Explaining the Rise of Americans With No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations[1]

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Explaining the Rise of Americans with No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations

Between the start and the end of the 1990s, the proportion of American adults reporting that they preferred no religion doubled from 7 percent, its level for about 20 years, to an unprecedented 14 percent. Not only is that a startlingly rapid social change in its own right, it also challenges many scholars' understanding of American culture. From at least the era of Tocqueville to contemporary survey research, observers have described Americans as especially religious (e.g., Callow 1985; Inglehart and Baker 2000; Kohut et al. 2000), an attribute that helped to define "American exceptionalism" (e.g., Greeley 1991; Lipset 1996). A sharp rise in the percentage of Americans with no religious preference could signal that the United States is less exceptional now than it used to be. One hundred-year-old predictions of secularization may be (finally) coming true. These frames prove to be inconsistent with some key pieces of the evidence we have uncovered and report here. The increase nonetheless points to important changes in religion's role in the cultural milieu of *fin-de-siècle* America, when many political controversies were about or entwined with religion.

We seek to explain why American adults became increasingly likely to say they had no religious preference as the 1990s unfolded. Briefly summarized, we find that the increase was *not* a statistical aberration, that it was *not* connected to a loss of religious piety, and, most dramatically, that it *was* connected to politics. The case is not airtight, but the preponderance of evidence implicates politics as the cause of changing religious identification. Throughout American history, many adults maintained an identification with the religion in which they were raised, in spite of infrequent attendance at religious service. In the 1990s many of the people who had this kind of weak attachment to religion and either moderate or liberal political views found themselves at odds with the conservative political agenda of the Christian Right and reacted by breaking their weak attachment to organized religion. People with religious commitments and people with conservative political views did not contribute to the trend.

We arrive at this conclusion in four steps: (1) We identify three theories on the doubling of "no religion" answers; (2) we examine the trend more closely and establish that the change

is a real historical change and not an artifact of survey methodology or the replacement of religious cohorts by less religious ones; (3) we assess secularization by examining carefully the beliefs, practices, and social origins of people who have no religion; and (4) we quantify the contributions that demography, politics, and beliefs make to explaining the trend in religious preference and find that an aversion to mixing conservative politics with religion and demographic changes combine to account for it. Neither private piety nor core beliefs about God have changed, so we conclude that the trend toward no religious preference cannot be interpreted as secularization.

THE TREND TO BE EXPLAINED

National surveys taken since the early 1990s show a sharp increase in the proportion of American adults who reported having no religion.[1] The proportion doubled between 1990-1991 and 1998-2000 – from 7 to 14 percent – according to the General Social Survey (GSS), a large, nationally representative survey of American adults conducted annual or biennially from 1972 to 2000 (and continuing).[2] After 17 years of no significant change in surveys from 1974 to 1991, this sudden increase is one of the most dramatic proportional changes in any of the variables measured by the GSS. Figure 1 shows the GSS data. The circles show the observed percentage in each survey, the thin vertical lines show the 95-percent confidence

[1]Usually the question includes the word "preference" and may or may not explicitly mention "no religion" as one of the options. Most of the data for our analysis comes from the General Social Survey which does both: "What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?"

[2]We average two surveys together at each end of the decade in order to reduce the sampling error of our estimate of how much religious preference changed (as elementary statistics show that the standard error of a difference is greater than the standard error of either point). In this and all other calculations involving GSS data we restrict attention to persons who are between 25 and 74 years old. We exclude 18-24 year olds because their lives are so much in flux that inferences about them are particularly tenuous. We exclude persons 75 years old and over because differential mortality and institutionalization make the 75 year-old and older population living in households unrepresentative of their cohorts. We exclude the 1972 GSS and half the 1973 GSS because they do not use full probability sampling methods (and the method we use to estimate standard errors is only appropriate for full probability samples). Furthermore, the 1972 GSS did not include a question about religious origins – an important variable in the multivariate analysis to come. We also exclude persons who are missing data on their age, marital status, parenthood, or education because those are important variables in subsequent analyses. The cases excluded due to missing data amount to less than one percent of the cases that would otherwise have been available to estimate the trend.

intervals (adjusted for survey sampling effects),[3] and the heavy, dark line is a spline function that traces the main trend in among the sampling fluctuations.[4] The sharp upturn after 1991 in the observed percentage with no religious preference is unmistakable; it would be clear even if we were to leave the spline function off the chart.

(Figure 1 about here)

Other surveys confirm the increase. The National Election Study shows a rise from 8 to 13 percent from 1992 to 2000, and a 1996 study of religion and politics estimated that 14 percent of American adults had no religious preference (Kohut et al. 2000). There is one exception among major data sources; Gallup Polls as late as the first quarter of 2001 continued to report that 8 percent of American adults claimed no religion.[5] While it is conceivable that Gallup is right and every other major survey is wrong, we are inclined to accept the preponderance of evidence which indicates an increase of 6 to 8 percentage points. One important distinction between Gallup and the other surveys: Gallup interviewers accept "no religion" as an answer but do not suggest it to their respondents; NES, Pew, and the GSS interviewers all read "or no religion" as an explicit alternative.

THEORIES OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

There are at least three ways to explain the upsurge in "no religion" in the 1990s, each with its own theoretical significance and implications. The three are not contradictory; that is, one or more of the theories might be true.

One: The increase in no preference responses may be a simple artifact of changing demography. Religion follows a family lifecycle; people frequently disengage from organized

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[3]The adjustment takes account of the oversamples of African Americans included in the 1982 and 1987 GSSs and of the variations among the sampling frames (updated in 1983 and 1993) and, within sampling frames, variation among primary sampling units.

[4]A spline function splices lines; specifically it joins together two lines with different slopes. The slopes are usually estimated using maximum likelihood methods. We used a logistic regression of the log-odds on having no religious preference on a year spline that had the value of zero for years 1973-1991 and (t-1991) for subsequent years. Note that the net change in expected percentages between 1991 and 2000 is 8.5 percentage points.

[5]The Gallup figure refers to a poll conducted 19-21 February 2001 and reported on their website (www.gallup.com/poll). The same website reports that the percentage of Gallup respondents with no religion fluctuated between 6 and 9 percent through most of the 1990s after an all-time high of 11 percent in 1990 and 1991.

religion when they leave the family they grew up in and re-attach themselves about the time they start a family of their own (Glenn 1987; Greeley and Hout 1988; Roof 1993, chap. 6). Extended schooling and delayed family formation may have contributed to the trend in non-preference. If such demographic factors explain the change, then there is no need to search for cultural sources.

Two: The increase reflects a historical trend, suddenly accelerated, of secularization. The debate over whether modernization brings secularization is generations-old in sociology. (Even the briefest bibliographies would include, in addition to the classic works of sociology's founders, sources from the 1990s such as Bruce 1992; Butler 1990; Casanova 1994; Chaves 1994; Finke and Stark 1992; Lechner 1991; Swatos and Christiano 1999.) Secularization seems to have been long-delayed in the United States, compared to other mostly Protestant English-speaking nations. Perhaps the 1990s upsurge heralds the coming of secularization at last. That is how Glenn (1987) treated earlier, smaller trends in "no preference," as the leading edge of secularization.

The term, secularization, is itself a subject of debate. Some suggest that distinctions be made, especially between public and private religious expressions. Chaves (1994), for example, distinguishes between secularization as a decline in individual piety, which he says has not happened, and secularization as the loss of religious authority in society, which he says has happened. Casanova (1994) cautions that the public-to-private transition may be reversible; there was as much evidence (from Spain, Brazil, Poland, and the United States) of religion moving from the private to the public sphere as there were clear indications that religion had "retreated" to the private sphere. Below, we will distinguish between individual piety and denominational identity as we attempt to assess whether the trend to no religious preference is secularization.

Three: The increase in no preference responses may reflect the emergence of what has loosely been termed the "culture wars," controversies that connect politics and religiosity (as opposed to specific religious affiliations). This is an old association in many other nations, where to declare oneself religious was – and still is – to take a political stance, typically a conservative one, while anti-clericalism was deeply ingrained in Left politics (Lipset and Rokkan 1964; Greeley 1991; Casanova 1994; Gorski 2001). We have in mind the Dutch

confessional parties, the Christian Democrats in Italy and Germany, and several parties including Shas and the National Religious Party in Israel. That kind of institutionalized connection between religiosity and party did not exist in the United States for much of the twentieth century (Dalton 1988, p. 169; Lipset 1996) though specific religion was an important influence on voting (Manza and Brooks 1997). With the emergence of the Religious Right as a force in Republican Party politics, a connection may have emerged (Casanova 1994). Research suggests that Americans did not become more polarized on most cultural matters in the last few decades, but also suggests that religious identities and political party affiliations have become more closely aligned to positions on those cultural matters like abortion that touch on the public regulation of choices that have moral components (DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996; Miller and Hoffman 1999; see also Layman 1987 and Hout 1999). Our conjecture is that the growing identification in the press and in the Congress between Republicans and Christian evangelicals may have led Americans with moderate and liberal political views to express their distance from the Religious Right by saying they prefer no religion.

The succession of explanations one, two, and three is a useful schematic to guide and organize our analysis. But we would not want to rule out either complementary or overlapping effects from each in crafting our understanding and explanation of the increase in null religious preferences. For example, prolonged education may not only be delaying religious attachment, it may be raising the likelihood of never attaching (melding demographic and secularizing effects). More subtly, the activism of some evangelical Christians may be simultaneously increasing the religious vigor of fellow evangelicals who share their sympathy for a conservative social agenda and prompting a withdrawal from public religious expression among other Protestants (and even some Catholics) who dissent from the conservative agenda.

THE DEMOGRAPHIC EXPLANATION

Religious practice is, according to previous research (e.g., Glenn 1987; Greeley and Hout 1988), connected to the family lifecycle. Perhaps contemporary delays in family formation or other lifecycle events may be delaying religious affiliation. Yet it seems unlikely that all of the trend can be coming from this one source. The religious change is so sudden compared to the

longer-running and slower trend toward delaying school-leaving and family formation that it must be regarded as unlikely that family events or cohort succession can fully account for the sudden increase we are trying to explain. Nonetheless, it is essential to start with these kinds of compositional arguments, if for no other reason than to get them off the table.[6] Figure 2 presents GSS data on the trend in religious preference for each of five birth cohorts. If the lifecycle thesis is correct, then the two youngest cohorts should have high prevalence of no religion early and move downward toward the average as they age. The cohort succession argument implies that all the change should be evident in the contrast between the younger and older cohorts; no cohort should show a dramatic increase in the 1990s. The circles show observed percentages; the trend lines trace the percentages expected from a logistic regression of having no religious preference on the spline function we described in connection with Figure 1 and four dummy variables that distinguish among the five birth cohorts.[7]

(Figure 2 about here)

People from younger cohorts that entered the adult population after 1973 expressed significantly less attachment to organized religion than the cohorts they replaced had. That much of the cohort succession argument is correct. However, the younger cohorts also increased their preference for no religion by a wider percentage-point margin after 1991, thus widening, not narrowing, the gaps among cohorts in no preference. The small and mostly random differences between observed percentages (the circles) and expected percentages (the lines) in Figure 2 suggest that we have arrived at a reasonably descriptive function. Table 1 formalizes that assessment by partitioning the total association between year and religious preference into the fraction due to differences among years 1973-1991 and the fraction due to differences among the first period taken as a whole and each subsequent year. In particular, if our spline function is the correct expression of preference for no religion changed over time (within cohorts), then we should see no significant association between year and religion for

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[6]We start with cohort succession because it implies that no individuals changed their religious identification by arguing that the most religious cohorts passed out of view (by death or passing our upper age limit) while less religious cohorts came into view for the first time in the 1990s.

[7]The spline function is equal to zero for 1973-91 and equal to t-1991 for t>1991. The logistic regression coefficient for the spline function is .050 (with an asymptotic standard error of .011), and the coefficients are 0, .040, .520, 1.108, and 1.283 for cohorts 1900-14 through 1960-74, respectively.

the period when the spline function is flat, i.e., from 1973 to 1991. We should see a uniform (log-linear) trend upward from 1991 to 2000. The first part of our model is confirmed; the chi-square tests show that change from 1973 to 1991 is statistically insignificant within all five cohorts.[8] The oldest cohort passed out of our observation before 1991 so we have tests for 1991-2000 in only the last four cohorts. The trend from 1991 to 2000 is not significant for the 1915-29 cohort, but it is significant at conventional levels in each of the three subsequent cohorts. In each of these three cohorts the changes from 1991 to 2000 account for more than half of the total association between year and religious preference; in the last cohort the 1991-2000 trend amounts to 79 percent of the total association.

