) finds that the more candidate characteristics made salient to voters, the more accurate voter's perceptions of candidate issue stances are likely to be. It is prudent to understand how a wide variety of candidate characteristics affect voter's electoral choices, despite the fact that party affiliation is often considered a

dominant voting cue.

Similar to McDermott's 2007 study of Catholicism as a voting cue, I approach the subject of religion as a voting cue by beginning with social cognition theory. Based on Social Cognition theory, voters are viewed as information processors with a limited capacity (Conover and Feldman 1989). As a result, voters make inferences about candidates based on the most reliable and visible information available that is relevant to voters' acquired knowledge base (Conover and Feldman 1989). Voters are known to rely on projection effects and candidate characteristic cues in order to arrive at their electoral choices due to the low cost associated with reaching electoral decisions in this manner. Projection effects are simply the assignment of personal issue stances to a candidate, which is more favorable for one reason or another (Conover and Feldman 1989). Most often, candidate characteristics and descriptive representation have a great deal to do with the projection of personal ideologies onto congressional candidates. Likewise, the use of candidate characteristic cues rely on physical and biographical traits of candidates, which voters have preconceived knowledge of their ideological tendencies, to place congressional candidate's issue positions (Conover and Feldman 1989). I argue that religion is a candidate characteristic, which is highly visible, has well-established tendencies, and is salient to most voters. It should therefore be a powerful voting cue.

Voting cues are a powerful determinant of individual vote choice, but which cues individuals utilize are much less clear (Moskowitz and Stroh 1996). I argue that self-relevant cues, characteristics common to both voter and candidate, are some of the most informative cues on which voters rely. Voters using self-relevant cues have a well-developed knowledge of the issue stances that generally belong to this type of shared characteristic between both voter and candidate (Moskowitz and Stroh 1996). Shared

characteristic cues allow voters to more accurately place candidate's issue positions and ideology. I argue that a candidate's religious affiliation is a salient voting cue due to the possibilities for descriptive representation arising from a match between the religious affiliation of the voter and the religious affiliation of the candidate.

> *H1: When deciding which candidate to support, voters will exhibit increased likelihood of voting for candidates that match the voter's religious affiliation than those that do not match the voter's religious affiliation, all else being equal.*

Voters who do not mirror either candidate's religious affiliation will find religious affiliation to be a less salient cue because they have a smaller acquired knowledge base about religion from which to draw inferences about candidates. Voters in this situation are more likely to use a different self-relevant voting cue. If voters who do not share the religious affiliation of either candidate utilize religion as a voting cue, the voter is more likely to incorrectly place the candidate's issue positions and ideology (Granberg 1991). Similarly, voters who mirror the religious affiliation of both candidates are likely to deem religious affiliation to be a non-salient cue based on their inability to ascertain differentiating inferences about the candidates. Since the voter will draw the same inferences about both candidates based on the religion cue, the voter is no longer able to make a decision about which candidate to support, rendering the cue of little consequence.

As with most political models, party affiliation is expected to play a role with the religious matches between voters and candidates. I expect religion to be more salient to Republican religion matches than for Democratic religion matches. This expectation is based on the proclivity for religious voters, especially voters with high religiosity, to migrate towards the Republican Party (Layman 1997; McDermott 2007; Miller and Wattenberg 1984). Since the 1980s, the Republican Party has had a strong hold on the

growing evangelical religions, protestant religions, and a shifting Roman Catholic demographic (Green, Guth and Hill 1993; Miller and Wattenberg 1984; McDermott 2007).

Research Design

To test my assertions about religion as a voting cue, I employ the American National Election Studies (ANES) 2004 post election survey to analyze the effect that a candidate's personal religious affiliations has on respondent's voting behavior. The 2004 ANES survey will be studied because it provides one of the most recent and complete data sets available to study this link. In particular, the affect of the religious affiliation of candidates, both incumbents and challengers, running for seats in the 109th Congress will be utilized because congressional districts afford greater breadth of data than that of the United States Senate. Historically, the greater plurality of religious denominations in the House more closely resembles the actual United States population and therefore allows for more robust findings. The closer match between theoretical concepts and their empirical representations will make empirical support or refutation of the arguments made about religion's ability to achieve substantive and descriptive representation through the specific dyadic and descriptive links between House members and their constituencies stronger.

