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What is This?

Race as a Moderator of the Relationship Between Religiosity and Political Alignment

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Religiosity, especially religious fundamentalism, is often assumed to have an inherent connection with conservative politics. This article proposes that the relationship varies by race in the United States. In Study 1, race moderated the relationships between religiosity indicators and political alignment in a nationally representative sample. In Study 2, the effect replicated in a student sample with more reliable measures. Among both Black and Latino Americans, the relationship between religiosity and conservative politics is far weaker than it is among White Americans, and it is sometimes altogether absent. In Study 3, a tradition-focused view of religion was found to more strongly mediate the link between religiosity and political attitudes among Whites than it did among Blacks and Latinos. It is argued that the relationship between religiosity and political alignment is best understood as a product of cultural–historical conditions associated with group memberships.

Keywords: race; culture; fundamentalism; religion; conservatism; political attitudes

Many commentators and social scientists have argued that religion has profoundly influenced the recent political climate of the United States (Fowler, Hertzke, Olson, & den Dulk, 2004; Green, Guth, Smidt, & Kellstedt, 1996; Kohut, Green, Keeter, & Toth, 2000; Norris & Inglehard, 2004; Seyle & Newman, 2006; Suarez, 2006; Wald, 2003). Although this topic has been subject to exaggeration (Fiorina, Abrams, & Pope, 2006; Hillygus & Shields, 2005), some social scientists have argued that there are inherent relationships between aspects of religiosity and political "conservatism" (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Wilson, 1973). One might suppose that there is a natural relationship between these constructs. Stances on "moral" policies, such as abortion, same-sex marriage, and federally funded stem cell research, are widely perceived as contrary to traditional religious teachings, and for some people this mind-set may extend to a general right-leaning orientation toward politics (Hunter, 1991; Layman & Green, 2005).

In this article we argue that the influence of religiosity on political alignment varies as a function of race in the United States. In particular, we present evidence that the relationships between various indicators of religiosity and conservative political alignment are much weaker, and often absent, among the two largest racial/ethnic minority groups in the United States, Black and Latino Americans. Furthermore, we demonstrate that that there is a stronger pathway from religiosity to focus on religiously traditional values (vs. focus on social justice) to conservative politics among Whites than there is among Blacks and Latinos. We contend that inquiry into the relationship between religiosity and political alignment should focus on the role of cultural context.

Individual Differences in Religiosity

Religiosity is a multidimensional phenomenon. It is distinct from religious affiliation, such as whether a person is Christian, Muslim, or Jewish (Cohen, Hall, Koenig, & Meador, 2005; Cohen & Hill, 2007). But aside from religious affiliation, there are multiple ways in which a person may be "religious" (Hill & Pargament, 2003). First, there is religious behavior, often operationalized as how frequently a person attends religious services. Second, there is the psychological experience of religion. For example, it has long been recognized in personality and social psychology that religious people have a variety of motivations for their religiosity. Allport and Ross (1967) proposed that people who are high in "intrinsic religiosity" have internalized their religion and experience it as an important, or even primary, source of guidance in their lives. Thus, intrinsic religiosity, or personal guidance of religion in one's life, is one psychological dimension pertaining to religious experience. Another psychological dimension of religiosity, sometimes termed fundamentalism or "doctrinal orthodoxy," is the belief that religious texts are literally true, immutable, and inerrant (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005; cf. Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Hunter, 1991). Although attendance, intrinsic religiosity, and fundamentalism correlate strongly, it is useful to study them as distinct dimensions (Hood et al., 2005). For example, the correlations of some dimensions of religiosity with each other, and with other psychological constructs, can vary across religious cultural groups (Cohen et al., 2005; Cohen, Siegel, & Rozin, 2003).

With regard to the relationship between religiosity and political alignment, values pertaining to traditionalism are often highlighted. In particular, it is typically argued that a central emphasis on tradition and traditional aspects of religion provides the link between religiosity and politics. For example, Hunter (1991) argued

that religious traditionalists possess radically different worldviews regarding the ultimate nature of morality in comparison to secular and religiously progressive people. It has also been proposed that religious traditionalists are conservative because they are not very open to experience or are rigid in their thinking (Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007; Edgington & Hutchinson, 1990; Kirkpatrick, Hood, & Hartz, 1991; Saroglou, 2002).

Race, Religion, and Politics

Notwithstanding stereotypes to the contrary, religious Americans, including fundamentalist Americans, are a heterogeneous group (e.g., Greeley & Hout, 2006). In the contemporary American context, race is one factor that might be expected to determine which religious individuals are drawn to right-leaning political alignment and which are not. A majority of Americans are White/European descended, and the two largest racial/ethnic minority groups are Black and Latino Americans. These groups are economically and socially disadvantaged, and the nature of their social positions may have implications for how their religious sentiments influence their political leanings.