(Table 1 about here)

The data in Figure 2 are organized to show cohort and period effects. If an aging effect, presumably related to the family lifecycle, were significant it would show up in this figure as a down-sloping trend in the observed percentages from 1974 to 1991. Only in the 1945-1959 cohort do we get any hint that an age effect may have been important. A full decomposition of age, period, and cohort components of the patterns in Figure 2 is beyond the scope of the present paper. This evidence and a complementary figure designed to highlight the relationship between age and religious preference (not shown) is definitive on one point: the increase in the percentage of American adults with no religious preference after 1991 was *not* limited to people who were too young to have been interviewed in the 1970s or 1980s (or even in 1991). In other words, cohort succession, even in combination with (a hard to discern) lifecycle effect, does not fully explain the upsurge in no religious preference. But demography offers an important first step in the direction of forming a fuller explanation. The 1900-14 cohort was, by this measure, the most religious cohort born in the twentieth century. It aged out of the population in the last decade of the century while the least religious cohort of the century – that born 1960-74 – came of age and replaced it. This generational

[8]The one exception might be the 1945-59 cohort; the observed percentages for that cohort hint at a decrease in the percentage with no religious preference between 1973 and 1991. As the 1945-59 cohort is the one cohort whose experience spans the crucial age range from 14 to 45 years old, if there is a lifecycle effect increasing religious attachment as people age through their twenties and early thirties, then it would show precisely in the 1945-59 cohort. The chi-square tests in Table 1 are negative, but they do not order the years. A uniform association model the 1945-59 cohort over the 1971-1991 period does indicate a significant decrease ($L^2 = 8.50$; df = 1; $p < .01$).

succession, by itself, increased the percentage of American adults with no religion by 3 or 4 points. Thus, the average within-cohort change from 1991 to 2000 is only 3.8 percentage points – just about half of the gross change.

As the cohort succession process is gradual, it would be reasonable to expect it to gradually raise in the prevalence of no religious preference earlier than 1991. Yet we have no evidence of change in the 1980s. As nearly as we can figure with the GSS data, the modest period (or age) effect evident for the 1945-1959 cohort was just strong enough to counteract it. That is the percentage of the 1945-59 cohort with no religion declined just enough in the 1980s to offset the disappearance of the 1900-14 cohort. We would be persuaded by this observation to abandon the cohort succession idea but for one additional observation. The cohorts that had the highest proportion with no preference before 1991 also experienced the most change between 1991 and 2000. That observation convinced us that the cohort effects were indeed relevant to the explanation.

THE RELIGIOUS EXPLANATION: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF PEOPLE WITH NO RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE

If secularization accounts for the rise in no religious preference, then we should see evidence that people who have no religious preference, in effect, reject religion. Our principal finding, documented in the next few figures and tables, is that few people who claim no preference are atheists or agnostics; most have religious beliefs. Their beliefs tend to be less articulate and less certain than the beliefs of people who belong to a religion, but few adults with no preference are described well by the term "non-believer." The trend data we have offers *no* evidence of a sudden loss of belief or even of growing doubt. Over three-fourths of the people who expressed no religious preference in 1998 or 2000 also said that they believed in God or a higher power. Most prayed. Their self-image was of being "spiritual" without being "religious" (although a significant minority was neither). When faced with trouble, most respondents who said that they had no religious preference said they turn to God for hope, help, or solace. They did not practice religion in any other conventional sense, though; for example they rarely attended religious services and did not read the Bible. For the most part, people with no religious preference seemed to simply have no interest in churches, but there

is some indication that they distrusted religious leaders and may have been hostile to organized religion in general. Thus, we have evidence of detachment from organized religion but none that supports the view that Americans were losing religious faith.

Religious Beliefs

Most people with no religious preference say they believe in God or some higher power. The 1998 GSS inquired about this core belief in three ways. The first offered people six alternative expressions, typical of what people say about God (shown in the left margin of Figure 3A); respondents were asked to pick the one that comes closest to their own ideas about the existence of God. The other two were agree-disagree items. We compare the responses of people who have no religious preference with those who have one. People with no preference are divided into two groups, both groups shown with shaded bars. The darkest bars display the percentage of those who had no preference but who in each question expressed some confidence in God's existence; the lighter bars displays the percentage of those who had no preference and answered skeptically about God. Those with a preference are shown with broader white bars that have dots on them.

One-third of the people with no religious preference chose the atheist or the agnostic responses to the first question about God. One-third is far more than the 4 percent atheist or agnostic among people who have a religious preference, but it is also far less than a majority of the people who have no religious preference. Thus we cannot equate having no religious preference with being skeptical of religious beliefs. On the other hand, people with no religious preference are significantly less certain about God than are people who have a religious preference; 70 percent of those with a religious preference expressed no doubts about God's existence. (Note that, while "no preference" responses increased in the 1990s, certainty in God stayed the same or, paradoxically, increased.[9])

(Figure 3 about here)

[9] In the GSS, 63 to 66 percent of respondents were certain of God. The Pew Center poll found an increase between 1990 and 1997 of 11 points in the percent of Americans who "never doubt the existence of God" (Pew Center 1997).

The other two measures of belief in God asked people to agree or disagree with the statements: "I believe that God watches over me" and "I believe in a God that concerns himself with each human being personally." In 1998, 89 percent of all 25-74 year-old Americans agreed with the first statement, and 73 percent agreed with the second statement. Persons with no preference were substantially less likely to agree with either – 58 percent and 38 percent, respectively.[10] The more belief the question required, the less likely the people who claim no religion were to agree with it. Nevertheless, *most* "nones" believe in a watchful God and a substantial minority in a God that attends to each person.

Belief in God among Americans with no religious preference has been historically robust. In a 1965 Gallup survey, 71 percent of respondents claiming no religion also gave an unqualified "yes" to the question, "Do you believe in God?" – and 54 percent of those said they were "absolutely certain" of their belief.[11] The GSS question was different but it showed no statistically significant change in the beliefs of persons with no preference between 1988 and 2000.[12]

In Table 2 we compare the beliefs of those who have and do not have a religious preference with respect to beliefs in life after death, heaven, religious miracles, and hell. The vast majority of religiously-identified people believed in the each of these things. Persons with no religious preference were more skeptical about these articles of religious faith, but over half believed in life after death, and about a third in heaven and hell. Belief in life after death actually increased among adults with no religion from 1974 to 1998 (Greeley and Hout 1999a); belief in heaven, hell, and miracles did not change significantly between 1991 and 1998.

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[10]Both likelihood-ratio (L^2) and Pearson chi-square tests (X^2) indicate that the differences between people with and without religious preferences are statistically significant. Regarding the first question, $L^2 = 168.52$ and $X^2 = 209.92$ with 3 degrees of freedom; regarding the second, $L^2 = 149.41$ and $X^2 = 192.29$, with 4 degrees of freedom.

[11]Our calculation from individual-level data we obtained from the University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance (UCDATA) office. Recall that while the GSS respondents were prompted with "or no religion" the Gallup Polls do not explicitly mention "no religion" as an options although they record it if it is volunteered.

[12]The question was asked six times over that span; the chi-square tests are $L^2 = 2.85$ and $X^2 = 2.91$ with 5 degrees of freedom. The observed percentage of people with no religious preference who believed without doubt rose from 18 to 29 percent. Though it is not statistically significant, change in the wrong direction further weakens the case for secularization.

(Table 2 about here)

Religious Practice And Spirituality

The most distinctive fact about the people with no preference is their lack of participation in organized religion. While two-thirds of people with a religious preference attended church services several times a year or more, only 12 percent of persons with no religious preference attended more than once a year (a 55 percentage-point gap). Almost two-thirds (64 percent) of those with no religious preference said that they never attend religious services. The data on the left in Table 3 refer to the 1998 and 2000 GSSs, but the same pattern is evident in each year's survey.

(Table 3 about here)

Few people with no religious preference showed any sign of religious activity. Three-fourths did not read the Bible at home in the 12 months prior to their interview. Less than 3 percent belonged to church-affiliated organizations.

But they do pray. On average, people with no religious preference prayed less often than others did, but *93* percent reported praying sometimes and 20 percent reported praying every day (see the right panel of Table 3). Prayer among the non-affiliated may have been more common in the late 1990s than it was in the mid-1960s. The 1965 Gallup survey we referred to above asked about praying. The Gallup and GSS questions differ so precise comparisons are not possible, but while only 12 percent of adults with no religious preference had attended services in the prior three months, 60 percent said "yes" when asked if they "ever" prayed.[13]

People who profess no religion said they rely on God in times of trouble in the three ways that people with a religion do (Figure 4). Most of them responded to trouble by thinking of themselves as part of a larger spiritual force, working together with God as partners, and looking to God for strength, support and guidance at least some of the time. Neither the affiliated nor the non-affiliated thought of hard times as a sign of God's punishment or that God has abandoned them or that they try to make sense of bad situations without relying on God. The two groups differed significantly on four of these six items – it is no surprise – but

[13]Surveys get asymmetrical results from seemingly symmetrical comparisons, so we are reluctant to infer that 60 percent "ever" praying implies 40 percent "never" praying.

most people with no religion nonetheless said that they rely at least somewhat on God in times of trouble.

(Figure 4 about here)

A key fact, in sum, about people who express no religious preference is that most are believers of some sort, many quite conventional. Relatively few are secular, agnostic, or atheist. Their most distinguishing feature is their avoidance of churches.

Social Participation

We might get a better sense of the "unchurched believers" we have just identified if we knew whether they were attached to or detached from other social institutions. Perhaps the increase in their numbers may be part of a decline in social participation of many kinds (Putnam 2000). Those with no preference are, in fact, less socially active than are those who claim a preference: One-third volunteered for charity in 1997 compared with 42 percent of religiously affiliated Americans.[14] They belong to fewer non-religious organizations and are significantly less likely to vote than persons with a religious affiliation. People with no religious preference are not totally inactive; they are more likely to attend concerts, see movies, and spend an evening with friends at a bar than are people with religious affiliations, but they are less likely to spend an evening with relatives or neighbors.[15] (They also reported fewer friends, but that seems explainable by differences in age.) In sum, people with no religion are generally less attached to non-religious organizations than are their religious counterparts, although perhaps likelier to go out in the evenings.

We do not propose that a "bowling alone" disengagement explains the decrease in religious preference. Among other shortcomings, the trends are out of synch. Most indicators of disaffiliation collected by Putnam began rising in the 1960s and 1970s; the trend in religious preference is a phenomenon of the 1990s. The pattern is, however, relevant as

[14]Not surprisingly, very few unaffiliated persons volunteered at church-sponsored charities, but they are also significantly less likely to participate in secular charity, too.

[15]Details for these activities are not reported here, but interested readers can find the relevant data on the data analysis website maintained by the UC-Berkeley Computer-assisted Survey Methods program (csa.berkeley.edu:7502).

background. We have shown that the people with no religious affiliation are unlikely to have a compensating attachment to another social institution.

Self-image and Attitude Toward Organized Religion

The 1998 GSS asked people whether they think of themselves as "religious" and if they think of themselves as "spiritual." People who had a religious preference gave similar answers to both questions (see Tables 4A and 4B). Over two-thirds described themselves as at least "moderately" religious and/or spiritual. People who had no religious preference overwhelmingly rejected the "religious" label; only 15 percent were even moderately religious. But 40 percent described themselves as at least moderately spiritual. This difference between people who have a religion and those who do not confirms our sense that the nonreligious dissent from organized religion but maintain nonsecular beliefs and identities.

(Tables 4A and 4B about here)

Why do so many believers claim no religion? A few GSS items gauge attitudes toward organized religion, and they show significant antipathy toward organized religion among unchurched believers. Two ask about the confidence that people place in "churches and religious organizations" or in "the people running organized religion." Table 5 compares the answers given to these two questions by people with religious preferences, believers with no religious preference, and non-believers.[16] Even among the people who preferred an organized religion, the level of confidence in the churches and religious leaders was low (fewer than half expressed "a great deal" of confidence). But just over 10 percent of unchurched believers expressed "a great deal" confidence in religious leaders. People with no religious preference have significantly less confidence than people with religious preferences. The differences between unchurched believers and non-believers suggest that the confidence is lowest among the non-believers, but the differences between the two types of people with no religious preference are not statistically significant at conventional levels.