Dependent Variable(s)

The Dependent variable is the announced vote choice of respondents for House elections in 2004 as surveyed by ANES. This variable, entitled *Vote Choice,* asked respondents, "Who did you vote for? Which party was that?" (ANES 2004). The dependent variable equals one if the respondent announced a vote for the Republican

candidate and zero if he announced a vote for the Democratic candidate. *Vote Choice* was

recoded from a five-category variable into a dichotomous variable. The original five

categories represented announced votes for a Democratic, Republican, Independent, and

Other Party candidates as well as a "Don't know," category. Table 1 illustrates the

specific frequencies of the dependent variable before it was recoded into a dichotomous

variable. Zero respondents in the sample announced voting for an Independent candidate

and therefore this category was naturally eliminated. The "don't know" category was

recoded as missing due to its lack of substantive information relevant to linking religion

and vote choice and its low frequency. The "other" category was also dropped due to its

low frequency within the sample, which would have made any findings linked to this

category unreliable based on its low number of observations. Party labels inherent to the

dependent variable are necessary only insofar as they allow us to differentiate between

candidates in the data set. In short, the dependent variable simply shows which candidate

the respondent supported in his respective House Congressional race.

[Insert Table 1.A]

To test my assertions about the relationship between candidate religious affiliation

and individual vote choice, I employ logistic regression, which will generate correlation

coefficients that show the direction of effect that the independent variables have on the

dependent variable. Probability change ratios display the likelihood that the dependent

variable will change given the independent variables within the model.

Independent Variables

The primary independent variables to be tested in this model match respondents'

religious affiliation with their candidates' religious affiliation. Respondent religious

affiliations were compiled completely by ANES. Respondents were asked: "Do you mostly attend a place of worship that is Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, or something else?" (ANES 2004). ANES then further broke down these categories by asking respondents for their specific denominational affiliations totaling 134 different categories. These responses coupled with the initial four category religious response question were compiled to create a summary variable with all denominations assigned to seven religious categories: Protestant, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Other, None, and Non-applicable. Finally, I recoded this summary variable into four mutually exclusive dummy variables, *Protestant Respondent, Catholic Respondent, Jewish Respondent, and No Religion Respondent.* For each category, a code of one represents affiliation with the respective religious category and zero represents absence of affiliation with the respective category.[4]

[Insert Table 1.B]

Although candidate characteristics such as age, gender, and party were collected by ANES and included in the 2004 post-election survey, candidate religious affiliations were not. Candidate religions were collected and merged into the data set two ways. First, data on incumbent representative's personal religious affiliations were derived from the 2006 Almanac of American Politics (Barone and Cohen 2005). Then, the personal religious affiliation of each incumbent representative was coded using the same criteria used by ANES to code respondent's religious affiliation. Second, the religious affiliations

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[4] The seven-category religion variable created by ANES was collapsed to decrease the number of categories while still maintaining doctrinal integrity. Therefore, the only categories that were collapsed were the Eastern Orthodox category, which was combined with Roman Catholic adherents to create the variable *Catholic Respondent* and the categories "None" and "Non-applicable" were collapsed based on their substantive similarities into the category *No Religion Respondent*.

of challengers and open seat candidates were complied from the U.S.A Today Election

2004 website and the Project Vote Smart candidate biography data set (Election 2004;

2004 Congressional Election Bios). These religious affiliations were also coded

according to ANES coding schemes and merged into the data set. Candidate religions

were then recoded into four mutually exclusive religion dummy variables, *Protestant*

Candidate, *Catholic Candidate*, *Jewish Candidate*, and *No religion Candidate*. For each

category, a code of one represents a candidate's adherence to the respective religious

category and zero represents non-affiliation with the respective category.

Finally, respondent religion dummy variables and candidate religion dummy

variables were matched to create the three final religion variables included in the model:

Religion Match Republican (respondent's religion matches with the Republican

candidate)*, Religion Match Democrat* (respondent's religion matches with the

Democratic candidate), and *Religion Match Both* (respondent's religious affiliation

matches both candidate's religious affiliations).[5] These variables are broken up by the

candidate's party affiliation as a means to identify which candidate the respondent's

religion matches, if any. The variables relating to respondents whose religious affiliations

match either both or neither of the candidate's religious affiliations do not appear in

Tables 2 and 3 because they are the variables of comparison. Both variables are used as

categories of comparison based on their theoretically similar implications. Namely, as

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[5] *Religion Match Republican* equals 1 if the respondent's religion matches the Republican
candidate's religious affiliation and zero if it does not. Likewise, *Religion Match
Democrat* equals 1 if the respondent's religious affiliation matches the Democratic
candidate's religious affiliation and zero if it does not. *Religion Match Both* equals 1 if
the respondent's religious affiliation matches both candidates' religious affiliations. A
variable for candidates who match none of these categories is implicitly included through
these dummy variables and possible when each of the three religion match variables is
equal to zero.

previously laid out theoretically, religious affiliation will not be used as a primary voting

cue under these circumstances because religious affiliation will not help voters to infer

self-relevant, differentiating information about candidates.[6] It is expected that

respondents who share a religious affiliation with one of the candidates will be more

likely to support that candidate than the candidate with which their religious affiliation

does not match, when all other variables are controlled.

