

Religious Adherence and Equality in American Political Representation

Fourth Biennial Symposium on Religion and Politics  
The Henry Institute, Calvin College  
April 24-26, 2008

Kasey Swanke

Department of Political Science  
University of Notre Dame  
217 O'Shaughnessy Hall  
Notre Dame, IN 46556  
kswanke@nd.edu

*Literature regarding the responsiveness of politicians to the preferences of their constituents is replete with the revelation of stark disparities between several groups. For example, various empirical analyses suggest that the unequal representation of interests results between the affluent and the less affluent, whites and racial minorities, and men and women. Examining further possible representational disparities, this paper functions to test whether or not inequalities exist in the representation of the preferences of those constituents adhering to various degrees of religiosity. Specifically, this paper will demonstrate the degree to which the churched and unchurched possess disparate ideologies and preferences on those specific issues whose judgments are most vulnerable to religious influence, namely abortion and homosexual rights. Following the responsiveness model of representation, regression analyses are employed to measure the congruence between Senators' roll call votes and their constituents' preferences, it is shown that the preferences of the churched are disproportionately represented over those of the unchurched.*

As Robert Dahl (1971) states, "A key characteristic of a democracy is the continued responsiveness of the government to the preferences of its citizens, considered as political equals" (pg 1). However, a plethora of studies are evolving the thought that the democratic principle of responsiveness of preferences, as least as it applies in the United States, is hardly equal. For example, studies highlighting the unequal influence that African American preferences pose on policies (Griffin and Newman, forthcoming), the overrepresentation of the interests of voters versus nonvoters (Griffin, 2005), and the policy bias in favor of the affluent versus lower- and middle-class citizens (Gilens, 2005; Bartels, 2002) call into question the equal responsiveness of Americans' political preferences. It is true that those in this literature that are found to be underrepresented to the advantage of their better-represented counterparts are those who typically participate in politics at lower rates than their counterparts and therefore provide reelection-seeking politicians little incentive to represent their preferences. However, these studies indicate that, even controlling for turnout among unequally represented groups, disparities in representation are still measurable. Therefore, even holding voting as a proxy for

political participation<sup>1</sup> constant, it is evident that the preferences of some citizens are less important to elected officials than others'. Utilizing the foregoing studies as evidence, it is clear that the democratic ideal of government responding to the general interests of the citizens applies disproportionately to exclusive groups, and this renders questionable the labeling of the United States as a representative democracy. As Martin Gilens (2005) notes regarding the disparity in representation among economic unequals, "a government that is democratic in form but is in practice only responsive to its affluent citizens is a democracy in name only" (pg. 794).

The prolific literature that contains robust results indicating disparities in representation among different demographic groups begs the question *what other demographic characteristics of Americans contain one group of citizens whose interests are privileged by political officials at the expense of others*? There may be numerous possible answers to that question that warrant further inquiry, but one demographic characteristic as of yet understudied in this literature is religion. More specifically, the incongruent levels at which citizens engage in religious practices may cause disproportionate levels of political responsiveness to the preferences of those engaging in different levels of religious adherence. That is, it may be that those who engage in religious activities the most—the strongest religious adherents—may enjoy a stronger link between their preferences and government policies than those who are secular or seldom partake in religious activities.

The importance of testing for possible religious disparities in representation is straight forward: as is the case with racial and economic differences between citizens, the difference in levels of religious adherence between citizens is an enduring feature of American culture. Not in the foreseeable future can it be realistically imagined that small minorities will constitute either

---

<sup>1</sup> Additionally, Bartels states that that possible explanation for the rich enjoying better representation of their interests than the poor that involves the notion that the rich are able to provide campaign contributions is not directly supported and necessitates more empirical testing.

non-adherent populations or strong-adherent populations. Laurence R. Iannaccone (1998) states this most clearly: “In the United States, rates of religious belief and behavior show little or no decline over time...[but] have actually risen throughout the past two centuries. Social scientists have little choice but to take account of religion because religion shows no sign of dying out” (pg. 1466). Moreover, Robert D. Putnam (2000) notes that, “America is one of the most religiously observant countries in the contemporary world” (pg. 65), and Joseph B. Tamney and Stephen D. Johnson explain that “church growth has occurred primarily among conservative Protestant groups” in past decades (pg. 209). Since this is so, there is reason to suspect that there exist wide gaps in the issues positions held by religious adherents versus non-adherents for those issues that are relevant to religion, particularly abortion and homosexual rights, for conservative churches tend to favor conservative positions on these issues, and non-adherents tend to, on the whole, favor more Liberal-leaning policies regarding these issues (Welch et al., 1999).

### **Religious Adherence and Representation**

There are various reasons to hypothesize that the preferences of strong religious adherents (henceforth, churcheds) might exert greater influence over government policies than those who are secular or seldom attend religious activities (henceforth, the unchurched). These are related to the three ways in which churches render rational their members’ participation in politics. Political science scholars in general, and especially those who employ the rational choice paradigm in studying mass behavior, have long recognized that the costs of participating in politics, given its benefits, compromises in many cases a rational individual’s incentives to do so. Churches, however, can be thought to increase members’ participation in politics through providing them benefits to doing so as well as subsidizing its costs.

First, churches subsidize the costs of participation though providing their members with information shortcuts regarding how to think about certain political issues and how to judge elected officials and candidates. It is easily observed that churches, like many social groups, maintain preferences regarding various political issues, and those preferences are adopted by their members. Thus, if churches hold strong preferences, the strength and direction of those preferences may be translated to their members via means such as providing voter guides, preaching at the pulpit, and providing formal and informal opportunities for members to discuss political issues. It follows then that if members of churches adopt their parishes' strong stances on issues then they are likely to hold their elected officials accountable for those issues that they are passionate about. Additionally, Frederick Harris (1999) shows that churches also provide the impetus for members to act through providing a moral framework that stresses the importance of affecting political issues that are relevant to various religious denominations<sup>2</sup>.