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[16]The questions about churches and religious leaders differed in three ways. The question about churches was asked in 1991 and 1998, in self-completed supplements, and offered five answer categories. The question about religious leaders has been a regular GSS item since 1973, was read by the interviewer, and had three answer options. We present the 1998 data on churches and pool the 1998-2000 data on religious leaders. The measure of believing is affirming God or a higher power by choosing one of the three responses shaded black in Figure 3A.

(Table 5 about here)

In 1998 the GSS also asked people whether they agreed with three statements about the effects of religion: "Looking around the world, religions bring more conflict than peace;" "People with very strong religious beliefs are often too intolerant of others;" and "The U.S. would be a better country if religion had less influence." People who have no religious preference differ sharply from those who do on each of these statements (see Table 6). By ratios of about 2:1, people who have no religious preference agree more with the critical statement than do other Americans. These items show that the unaffiliated are not merely uninvolved in organized religion, they have some antipathy to it.

(Table 6 about here)

Religious Origins

About 6.5 percent of American adults in the late 1990s had been raised within no specific religious tradition, an increase from 2.5 percent in the early 1970s. This increase alone would be enough to raise the percentage of adults with no religious preference by that same 4 percentage points if nobody raised without religion acquired one in adulthood. In fact, many people raised without religion took up religion later in life. In cohorts born before 1945 a wide majority took up a religion in adulthood despite their lack of religious upbringing – 72 percent of people born before 1945, raised without religion, and interviewed before 1991 had a religious preference at the time of interview.[17] That tendency declined for baby-boomer and subsequent cohorts; among people raised without religion, half of the people born 1945-59 had a religious preference when interviewed, and one-third of those born 1960-74 did. Multivariate analysis presented below confirms that the increasing tendency for those raised without religious affiliation to stay that way is an important part of the explanation or part of the phenomenon to be explained.

Prior to the 1990s, marriage contributed to the tendency of people who were raised without religion to take up a religion in adulthood, as the religion they adopted was nearly always the religion of their spouse. Three trends converged to alter that pattern in the late 1990s. (1) Americans of all religious origins married later (if at all), so a smaller fraction of

[17]This calculation is made from among cases that we included in Figure 1.

adults raised without religion had a spouse to conform to.[18] (2) As their numbers grew, people who were raised without religion saw their chances of finding mates who likewise had no religious preference also increase, so that in more couples neither spouse has a religion for the other to conform to; the percentage of married persons raised without religion who had a spouse with no religion doubled from 16 to 32 percent from the early 1970s to the early 1990s.[19] (3) Finally, the pressure on people raised without religion to adopt their spouse's religion may have diminished as the proportion of married people raised without religion who preferred no religion at the time of interview rose from 27 percent in the 1970s to 51 percent in 1996-2000.[20] This is consistent with an historical increase in the proportion of couples in which the spouses have different religious affiliations.

The foregoing evidence of growing intergenerational stability and homogamy among those raised outside a faith suggest that having no religion is gaining momentum. Is the proportion of Americans with no religion likely to double again in the next generation? The record of social forecasting is too humbling to give us any confidence in a precise prediction at this point, but we can study the mathematical properties of the data we rely on in the hope of tendering an honest if tentative answer. The cross-classification of religious origins by destinations obtained from the 1998-2000 GSS can be thought of as a "transition matrix" of probabilities that transform the religious distribution of one generation into the distribution of the next generation. A common result in linear algebra tells us that if such a transition matrix is "regular" and applies for an indefinitely long time, eventually the population comes into an equilibrium, that is, the origin distribution exposed to the transition matrix yields a destination

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[18]In the 1970s 11 percent of adults raised without religion had never married, in the 1980s it was 15 percent who had never married, in the first half of the 1990s it was 18 percent, and in 1996-2000 the never-married reached 29 percent of persons with no religious upbringing. The conditional probability of having no religion given that one was raised with no religion and never married has not changed significantly over time; the chi-square tests for a table with six periods and a dichotomy (no religion versus some religion at the time of interview) are $X^2 = 7.89$ and $L^2 = 7.66$ with 5 degrees of freedom ($p > .10$ for each).

[19]The GSS last asked about spouse's religion in 1994. The chi-square tests for a table with five time periods and a dichotomy (spouse currently prefers no religion versus spouse prefers some religion) are $X^2 = 10.71$ and $L^2 = 10.59$ with 4 degrees of freedom ($p < .05$ for each), for persons 25-74 years old and born 1900-1974 who were raised with no religion.

[20]We cannot restrict our attention to persons married to spouses who have a religion because, unfortunately the GSS contains no data on spouse's religious origin after 1994. The chi-square tests for a table with six time periods and a dichotomy (no current religion versus currently prefers some religion) are $X^2 = 21.39$ and $L^2 = 21.51$ with 5 degrees of freedom ($p < .01$ for each).

distribution that is identical to the origin distribution.[21] The United States was clearly far from religious equilibrium in 2000 because 14 percent of adults had no religious preference but 6.5 percent had no religious origin. What percentage of adults would have no religious preference if the 2000 transition matrix were to hold sway until equilibrium is reached? We did the math and discovered that just under one-quarter of adults (24 percent is the exact implication) would ultimately have no religious preference if the most recent intergenerational pattern were to persist long enough to achieve equilibrium.[22] Numerous caveats apply to a calculation such as this (e.g., each religion would have to have the same fertility), but the main substantive implications are robust. On the one hand, the momentum of recent growth in the percentage of adults with no religion is sufficient to raise the proportion higher even if no new changes add to the trend. On the other hand, the momentum is not sufficient to double the percentage of adults with no religious preference in the next generation (as it has in the most recent generation) let alone make no religion the largest preference. In other words, current patterns of intergenerational religious mobility imply that the most dramatic consequences of recent changes are already visible.

While being raised without religion has spread and become more salient, it is not the whole story. Adults who were raised as Protestants or Catholics were significantly more likely to prefer no religion in 1998-2000 than in the past – up from 5 percent of people with Protestant roots in the 1970s to 11 percent in 1998-2000 and from 8 percent of Catholics in the 1970s to 11 percent in 1998-2000 (see Figure 5). Adults from the heterogeneous "other" origins probably increased their propensity to prefer no religion as well.[23]Jews are the only religious group to show no sign of increased apostasy. Though the "falling-away" from childhood religions in the 1990s (except among Jews) is far more modest than the strong trends among people from a nonreligious background, it contributed almost as much to the

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[21]A transition matrix (T) is "regular" if it has no zero entries in at least one of its positive integer powers including the initial matrix itself. Formally, there exists some integer $n = 1,\ldots,\infty$ for which element $t_{ij}^{(n)}$ in T^n is not equal to 0 for all i,j (see Kemeny, Snell, and Johnson 1963).

[22]We used a 6x6 transition matrix; the origin and destination categories were conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, other religion, and no religion. The distinction between conservative and mainline Protestant is that defined by Smith (1990) and coded as the FUND variable in the GSS.

[23]The trend for "others" is not significantly different from zero, nor is it significantly different from the Protestant trend. Thus we say the others "probably" increased their defections.

overall growth in no religious preference because almost 95 percent of Americans were raised Christian or "other." Thus a full explanation must also account for the transition from a religious origin to preferring no religion.

(Figure 5 about here)

Conclusions about Secularization

This analysis of the beliefs, practices, attitudes, and origins of persons who preferred no religion have shown the majority to be "unchurched believers" – only a minority appear to have been "atheist," "agnostic," or "skeptical." Many of them described themselves as spiritual but not religious. And while they did not attend religious services or read the Bible, these unchurched believers did pray and ask God's help in times of trouble. Their quarrel was not with God but with the men running organized religion. They expressed little or no confidence in religious leaders and churches, and many saw them as the source of conflict.

Our general description of non-religious Americans is confirmed by several other surveys we have examined. In a 1996 Gallup poll, for example, 70 percent of those who said they had no religion also said that they believed in God (30 percent were absolutely certain of God); 54 percent prayed at least occasionally; and 43 percent said that the Bible was inspired by or the literal word of God. These percentages are far lower than the responses of, say, self-identified Protestants who answered these items at 90 percent or more. As in the GSS data, 70 percent of them rarely if ever attended services, showing that it was this feature that most distinguished them. Again, "unchurched believers" best describes this growing feature of the American religious landscape.[24]

Did the rapid increase in no religious preference in the 1990s reflect an increase in unbelievers, unchurched believers, or both? The best indicator of belief is the item we displayed in Figure 3A – the one that asks people to pick the one phrase that best describes their view of God from among six statements. For the purposes of this calculation, we

[24]Recall that people with no religious preference are a much smaller fraction of the 1996 Gallup data than the GSS reports. We think that this may be due to question wording; the Gallup question does not mention "no religion," but the GSS question does. If that is the only difference between the two surveys, then the Gallup sample of people with no religion is probably composed of more "hard core" skeptics than the GSS sample is. Even with this bias, we find significant levels of belief among the Gallup "no religionists" – a finding that builds confidence that "unchurched believers" are the majority of the adults with no religion.

considered people to be believers if they expressed belief in God or a higher power (the top three phrases in Figure 3A, shaded black in the figure); otherwise we consider them non-believers (gray in Figure 3A). Unchurched believers were 4.5 percent of adults in 1991-1993 and 7.9 percent in 1998-2000 – a 3.4 point increase. Non-believers with no religious preference were 3.7 percent of adults in 1991-1993 and 5.3 percent in 1998-2000 – a 1.6 point increase. Thus two-thirds of the increase in preferring no religion was due to an increase in unchurched believers and one-third was due to an increase in non-believers.

A longer time series in the GSS bolsters our conclusion that a change in the religious preferences of believers in the 1990s contributed more to the run up in no religious preference than disbelief did. The GSS has asked about peoples' beliefs in an afterlife since 1973; it is a more narrow belief than believing in "God or a higher power," but with it we can see change over two more decades. Figure 6 shows that unchurched believers – people who prefer no religion but believe in life after death – have risen from 3 percent to 8 percent of adults while non-believers have risen from 3.5 percent to 5 percent. This decomposition of the overall change is very close to the two-thirds vs. one-third breakdown using the "God or higher power" item. All the change occurred in the 1990s.

(Figure 6 about here)

In sum, the secularization explanation for the growth in no religious preference is incorrect in so far as secularization means decreasing belief and piety – the fraying of the "sacred canopy."

A POLITICAL HYPOTHESIS

Few would be surprised to learn that religion has played a role in American politics throughout American history. From abolition to populism to the progressive era and on to the Civil Right Movement, religion provided a wellspring from which political movements could draw ideas and supporters. In this paper we are less concerned with what the trend toward not expressing a religious preference might do to future faith-based social movements – although others might profitably take up the issue – than with the possibility that the cause-effect relationship linking religion and politics might have become reciprocal in the 1990s. While religion propelled some people into politics, the politicization of religion might have cause people who

dissent from the conservative agenda of vocal Christian leaders to stop identifying with those religions.

In the 1990s the Religious Right became a political factor for its critiques of what it saw as eroding family values. Religious leaders made pronouncements on abortion, gay rights, school prayer, and public spending on art they considered sexually explicit or anti-religious. Their power and its consequences are widely debated (e.g., DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996; Evans 1996; Williams 1997; Smith 2000), and their numerical strength is easily exaggerated (Smith 1997; Greeley and Hout 1999b). But religious conservatives definitely received more attention in the press in the 1990s than during the earlier years covered by the GSS. Our search of articles in "major newspapers" compiled by the Lexis-Nexis service revealed that the number of listings with the keyword "religious right" increased from 72 in 1980-84 (that is 14 per year) to 1,736 in 1994-96 (578 per year). It tapered off slightly to 1,017 articles in 1997-99 (339 per year), and then spiked to 216 in just the first quarter of 2000 (864 for the year if the other three quarters kept pace with the first).[25] Additionally, considerable political emotion between 1992 and 2000 concerned moral issues that religious people care about – from the murder of abortion providers to President Clinton's personal life. We suggest that this religiously-tinged political atmosphere not only brought some religious people out of apathy into politics but also pushed some moderate and liberal Americans with weak religious attachments away from religion.

The first evidence of the political nature of increasing disaffiliation is in Figure 7.[26] Liberals increased their preference for no religion by 11 percentage points, moderates who

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[25]The first quarter of 2000 was distinctive because the presidential primaries were going on then. That linkage of politics with coverage is exactly the point we are making.