Since party identification explains a high percentage of voting behavior, it is an

important factor to include in any model explaining voting behavior. Survey respondent's

party affiliation was compiled by ANES in the 2004 pre-election survey by asking:

"Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat,

Independent, or what?" Party affiliation of the respondent appears in Tables 2 and 3 as

three dummy variables called *Democrat*, *Independent,* and *Other.* The dummy variable,

Republican is the category of comparison and is therefore not included in the model. For

each party affiliation category, a code of one denotes affiliation with the respective party

and a code of zero represents a non-affiliation with that party. It is expected that

Republican respondents will be more likely to support Republican candidates than

Democratic candidates.

In addition, the incumbency advantage afforded to MCs running for reelection is

another large determinate of vote choice (Cox and Katz 1996). Therefore, four dummy

variables were created to control for this factor entitled *Republican Incumbent*,

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[6] Empirically, including the variable *Religion Match Both* in the model has negligible
effects on the other variables because it is statistically insignificant. Therefore, it is more
parsimonious to exclude it from the model. As previously discussed, it is also more
theoretically sound to use it as a category of comparison along with respondent's whose
religious affiliation does not match either candidate based on the two categories
substantive similarities.

Democratic Incumbent, *Open Seat Democrat*, and *Open Seat Republican*. For each incumbency variable, a code of one denotes the respective level of congressional experience and zero denotes a Candidate that does not match the respective description. The open seat variables are omitted from the model as the categories of comparison and therefore do not appear in Tables 2 and 3. It is expected that respondents will exhibit increased likelihood of voting for incumbent candidates than challengers.

While religious affiliation is the primary independent variable to be theoretically tested, prior research into voting behavior supports the inclusion of several other independent variables that affect vote choice. Therefore, several respondent characteristics are included in the model as control variables such as a respondent's race, ethnicity, gender, ideology, education and income. See appendix A for coding criteria.

Results

The results of the logistic regression analysis for religious influence on voting for candidates for the House of Representatives appear in Table 2 and the probability of change ratios for each variable appear in Table 3. Overall, the model fared quite well with a pseudo R-square of .54, or predictive of 54% of variance at a high significance level of less than .01. This garners basic support for my theoretical model of religion and voting.

[Insert Tables 2 and 3]

The primary independent variables, *Religion Match Republican and Religion Match Democrat,* which match the religious affiliation of candidates and respondents in Table 2*,* support my hypothesis. Both variables were significant at the less than .05 level. As predicted, the match variable with Republican candidates is highly significant at the

less than .01 level. The religion match variable with the Democratic candidate is also significant (p < .05). Both religion-match variables acted in their expected directions with respondents being more likely to vote for the Republican candidate if their religion matched with the Republican candidate and respondents less likely to vote for the Republican candidate if their religion matched the Democratic candidate. The magnitude of these correlation coefficients is reported in probability change coefficients in Table 3. Respondents are 25% more likely to vote for the Republican candidate if their religion matches that professed by the Republican candidate. Likewise, respondents are 10% less likely to vote for the Republican candidate if the respondent's religion matches that of the Democratic candidate when compared with respondents whose religion matches both or neither of the candidate's religious affiliations. These findings directly coincide with my theoretical hypothesis that respondents whose religious affiliation matches one of the candidate's religious affiliations, will be more supportive of the candidate with which they match because they are able to infer self-relevant information about that candidate's issue positions. Also, as expected, the likelihood of respondents to use religion cues when the respondent is Republican is nearly twice the likelihood of Democratic respondents to exhibit increased likelihood of voting for candidates when their religion matches that of one candidate. These results are consistent with the religious shift toward the Republican Party beginning in the 1980s (McDermott 2007).