The degree to which a church would be expected to impact their members' thinking about political issues depends on the church's denomination and the level of members' adherence. Specifically, those churches that are able to develop in their members a religious identity tied to a political identity insofar as they can produce amongst their members attitudinal conformity among them, especially grounded in relevance to religiously important issues such as abortion and homosexual rights, should be theorized to enjoy greater representation of their interests (Wald et al., 1989). This is so because if a member's political identity is tied to her religious identity, she will be more likely to adopt her church's stance on political issues. Because these

---

<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Wald et al. (1988) explain that since many members consider the church to be an authority figure regarding how to think about politics, churches and church leaders thus provide members the impetus to participate in politics through essentially pressuring them to conform to the actions of their fellow church members and leaders. Through this, churches highlight the solidary benefits of participation associated with citizens feeling as though they are part of a social group of like-minded peers (Maloney et al. 2000). Consequently, churches motivate reelection-seeking public officials to cater to the preferences of impassioned church members.

churches garner constituents who will likely hold their elected officials accountable for the issues that the church makes salient to them, then theoretically, elected officials should be expected to better represent their interests. This depends on both the religious denomination that the church is affiliated with as well as how committed to the church its members are. For those churches that do not emphasize issues commonly thought to be relevant to religion, members are not likely to adopt a political identity that is associated with their religious identity. Thus, the church will have little to no effect on its members' political behavior. Likewise, those who fail to attend church often enough are not likely to receive those political cues that churches may signal, and so they would be less likely to internalize the norms that churches impose regarding both participation in politics and adopting church-friendly stances on issues relevant to religion (Wilson and Janoski, 1995, 138). Theoretically, then, the unchurched would be less likely than the churched to hold their elected officials accountable for their actions on policies relevant to religion, and so should be expected to enjoy less political representation than do the churched.

Another important way in which churches increase the perceived benefits of participating in politics for their members is through instilling in them a sense of duty to participate in politics so that members engage in political activity to serve their desire to fulfill this duty. Specifically, churches are able—though not all do so at equal rates—to instill in their members a sense of “this-worldly social concerns” that inspire the undertaking of volunteer work. (Wilson and Janoski, 1995, 137). Specifically, many of the teachings of many churches, though they vary by religious denomination, supply “an important sources of values of benevolence...to induce people to give their time...because...it [is] their duty to do so (Wilson and Janoski, 1995, 137). This indicates that churches are able to instill in their members the same sense of putting the interests of others ahead of their own that is necessary in participating in politics. Robert

Wuthnow (1999) explains that “active church members are likely to be exposed to religious teachings about loving their neighbor and being responsible citizens...and they are more likely to be aware of the needs and opportunities in their communities” (pg. 334). Therefore, by encouraging members to volunteer, churches engage in democratic training relating to putting the interests of the community above members’ self-interests. This would in turn expect to mitigate the irrationality involved in political participation for even though it may be internalized that one’s, say, vote will not affect the outcome of an election, the state of American democracy depends on a certain number of voters. To reiterate, then, in this way churches train their members to participate by acclimating them to those indirect benefits that accompany their actions, namely those associated with a participant’s sense of civic duty<sup>3</sup>.

Second, besides providing their members the motivation to participate in politics, churches impact their members’ participation by significantly subsidizing their costs to doing so. Churches not only provide their members with political information as mentioned above, but they also offer them the opportunity to develop and practice civic skills that are required to participate in politics. Various scholars (e.g. Brady et al. 1995, Skocpol 2004) recognize the ability of churches to instill in their members civic skills through offering chances to serve on executive boards, speak in public, organize church functions, and participate in church groups. Such activities offer members the ability to hone skills associated with members’ opportunities to “work together on committees, lead meetings, serve as officers,...develop networks,...[and]

---

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that Putnam’s social capital thesis is relevant here, as well. Because churches encourage their members to volunteer their time in helping others, they promote their members to extend their social networks beyond that offered within the church organization. That is, churches, in their efforts to encourage their members to engage in volunteering, promote the bridging of one social network to another. In Putnam’s view, the web of networks that is likely to result from bridging functions amongst different networks to develop a sense of trust between networked individuals. This trust, according to Putnam, operates to promote in networked individuals a general trust in fellow citizens on the whole. In turn, trust in citizens leads to trust in democratic government which thereby is theorized to lead to an increased sense of individual political efficacy. Finally, once a citizen develops political efficacy, her rational calculation of the direct benefits to participating increase as her perception of the probability of her affecting policy or election outcomes increases with efficacy (Putnam, 2000).

write news stories or contact public officials” (Wuthnow 1999). Additionally, churches have been shown to nourish within their members a sense of self-confidence and efficacy in practicing these skills, both of which are important in motivating individuals to participate in politics (Harris 1999). Thus, churches motivate political participation among their members by providing them with opportunities to practice skills they can transfer to activities associated with participating in political processes such as partaking in political demonstrations, donating money to candidates, addressing others with a politically-themed speech or presentation, volunteering for a campaign, and contacting officials.