[26]We classify people according to their political views – ascertained by a GSS question asked each year since 1974: "We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. I'm going to show you a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal – point 1 – to extremely conservative – point 7. Where would you put yourself on this scale?" [the respondent is handed a card that corresponds to the wording of the question]. The "extreme" answers are relatively rare, so we combine responses 1 with 2 and 7 with 6 to avoid having to make inferences from sparse data. Furthermore, we restrict attention to ever-married persons where were born 1900-1974, 25-74 years old at the time of interview, had no missing data on age, marital status, parenthood status, or education, and who were not part of the black oversamples of 1982 and 1987. The missing data restrictions make these figures comparable to those in other figures and in the tables; the ever-married restriction controls for an important demographic contingency; and excluding the oversample cases eliminates the need to use sampling weights. We fitted separate spline functions to the trend for each category of political views.

lean to liberal increased theirs by 7 percentage points, moderates theirs by 5 points, moderates who lean to conservative by 4 points, and conservatives by a statistically insignificant 1.7 points. In short, the increase in no religious preference was confined to liberals and moderates, and the magnitude of the change increased with distance from the right. As liberals were more likely than conservatives to have no religious preference throughout the "stable" period from 1974 to 1991, moving away like this polarized the religious climate.

(Figure 7 about here)

Of course the causal order between religious and political variables is usually thought to run the other way – religious preference affects political views, not the other way around (e.g., Manza and Brooks 1997). In this trend away from religion, we are inclined to see the usual order as being reversed by the politics of the day. In defense of our interpretation we cite the relative amounts of change in religious affiliations and political views. While the preference for no religion was doubling between 1991 and 2000, the liberal-conservative balance did not shift.[27] If the usual causal direction were dominant in the 1990s, then the increase in Americans with no religious preference should have increased the prevalence of liberal political views. That did not happen. From this observation we have arrived at the interpretation we favor: the disaffinity of liberals and moderates for the social agenda of the Religious Right led the ones who had weak attachment to religion to disavow it. Further interpretation of these results must be supported by multivariate analysis, to which we now turn.

EXPLAINING THE TREND: DEMOGRAPHY, BELIEF, OR POLITICS?

Methodological Considerations

To sort out the possible explanations of this sudden growth in Americans with no religious affiliation, we turn to a multivariate analysis that can weigh the contribution of many potentially significant factors while statistically controlling for other influences. Our strategy is to start with a logistic regression of the propensity to claim no religious preference on time – using the spline function we introduced in Figure 1 to model the sharp acceleration in having

[27]The chi-square statistics are $X^2 = 30.22$ and $L^2 = 30.29$ with df = 20 (p = .06); adjusting for sampling design we get $F[15.60, 2854.26] = 1.31$ (p = .18).

no religious preference after 1991. This approach gives us one number with which to track our success (or lack of success) in explaining the rise of the "nones" – a logistic regression coefficient that measures the gross change over time in a bivariate regression and measures the unexplained trend once we add explanatory factors to the equation. If a factor or group of factors explain a substantial part of the increase after 1991, then the net spline coefficient will be noticeably less than its gross coefficient; if the model explains little or nothing of the increase, then the gross and net spline coefficients will be similar.

This logic of explanation applies to the demographic and secularization explanations but not to the political one. That is because the demographic and secularization explanations propose that there is no trend within categories of their explanatory variables; the preference for no religion grew because one cohort replaced another or people married later or quit believing in God. So the efficacy of the demographic and secularization explanations will show up as a net spline coefficient near zero. The political explanation is different. It says that political moderates and liberals changed but political conservatives did not. The efficacy of the political explanation will show up in the differences among the spline coefficients for political liberals, moderates, and conservatives.

The mathematical form of the logistic regression model (LRM) is important to keep in mind when interpreting the results. The LRM is "loglinear." That means that the spline coefficient measures the uniform effect of time after 1991 on the log-odds of having no religious preference, but not on the probability (p) of having no religious preference. While each year after 1991 raises the expected log-odds by the same amount, its effect on the expected percentage accelerates.[28] We saw this feature of the model in Figure 1 where the gross spline coefficient of .099 implies an increase of 1.4 points between 1991 and 1993, then an increase of 2.4 points between 1998 and 2000. This loglinear feature of the model becomes important for our analysis because it implies a larger increase in the probability of having no religious preference for groups that had a relatively high probability of no religious preference in the 1970s and a smaller increase among groups that had a relatively low initial

[28]The acceleration stops and begins to reverse once p reaches 50 percent, but that limit is not relevant to us as the overall expected percentage with no religion does not get to that point (it comes to exceed 50 percent for those who were raised without religion).

probability.[29] Petersen (1985) and Long (1993, pp. 51-82) present methods making the results more interpretable. We employ one of them, as we explain in the appendix.

A Sociodemographic Model of Religious Change

Turning now to the actual multivariate analysis, we assess how changes in demographic, social, and political variables that significantly affect respondents' odds of claiming no religion in the cross-section may have contributed to the increase over time in having no religious preference. As we saw in Figure 2, cohort differences – and any age differences they harbored – were appreciable. The cohort contrasts are not purely demographic; cohort succession is a demographic process that can lead to cultural change as cohorts with one outlook are replaced by new ones that view the world (or hereafter) differently. Thus the replacement of more religious cohorts with less religious cohorts can potentially explain the increase in having no religious preference: the religious did not leave their churches; cohorts that were predominantly religious died or reached age 75 while less religious ones reached age 25. This would be the extreme form of the demographic explanation – nobody changes, the young entering the adult world are just different from the old ones they have replaced. Figure 2 showed us that the cohort replacement process accounts for some but not all of the increase in having no religious preference.[30]

Noting that one cohort was more or less religious than another offers some perspective on change, but it raises the question of why the cohorts were different. Knowing that the change originated in differences among cohorts instead of one year (or decade) vs. another

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[29]We used this implication of the model to test whether it is an appropriate functional form for the data at hand. If the logistic is appropriate, then groups that had relatively high probabilities of preferring no religion in the 1970s should change more in the 1990s than groups with lower initial probabilities of preferring no religion. In six comparisons, the group with the higher initial percentage increased more in the 1990s than the group with the lower initial percentage. Specifically, the percentage preferring no religion increased more in the 1990s among men than women, Pacific residents than Southern residents, whites than African Americans, childless people than parents, 20-29 year olds than 50-59 year olds, and people with no religious upbringing than people with a religious upbringing. These relative changes are captured well with the LRM that has one time effect and additive effects of each of these attributes, so we accept it as the appropriate functional form. The interaction between political views and time that we use to test our political explanation is change over and above that captured by the loglinear functional form. That means we have set a high standard for our preferred explanation.

[30]We initially thought to include dummy variables for age groups in the multivariate analysis. But as we noted in discussing Figure 2, there is little indication that age effects matter so we avoid the complications of age-period-cohort analysis by leaving age out of the sociodemographic model.

offers an important clue about the possible sources of change, but it is usually an indirect form of explanation. So if we find that cohort differences "explain" a significant part of the trend in preferring no religion, we will have made less progress in understanding religious preferences than if other, more substantive factors account for the trend. Therefore, in addition to trying to find variables to explain period differences, we look for variables that changed across cohorts in ways that could explain the differences among cohorts.

To facilitate this search for intervening variables, we use a spline function that expresses the cohort effects in a single coefficient, just as we do with period effects. The spline function we use is zero for cohorts born before 1935, equal to the difference between the year of birth and 1934 for cohorts born 1935-1949, and stays equal to 15 for cohorts born 1950-74. We arrived at this specification after exploratory analyses of single-year cohorts using locally estimated regression techniques (Cleveland 1994) and five-year cohorts using dummy variables in logistic regression analyses.

The shape of this empirically derived spline function and the cohort differences we saw in the more detailed analyses suggest to us that the cohort differences reflect the legacy of a "sixties" effect. Prior to the 1990s, the last well-documented increase in the percentage of American adults with no religious preference occurred in the 1960s when it rose from 2 or 3 to 6 or 7 percent (Glenn 1987). The cohort differences in the GSS are consistent with the conjecture that people who were old enough to have well-established religious identities were less affected by the changes of those times than were cohorts just coming of age then. Thus the cohorts that were older than 30 years in the 1960s expressed less preference for no religion in the 1990s than cohorts that were in their teens and 20s during the 1960s. The "sixties effect" levels off but does not reverse for cohorts born after 1950 (they were less than 15 years old in 1965).

We have already documented the growing importance of religious origins. We incorporate both the main effect of having been raised in a religious tradition and its recent increase in efficacy in the multivariate analysis. The main effect is a dummy variable equal to one for people raised with no religion and zero for those with a religious upbringing. We experimented with models that treated the increase in the effect of religious origins as either a period effect or a cohort effect and found that an interaction effect that is zero for cohorts

born prior to 1960 and proportional to the difference between year-of-birth and 1959 for cohorts born 1960-74 works best.[31]

We include family lifecycle events – marriage, divorce, remarriage, and parenthood – that underlie the correlation between age and having a religious preference (e.g., Greeley and Hout 1988). However, the arguments for how they affect religious preferences only apply to people who had a religious upbringing, so we specify the effects of family lifecycle as operative for those who were raised in a religion but nil for those who were not.[32] Between 1991 and 2000 each of these factors except divorce changed in ways that can be expected to decrease the incidence of having no religious preference: higher fractions of each cohort had been married and parents at the end of the 1990s than at the beginning.

Rising education has long been thought of as a secularizing influence on those who were raised in a religious tradition. Although education increases certain kinds of religious belief and practice (e.g., belief in life after death among Catholics; Greeley and Hout 1999a), it also contributes to the propensity to claim no religion (e.g., Kohut et al. 2000). And Americans were more highly educated in 2000 than in 1991. So rising education may have been a factor in the 1990s increase in preferring no religion. We include education in our sociodemographic model with the constraint that its affect applies only to those who had a religious upbringing.

Other sociodemographic factors are important for explaining cross-sectional variation in religious preference but did not change much between 1991 and 2000. For example, men are far more likely than women to prefer no religion; 18 percent compared to 11 percent in 1998-2000. Other sociodemographic factors such as the racial and ethnic ancestry composition of the U.S. population changed but in ways that were unlikely to have contributed to the 1990s increase in having no religious preference. Both Asian Americans, a not-very-religious group (39.1 percent of Americans with Chinese or Japanese ancestry preferred no

[31]This is, in effect, another spline function, albeit one that only applies in interaction with religious origins.

[32]This amounts to including an interaction effect between marital status and religious origins and a three-way interaction involving marital status, parental status, and religious origins but not the main effects of marital status or parental status. Preliminary models that include all relevant effects confirm the supposition that marital status and parental status did not affect those who had no religious upbringing.

religion in 1998-2000), and Latinos, a more religious than average group (11.1 percent prefer no religion in 1998-2000) increased. Similarly, regional differences are quite large, but the most and least religious regions grew fastest between 1991 and 2000 – washing out region as an explanatory factor. Even though we do not expect them to explain much of the trend or the cohort differences, we include dummy variables for being female, African American, Latino, Chinese-Japanese,[33] living in the Midwest, South, or Pacific states in the multivariate models to assure that we are focusing as clearly as possible on net effects.

The results for our sociodemographic model are shown in Table 7 (along with the standard errors adjusted for sampling design, the p-levels for the test of each coefficient's statistical significance, and three "discrete-change effects" explained in the appendix). We limit attention to persons born 1900-1974 who were 25-74 years old at the time of interview and who had missing data on none of the variables in the model.[34]

(Table 7 about here)

The most important result in the sociodemographic model is the coefficient for the period spline function, compared to the bivariate association. Its value of .038 indicates that changes in the sociodemographic variables included in the model explain (1 - .038/.099 =) 62 percent of the increase in the log-odds on having no religious preference. Translating that into expected percentages, we find that more cohorts with a "sixties experience," more prevalent non-religious origins, and delayed marriage and parenthood together would have raised the percentage of adults with no religion by about 5 percentage points, even if there had been no period effect in the 1990s.

Removing each explanatory factor from the model and noting the coefficient for the period spline function gives an indication of how much that particular factor contributed to the explanation. Removing cohort – a measure that reflects maturation during the 1960s – (and

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[33]These are not mutually exclusive categories; adults with Latino, Chinese, and Japanese ancestry can be of any race. Therefore, we enter each ancestry as an independent contrast. A person with two of the three ancestries in her background would be scored 1 on each and her predicted log-odds on having no religion would be the sum of the separate effects.