Black Americans have had a highly unique historical experience that has impacted their social and political attitudes. Sears and Savalei (2006) note several aspects of this unique historical experience that are relevant to the social and political views of Black Americans. First, most contemporary Black Americans descend from Africans who were involuntarily brought to America and enslaved by Europeans. Since the abolition of slavery, Blacks have been subjected to vigorous, violent, and influential opposition to their civil and political liberties, as well as to more subtle forms of discrimination. Black Americans have been the largest minority group in the United States until very recently, and their treatment has been the subject of fierce political differences throughout American history (see Carmines & Stimson, 1989). Furthermore, their physical distinctiveness from the White majority of Americans renders it in the case that Black Americans are more quickly recognized as members of a distinct minority than are other minority group members that have been the subject of discrimination (e.g., Irish Catholics, Jews, and most Latinos).

As a consequence of their unique situation, Black Americans' political views are strongly and uniquely centered around perceptions of group interests, which include a particular focus on promoting social justice (Kinder & Winter, 2001; Sears & Savalei, 2006). Although traditionalism is also important to the Black American religious experience, it may be a less central concern relative to social justice than it is for White

Americans. Religion is a very important part of life for many Black Americans, and religion has served as a context for political efforts to obtain better conditions for their racial/ethnic group (Calhoun-Brown, 1998; McClerking & McDaniel, 2005). Because left-leaning preferences on many issues are viewed as instrumental to such improved conditions, religiosity indicators might not display as strong a relationship, or any relationship at all, with conservative political alignment among Black Americans.

Sears and Savalei (2006) point out a variety of factors that distinguish the Latino American experience from the Black American experience. Whereas most Black Americans are descendents of slaves, most Latinos are either recent voluntary immigrants or descendents of voluntary immigrants. Latinos have not had the same historical experience of enslavement, Jim Crow discrimination, and violent resistance to equal civil and political rights as have Black Americans. Furthermore, Sears and Savalei note that Black Americans are, on average, more immediately physically identifiable as a distinct racial group than are Latinos, many of whom are indistinguishable from European-descended White Americans. This likely leads to differential treatment across the two minority groups. However, Latino Americans are also economically and socially disadvantaged in the United States and, like Black Americans, are inclined to view religion as personally important (Kelly & Morgan, 2008).

Given the ways that the cultural and historical experience of Blacks and Latinos differ from those of Whites, it may be the case that for both of these racial minority groups, religiosity does not entail aligning with conservative political views. In particular, a relative centrality of traditionalism, compared to social justice, may not characterize the religious experience of Black and Latino Americans to the extent that it characterizes that of White Americans. Even to the extent that the value of traditionalism is associated with religiosity among these minority groups, this value may not translate as straightforwardly into conservative political alignment as it does for White Americans. Thus, we expect that the relationship between religiosity and conservative political alignment will not be as strong among Black and Latino Americans as it is among White Americans.

Examining links between religiosity and political alignment among Americans sampled between 1992 and 2000, Layman and Green (2005) found a relationship between a religiosity composite (consisting of attendance, religious importance, and prayer frequency) and conservative alignment among various White religious affiliation groups. However, these researchers found that this same religiosity composite correlated with "liberal" alignment among Black Protestants. This

is consistent with our present hypotheses. However, in contrast to our present hypotheses, these researchers demonstrated similar effects of fundamentalism (biblical literalism) on right-leaning alignment among all of the groups under study. Thus, one goal of the present study is to reexamine the relations of distinct religiosity indicators and political alignment among Black Americans and, in particular, to compare the strength of these relations with the strength of those relations among White Americans.

Our hypotheses also extend to Latino Americans. In particular, we expect that, as among Black Americans, a weaker effect of religiosity on political alignment (compared to that among Whites) will be present among this minority group. Kelly and Morgan (2008) found evidence consistent with this hypothesis in a sample of Americans surveyed between 1990 and 2000. These researchers combined items assessing frequency of prayer, bible reading, religious attendance, biblical literalism, born-again experience, and religious importance into a single composite. They found that this composite predicted a host of right-leaning political attitudes more weakly among Latino Americans than it did among White Americans. However, as discussed earlier, it is useful to distinguish among different components of religiosity. It is unclear from Kelly and Morgan's analysis if differential effects occur for some religiosity indicators but not for others.

Thus, we test the differential relations between distinct religiosity indicators and political alignment across White, Black, and Latino Americans. Because the studies reported here used a small subset of available measures of religiosity, we use multiple indicators of religiosity across our studies. Moreover, we test whether the relation between religiosity and political attitudes is different among Asian Americans than it is among White Americans in one study with a sufficiently large sample of Asian Americans. Because Asian Americans are a relatively advantaged minority group, we do not expect to see differing relations between religiosity and political alignment among Whites versus Asians.

Finally, we examine the specific mechanism by which a differential relation between religiosity and political alignment might occur across the groups under study. Specifically, we test whether a less central focus on the traditional aspects of religiosity accounts for the differential relationship between religiosity indicators and political alignment across Whites, on the one hand, and Blacks and Latinos, on the other. That is, we examine whether Black and Latino Americans are less inclined to translate their religiosity into right-leaning political alignment because both (a) their religious experience is less centrally focused on the value of traditionalism and (b) the value of traditionalism that does exist in their

religious experience is less likely to translate into right-leaning political alignment.