Third, because the churched are mobilized into a group with presumably relatively stable meeting times and places, they are easy for public officials to target for visiting and meeting with constituents. Since the churched may be easily accessed, they in turn benefit from relatively easy access to their political representatives. Thus, the churched are able to communicate their policy preferences to elected officials and so may enjoy greater representation of their interests by virtue of politicians knowing what exactly their interests are (Fenno, 1977). By contrast, all else considered equal, the unchurched are not thought to enjoy the same convenience of personally conveying their preferences to their political representatives. So, one possible cause for the potential existence of a disparity in the representation between the churched and the unchurched stems from the formal organization of the former.

Given the above, it is important point to underscore that it is not merely that the churched enjoy better representation because they are mobilized by a group, for much of the civic engagement literature already contributes the thought that voluntary groups function to mobilize members’ political participation and thus impact their representation. Instead, churches should be thought of as distinct from other types of voluntary associations in contributing to members’

incentives to engage in political behavior. First, as mentioned earlier, churches' impact on members' participation involves catalyzing the translation of their religious identity into a political one. What is more, church mobilization imposes norms against and punishes defections not only through peer pressure within the church, but also by appealing to members' fears of divine punishment.

Beyond the foregoing, however, it should be strongly emphasized that churches are unique types of groups that tend not to over-represent the affluent. Because non-church voluntary associations often require disposable time and social and occupational connections, they tend to be populated with members who are, on average, more educated, connected to more social networks, and more affluent. This is not the case with churches as their memberships typically include a wider variance than other voluntary associations' do in members' demographic characteristics such as their income and level of education. Thus, "religious institutions play a much more important role in potentially enriching the stockpile of participatory factors *for those who would otherwise be disadvantaged*" (Verba et al., 1995, 519; emphasis added). Given the unique role of churches in mobilizing the participation of citizens who would otherwise not be likely to participate in politics, there are implications for the representation of the churched that supersede the thought that organized groups enjoy greater representation simply because they are organized.

Beyond stating that churches function to render political participation engaged by their members rational, John C. Green and James L. Guth (1991) find that the denominational composition of House districts does affect the representation of MCs' constituents. However, absent in their analysis is the testing of whether religious commitment matters for representation. Theoretically, those who are the most committed to their religion should be expected to be most

affected by their churches' abilities to boost their political participation. It follows that all else held constant, those citizens who are churched are mobilized to participate more than those who are unchurched. Consequently, since reelection-seeking political officials respond more to the interests of those who participate than those who do not, it would be expected that the churched enjoy greater representation of their interests than do the unchurched (Griffin and Newman, 2005). Therefore, because plausible theories are developed to warrant the inquiry of whether there is a representational disparity between the churched and the unchurched, it will be the focus of the remainder of this paper to establish whether or not one exists. In determining whether or not a disparity in representation exists between the churched and the unchurched, it is clear that two phenomena need revealing. First, for there to be an opportunity for one group's interests to enjoy greater representation over another's, it is necessary for the two groups' interests to be disparate. This is so because if both groups share the same preferences, then there exists no opportunity for one group's preferences to be favored over the other group's. Second, if evidence exists to indicate that both groups' interests are sufficiently dissimilar from one another's, then it will be tested whether or not there is a difference in the quality of representation of the interests held by the churched versus those held by the unchurched. Therefore, the following two hypotheses will be tested:

Hypothesis 1: The preferences of those who are churched versus those who are not will differ with respect to issues that are relevant to religion such as abortion and homosexual rights.

Hypothesis 2: The preferences of those who are churched will be favored by Senators in determining the direction of their roll call votes.

## Data

To test the foregoing hypotheses, statistical analyses of data regarding the preferences of both the churching and the unchurching, as well as the representation of those interests via legislators' roll call votes, will be employed. More specifically, this study will be contained to constituents' political interests as represented by their U.S. Senators. Additionally, while various methods of measuring representation are popularly employed<sup>4</sup>, this paper will study exclusively the responsiveness of Senators to the preferences of their constituents. That is, whether a Senator votes in accordance with the preference of her or his majority of constituents will be measured, as opposed to how close a Senator's vote is in relation to her or his constituents' median preference.

Data to measure the preferences of the churching versus the unchurching and the responsiveness of Senators to her or his constituents' preferences are gathered from four sources in total. First, data gathered for the National Annenberg Election Studies (NAES) provide measures of over 7,000 U.S. respondents' preferences on issues and their demographic characteristics. This study employs the following variables for each respondent: ideological score<sup>5</sup>, religious adherence<sup>6</sup>, abortion preference<sup>7</sup>, homosexual rights preference<sup>8</sup>, and the

---

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Christopher Achen's (1978) article explicating the different facets of representation that are measured through responsiveness versus proximity models.

<sup>5</sup> This measure is

<sup>6</sup> This measure offers respondents the option to choose from the following alternatives in answering the question "How often do you attend religious services, apart from special events such as funerals and weddings?": "more than once a week," "once a week," "once or twice a month," "a few times a year," and "never."

<sup>7</sup> Measured through the question "Do you personally favor or oppose making it harder for a woman to get an abortion?" The respondent is asked to select among the following alternatives "favor," "oppose," and "don't know." Those respondents who neglected to provide an answer and those who responded "don't know" are, in the following analyses, considered as missing.

<sup>8</sup> Measured through the question "On a scale of 0-100, how would you rate homosexuals? Zero means very unfavorable, and 100 means very favorable. Fifty means you do not feel favorable or unfavorable." This feeling thermometer is not a perfect measure of preferences regarding homosexual rights. There is a difference between how citizens feel towards homosexuals in general and how they feel the government should be able to discriminate against them—many who claim to feel relatively cold towards homosexuals may nevertheless oppose differential treatment towards them by the state. Welch et al. explain that "polls suggest that most American[s] do not wish to

respondent's state. The data were borrowed from the specific survey within the NAES study that was administered from April 2000 through July 2000. In addition to measuring Senators' responsiveness to the general ideological preferences of the churched versus the unchurched, measures of the preferences of the churched and the unchurched that relate to specific issues relevant to religion will be tested using the variables containing their preferences on abortion and homosexual rights.