[34]Missing data can introduce biases if it affects many cases. Fortunately, there is very little missing data on year of birth, martial status, parental status, religious origins, or education, and none on year, region, gender, or ancestry. So excluding missing data reduces the number of cases available for analysis by less than one percent.

its interaction with religious origins) has the biggest effect; the coefficient for the period spline is .068 when all factors except cohort are in the model. Removing religious origins (and its interactions with cohort, education, and the family variables) yields a trend spline coefficient of .053. Removing the family variables – marital status and parenthood – from the sociodemographic model increases the spline coefficient to .043. Removing education, region, gender, and ancestry has almost no effect on the spline coefficient. Thus the three big sociodemographic factors in the 1990s increase in having no religious preference are the replacement of pre-sixties cohorts by post-sixties ones, the growing segment of the adult population that has no religious background, and the demographic trends toward later marriage and childbearing.

As we noted above, the cohort effects are largely legacies of the previous period of defection from organized religion – the 1960s. So, too, having no religious background reflects previous moves away from religion (on the part of the respondent's parents). The cohorts affected by the upheavals of the 1960s (and subsequent ones) are the less religious ones that have replaced the cohorts born early in the twentieth century. The cohort most affected by the upsurge in non-religious origins is the 1960-74 cohort – the children of the cohorts most directly affected by the 1960s. This raises the prospect of a legacy for the recent changes, too; one that will be reflected in data for the next generation. While we how that is a clear implication of our model, we caution that origins are only imperfectly related to parents' religions. The 1991 and 1998 GSSs included questions on parents' religions as well as the usual question about religious upbringing. To our surprise only 68 percent of the people who said that both their mother and their father preferred no religion also said that they were brought up with no religion. Where the nearly one-third of people whose parents had no religion got a religious upbringing we cannot say. Nor does it bear on our explanation of changes that have already occurred. We bring it up as a note on how hard it is to predict the future from trends like these.

The discrete-change effects show the contribution of each variable to cross-sectional differences in having no religious preference. Religious origins are the largest cross-sectional factor in each year, and their importance has grown in the 1990s. The discrete-change effect of having no religious upbringing is 26.8 percentage points for the period 1973-1991, 30.0

percentage points in 1996, and 32.5 percentage points in 2000. Women are 3 to 4 points less likely than men to have no religious preference. Ancestry groups vary by 9 to 12 points. The other effects, though statistically significant, are substantially smaller.

The Politics of Religious Identity

Our political hypothesis is that the Religious Right prompted political moderates and liberals to quit saying they had a religious preference. We now add political effects to our socio-demographic model of having no religious preference to see if the net period and cohort effects differ for people with different political views. If, as Figure 7 indicated, more Americans had no religious preference in 2000 than in 1990 because moderates and liberals left organized religion, then the trend and cohort coefficients should be positive and statistically significant for moderates and liberals but close to zero and insignificant for conservatives. The results in panel A of Table 8 affirm our political hypothesis. The period and cohort effects vary by political views as expected. The period and cohort coefficients are insignificant for conservatives but positive and significant for moderates and liberals. The period and cohort coefficients actually turn out to be larger for moderates than liberals, but the discrete-change calculations (not shown) indicate more increase among liberals than moderates – just as we already saw in Figure 7.[35]

(Table 8 about here)

We have argued that the political effects evident in Figure 7 and Table 8 operate through an aversion to the politics of the 1990s – a politics that made religious identity seem more conservative. While the results presented to this point are all consistent with our interpretation, they are indirect. We have not shown that the Religious Right is the link. The mechanism could be the divisive issues themselves, for example, abortion or gay rights, or the principle of separating religion and politics. The 1991 and 1998 GSSs included three items that ask about the overlap between politics and religion: the first asks whether church leaders should influence their followers' votes, the second asks whether church leaders should attempt to influence governmental decisions, and the third asks whether churches have too

[35]This is a consequence of the nonlinear relationship between the expected logits and the expected probabilities.

much or too little power. The first column of Table 9 shows the exact wording of each question, the second and third columns show the distribution of responses for 1991 and 1998, respectively, and the fourth and fifth columns show the percentage "no religious preference" in each response category in each year.

(Table 9 about here)

The first two items – about whether church leaders should influence their followers or political leaders – changed significantly between 1991 and 1998. The extreme positions grew while the middle shrunk. The third item did not change significantly. The growth in preferring no religion is concentrated among the people who think that religious leaders should not influence politics and far greater among people who think that religion is too powerful than among those who think that religion has the right amount of power. We cannot say anything about cause and effect from these tabulations. But our argument does not require us to resolve that. Finding the link between having no religion and rejecting clerical activism in politics supports our interpretation of the effect of political views on religious preference.

The Secularization Hypothesis Reconsidered

To put the secularization hypothesis on an equal footing with our political hypothesis, we repeat the multivariate analysis, including the six-statement belief-in-God item (the statements are spelled out in Figure 3A) in the sociodemographic model.[36] If secularization explains the increase in the no religious preference, then the period and cohort coefficients will be close to zero and statistically insignificant once we control for belief in God. Exploratory analysis revealed that beliefs interact with period and cohort. The interaction effects should show a greater increase over the 1990s in having no religious preference among atheists and agnostics (combined into a "skeptic" category for these purposes) than among believers who have doubts and no change at all among believers who have certain of God's existence. We

[36]We consider this to be the most generous test possible because it attributes all of the association between belief and religious preference to the effect of disbelief on disaffiliation. Any correction that purged the observed belief variable of the reciprocal effect of religious preference on belief would reduce the efficacy of the belief variable.

show the surprising result in panel B of Table 8.[37] Far from explaining the trend, the period and cohort coefficients are actually larger for adults with belief in God or a higher power than among skeptics. The increase in no religious preference occurred despite a slight increase in belief in God (net of the sociodemographic factors). Most tellingly, the change is concentrated among those with the firmest beliefs, not among skeptics. These results confirm our earlier conclusion that the rise in no religious preference responses stems from growing numbers of unchurched believers not from a loss of belief. Substantively that means that, absent the demographic and political factors that have encouraged disaffiliation, there would have been fewer – not more – adults with no religious preference in the late 1990s.

CONCLUSIONS

We have documented a large change in the American religious landscape that emerged in a very short time. The fraction of adults who prefer no religion doubled from 7 to 14 percent between 1991 and 2000. The change was particularly strong among the very small (but growing) segment of the population raised without religion. A preference for no religion also grew among those who were raised in a Christian tradition, especially in cohorts that came of age in the 1960s and their offspring. That broader portion of the effect appears to have political content. Organized religion linked itself to a conservative social agenda in the 1990s, and that led some political moderates and liberals to declare that they have no religion. Had religion not become so politicized, these people would have gone on identifying with the religion they were raised in (or their spouse's) and the proportion of Americans preferring no religion would only have risen 2 or 3 percentage points.

In a country with as much emphasis on religion as we see in the United States – today and throughout American history – it is hard to understate the importance of the growing

[37]Because the question about belief in God was not asked until 1988, we lose the earliest cases. However, 1988 through 2000 still includes the period of the upsurge in no affiliation. We considered some alternative specifications of how to include belief in the model. As the trend is limited to the 1990s, we introduced an interaction term that allowed the effect of beliefs to increase in the 1990s; that term is highly collinear with the period effect itself as only the 1988 survey is not in the 1990s, so we dropped it. We also extended the analysis over a longer period by using the belief in life after death item instead of belief in God. Because this belief has increased, especially among persons who had no religious preference (Greeley and Hout 1999a), controlling for it results in an even bigger coefficient for the period spline function than we report in Table 8; that is even stronger evidence that secularization (defined as the erosion of belief) is not responsible for the increase in no religion preference.

detachment of a significant portion of the adult population from organized religion. But the bulk of the evidence indicates that the new religious dissenters have distanced themselves from the churches, not from God. The data offer no support for conjecture that a long-delayed secularization has finally asserted itself. The majority of adults who prefer no religion believe in God and an afterlife. Few are atheists or agnostics. Most pray. Many think of themselves as "spiritual," but they reject the "religious" label. They seldom if ever attend religious services or read the Bible. In short, the critical feature of most such people is not their beliefs or personal piety but their estrangement from organized religion.

For 5 to 7 percent of American adults,[38] holding no religious preference in the late 1990s was a political act, a dissent from the affinity that had emerged between conservative politics and organized religion. Without panel data we cannot be sure, but we infer from the available data that people who changed from some religious preference to none rarely attended services anyway and simply quit using the name of the denomination they were raised in because the meaning of religious identification changed for them. This account makes sense of our two key observations: (1) political conservatives did not change their religious preferences and (2) most people who prefer no religion have conventional religious beliefs and many are personally pious or describe themselves as "spiritual."

Aside from helping explain a major social change, our analysis of politics and religion underlines the point that the meanings expressed in identities only make sense in context. Even if Americans' religious beliefs and practices are stable – as we showed they basically are – the symbolic meaning of their religious identities can change. In this case, affirming religion increasingly carries the meaning of being conservative, much more than in an earlier era.[39] Furthermore, specific historical events or shifts in the spirit of the times can change these defining contexts. (This view is in contrast to theories that describe a long-term unfolding of modernity and secularization.) We have identified two historical events here: the cultural turmoil of the 1960s, reflected in the cohort effects, and the politicization of religion in the 1990s, reflected in the liberal-moderate effects. One cannot, therefore, simply extrapolate

[38]We include here some of the adults who were raised without religion because the political effects apply to them as well as to the ones who were raised in a religious tradition.

[39] Identifying reference.

from the 1990s trend that the rise in non-preference will continue. Indeed, we are revising this paper in the aftermath of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The responses to these events have invoked religion in complex ways – from mentions of Jihad to calls for religious tolerance to the singing of "God Bless America." If organized religion plays a partisan role in this discourse, then the trends we have described here are likely to continue. If, on the other hand, organized religions sound unifying themes, the trend may well level off or reverse as those who dissented from one kind of religious identity in the 1990s take on the new one that is emerging in this decade. The 1940s and 1950s were just such a time when religion unified the country and, according to polling data from the time, church attendance and religious beliefs increased.[40]

APPENDIX A: Using Discrete-change Effects to Interpret Logistic Regression Results

The logistic regression model is inherently nonlinear, so the coefficients are harder to interpret than the coefficients from a linear regression are (Petersen 1985; Long 1997). The log-odds (or logit) of experiencing an outcome in question – such as having no religion – changes by a fixed amount for a unit change in each independent variable, but a constant change in the logit implies a varying amount of change in the expected probability of having the outcome. Thus methodologists have developed the idea of a "discrete-change effect." It begins with a baseline probability of having the outcome in question (p_0) and calculates how much that probability changes (Δp) if the independent variable changes by one unit (ΔX):

$$\frac{\Delta p}{\Delta X} = \frac{\exp(y_0 + b_x)}{1 + \exp(y_0 + b_x)} - \frac{\exp(y_0)}{1 + \exp(y_0)} \qquad [1]$$

where $y_0 = \ln(p_0 / (1 - p_0))$. The discrete-change effect increases as the baseline probability rises toward $p_0 = ½$; after reaching a maximum at ½, the discrete-change effect decreases with further increases in p_0.

This feature of all logistic regression models is especially important for our analysis of religious preference because "no preference" is initially a very rare outcome – where discrete-

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[40]Our calculations from archived Gallup polls.

change effect nears its minimum. However, by the late 1990s the baseline probability for many subgroups of American adults had reached a point where a one-point increase in some variables can cause the probability of preferring no religion to increase rapidly. In short, to understand the implications of the model we need to update the baseline we use to calculate discrete-change effects in later years.

Our strategy for comparing effects across models is consistent as long as we view having no religion as discrete outcome that is either true or false at the time of observation. The other popular motivation for a logistic model – the one based on a dichotomous realization of a continuous latent variable (e.g., Long 1997, pp. 40-48) – is inappropriate here. The difficulty arises because the latent variable model requires a statistical convention to fix the scale of the latent variable, typically a fixed error variance of $\pi^2/3$ is used. This is no problem if we fit only one model. But our analysis is based on a succession of logistic regressions, each with more variables than the previous ones. It seems unreasonable to think that the error variance will not decline as we add more independent variables, but the convention is to set the error variance at $\pi^2/3$ no matter how many independent variables are in a particular model. We could conceivably scale down the error variance as we add new independent variables if we had some reasonable way of gauging the impact of variables independent of the model itself. Unfortunately, we lack that kind of information so we caution against interpreting the coefficients in any way other than as measures of the uniform effect of the independent variables on the log-odds of having no religion.