STUDY 1

In Study 1 we examine whether the relations between religiosity indicators and political alignment are different across Whites, Blacks, and Latinos. We also test whether any such differences survive controlling for social class and gender.

Method

Sample

We used data from the 2004 National Election Studies (University of Michigan, Center for Political Studies), which are based on 70-min, English, face-to-face interviews with a representative cross-section of the American electorate, U.S. citizens aged 18 and over ($n = 1,212$). The dataset consists of responses before and after the 2004 election. There were 189 Blacks, 28 Asians, 86 Latinos, and 864 Whites in the sample. Because of the small number of Asians, we only present data comparing Blacks with Whites, and comparing Latinos with Whites.

Measures

We used three religiosity items in our analyses: one assessing religious fundamentalism, one assessing personal guidance of religion (i.e., intrinsic religiosity), and one assessing religious attendance.

The item measuring religious fundamentalism was "Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?" Response options were 1 (*The Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God*), 2 (*The Bible is the word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word*), or 3 (*The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word*). Participants providing other responses (don't know, refused to answer) were dropped from the analysis.

The importance indicator represented how much religion is used in making everyday decisions for the individual, coded from 1 (*not at all*) to 4 (*a great deal*). This indicator was computed from responses to two items. Participants were first asked whether religion was important to them. Participants who responded "no" received a code of 1 (*not at all*). Participants who responded "yes" were then asked how much religion guided their life, and response options were 2 (*some*), 3 (*quite a bit*), and 4 (*a great deal*).

The attendance item queried frequency of religious attendance, and the response options were 1 (*never*), 2 (*a few times a year*), 3 (*once or twice a month*), 4 (*almost every week*), and 5 (*every week*).

Political alignment. Our dependent variable was the response to the item "We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative." Participants rated their political leaning on this scale from 1 (*extremely liberal*) to 7 (*extremely conservative*). Respondents who provided other responses (e.g., don't know, refused to answer) were dropped.

Social class. We sought to ensure that our effects were not due to systematic differences in social class between the groups of focus (Graham, 1992). We used three items as social class indicators. One item tapped education (8 levels, with a maximum of an advanced degree), another tapped subjective social class (8 levels, from lower class to upper class), and another asked respondents to report household income (24 levels, with a maximum of earning at least $120,000 per year; for this variable, we substituted the median of 16 [corresponding to $45,000-$49,999] for those with missing data). For all three variables, participants who provided other responses (e.g., don't know, refused to answer) were dropped from analyses.

Results and Discussion

To investigate our hypothesis that the relationships between religiosity indicators and political alignment would vary across Blacks and Whites, and across Latinos and Whites, we used moderated regression (Aiken & West, 1991). We predicted political alignment from a dummy variable coded 1 for *Black* versus 0 for *White or Latino*, another dummy variable coded 1 for *Latino* versus 0 for *White or Black*, a composite religiosity scale (mean centered), and interaction terms between the religiosity composite and each of the dummy variables. Using this set of dummy codes and interaction terms allowed us to simultaneously test for differences between Whites and Blacks and between Whites and Latinos. Because we had directional hypotheses about the relative strength of relationships between political alignment and religiosity for our groups, we report one-tailed tests of our moderator effects.

Figure 1 shows the relations for the three ethnic groups. Being Black versus White significantly moderated the relationship between religiosity and political alignment ($b = .14$, $\beta = .08$, $p = .025$). A similar moderator
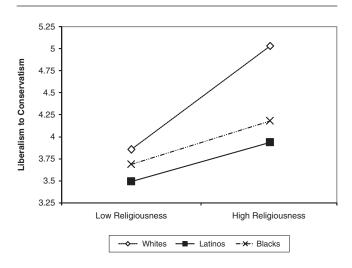
Figure 1   Relationship between religiosity and liberalism versus conservatism in the National Election Studies dataset in Study 1.

NOTE: High and low religiosity correspond to 1 *SD* from the mean. Higher scores on the *y*-axis indicate greater conservatism. Liberalism and conservatism scores could range from 1 to 7.

effect was present when comparing Latinos and Whites ($b = .15$, $\beta = .06$, $p = .03$), with a similar difference in slopes between Latinos and Whites. We next explored whether these moderator effects would survive controlling for gender, household income, subjective social status, education, Catholic affiliation, Protestant affiliation, and sex. Neither moderator effect was substantially changed (Blacks vs. Whites: $b = .12$, $\beta = .06$, $p = .05$; Latinos vs. Whites: $b = .14$, $\beta = .06$, $p = .04$). In the analyses in which sex, the three social class indicators, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation were controlled, the unstandardized effect of religiosity on political alignment was .25 ($p < .001$) among Whites, but only .11 ($p = .10$) for Blacks and .11 ($p = .16$) for Latinos.

We next conducted similar analyses using each of the individual religiosity indicators. We controlled for gender, the social class variables, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation in these analyses. For the fundamentalism item (belief about the Bible being literally true), both the White–Black difference in slopes ($b = .46$, $\beta = .07$, $p = .03$) and the White–Latino difference in slopes ($b = .56$, $\beta = .07$, $p = .02$) were significant. The unstandardized effect of the fundamentalism item on political alignment was much stronger among Whites ($b = .58$, $p < .001$) compared to Blacks ($b = .17$, $p = .29$) and Latinos ($b = .04$, $p = .84$).