Data utilized to measure the responsiveness of Senators to their constituents come from three separate sources. First, a measure by Jeff Lewis and Keith Poole, called W-NOMINATE coordinates, with parametric bootstrapped standard errors, provides a measure from Senators' voting behavior of their ideological positions on legislative votes taken in each term (Griffin and Newman, forthcoming). For this study, the W-NOMINATE scores for the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress, from 2001 through 2002, are employed. The values of the coordinates range from -1 to 1, where -1 indicates the most liberal roll call voting pattern, and 1 indicates the most conservative roll call voting pattern. Because the NAES neglected to survey respondents from both Alaska and Hawaii, Senators from those states had their W-NOMINATE coordinates excluded from my analysis.

The other two data sets that measure Senators' roll call votes involve Senators' actions on the abovementioned issues that are relevant to religion. Specifically, the second set of data that measures Senators' roll call votes is derived from the National Right to Life Committee's (NRLC) website<sup>9</sup>. The NRLC is a political interest group that pushes for legal restrictions to a woman's access to abortion procedures. In the data set, the NRLC assigns each Senator of the

---

endorse homosexuality, but they also do not want to see gays and lesbians discriminated against" (Welch et al., 1999, 532). Or, "[M]any Americans ... [disapprove of] the practice [of homosexuality] but [do not want] government intruding on individuals' sex lives" (Welch et al., 1999, 532).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.nrlc.org>

107<sup>th</sup> Congress a score based on the number of bills (out of three<sup>10</sup>) in which each Senator voted in favor of the NRLC's interest. Based on a 0-100 scale, higher scores indicate increasingly pro-life voting patterns.

The final data set used in this study's analyses includes that provided by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) on their website<sup>11</sup>. The HRC is a political interest group concerned with advancing the civil rights of homosexuals in order to earn them equal status under the law and in society. HRC assigns scores to each Senator during the 107<sup>th</sup> Congress in a manner similar to the NRLC's method. Specifically, the HRC scored Senators based on the six<sup>12</sup> bills in which they voted in favor of the interests of the HRC. Therefore, from the HRC's coding scale of 0-100, Senators who scored highest voted in favor of extending the rights of homosexuals. Again, because the NAES neglected to survey respondents from both Alaska and Hawaii, both the NRLC and HRCs' scores of Senators from those states are excluded from the tests executed in this study.

In order to carry out the necessary tests to determine whether or not there is a representational bias in favor of those who are churched versus those who are unchurched, modifications to each data set's coding schemes are required. First, because the W-NOMINATE coordinates are coded in such a way that lower values designate more liberal voting behavior, and higher values indicate more conservative voting patterns, for the sake of consistency and ease of interpretation, all other variables are coded so that the highest values indicate those

---

<sup>10</sup> The three bills included two regarding campaign finance reform which included placing broad restrictions on citizens' groups abilities to communicate with the public regarding federal politicians' positions and votes on issues as well as upcoming votes in Congress. The third bill was designed to ban abortions in military medical facilities.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.hrc.org>

<sup>12</sup> The six bills included a bill banning discrimination in the workplace; a bill granting the federal government extended jurisdiction over cases hate crimes committed because of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender, or disability; an additional non-discrimination policy; a motion to establish that faith-based initiatives do not supersede state's civil rights laws; an amendment to ban the spending of local funds on domestic partner health care; and an amendment to compensate Boy Scouts of America leaders that were fired for being homosexuals.

measures that are associated with the most conservative position. Accordingly, the measure of abortion preferences provided in the NAES data is coded such that respondents who indicated that they favor restricting a woman's access to abortion procedures earn the score of one, and those who oppose it earn the score zero.

Additionally, those respondents who offered a feeling thermometer measure between zero and 50 are coded with the score of one, designating that they feel unfavorable towards homosexuals<sup>13</sup>. Those who responded with a score between and including 51 through 100 are considered favorable towards homosexuals, and are coded with a score a zero<sup>14</sup>. The scores obtained from the NRLC data set have been preserved since higher values in that data set's scoring system already reflect voting more conservatively. However, the data gathered from the HRC, because they depended on a scoring scheme that assigned higher values to more liberal voting patterns, are modified such that 100 is subtracted from each score, and the absolute value of the resulting score is taken to generate a coding scheme where higher values reflect voting patterns unfavorable to the extension of equal civil rights to homosexuals.

Formatting the data also involved creating a measure of the aggregate preferences of the church and the unchurched. To do so, the mean preference of each issue is calculated for those cases that belong to each group so that variables are developed to measure the mean opinion on abortion and the mean opinion on homosexual rights for those who are considered church, as well as the mean opinions on those issues for those who are considered unchurched.

---

<sup>13</sup> As becomes evident in the results below, dichotomizing the favorability of homosexuals was performed after the testing of the mean feeling thermometer scale for each category of religious adherence is executed.

<sup>14</sup> Even though data are discarded in the process, dichotomizing the feeling thermometer scores was performed in order to truly capture respondents' tolerance towards homosexuals. If the scale remained, the models would not pick up the crucial difference between those who responded with, say, a 49 degree feeling toward homosexuals, and those who responded with a 51 degree feeling thermometer score. Though the mathematical difference between the scores is a mere two degrees, the two scores are substantively very different as those who respond with a temperature of 49 feel generally unfavorable towards homosexuals, whereas those who respond with a temperature of 51 feel generally favorable towards homosexuals.