[word count: 14,351]

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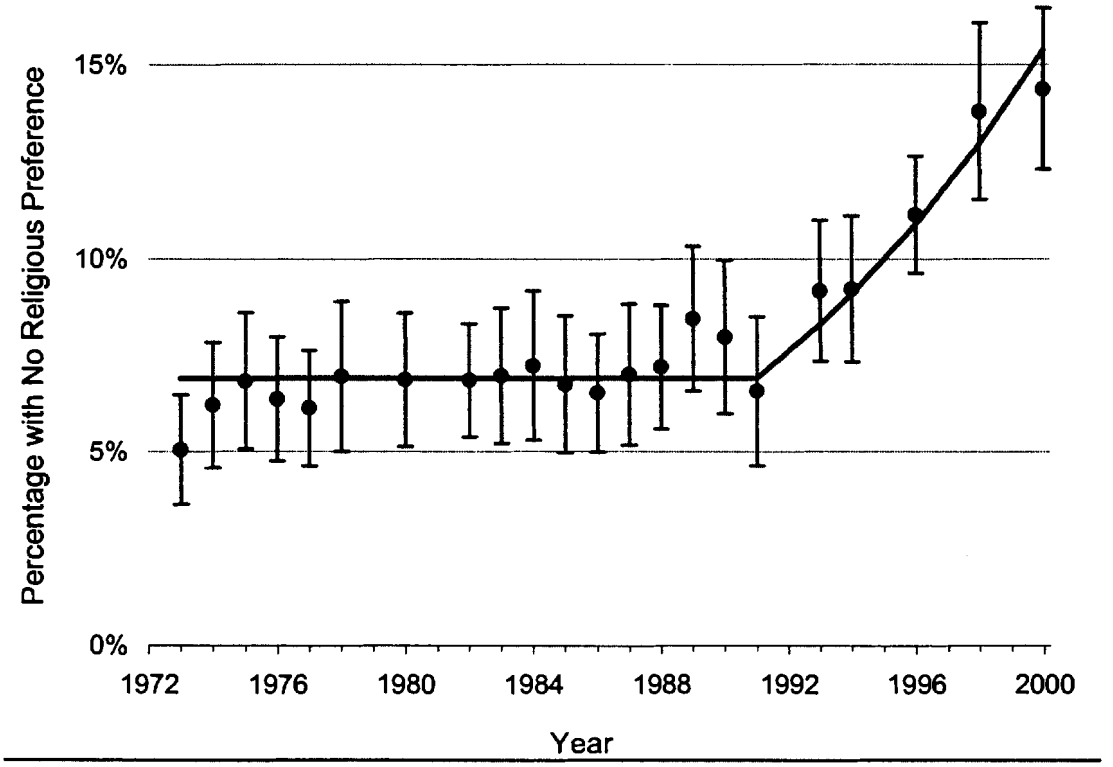

Figure 1
Percentage with No Religious Preference by Year: Persons 25-74 Years Old
Note: Observed data smoothed by spline function hinged at 1991.

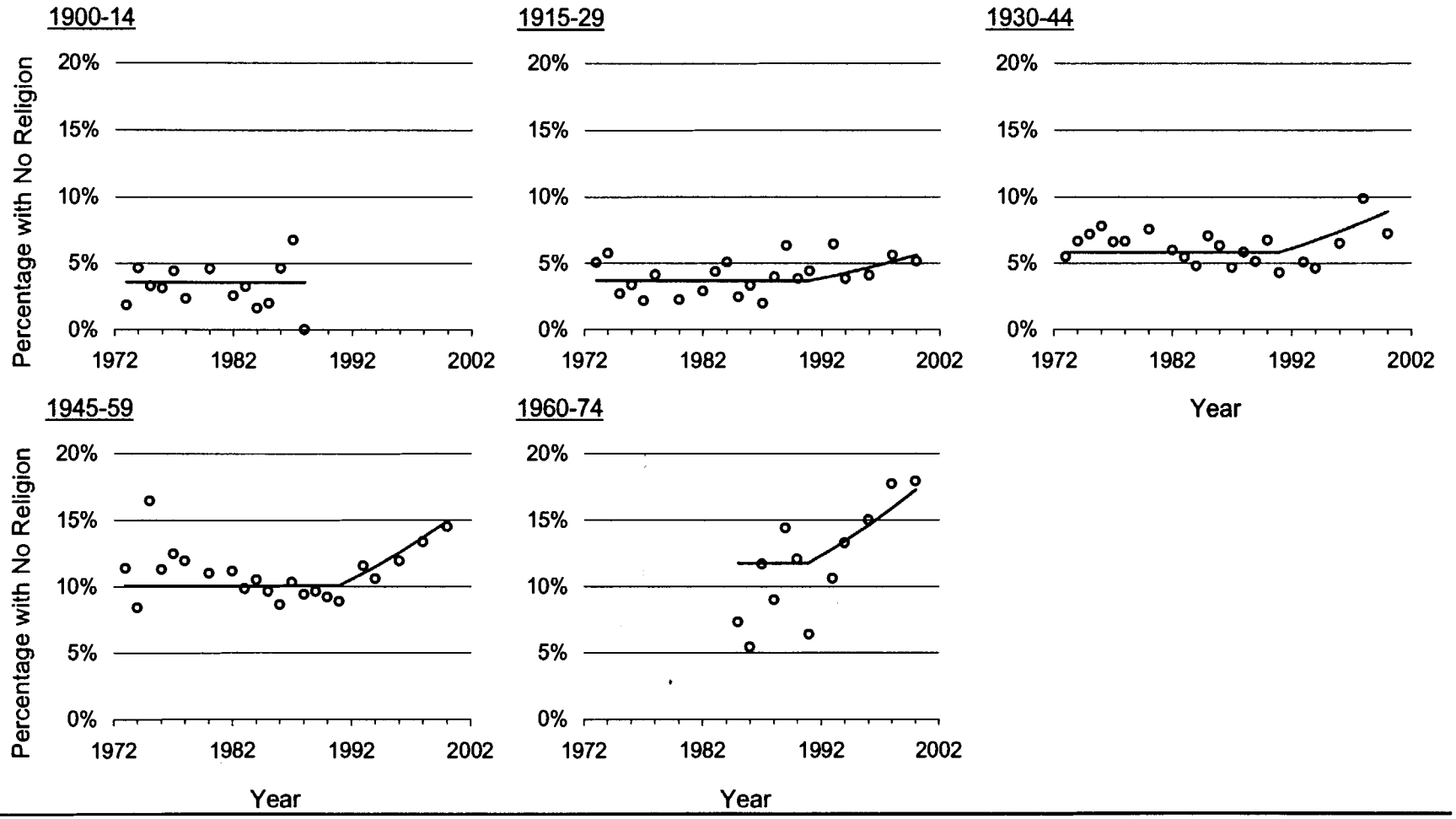

Figure 2
Percentage with No Religion by Year and Birth Cohort: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974

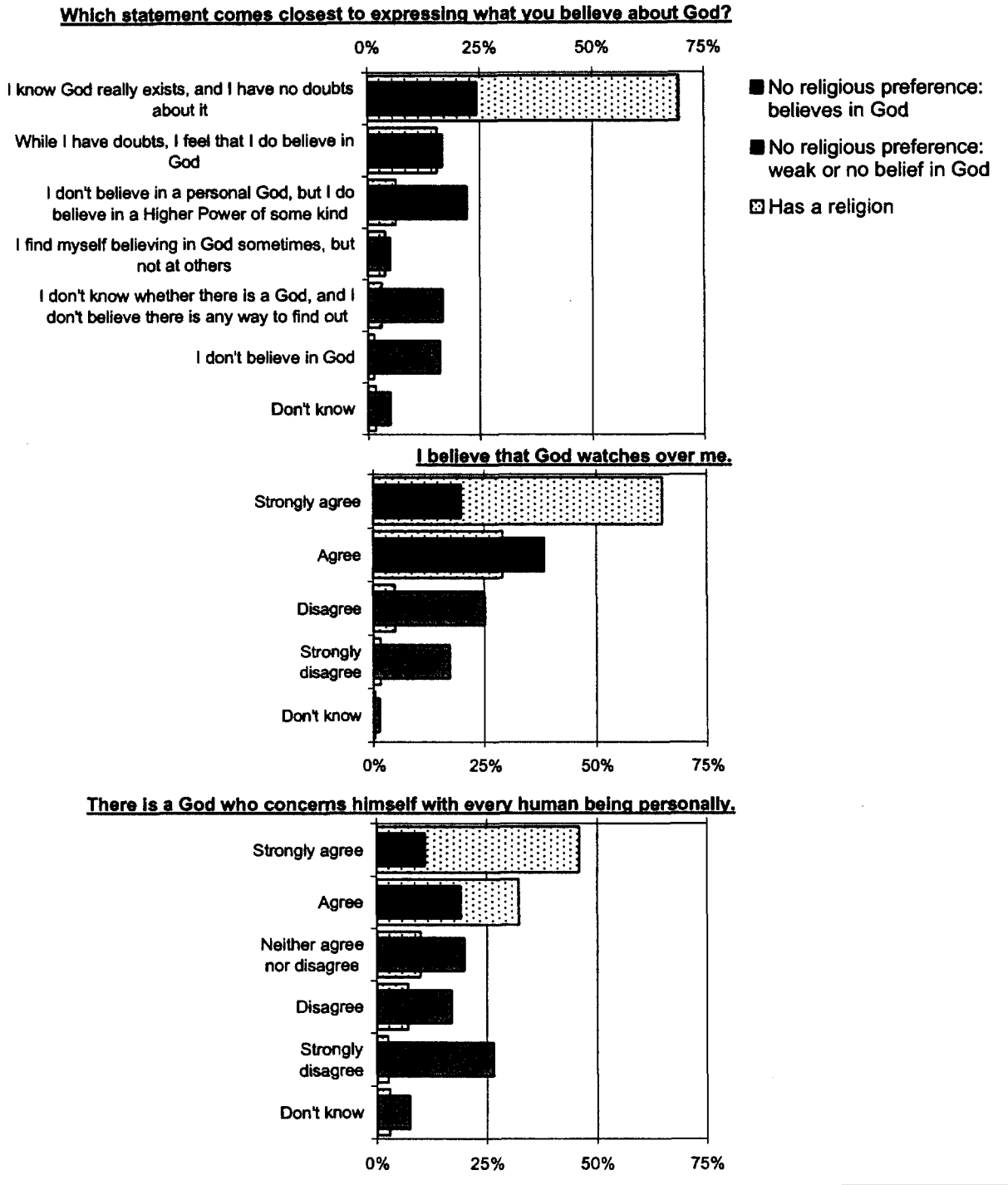

Figure 3
Belief in God by Presence or Absence of Religious Preference: Persons, 25-74 Years Old, 1998