For the religious guidance item, the Black–White difference in slopes ($b = .24$, $\beta = .06$, $p = .05$) and the Latino–White difference in slopes ($b = .27$, $\beta = .05$,

$p = .06$) were significant. Again, the unstandardized effect of the religious guidance item on political alignment was stronger among Whites ($b = .35$, $p < .001$) than among Blacks ($b = .13$, $p = .35$) and among Latinos ($b = .08$, $p = .69$).

For the religious attendance item, the Black–White difference in slopes was significant ($b = .18$, $\beta = .06$, $p = .04$) but the Latino–White difference, while in the same direction, was not significant ($b = .12$, $\beta = .03$, $p = .16$). The unstandardized effect of the religious attendance item on political alignment was stronger among Whites ($b = .40$, $p < .001$) than among Blacks ($b = .12$, $p = .49$) and among Latinos ($b = .23$, $p = .28$).

STUDY 2

In Study 2 we examined the same hypothesis tested in Study 1 using more reliable, multi-item measures of political alignment and religiosity. Furthermore, we examined this hypothesis using White and racial minority student samples that are much more comparable along socioeconomic lines than are the corresponding groups in nationally representative samples, such as that used in Study 1. This study included two samples: one for scale development and the other to test the substantive hypothesis.

Method

Participants

Our scale development sample consisted of 199 undergraduate students (126 women and 73 men) taking an introduction to psychology course who received course credit. Most were White (144), 10 were Asian or Asian American, 4 were American Indian/Alaska Native, 5 were Black, and 32 indicated Other (of the 32 people in the Other racial category, 24 reported being Hispanic or Latino/Latina). Probed in a separate item, 36 were Hispanic or Latino/Latina, and 162 were not. For religion or faith, 47 were none/atheist/agnostic, 3 were Buddhist, 63 were Catholic, 6 were Jewish, 7 were Mormon, 2 were Orthodox Christian (Greek Orthodox or Russian Orthodox), 36 were Protestant, and 33 indicated Other.

A different sample of introductory psychology students comprising 463 individuals (328 women and 135 men) was used to test the substantive hypotheses. Ten did not provide their race, 43 were Asian or Asian American, 13 were Native American, 13 were Black, 309 were White, 1 was Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 77 indicated Other. Probed in a separate item, 71 were Hispanic or Latino/Latina, 390 were not, and 5 did not

provide this information. In terms of religious affiliation, 93 were none/atheist/agnostic, 6 were Buddhist, 129 were Catholic, 5 were Hindu, 17 were Jewish, 14 were Mormon, 7 were Muslim, 7 were Orthodox Christian, 87 were Protestant, and 93 indicated Other.

Measures

We used the following 11 items to measure political alignment: "In terms of my political identity, I consider myself to be conservative"; "I have positive feelings about the Republican party"; "In terms of my political identity, I consider myself to be liberal" (reverse-scored); "I have positive feelings about the Democratic party" (reverse-scored); " I admire President Bush"; "President Bush makes me proud to be an American"; "I admire Hillary Rodham Clinton" (reverse-scored); "In the last [2004] election, I voted for President Bush (or would have if I voted)"; "In the last [2004] election, I voted for John Kerry (or would have if I voted)" (reverse-scored); "I feel that the US is nowon the right track"; "I feel that the US is now on the wrong track" (reverse-scored).

We used Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (1992) 20-item fundamentalism scale to assess religious fundamentalism ($\alpha = .94$ in this sample). Sample items include "God has given mankind a complete, unfailing guide to happiness and salvation, which must be totally followed" and "There is a religion on this earth that teaches, without error, God's truth." This measure of religious fundamentalism contains several items that are especially extreme forms of fundamentalism that are not applicable to all fundamentalist groups. Two examples are the item "'Satan' is just the name people give to their own bad impulses. There really is no such thing as a diabolical 'Prince of Darkness' who tempts us" (this is a reverse-scored item) and the item "The basic cause of evil in this world is Satan, who is still constantly and ferociously fighting against God." To deal with this, we also created a short fundamentalism scale with the following four items: "I believe that the Bible was given directly by God to people"; "I believe that the religious texts of my religion (such as the Bible) are literally true"; "In terms of my religious identity, I consider myself to be conservative"; and "In terms of my religious identity, I consider myself to be liberal" (reverse-scored). The scale was internally reliable ($\alpha = .80$).

We measured intrinsic religiosity using Allport and Ross's (1967) 9-item scale, with each item rated from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item is "I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life." Internal reliability was high ($\alpha = .94$).

We measured religious practice with two items ($\alpha = .86$) rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*): "I practice the requirements of my religion or faith" and "I attend religious services regularly."