Finally, the NAES data are collapsed by state so that each state contains the mean of each variable. The result is that there exist 49 cases for each variable. Because there can be no matching up of the preferences of respondents residing in the District of Columbia with any Senator, the case is dropped from the data set in order to merge it with the three data sets containing senatorial voting scores. Upon merging the four data sets into one, there exists 97 cases to account for the 96 Senators from the 48 states plus an additional case to account for Senator Jeffords' changing parties during the congressional term; this switch earned Jeffords two scores for the term from each of the three data sets.

## **Methods**

Once the data are formatted appropriately and merged, the first statistical test to measure whether the responsiveness of Senators is biased in favor of the churchd versus the unchurchd involves testing whether meaningful differences in the preferences between the two groups exist. In order to do so, a simple means test is employed to illuminate the preferences of citizens pertaining to abortion and homosexual rights as they vary by different levels of religious adherence. If it is established that there do exist differences in opinion between those categories of religious adherence that are considered “churchd,” as opposed to those categories that are considered “unchurchd,” tests measuring whether or not the two groups' preferences are favored will follow.

To determine whether sufficient differences in preferences between the two groups exist, three tests will be executed. First, regressing the general ideology measures of the churchd and the unchurchd—to investigate whether or not the effect that each has on Senators' W-NOMINATE scores varies—will determine whether or not the churchd or unchurchd are represented differently with regards to roll call votes encompassing a broad set of issues. Also,

included in the ideology regression is a dummy variable accounting for each Senators' party affiliation. Finally, the last two tests will be executed utilizing the preferences of the churched and the unchurched regarding abortion and homosexual rights and Senators' scores provided by the NRLC and the HRC in order to determine whether the preferences of the churched are overrepresented. For each regression, ordinary least squares tests are employed.

Before displaying and discussing the results generated by the foregoing methods, a caveat is in order. The abovementioned methods of analyses are designed to show whether or not there exists a disparity in the equality of representation between the churched and the unchurched; therefore, they are not designed to explain Senators' votes. While the many influences on Senators' votes would require my regression models to include many controls such as, for example, party identification, margin of victory, and amount of interest group contributions, I follow other scholars<sup>15</sup> in neglecting such controls for my undertaking in this study simply involves measuring whether votes are biased towards the preferences of the churched over the unchurched.

## **Results and Discussion**

### DIFFERENCES IN PREFERENCES BETWEEN THE CHURCHED AND THE UNCHURCHED

As stated above, in testing whether or not there exists a bias in the senatorial responsiveness of the churched versus the unchurched, it must first be demonstrated that preferences related to issues relevant to religion are disparate between the two groups. The preferences of the churched versus the unchurched are measured with respect to their favorability towards abortion and their favorability towards homosexuals. With regards to citizens' favorability towards abortion, Table 1 reveals that there is a negative relationship between the frequency of one's church attendance

---

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Griffin and Newman (forthcoming).

and their favorability towards abortion. Since the favorability of abortion is in this test a dichotomous variable<sup>16</sup>, each value for the mean can be interpreted as the percentage of respondents located in each one of the categories of church attendance who favor no further restrictions to a woman's access to abortion procedures. The values of the mean, which progressively increase as church attendance decreases, indicate not only that there is a relationship between religious adherence and increased conservatism with regards to abortion, but also that there is a substantive difference in the preferences of the churched versus the unchurched. Since this study considers those respondents who attend church at least once per month to be church and those who attend church less than that—particularly a few times a year to never—a difference in preferences is clear given that the mean values for the churched and the unchurched become, respectively, 45.11 percent and 76.18 percent. The difference in means between the two groups is substantive: nearly 55 percent of the churched prefer restricting access to abortions, while only about 24 percent of the unchurched prefer restricting access to abortions.

---

<sup>16</sup> While the variable for abortion is, as mentioned above, recoded for its use in regressions later in this study so its values become 0 and 1, the original NAES coding of the abortion preference variable is utilized in this test. Therefore, a value of 1 indicates that the respondent opposes abortion (or, per the NAES question wording, the respondent favors restricting a woman's access to obtain an abortion), and a value of 2 indicates that the respondent does not oppose abortion. This scheme produced in the results values between 1 and 2. For ease of comparing percentages in the analysis, the values are subtracted by 1 in order to produce percentages in each group that favor no further restrictions on abortion.

TABLE 1  
Differences in Favorability towards Abortion by Church Attendance

<b>Church Attendance</b>	<b>Favorability towards Abortion (mean)</b>	<b>Favorability towards Abortion (standard deviation)</b>
More than once a week	.267523	.4429264
Once a week	.471043	.4992985
Once or twice per month	.614739	.4868841
Once or twice per year	.723551	.4473603
Never	.8	.4001703

N = 6797

Similar results are obtained after testing the average feeling thermometer score regarding favorability towards homosexuals for each level of religious adherence. As shown in Table 2, favorability towards homosexuals increases as church attendance decreases. If the means for those who are churched and those who are unchurched is calculated, the values, 37.4 and 49.1, respectively, indicate that there exists a difference in preferences among the churched and the unchurched. While the gap in means between the two groups is not as wide as that which is associated with abortion preferences, it is still substantial in that according to the NAES wording of the question regarding favorability of homosexuals, the unchurched are as a group nearly neutral towards homosexuals, whereas the churched feel unfavorable towards them.