The resulting effects of partisanship on vote choice reported in Tables 2 and 3 are also predictive of my dependent variable. *Democrat Respondent* and *Independent Respondent* are both highly significant at the less than .01 level, and are therefore predictive of respondent's vote choice. *Other Party Respondent* has a lower significance level at .01. A lower significance level is expected for a heterogeneous category, such as

Other Party Respondent, consisting of several different party labels and non-affiliates. This mixture creates larger variance and therefore erodes the variables predictive capabilities. Table 3 reports the probability change coefficients for each party affiliation variable.

The results for *Democrat Respondent,* in Table 3, report that Democratic respondents are 51% less likely to vote for the Republican candidates than are respondents who affiliate with the Republican Party. The latter is not surprising considering major party variables have been shown to explain a high percentage of vote choice.

Independent Respondent reaps a probabilistic change ratio of -30%, meaning that Independent respondents are less likely to vote for Republican candidates than Republican respondents. These results are consistent with expected results based on the substantive difference involved with affiliating with a 3rd party rather than one of the two major parties. In my model, the predicted value of Independent respondents who voted for the Republican candidate is 39% whereas, 61% voted for the Democratic candidate.

Finally, *Other Party Representative* achieved a -25% change coefficient illustrating that respondents affiliating with a party other than Democrat, Republican, or Independent are less likely than Republican respondents to vote for the Republican candidate. This dynamic was expected due to the substantive similarities between Independent voters and other party voters, which although slightly more supportive of George W. Bush in the 2004 Presidential election, were not specifically targeted by Republican strategists. Republicans chose to increase turnout among rural partisans in an effort to win more votes, rather than focusing on weak or non- party affiliates (Barone and Cohen 2005). Further to the point, in this model, the predicted value of Independent

respondents who voted for Republican candidates is 42%, suggesting that majority of independents voted for Democratic Candidates, but not by a landslide. Therefore, it is not surprising that respondents affiliating with other third parties did not exhibit increased likelihood to vote for the Republican candidate.

Consistent with prior research relating to vote choice, my model finds incumbency to be predictive of vote choice. In Table 2, both incumbency variables were statistically significant. *Republican Incumbent* was statistically significant at the less than .05 level and *Democratic Incumbent* was statistically significant at the less than .01 level. Respondents are 27% more likely to vote for the Republican Incumbent than the Democratic Challenger. Likewise, *Democratic Incumbent* has a predicted change in probability of 32%, denoting that respondents are 32% less likely to vote for the Republican Challenger than the Democratic Incumbent. All of these findings are consistent with current research on incumbency effects for Congressional races.

A respondent's race and ethnicity are two factors that have been shown to influence voter's electoral decisions. Interestingly, in this model, race of the respondent, *African American Respondent*, is statistically significant at the .001 level, whereas the ethnicity of the respondent, *Hispanic Respondent*, is not significant. In this model, Hispanics do not appear to be significantly different from white respondents in their voting behavior. Although seemingly counterintuitive, the similarity in voting behavior between Hispanic respondents and non-Hispanic respondents is supported by current Latino politics literature. The model shows that although insignificant, the direction of the probability change ratio is, in fact, negative which is supported by prior research that Hispanics in general tend to be more liberal than non-Hispanics and affiliate with the Democratic Party (Uhlaner and Garcia 2002; Welch and Hibbing 1984). However, the

result is insignificant suggesting two explanations. First, the 2004 elections are an anomaly in terms of modern electoral trends. The 2004 elections are the first time since random sample polling began in the 1930s that Republican Party affiliation has equaled Democratic Party affiliation at 37% (Barone and Cohen 2005). It is not surprising that the nearly 40% of Hispanics who supported George W. Bush in 2004 were not statistically different from the 58% of white voters who supported George W. Bush in 2004 (Barone and Cohen 2005). During this election, the Bush campaign specifically targeted Hispanic voters, tactic which proved successful. Similar effects took place in the election of a Republican House majority, with the overtly conservative political climate leading non-traditional Republican supporters such as Latinos and Independents to behave more like white voters and partisan Republicans. Second, ANES does not conduct their survey in Spanish, which limits Hispanic respondents to those who, at least linguistically, are already more similar to non-Hispanic voters. Such a decision may make their voting behavior appear statistically similar to non-white voters, when it may not be.

Other Race Respondent is highly insignificant. The higher amount of variance due to ethnic heterogeneity within the "other" category makes the variable's non-significant results expected. Table 3 shows that *African American Respondents* are nearly 32% less likely to support the Republican Candidate than are white respondents. The latter supports the well-established tendency of African American voters to affiliate with the Democratic Party and vote for Democratic Candidates (Lublin 1997; Canon 1999; Tate 2003).