Results and Discussion

Starting with our 11 political alignment items, we performed an exploratory factor analysis using principal axis factoring with varimax rotation. We were open to one or two factor solutions because some have proposed that liberalism and conservatism are relatively orthogonal (Kerlinger, 1970), but it is also common to have participants rate themselves on a single item from liberal to conservative (e.g., Conover & Feldman, 1981; Sidanius, Pratto, & Bobo, 1996). The scree test suggested a one-factor solution. The eigenvalue of the first factor was 6.42, and that of the second factor was 1.21. The first factor accounted for 58.3% of the variance. Thus, we elected to include all 11 items in our political alignment scale ($\alpha = .94$).

Moderator Analyses

Figure 2 depicts the results of a regression analysis investigating the moderating effect of race on the relationship between fundamentalism and conservative politics. Because of the small number of Blacks in the sample, and because we found similar effects for Blacks and Latinos in Study 1, we combined these two groups in a single White versus minorities dummy variable. Whites were more politically conservative ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$), as were fundamentalists ($\beta = .24$, $p = .002$). However, fundamentalism was more strongly associated with conservative politics for Whites (coded as 1) compared to minorities (coded as 0; $\beta = .23$, $p = .002$). The simple slope for Whites regressing fundamentalism on politics was .58 ($p < .001$) in unstandardized units. The simple slope for minorities was .28 ($p = .002$). Thus, the relationship between fundamentalism and politics was substantially stronger among Whites than among racial minorities, although it was significant for both groups. This interaction was still significant after controlling for sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation ($b = .32$, $\beta = .24$, $p = .001$).

The short fundamentalism scale correlated highly with Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (1992) fundamentalism scale ($r = .80$, $p < .001$). We obtained the same moderator effect of race on the relationships between fundamentalism and political alignment when using this scale ($\beta = .21$, $p = .0025$). The relationship between this short fundamentalism scale and political alignment in unstandardized units was .32 ($p < .001$) for minorities and .54 ($p < .001$) for Whites. This interaction was still significant after controlling sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation ($b = .22$, $\beta = .21$, $p = .002$).

The relationship between intrinsic religiosity and conservative politics was moderated significantly by race and was again stronger for Whites compared to minorities
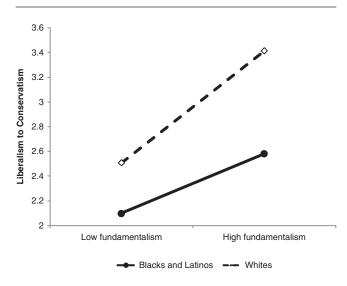
Figure 2   Being White versus a racial minority (Black or Latino) moderates the relationship between religious fundamentalism and the average of 11 items gauging conservative politics (Study 2).

NOTE: High and low fundamentalism corresponds to 1 *SD* from the mean. Higher scores on the *y*-axis indicate greater conservatism. Conservatism scores could range from 1 to 5.

($b = .17$, $\beta = .17$, $p = .02$). The relationship among Whites was .35, ($p < .001$) and the relationship among minorities was .19 ($p = .005$). This interaction was still significant after controlling for sex, Protestant affiliation, and Catholic affiliation ($b = .16$, $\beta = .16$, $p = .03$).

The relationship between religious practice and political alignment was similarly moderated by race ($b = .16$, $\beta = .19$, $p = .005$). The effect of religious practice on political alignment in unstandardized units was stronger for Whites ($b = .28$, $p < .001$) than for minorities ($b = .12$, $p = .03$). This interaction was still significant after controlling sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation ($b = .17$, $\beta = .20$, $p = .005$).

STUDY 3

Our goal in Study 3 was to elucidate the process by which religiosity affects political alignment in various racial groups. In particular, we examined whether, among Whites more so than among Blacks and Latinos, religion leads to a central emphasis on tradition, which in turn leads to more conservative political alignment. We also examined whether, among Blacks and Latinos more so than among Whites, religion leads to more emphasis on social justice, which in turn leads to less conservative political alignment.

We used a dataset with a larger sample of Asian Americans so we could test whether the effect of

religiosity on political alignment is weaker among this minority group compared to Whites. We predicted that it would not be. In particular, we argue that it is the religious-based focus on group social welfare, rooted in particular group experiences, that counteracts the tendency of religiosity to relate to right-leaning political alignment for some groups. Because Asian Americans do not, on average, struggle economically relative to other ethnic minorities, and because they have not faced the same challenges historically in America as either Blacks or Latinos, we did not predict a similar effect for this group.

Method

Participants

Participants were undergraduate students (166 men and 405 women) from two universities, one in the South and one in the Southwest United States, who participated for course credit. Out of 553 people reporting their race, the dataset contained 363 non-Hispanic Whites and 191 coded as racial minorities (64 were Asian/Asian American, 7 were American Indian/Alaska Native, 25 were Black/African American, 6 were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 89 indicated Other). In a separate item, 87 of the 556 people who responded reported being Hispanic or Latino/Latina. Mean age was 19.7 ($SD = 2.79$).