TABLE 2  
Differences in Favorability towards Homosexuals by Church Attendance

<b>Church Attendance</b>	<b>Favorability towards Homosexuals (mean)</b>	<b>Favorability towards Homosexuals (standard deviation)</b>
More than once a week	27.40	28.09
Once a week	39.48	28.55
Once or twice per month	45.31	28.14
Once or twice per year	46.68	28.04
Never	51.51	28.99

N = 7090

The above analysis, coupled with that which precedes it indicating that differences prevail between the opinions of the churched and unchurched with respect to abortion access, clearly establishes that substantive differences in preferences do exist between the two groups. Because the tests confirm the first hypothesis articulated above, testing the second is warranted.

#### DIFFERENCES IN SENATORIAL RESPONSIVENESS OF CHURCHED AND UNCHURCHED PREFERENCES

The first task in determining whether or not the interests of the churched are better translated into policies than are those of the unchurched involves testing whether either of the two groups' mean ideology scores correspond better to the ideology scores of their Senators' as assigned by the W-NOMINATE coordinates. Table 3 indicates that independent regressions of the mean ideologies of the churched and the mean ideologies of the unchurched demonstrate that neither of the groups' ideology measures have a substantial impact on Senators' W-NOMINATE coordinates, even when controlling for Senators' party affiliation. Moreover, the multivariate regression including both groups' ideologies as separate variables generates no statistically significant coefficients for either group's ideology score. Therefore, the results of the first test measuring a possible bias in the senatorial responsiveness of the general interests of the churched indicate that my second hypothesis is not yet statistically supported. This finding comports with our understanding of religion and ideology as informed by Layman and Green's (2005) results demonstrating that ideologies derived from religious considerations, so far as they affect citizens' views on issues relevant to religion, do not extend to affect their views on issues that are not related to religion. This is so, explain Layman and Green, because citizens do not possess enough ideological constraint in their political beliefs to carry that paradigm that affects their

stances on religiously-relevant through to affecting their views on issues that are not related to religion. Thus, it is not surprising that the effects of religious adherence on members' overall ideologies do not predict senatorial responsiveness.

TABLE 3  
 Churched and Unchurched Ideologies and Senatorial Responsiveness,  
 107<sup>th</sup> Senate W-NOMINATE Scores

	<b>Churched</b>	<b>Unchurched</b>	<b>Churched and Unchurched</b>
<b>Ideology of the Churched</b>	-.2148 [.1479]		-.2389 [.1702]
<b>Ideology of the Unchurched</b>		-.0681 [.1521]	.0504 [.1733]
<b>Senator's Party Identification</b>	1.190*** [.0652]	1.218*** [.0633]	1.191*** [.0657]
<b>Constant</b>	-.03490 [.4079]	-.4159 [.4665]	1.005** [.3559]
<b>N</b>	97	97	97
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.8137	.8099	.8139

Standard errors are in brackets; \*\*\* denotes  $p < .001$ , \*\* denotes  $p < .01$

Even though the above results indicate that the sum of the ideological preferences of the churched enjoy no more representation than do those of the unchurched via the responsiveness model, it is still within this study's theory that specific issues that are relevant to religion and important to religious adherents may accompany unequal responsiveness by Senators. To determine this, a regression measuring the effect of the abortion preferences of both the churched and the unchurched on senatorial roll call votes regarding the issue is employed. The results, as shown in Table 4, reveal that the coefficients representing the impact of the abortion preferences

of the churched on Senator's abortion-related roll call votes are significant and substantive in both the bivariate and multivariate regressions.

TABLE 4  
Favorability Towards Abortion and Senatorial Responsiveness,  
107<sup>th</sup> Senate NRLC Scores

	Churched	Unchurched	Churched and Unchurched
<b>Abortion Preferences of the Churched</b>	112.51** [35.39]		95.75* [37.95]
<b>Abortion Preferences of the Unchurched</b>		108.65* [48.78]	61.43 [51.01]
<b>Constant</b>	-18.02 [19.20]	13.02 [13.52]	-25.14 [20.04]
<b>N</b>	97	97	97
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.0962	.0496	.1099

Standard errors are in brackets; \*\* denotes  $p < .01$ , \* denotes  $p < .05$

With the regards to the preferences of the unchurched, the bivariate regression indicates that as a group, their preferences do pose a significant and substantial impact on Senators' votes. However, since the measure of their preferences fails to pose a significant relationship with Senators' votes in the multivariate regression, it may be that in many states, abortion preferences of the unchurched are correlated with the abortion preferences of the churched. A correlation between the two yields a Pearson's  $r$  of .37, and that value is high enough to provide an explanation for the large and significant coefficient of abortion preferences of the unchurched in only the bivariate model. It is seen in the multivariate regression that, controlling for the preferences of the churched, the magnitude and statistical significance of the coefficient

corresponding to the preferences of the unchurched indicates that such preferences are not as influential on Senators' votes as those of the churched. It is also worth noting that even if the probability were high enough to conclude that the coefficient for the preferences of the unchurched was not actually zero, the preferences of the churched would still enjoy 50 percent more responsiveness than those of the unchurched. Therefore, this analysis demonstrates that there is indeed a bias in the representation of interests with regards to religious adherence.

To possibly strengthen or weaken the conclusion derived from the above analysis regarding the representational bias in favor of the interests of the churched, each group's preferences with regard to homosexual rights will be tested for their impact on senatorial roll call votes. Regressing each group's preferences on HRC scores for each Senator yields, as is shown through the results contained in Table 5, further evidence that the preferences of the churched are privileged. The coefficient relating the preferences of the churched to the impact they have on Senators' roll call votes concerning homosexual rights is significant both statistically and substantively. This is also the case in the multivariate regression controlling for the interests of the unchurched. As was the case above regarding the preferences of the unchurched yielding a statistically significant and substantial impact on Senators' votes in the bivariate regression, it is judged that the results are an artifact of the correlation between both groups' preferences. The Pearson's  $r$  of .48 supports this. Again, even if the coefficients for the preferences of the churched were significant in both models, the preferences of the churched enjoy about twice the impact on Senators' roll call votes than do those of the unchurched.