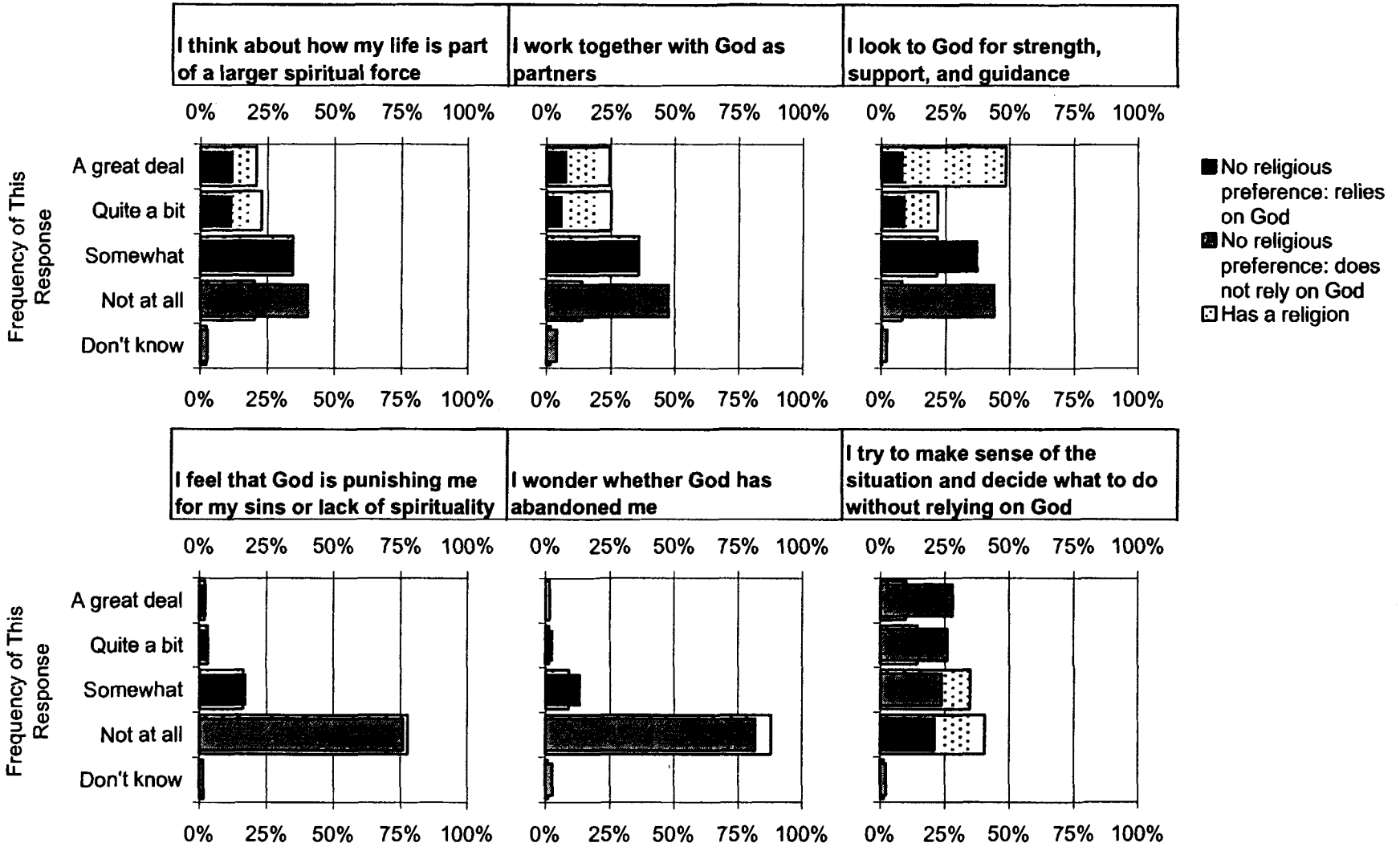

Figure 4
Responses to Major Problems in Life by Presence or Absence of a Religious Preference: Persons 25-74 Years Old, 1998

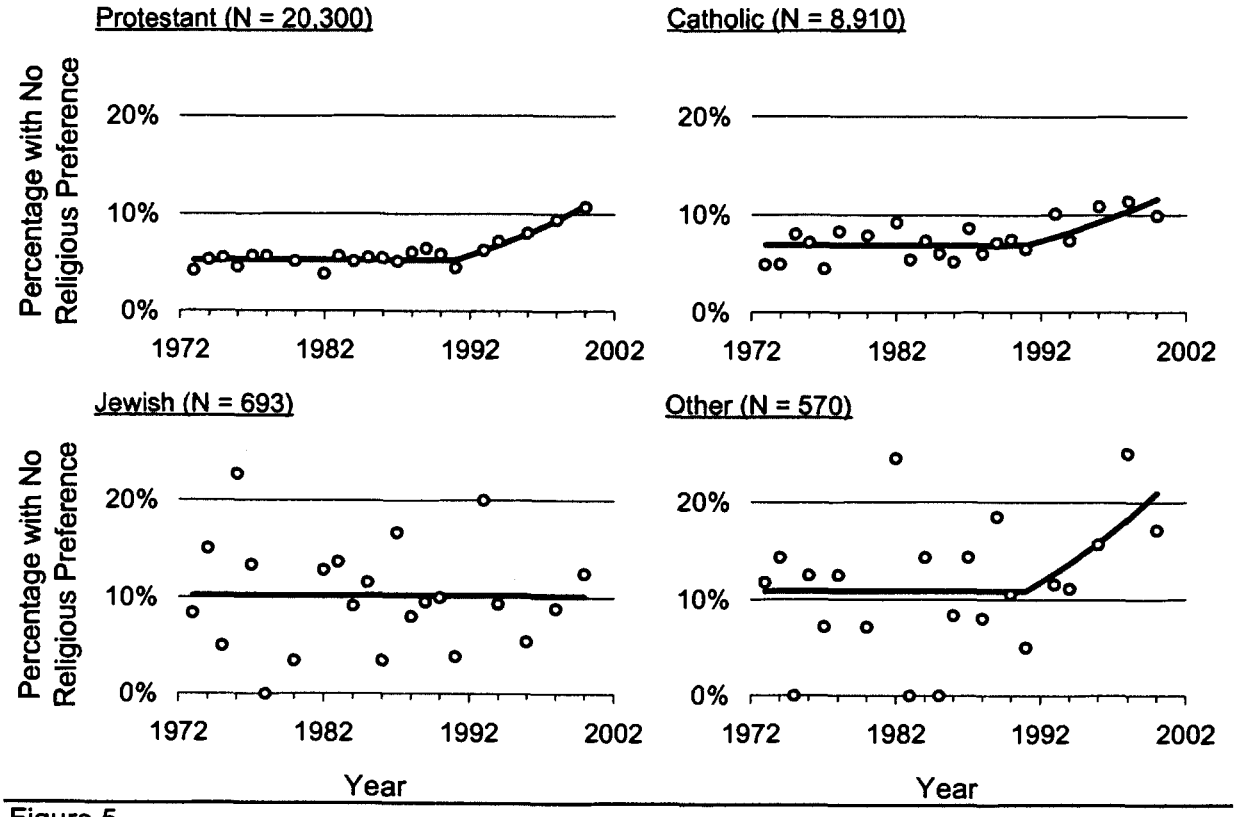

Figure 5

Percentage of Persons With No Religious Preference by Year and Religious Origin: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974 with a Religious Origin, 1973-2000

Note: Observed data smoothed by spline functions hinged at 1991. Each panel has its own, best-fitting, spline function.

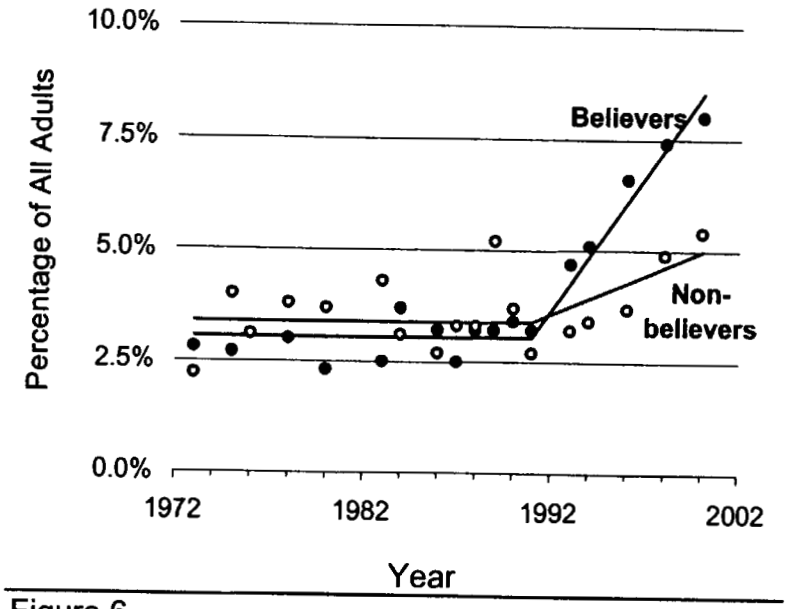

Figure 6

Percentage Who Have No Religious Preference by Belief in Life After Death and Year: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974

Note: Observed data smoothed by spline function hinged at 1991.

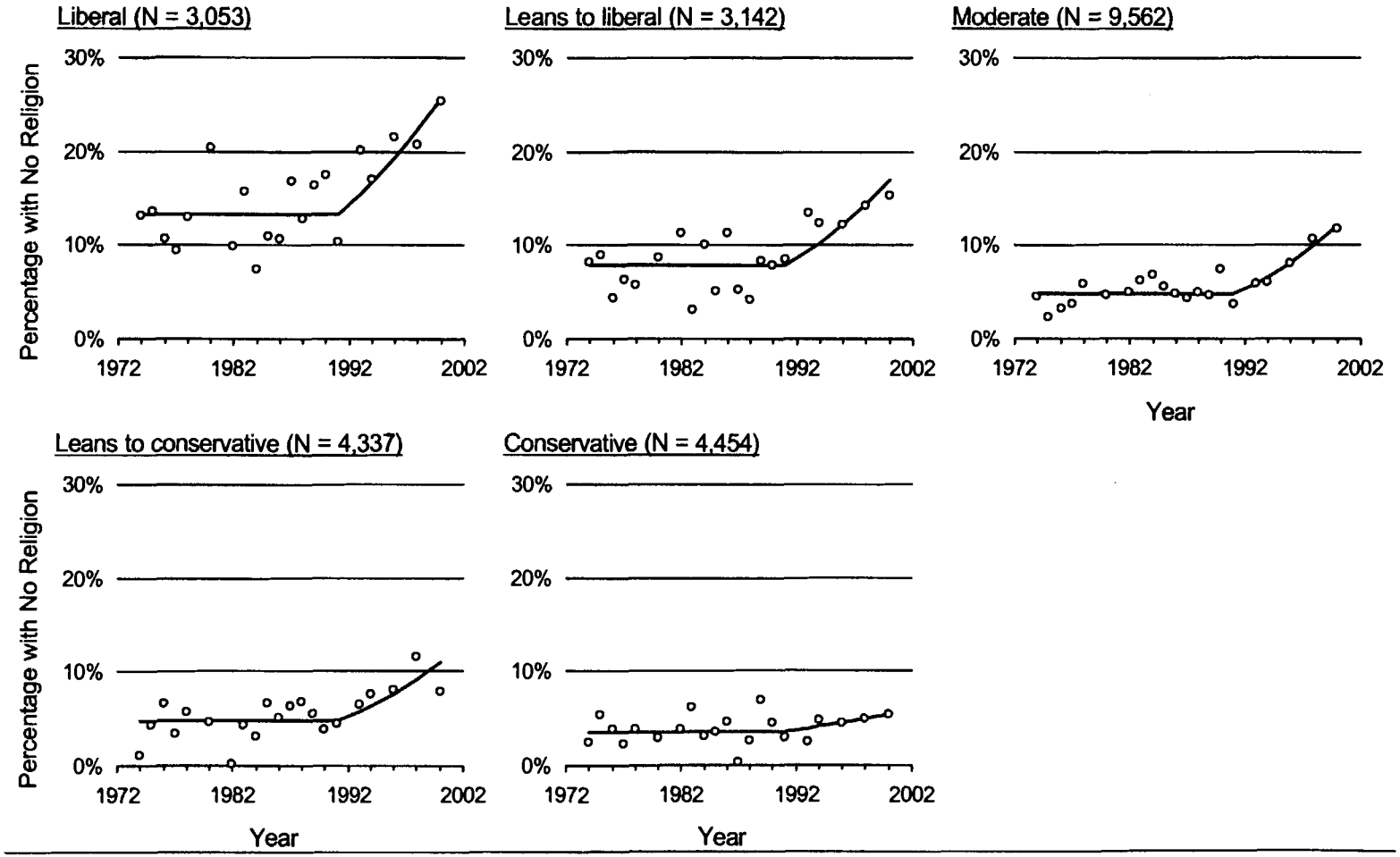

Figure 7

Percentage with No Religious Preference by Year and Political Views: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974, Ever-married, 1974-2000

Note: Observed data smoothed by spline functions hinged at 1991. Each panel has its own, best-fitting, spline function.

Table 1

Partition of the Total Association Between Year and Having No Religious Preference by Birth Cohort: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974

Birth cohort	Total df = 21		1973-1991 df = 16		{1973-1991}-2000 df = 5	
	L^2	X^2	L^2	X^2	L^2	X^2
1900-14[a]	--[b]	8.49	--[b]	8.49	--[b]	--[b]
1915-29	28.54	28.50	23.81	24.10	4.73	5.44
1930-44	22.64	23.34	10.06	9.92	**12.56**	**13.63**
1945-59	**36.88**	**38.09**	16.60	17.94	**20.28**	**21.33**
1960-74[c]	**49.05**	**44.81**	10.25	10.14	**38.80**	**37.59**
Total	**270.32**	**291.63**	16.02	16.08	**254.30**	**278.46**

a - No observations after 1988, so degrees of freedom are 13, 13, and 0.

b - Zero counts preclude calculation of L2.

c - No observations before 1985, so degrees of freedom are 11, 6, and 5.