Measures

We used the same measures employed in Study 2 but also assessed whether participants believed that religion is mostly about traditional values (two items, $\alpha = .67$): "Religion or faith is most importantly about traditional values" and "The most important thing about religion or faith is its time-honored values and morals." In kind, we measured whether participants believed that religion is most about social justice (two items, $\alpha = .55$): "Religion or faith is mostly about helping people less fortunate than us" and "The most important thing about religion or faith is its requirement to be socially responsible."

Results and Discussion

We simultaneously tested for differences in relationships between fundamentalism and conservative political alignment comparing Whites with each of Blacks, Latinos, and Asians, using a similar moderated regression analytic strategy as in Studies 1 and 2 (Figure 3). For Whites, religious fundamentalism was strongly associated with more conservative politics (simple slope: $b = .43$, $p < .001$).
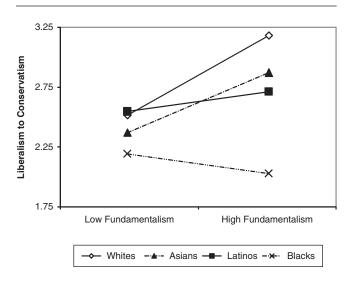
Figure 3 Relationship between religious fundamentalism and the average of 11 conservative politics items among Whites, Blacks, Asians, and Latinos (Study 3).

NOTE: High and low fundamentalism corresponds to 1 *SD* from the mean. Higher scores on the *y*-axis indicate greater conservatism. Conservatism scores could range from 1 to 5.

The moderator effect was large when comparing Whites with Blacks, a difference between Blacks and Whites in simple slopes of .55 in unstandardized units (moderator effect: $b = -.55$, $\beta = -.16$, $p = .005$). Among Blacks, fundamentalism was uncorrelated with political alignment (simple slope: $b = -.11$, $p = .60$).

The moderating effect of race on the relationship between fundamentalism and political alignment was also significant when comparing Whites with Latinos (moderator effect: $b = -.33$, $\beta = -.12$, $p = .01$). The simple slope for Latinos was not significant ($b = .11$, $p = .40$).

There was not a significant moderating effect of being White versus Asian on the relationship between fundamentalism and politics (moderating effect: $b = -.11$, $\beta = -.04$, $p = .40$). The simple slope for Asian Americans ($b = .33$, $p = .008$) was similar to that of Whites. The moderating effects of being Black versus White ($b = -.49$, $\beta = -.14$, $p = .02$) and of being Latino versus White ($b = -.31$, $\beta = -.11$, $p = .01$) were still significant after controlling for sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation. The effect of being Asian versus White still was not significant ($b = -.16$, $\beta = -.05$, $p = .25$).

We similarly examined race as a moderator of the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and political attitudes, and found a similar pattern as in our analyses with fundamentalism. There was a significant moderating effect when comparing Whites with Blacks ($b = -.46$, $\beta = -.15$, $p = .005$), a significant effect when comparing Whites with Latinos ($b = -.18$, $\beta = -.08$, $p = .04$),

and a nonsignificant effect when comparing Whites with Asians ($b = .01$, $\beta = .00$, $p = .93$). For Whites, the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and political alignment in unstandardized units was significant and positive ($b = .29$, $p < .001$). For Asians, the slope was also significant and positive ($b = .31$, $p < .001$). For Blacks ($b = -.16$, $p = .19$) and Latinos ($b = .21$, $p = .31$) there was no significant relationship. The moderating effects of being Black versus White ($b = -.41$, $\beta = -.13$, $p = .02$) and of being Latino versus White ($b = -.15$, $\beta = -.07$, $p = .08$) were not much changed when controlling for sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation. The effect of being Asian versus White did not change either ($b = .003$, $\beta = .001$, $p = .98$).

A similar pattern of results emerged when looking at whether race moderated the relationship between religious practice and political attitudes. There was a significant moderating effect when comparing Blacks with Whites ($b = -.37$, $\beta = -.15$, $p = .0025$) and when comparing Latinos with Whites ($b = -.19$, $\beta = -.10$, $p = .015$), but no moderating effect when comparing Asians with Whites ($b = .004$, $\beta = .00$, $p = .97$). The relationship between religious practice and conservative alignment in unstandardized units was positive and significant for Whites ($b = .26$, $p < .001$) and for Asians ($b = .26$, $p = .002$), but not significant for either Latinos ($b = .05$, $p = .58$) or Blacks ($b = -.11$, $p = .22$). The moderating effect of being Black versus White ($b = -.31$, $\beta = -.12$, $p = .01$) and of being Latino versus White ($b = -.16$, $\beta = -.09$, $p = .03$) were still significant when controlling sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation. The effect of being Asian versus White did not change either ($b = .02$, $\beta = .01$, $p = .86$).

Tradition and Social Justice

We next set out to better understand the process whereby religiosity differentially influences political attitudes among Whites, on the one hand, and Blacks and Latinos, on the other. Because we have seen similar effects for fundamentalism, intrinsic religiosity, and practice, we modeled these as indicators of a single latent variable, religiosity. The relationship of these three indicators with the latent variable was invariant across Whites and the combined sample of Blacks and Latinos; specifically, constraining the factor loadings and intercepts to be the same did not significantly deteriorate the fit of the model, $\Delta\chi^2(2) = 1.92$, $p = .38$. This is evidence of strong factorial invariance (Widaman & Reise, 1997).