TABLE 5  
Favorability Towards Homosexuals and Senatorial Responsiveness,  
107<sup>th</sup> Senate HRC Scores

	Churched	Unchurched	Churched and Unchurched
<b>Preferences of the Churched Regarding Homosexual Rights</b>	163.02** [52.12]		135.66* [61.70]
<b>Preferences of the Unchurched Regarding Homosexual Rights</b>		91.85* [39.56]	38.12 [45.84]
<b>Constant</b>	-86.17* [42.67]	-22.16 [29.94]	-92.43* [43.40]
<b>N</b>	97	97	97
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.0934	.0537	.1000

Standard errors are in brackets; \*\* denotes  $p < .01$ , \* denotes  $p < .05$

The results regarding the churched and the unchurched constituents' favorability towards homosexuals depend on the coding scheme of those who responded in the NAES with a score of 50, which indicated that the respondent felt neutral towards homosexuals. This study considers those who responded with the score of 50 as part of the group that feels unfavorably towards homosexuals. The justification for doing so follows the conventions employed in the tolerance literature and involves the argument that if one does not explicitly favor homosexuals, then they will for all intents and purposes be either opposed to or, in the case of those who are neutral, ambivalent with regards to their rights, and therefore essentially unfavorable towards them. However, to demonstrate the robustness of the above results even if those neutral towards homosexuals are coded as being favorable towards homosexuals, table 6 displays the regression

results of the impact of the preferences of the churched and the unchurched on Senators' roll call votes concerning homosexual rights legislation.

TABLE 6  
Favorability Towards Homosexuals and Senatorial Responsiveness,  
107<sup>th</sup> Senate HRC Scores with Modified Coding Scheme

	Churched	Unchurched	Churched and Unchurched
<b>Preferences of the Churched Regarding Homosexual Rights</b>	112.50 [61.61]		93.91 [70.64]
<b>Preferences of the Unchurched Regarding Homosexual Rights</b>		82.32 [60.95]	37.76 [69.34]
<b>Constant</b>	24.85 [12.71]	34.68*** [9.89]	22.97 [13.22]
<b>N</b>	97	97	97
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.0339	.0188	.1000

Standard errors are in brackets; \*\*\* denotes  $p < .001$

The results indicate that although the coding modification does render all of the coefficients insignificant, the coefficient on the preferences of the churched and its impact on Senators' roll call votes in the bivariate regression is nearly significant at the standard .05 level as it accompanies a t-value of 1.83 and a p-value of .071. Moreover, the coefficient for the opinion of the churched is over one-third larger than the coefficient for the unchurched, indicating that it is likely there still exists a responsiveness bias in favor of the churched. In the multivariate regression accounting for the impacts of the preferences of both the churched and the unchurched on Senators roll call votes, neither coefficient is significant at the .05 level.

However, the magnitudes of the coefficients indicate that the preferences of the churchd are about 60 percent more influential on Senators' roll call votes than are the preferences of the unchurchd. Finally, it is also worth noting the in comparing in Tables 4-6 the  $R^2$  values for each of the bivariate regressions, those models that took into account the preferences of the churchd explained roughly twice the amount of variance in senatorial roll call scores than did the preferences of the unchurchd. Therefore, from the above analyses, it is concluded that the preferences of the churchd enjoy greater senatorial responsiveness than do the preferences of the unchurchd.

## **Conclusion**

Various studies pertaining to an assortment of demographically disparate groups that are unequally represented reveal a major flaw in American democracy. Specifically, the interests of American citizens are systematically unequally represented on account of a range of variables, many beyond the control of the citizens themselves. The results in this study have further exposed the tendency of those held accountable to govern democratically to over-represent the interests of males, whites, the economically advantaged, the churchd, and those who, for various reasons, neglect their right to vote. However, given the capacity of some of the most important demographic traits to render citizens unequal with regards to their elected officials' responsiveness to their political preferences, this study shows that the disparity in responsiveness associated with religious adherence is seemingly contained to certain issues. Specifically, the data substantiate my proposed theory that strong religious adherents, by virtue of a number of possible reasons, enjoy greater representation of their interests on those issues that are subject to the influence of religion, particularly those that involve morally debatable issues. However, the failure of the general ideology scores of the churchd to predict the general ideology scores of

their Senators' roll call votes better than the ideology scores of the unchurched indicates that religion's propensity to cause political inequality is limited.

Since the foregoing results of the tests executed in this study corroborate my hypothesis that the interests of the churched seemingly enjoy greater representation in terms of senatorial responsiveness than do the interests of the unchurched, the phenomenon warrants additional attention paid to important considerations. In particular, the above analysis employs rather crude measures, particularly because not all churches are equal in their capacity to nourish civic skills. Since, for instance, the Catholic Church is hierarchically organized, it provides members less opportunities to serve on committees and make decisions (Verba et al. 1995). Thus, it should be tested whether strong adherents of specific denominations enjoy greater representation than those of belonging to other denominations. Additionally, civic skill development varies between churches that are socially homogenous and those that are more socially heterogeneous (Gilbert and Djupe 2006), and differences in the representation of interests between those who are members of socially homogeneous churches versus those who are not should be tested. Additionally, religious adherence varies between different denominations (Wilson and Janoski, 1995), and so this should be accounted for too in illuminated the scope of the effect of religious adherence on the quality of political representation.