Although voting literature suggests that women may tend to exhibit more liberal voting patterns than men, the inclusion of gender in the model did not constitute statistically significant results in Table 2 (McDermott 1998). These findings are not

consistent with McDermott's study of gender based voting cues. However, the overtly conservative climate under which the 2004 elections operated may have affected the gender gap in a similar manner as it affected Hispanic respondents. Namely, that men and women in general were more conservative during the 2004 elections and therefore, usual ideological differences may have been dwarfed, rendering them insignificant.

The close match between ideology and partisan voting is supported by this study of ANES survey respondents. The measure of ideology, a feelings thermometer for George W. Bush, was highly significant at the less than .01 level, which denotes that as respondents have increasingly positive feelings towards George W. Bush, they become 89% more supportive of the Republican Congressional candidate than the Democratic candidate.

The effect of income on voting reaped mixed results. The variable Working Class was insignificant at the .05 level, but *Upper Class* was significant at the .05 level. As expected, upper income respondents are 36% more likely to vote for the Republican candidate than their middle class counterparts.

Finally, the education variable, *Less than College Degree*, was insignificant at the .05 level. It was expected that having a college degree would be associated with increasingly liberal voting. However, in this model it seems that education is not statistically shown to affect vote choice. It may be that given the overtly conservative political atmosphere during the 2004 elections, the usual link between education and ideology may have been cancelled out by national mood (Barone and Cohen 2005).

Conclusion

Religion as a voting cue has powerful implications for representation within

Congress. The forgoing theoretical model and empirical research has provided strong support for my assertion that voters look to religion as a self-relevant cue when deciding which candidate to support for their respective Congressional House seat. These findings support the idea that voters may be purposively choosing candidates whose religious affiliations mirror their own and that they may expect a descriptive and substantive representational return on their voting investment. Voters may expect substantive policy outcomes on moral issues such as abortion, gay rights, capital punishment, contraception funding, and education by voting for representatives who share their religious affiliations. This link is highly influential in that it has the power to change and/or reframe the debate on political issues with moral overtones in Congress. In an extreme case, for example, if all Catholic voters in the United States decided to support only Catholic candidates, an increase in Catholic MCs could result, which would have the power to produce fundamentally different outcomes on issues salient to Catholic doctrine such as abortion and capital punishment. Another implication of increased religious descriptive representation is its ability to change the debate on issues by adding more voices to the chorus of policy debates, which may lead to better (e.g. more representative) policies. This may be especially pivotal in the area of so called "moral" policies such as abortion, euthanasia, the death penalty, and gay marriage, which tend to be highly salient and highly controversial.

Although establishing a link between voter's electoral decisions and candidates religious affiliation is a large step in explaining how religion may influence political decisions, it is certainly not exhaustive in this currently small body of literature. The possibilities for expansion are many. Perhaps the next steps in examining the link between religious voters and religious congressmen would be to add religiosity of

candidates into the model. One avenue of further study might ask how voters respond to candidates and Congressmen with low religiosity. Are voters whose religion does not match the candidate's religion more supportive of these candidates because they have low religiosity and are therefore seen as more moderate? Does a low level of candidate religiosity decrease the support of voter's whose religion mirrors the candidates religion; do these type of voters expect Congressmen and Candidates once elected to "tow the religion line?" All of these questions are expected to reap interesting results based on the framework set out in this study. There is still much to be learned about the American voter and how their core values, including religion, guide the steadfast electorate towards their electoral decisions, this study constitutes one small step in this direction.

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Table 1.A

Cross tabulation of Dependent Variable: Vote Choice Before
Transformation into Dummy Variable

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Democratic Candidate	380	51.63	51.63
Republican Candidate	336	45.65	97.28
Other Candidate	5	0.68	97.96
Don't Know	15	2.04	100
Total	736	100	

Note: Although the ANES sample size for the 2004 election survey was 1,213
respondents, the actual number of observations was reduced to 736 by two main factors.
First, only those respondents who voted and responded to electoral questions by
announcing their vote choice were included.

Table 1.B

Cross tabulation of Respondent Religion: Before Transformation into
Dummy Variables

	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Protestant	672	56.66	56.66
Catholic	298	25.13	81.79
Jewish	35	2.95	84.74
None	181	15.26	100
Total	1,186	100	

Table 2.