We examined the hypotheses that (a) the path from religiosity to traditional religion (controlling for social-justice-oriented religion) to conservative politics would be stronger among Whites and (b) the path from religiosity to social-justice-oriented religion (controlling for

traditionalism) to conservative politics would be stronger among Blacks and Latinos. Using structural equation modeling, we tested for moderated mediation as suggested by MacKinnon (2008). We compared the fit of models (via chi-square) in which the mediated paths were constrained to be the same versus not constrained to be the same (Figure 4).

Sex, Catholic affiliation, and Protestant affiliation were controlled for by including in the model as predictors each of the substantive variables. We omit these paths and residual errors for the sake of clarity of the figure. (The model was also estimated without these variables, as shown directly in Figure 4, with very similar results.) The overall model fit was adequate, $\chi^2(28)$ = 61.04, p < .001, comparative fit index = .97, root mean square error of approximation = .073 (90% confidence interval = .048 to .098), standardized root mean square residual = .029.

Consistent with our hypothesis, the mediated path from religiosity to tradition to conservative politics was significantly stronger for Whites compared to Blacks and Latinos, $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 24.99, p < .001. The specific indirect effect for Whites was .076, z = 3.33, p < .001. The specific indirect effect (−.01) for Blacks and Latinos was much smaller and in fact close to zero (z = −0.35, p = .36). We also examined which of the individual paths differed for Whites compared to Blacks and Latinos. Although the path from religiosity to tradition was similar in size for Whites compared to Blacks and Latinos, $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 0.07, p = .79, the effect of tradition on being conservative politically was significantly stronger for Whites compared to Blacks and Latinos, for whom the path was small and negative, $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 5.81, p = .02.

Contrary to our hypothesis, the mediated path from religiosity to social justice to conservative politics was not significantly different for Whites compared to racial minorities, $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 1.17 p = .28. The specific indirect effects for Whites (−.02, z = −1.19, p = .12) and Blacks and Latinos (−.02, z = −0.17, p = .43) were small and very similar. The path from religiosity to social justice was similar for Blacks and Latinos compared to Whites, $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 1.43, p = .23. However, somewhat surprisingly, the path from social justice to conservative political alignment was more negative among Whites than among Blacks and Latinos, $\Delta\chi^2(1)$ = 4.44, p = .03.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Religiosity's effect on conservative political alignment was found to be significantly weaker among Black and Latino Americans than among White Americans. Moreover, we found in Study 3 that a mediational pathway connecting religiosity and political alignment via centrally valuing traditional aspects of religiosity was significantly stronger among White Americans than among Black and Latino Americans. We examined our hypotheses using two types of samples—one representative of the U.S. electorate and the others composed of undergraduates. Furthermore, we measured three conceptually distinct religiosity indicators in each study using different sets of measures across the three studies.
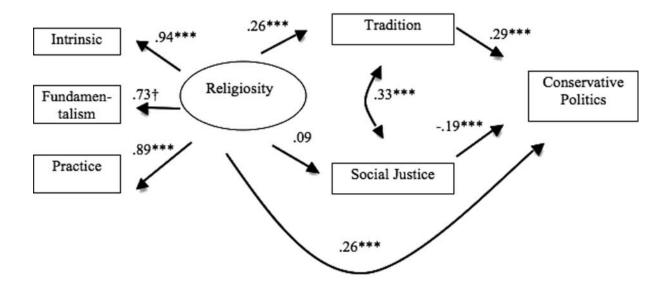
It is tempting to assume that there is a natural connection between being a religious person and being a politically conservative person (e.g., Hunter, 1991). Our findings suggest that connections between religiosity and politics are best understood as products of particular cultural inputs, which can vary as a function of group memberships within a particular nation (Kelly & Morgan, 2008; Layman & Green, 2005). Such a view is consistent with historical evidence that religious activism has often promoted causes that would nowadays be described as left leaning, such as public education, labor regulations, and the abolition of slavery (see Wald, 2003). Of course, religious activism has also promoted a variety of causes that would be considered conservative—but the point is that the political direction of religious activism is variable and seems to be influenced by changing contextual inputs. These contextual inputs vary both across different social groups and across time.

Religiosity and Politics: Psychological Dispositions Versus Social Experiences

It is sometimes argued that common dispositional tendencies might underlie both religious and political orientations. For example, Jost, Nosek, and Goslin (2008) noted an apparent historical continuity in the relation between religiosity and politics: "In previous centuries, conservatives were strenuous defenders of the church and the crown, whereas liberals, progressives, and radicals challenged the supremacy of those institutions. Today, conservatives still venerate religious traditions and authorities more than progressives do" (p. 127). The possibility of a historically enduring dispositional connection between religiosity and political attitudes should not be dismissed. Behavioral genetics findings of strong heritable components to both religiosity and political attitudes are suggestive in this regard (Alford, Funk, & Hibbing, 2005).