As articulated above, churches act as agents to mobilize civic participation, and their contribution to civic participation extends beyond that of other groups for the reason that churches mobilize those citizens who, by virtue of their non-affluence, might otherwise not be mobilized. That is, churches allow for the mobilization of those same citizens that Bartels and Gilens find are not as well represented in government. Though beyond the scope of this project, it may be possible to test whether the overrepresentation of the interests of the churched may

function to compensate for the decreased representation that those who are not affluent and churched experience.

These questions notwithstanding, it is proposed that the preferences of the churched enjoy greater senatorial responsiveness by virtue of their being easy for politicians to access. Consequently, those citizens who are churched enjoy a better opportunity to communicate their preferences to politicians than those that are not organized and thus less easy to access. Moreover, politicians are undoubtedly aware that the churched belong to organizations that provide cues as to how to vote, and so politicians seeking reelection are provided a strong incentive to appease the preferences of the churched on issues salient to them for they will likely be held accountable for their roll call votes on them in future elections.

This study also functions to merit worthy future inquiry regarding testing for the scope of this phenomenon. For example, it should be examined whether or not disparities in representation that favor the interests of the churched persist over time. Moreover, these results also warrant the testing of whether or not other governmental institutions in the United States such as the executive branch, the judicial branch, and the House of Representatives also over-represent the interests of the churched versus those of the unchurched. Additionally, it may also be that the mechanisms contributing to the disparity in representation of the churched and the unchurched will be revealed through more nuanced models of political responsiveness, such as those that account for the possible influence of, for example, the personal influence of Senators' religious adherence. Moreover, in light of the literature on shirking, it should be tested how proximate the next election for each Senator is and how high of quality the challenger is as it affects senatorial responsiveness. Ascertaining such mechanisms could potentially augment the evolution of normative strategies designed to stabilize the representation bias with regards to

religious adherence. By extension, such strategies could also ideally be applied to assuage other representational biases that imperil those esteemed American ideals that confer upon all citizens equal consideration of political preferences.

## References

- Achen, Christopher H. "Measuring Representation." *American Journal of Political Science*: 22(3). 475-510.
- Bartels, Larry M. 2002. "Economic Inequality and Political Representation." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, 29 August, Boston.
- Baumgartner, Frank R. and Beth L. Leech. 1994. *Basic Interests*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.
- Brady, Henry, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman. 1995. "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Participation." *American Political Science Review*: 89(2). 271-294.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1976. *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. Yale University Press: New Haven, CT.
- Djupe, Paul A. and Christopher P. Gilbert. 2006. "The Resourceful Believer: Generating Civic Skills in Church." *Political Behavior*: 26 (2). 155-180.
- Fenno, Richard F. 1978. *Home Style: House Members in Their Districts*. Little and Brown: Boston.
- Gilens, Martin. 2005. "Inequality and Democratic Responsiveness." *Public Opinion Quarterly*: 69(5). 778-796.
- Green, John C. and James L. Guth. 1991. "Religion, Representatives, and Roll Calls." *Legislative Studies Quarterly*: 16(4). 571-584.
- Griffin, John and Brian Newman. 2005. "Are Voters Better Represented?" *The Journal of Politics*: 67(4). 1206-1227.
- Griffin, John and Brian Newman. Forthcoming. *Minority Report: Evaluating Political Equality in America*. University of Chicago Press.
- Harris, Frederick. 1999. *Something Within: Religion and African-American Political Activism*. Oxford University Press.

- Iannaccone, Laurence R. 1998. "Introduction to the Economics of Religion." *Journal of Economic Literature*: 36(September). 1465-1496.
- Lewis, Jeff and Keith Poole. "W-NOMINATE Files With Parametric Bootstrapped Standard Errors." *Parametric Bootstrap Page*. Available online at [http://voteview.com/Lewis\\_and\\_Poole.htm](http://voteview.com/Lewis_and_Poole.htm) (15 November 2006).
- Maloney, W.A., G. Smith, and G. Stroker. 2000. "Social Capital and Associational Life." In *Social Capital: Critical Perspectives* (eds. S. Baron, J. Field, and T. Schuler).
- [no author recorded]. "Congressional Scored 107<sup>th</sup> Congress." Available online: <http://www.hrc.org/congress/107/scorecard.pdf>. (11 December 2006).
- [no author recorded]. "NRLC Scorecard 107<sup>th</sup> Congress U.S. Senate." *Vote ScoreCard*. available online: <http://www.capwiz.com/nrlc/scorecard/?chamber=S&session=107&x=78y=7> (11 December 2006).
- Tamney, Joseph B. and Stephen D. Johnson. 1998. "The Popularity of Strict Churches." *Review of Religious Research*: 39(March). 209-223.
- Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Harvard University Press.
- Wald, Kenneth D. Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill, Jr. 1989. "Political Cohesion in Churches." *Journal of Politics*: 52(1). 197-215.
- Wald, Kenneth D., Dennis E. Owen, and Samuel S. Hill, Jr. 1988. "Churches as Political Communities." *American Political Science Review*: 82(2). 531-546.
- Welch, Susan, Sue Thomas, and Margery M. Abmrosius. 1999. "The Politics of Family Policy." In Gray, Virginia, Russell J. Hanson, and Herbert Jacobs (eds.) *Politics in the American States, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly Press.
- Wilson, John and Thomas Janoski. 2005. "The Contribution of Religion to Volunteer Work." *Sociology of Religion*: 56(2). 137-152.
- Wuthnow, Robert. 1999. "Mobilizing Civic Engagement: The Changing Impact of Religious Involvement. In *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Ed. Theda Skocpol and Morris P. Fiorina. Brookings and Russell Sage: Washington, D.C.