Candidate Religious Affiliation Influence on Respondent Vote Choice

	Coefficient
Religion Match Republican	1.048**
	(0.276)
Religion Match Democrat	-0.449*
	(0.271)
Democrat Respondent	-2.591**
	(0.426)
Independent Respondent	-1.372**
	(0.344)
Other Party Respondent	-1.248*
	(0.553)
Republican Incumbent	1.135**
	(0.390)
Democratic Incumbent	-1.419**
	(0.396)
African American Respondent	-1.662**
	(0.561)
Hispanic Respondent	-0.515
	(0.598)
Other Ethnicity Respondent	0.276
	(0.519)
Female Respondent	-0.306
	(0.269)
G.W. Bush Feelings Thermometer	'0.031**
	(0.005)
Less than College Degree	-0.388
	(0.280)
Working Class	0.349
	(0.300)
Upper Class	1.596*
	(0.745)
Constant	-0.600
	(0.597)
Number of Observations	655
Pseudo R-Square	0.543
P-Value	0.000

Note: The dependent variable equals 1 if the respondent supported the Republican candidate and zero if he supported the Democratic Candidate. Standard errors are in parenthesis. *p<.05; **p<.01, one-tailed test

Table 3.

Religious Influence Logistic Regression Model
Predicted Probabilities

	Min--> Max
Religion Match Republican	0.2515
Religion Match Democrat	-0.1069
Democrat Respondent	-0.510
Independent Respondent	-0.2972
Other Party Respondent	-0.2475
Republican Incumbent	0.2711
Democratic Incumbent	-0.3251
African American Respondent	-0.3198
Hispanic Respondent	-0.1166
Other Ethnicity Respondent	0.0677
Female Respondent	-0.0737
G.W. Bush Feelings Thermometer	0.8937
Less than College Degree	-0.0935
Working Class	0.0833
Upper Class	0.3695

	Democrat	Republican
Pr(y|x)	0.5949	0.4051

*Note: Predicted Probabilities were calculated by allowing the variable of interest vary from its minimum to its maximum while holding all other variables at their mean. Dummy variables vary from a minimum of zero to a maximum of 1.

Appendix A: Independent Variables Known to Affect Voting Behavior

All control variables were collected by the 2004 ANES survey.

Race and ethnicity are common correlates of religious bodies. Immigration, in particular, increases the religious pluralism unique to the United States. As a result, many religions have predominant races associated with them. In addition the percent of African Americans in a state increases the Democratic nature of that state, and thus makes their voting behavior more liberal (Fowler et al. 2004). To control for these effects and improve the fit of the model, *African American Respondent* is included in the model as a dummy variable with one representing an African American respondent and zeros non-African American Respondent.

Hispanic Respondent is correlated with religion and party in the same manner as *African American Respondent*. Hispanics tend to be more liberal than non-Hispanics and are therefore included in the model as a control variable (Uhlaner and Garcia 2002). It is included in the model as a dummy variable with a code of one denoting a Hispanic respondent and a code of zero a non-Hispanic respondent.

Prior research has found that a voter's gender may affect his/her voting behavior. Scholars have found that female voters tend to vote more liberally on social issues, specifically abortion related social issues than their male counterparts (McDermott 1998). Therefore, I expect gender to reap significant and negative coefficients. The variable *Female respondent* is coded one if the respondent is female and zero if the respondent is male.

A respondent's ideology is included in the model using an indirect measure of conservatism. A respondent's level of Conservatism is measured through the feelings thermometer in the variable *George W. Bush Feelings Thermometer.* The variable, collected by the 2004 ANES pre-election survey, asked respondents to rate their feelings for George W. Bush on a 100 point scale with higher numbers corresponding to more favorable feelings to Bush and lower numbers corresponding to unfavorable feelings toward Bush.

Along with race and ethnicity, income is another socio-economic variable, which has been shown to affect vote choice. There is a strong correlation between income and ideology with higher income respondents exhibiting more conservative ideologies. Therefore income is included in the model as three mutually exclusive dummy variables entitled *Working Class*, *Middle Class*, and *Upper Class*. The Variable *Middle Class* is the variable of comparison, and therefore does not appear in tables 2 and 3. Working class respondents are those earning income levels ranging from zero to 40,000 dollars per year. Middle class respondents earn 40,000 to 119,000 dollars per year. Finally, upper class respondents encompass those who earn over 120,000 dollars per year. Each variable is coded one if the respondent exhibits the respective income category and zero if he does not.

Similarly, education is another common predictor of vote choice. It is included in the model as the dummy variable *Less than College Degree.* The variable is coded as one if the respondent has less than a college degree and zero if the respondent has a degree from a junior college, university or an advanced degree.