However, the present findings suggest that relations between commitment to religion and conservative politics must be considered in terms of different cultural experiences (Layman & Green, 2005). We only examined race as a representative of such distinct cultural experiences. However, future research should address the possibility that other individual differences and social identities related to cultural experience might

Whites (*n* = 346)

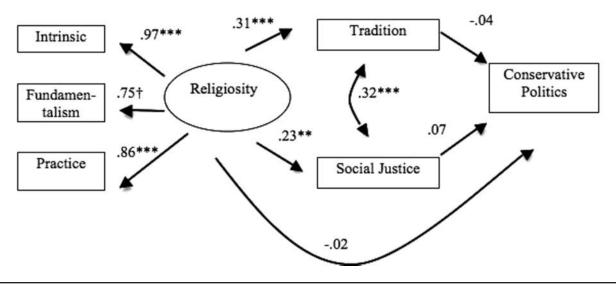
Blacks and Latinos (*n* = 100)

Figure 4   Mediation models of relationships from religiosity (a latent variable with indicators of fundamentalism, intrinsic religiosity, and religious practice) to tradition and social justice and then to conservative politics among Whites compared to Blacks and Latinos in Study 3.
NOTE: Coefficients from standardized solution are presented.
† unstandardized paths were constrained to be 1 (marker variable). **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

moderate the religiosity–political orientation link. One possibility is a family of individual difference variables pertaining to political awareness. Political scientists have reliably observed that alignment of a variety of political attitudes on the conservative–liberal dimension

is moderated by variables such as political knowledge, political interest, and education (Sniderman, Brody, & Tetlock, 1991; Zaller, 1990, 1992). Perhaps these variables also moderate connections between nonpolitical individual differences, such as religiosity, and political

alignment. This would suggest that it is context of information, with certain individual differences representing proxies for exposure to that context of information, that determines links between religiosity and political alignment.

Dimensions of Religiosity

Psychologists interested in religion have long argued that different religious people place different levels of emphasis on different aspects of religiosity, even considering certain motivations to be more authentic or mature than others (Allport & Ross, 1967; Cohen et al., 2005). Historically in the United States, many of these differences in foci of religiosity have occurred along divisions of religious affiliation (Hunter, 1991; Wald, 2003). However, foci of religiosity nowadays seem to differ along other social divisions (Layman, 2001). We presently demonstrate how the central focus of one's religion—particularly in terms of the relative focus on traditionalism—has implications for how one's religiosity might translate into a political leaning. White Americans displayed a stronger pathway from religiosity to tradition focus to conservative political alignment than did Black and Latino Americans. Although Whites and the group of Blacks and Latinos displayed a relationship between religiosity and tradition focus, only among Whites was there a link between tradition focus and conservative political alignment. Thus, the translation of a central focus on traditionalism into conservative political alignment is what differentiated the religiosity–politics associations of Whites from those of Blacks and Latinos.

Contrary to our expectations, we did not find that a central focus on social justice differentially mediated the religiosity–politics link across racial/ethnic groups. For both Whites and the combined sample of Blacks and Latinos, religiosity was associated with a focus on social justice, but this emphasis on social justice was uncorrelated with political alignment. It seems, then, that Americans of all three groups do not associate the notion of religiously inspired social justice with a particular political leaning. Indeed, the value of social justice may be invoked to justify both attitudes that are considered conservative and attitudes that are considered liberal. Our findings suggest that differences in the political translation of religiously inspired traditionalism, rather than that of religiously inspired social justice, account for the pattern of differential religiosity–politics connections for Whites compared to Blacks and Latinos.

Layman and Green (2005) found that among Blacks, fundamentalism related to right-leaning politics whereas other dimensions of religiosity related to left-leaning politics. In the present studies, all dimensions of religiosity tended to have nonsignificant relations with political alignment among Blacks. As for what might account for this difference, one possibility is that the relation between religiosity and political alignment changed for Black Americans between the 1990s and 2004. For example, it may be that the political climate accompanying a controversial presidential administration made Blacks less likely to organize their attitudes on the basis of religiosity. Temporal changes in the structuring of political attitudes on the basis of religiosity are broadly consistent with a contextual perspective on the religiosity–politics link.

Conclusion

Most social psychological studies oversample White college students. This problem may produce a variety of misleading conclusions (Sears, 1986). Apparently one such questionable conclusion is that religiosity and conservative political attitudes are inherently linked. The relationship between these constructs was found to be much weaker among Black and Latino Americans than among White Americans. Furthermore, this differential effect was found to be partly attributable to a tendency of White Americans, but not Black and Latino Americans, to translate a tradition-focused view of religion into conservative politics. Historical considerations suggest that traditional religiosity may be harnessed to promote causes that are considered "liberal"—such as public education—and causes that are considered "conservative"—such as opposition to same-sex marriage. It appears that cultural context—including information regarding what values, characteristics, and beliefs are emphasized as "going together" can produce widely varying political correlates of religiosity. In addition to varying across time, cultural context also varies across group memberships, such as racial/ethnic group memberships. Thus, in studying how nonpolitical individual differences relate to political leanings, it is crucial to address how the experiences associated with group membership might influence the connection.

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