NOTE: Statistics significant at the .05 level are indicated by boldface type. Analysis restricted to cases having no missing data on religious origin, marital status, parenthood, education, and age.

Table 2
Religious Beliefs by Presence or Absence of Religious Preference: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974, 1998

	Religious Preference	
	No religion	Religion
Belief	Definitely or probably believes (%)	Definitely or probably believes (%)
Afterlife	57	84
Heaven	42	92
Religious miracles	38	84
Hell	36	79

Table 3

Church Attendance and Prayer by Presence or Absence of Religious Preference: Persons 25-74 Years Old, 1998-2000

Church Attendance	*Religious Preference* No religion (%)	Religion (%)	*Prayer*	*Religious Preference* No religion (%)	Religion (%)
Never	64	13	Never	7	0
Less than once a year	13	9	Less than once a week	55	16
Once a year	11	12	Once a week	5	8
Several times a year	6	13	Several times a week	13	15
Once a month	1	8	Once a day	11	32
2 or 3 times a month	1	10	Several times a day	9	29
Nearly every week	1	6			
Every week	2	20			
More than once a week	1	9			
Don't know	4	2	Don't know	0	0
Total	100	100	Total	100	100
Number of cases	(656)	(3,989)	Number of cases	(332)	(1,985)

Table 4

Self-image as Religious and/or Spiritual Person by Presence or Absence or Religious Preference: Persons 25-74 Years Old, 1998

	A. Religious		B. Spiritual	
	Religious Preference		*Religious Preference*	
	No religion	Religion	No religion	Religion
Self-image	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Very religious / spiritual	4	22	16	25
Moderately religious / spiritual	11	47	24	43
Slightly religious / spiritual	24	23	27	25
Not religious / spiritual	61	7	34	8
Don't know	0	0	0	0
Total	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	(160)	(1,045)	(160)	(1,044)

Table 5

Confidence in Churches and Religious Organizations and in Religious Leaders by the Presence or Absence of Religious Preference: Persons 25-74 Years Old, 1998

	A. Churches and Religious Organizations *Religious Preference and Belief*			B. Religious Leaders *Religious Preference and Belief*		
	Non-believer	Unchurched believer	Religion	Non-believer	Unchurched believer	Religion
Degree of confidence	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Complete confidence	0	1	9	--	--	--
A great deal of confidence	4	10	37	3	15	30
Some confidence	28	37	41	41	37	55
Very little confidence*	30	33	8	47	46	12
No confidence at all	35	15	2	--	--	--
Don't know	4	5	3	9	2	3
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	(54)	(82)	(872)	(32)	(46)	(609)

*The wording for religious leaders is "hardly any confidence."

Note: "Unchurched believers" have no religious preference but believe in God or a higher power; non-believers have no religious preference and do not believe in God or a higher power.

Table 6

Attitudes About Religions and Religious People by the Presence or Absence of Religious Preference: Persons 25-74 Years Old, 1998

	A. Religions Bring Conflict		B. Religious People Intolerant		C. US Better if Religion Had Less Influence	
	Religious Preference		*Religious Preference*		*Religious Preference*	
	No religion	Religion	No religion	Religion	No religion	Religion
Response	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Strongly agree	20	7	31	9	14	2
Agree	41	23	38	35	26	7
Neither agree nor disagree*	25	23	22	26	46	26
Disagree	11	37	7	25	12	44
Strongly disagree	4	11	2	6	1	20
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Number of cases	(138)	(896)	(138)	(898)	(138)	(898)

*This category also includes the "can't choose" response.

Table 7
Logistic Regression Results for Socio-demographic Model of Preferring No Religion: Persons 25-74 Years Old, 1973-2000 (N=31,678)

Variable	b	Adjusted a.s.e.	p	Discrete-change effect [percentage points] 1973-1991	1996	2000
Year spline[a]	.038	.009	.000	---	---	---
Cohort spline[b]	.050	.005	.000	1.5	1.8	2.0
Raised with no religion						
Main effect	2.062	.164	.000	26.8	30.0	32.5
Interaction: 1960-74 cohort	.048	.012	.000	.3	.3	.4
Woman	-.679	.044	.000	-2.8	-3.3	-3.8
Ancestry						
African American	-.302	.078	.000	-1.4	-1.7	-2.0
Latino	-.349	.130	.007	-1.6	-1.9	-2.2
Chinese or Japanese	.907	.165	.000	7.4	8.6	9.7
Region						
Northeast	.000	---	---	---	---	---
Midwest and Mountain	-.102	.089	.256	-.5	-.6	-.7
South	-.425	.091	.000	-1.9	-2.3	-2.6
Pacific	.556	.090	.000	3.9	4.6	5.1
Effects that apply only to persons with religious upbringing						
Education (years)	.043	.011	.000	.2	.3	.3
Marital Status						
Married once	-.479	.081	.000	-2.1	-2.5	-2.9
Remarried	-.030	.108	.781	-.2	-.2	-.2
Widowed	-.282	.154	.067	-1.4	-1.6	-1.8
Divorced or separated	.155	.086	.071	.9	1.1	1.2
Never married	.000	---	---	---	---	---
Parenthood[c]	-.407	.062	.000	-1.9	-2.2	-2.5
Intercept	-2.804	.165	.000	---	---	---

NOTE: Standard errors are adjusted for survey effects. Discrete-change effects for 1973-1991 are calculated at a baseline percentage of 5.8 percent (the observed percentage for persons with a religious upbringing who were interviewed 1973-1991). Discrete-change effects for 1996 and 2000 add the period effect for the year in question to the baseline.

[a]The year spline function equals 0 for years 1973-1991 and equals t-1991 thereafter (i.e., for t = 1992,...,2000).

[b]The cohort spline function equals 0 for cohorts 1900-1934, equals y-1934 for y = 1935,...,1949, and equals 15 thereafter (i.e., for y = 1950,...1974). Discrete-change effects for cohort reflect a 5-year difference in year of birth.

[c]The parenthood affect applies only to ever-married persons.

Table 8

Period and Cohort Spline Coefficients After Adding Political Views and Belief in God to Sociodemographic Model of Preferring No Religion: Persons 25-74 Years Old and Born 1900-1974

Variable	b	Adjusted a.s.e.	p
A. Political Views (N = 28,484)			
Year spline[a]			
Conservative	.014	.025	.583
Moderate	.058	.010	.000
Liberal	.031	.015	.044
Cohort spline[b]			
Conservative	.015	.012	.184
Moderate	.054	.006	.000
Liberal	.040	.010	.000
B. Belief in God (N = 6,590)			
Year spline[a]			
Skeptic[c]	.022	.033	.496
Some belief[d]	.054	.022	.014
Belief without doubt	.091	.025	.000
Cohort spline[b]			
Skeptic[c]	.004	.018	.814
Some belief[d]	.073	.017	.000
Belief without doubt	.052	.020	.008

[a]The discrete-change effects for the year spline reflect the cumulative effect of time up to the year in question because the effect of a one-year change in year during a specific year is, of course, undefined.

[b]The discrete-change effects for the cohort spline reflect the change expected from a five-year increase in year of birth.

[c]Skeptics say they do not believe in God or that they do not and believe that there is no way to find out.

[d]People with some belief are those who believe in a higher power or say that they do not believe sometimes or have serious doubts about God's existence.

Table 9
Indicators of the Politicization of Religion: 1991 and 1998

Item and responses	Distribution of responses by year 1991	1998	Percentage with no religion by year 1991	1998
Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections	%	%	%	%
Strongly agree	31	36	9	19
Agree	35	30	3	11
Neither agree nor disagree	16	17	5	15
Disagree	15	12	8	5
Strongly disagree	2	4	19	9
Total	100	100	6	14
(N)	(1,053)	(1,026)	(1,053)	(1,026)
L2 (sig. with 4 df)	17.29 ($p < .05$)			
Religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions				
Strongly agree	22	30	11	24
Agree	31	29	4	9
Neither agree nor disagree	24	19	7	15
Disagree	20	17	6	5
Strongly disagree	3	6	6	3
Total	100	100	7	14
(N)	(1,046)	(1,012)	(1,046)	(1,012)
L2 (with 4 df)	31.71 ($p < .05$)			
Do you think that churches and religious organizations in this country have too much power or too little power?				
Far too much power	8	6	25	46
Too much power	16	17	10	29
About the right amount	57	55	5	9
Too little power	15	17	1	3
Far too little power	3	5	0	0
Total	100	100	6	13
(N)	(956)	(914)	(956)	(914)
L2 (with 4 df)	5.24 ($p = .26$)			

. svylogit None None16 None16_cx15 Woman Black LATINO ChinJapn xMidwest South Pacific Educ_relig Maronce_relig Remarr_relig Widow_relig DivSep_relig MarPar_relig Leancon-Libxlib Conserv_tx Conserv_cx Moder_tx Moder_cx Liber_tx Liber_cx if Noneregs==1 & POLVIEWS~=.

Survey logistic regression

pweight: OVER	SAMP	Number of obs	28484
Strata: <one	>	Number of strata	1
PSU: SAMP	CODE	Number of PSUs	302
		Population size	28530.94
		F(25, 277)	78.8
		Prob > F	0

None	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% Conf.	Interval]
None16	1.9019	.1715	11.090	.000	1.564	2.239
None16_cx15	.0637	.0125	5.110	.000	.039	.088
Woman	-.7258	.0480	-15.120	.000	-.820	-.631
Black	-.4311	.0794	-5.430	.000	-.587	-.275
LATINO	-.4283	.1354	-3.160	.002	-.695	-.162
ChinJapn	.9650	.1648	5.860	.000	.641	1.289
xMidwest	-.0225	.0892	-.250	.801	-.198	.153
South	-.3668	.0924	-3.970	.000	-.549	-.185
Pacific	.5977	.0921	6.490	.000	.417	.779
Educ_relig	.0299	.0106	2.820	.005	.009	.051
Maronce_re~g	-.4157	.0841	-4.950	.000	-.581	-.250
Remarr_relig	-.0191	.1160	-.160	.870	-.247	.209
Widow_relig	-.2326	.1630	-1.430	.155	-.553	.088
DivSep_relig	.1499	.0885	1.690	.091	-.024	.324
MarPar_relig	-.3514	.0649	-5.420	.000	-.479	-.224
Leancon	-.1292	.1529	-.850	.399	-.430	.172
Midroad	.0189	.1532	.120	.902	-.283	.320
Leanlib	.4211	.1590	2.650	.009	.108	.734
Libxlib	1.1552	.1704	6.780	.000	.820	1.490
Conserv_tx	.0137	.0250	.550	.583	-.035	.063
Conserv_cx	.0154	.0116	1.330	.185	-.007	.038
Moder_tx	.0581	.0100	5.830	.000	.039	.078
Moder_cx	.0536	.0059	9.140	.000	.042	.065
Liber_tx	.0306	.0152	2.010	.045	.001	.061
Liber_cx	.0396	.0097	4.080	.000	.020	.059
_cons	-2.9985	.2070	-14.480	.000	-3.406	-2.591

Appendix A2: Stata Output for Belief Model

. svylogit None None16 None16_cx15 Woman Black LATINO ChinJapn xMidwest South Pacific Educ_relig Maronce_relig Remarr_relig Widow_relig DivSep_relig MarPar_relig Agnostic-Godnodoubt Skeptic_tx Godsome_tx Godnodoubt_tx Skeptic_cx Godsome_cx Godnodoubt_cx if Noneregs==1

Survey logistic regression

pweight:	OVER	Number of obs	6590
Strata:	<one	Number of strata	1
PSU:	SAMP CODE	Number of PSUs	184
		Population size	6590
		F(26,158)	31.31
		Prob>F	0

None	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	95% Conf.	Interval]
None16	1.3209	.3685	3.580	.000	.594	2.048
None16_cx15	.0441	.0215	2.050	.042	.002	.087
Woman	-.4878	.0981	-4.970	.000	-.681	-.294
Black	-.1714	.2047	-.840	.403	-.575	.232
LATINO	-.1560	.2321	-.670	.502	-.614	.302
ChinJapn	.1797	.3395	.530	.597	-.490	.849
xMidwest	.1763	.1311	1.350	.180	-.082	.435
South	-.0599	.1316	-.460	.649	-.319	.200
Pacific	.7954	.1516	5.250	.000	.496	1.095
Educ_relig	-.0275	.0203	-1.350	.177	-.068	.013
Maronce_re~g	-.2294	.1730	-1.330	.186	-.571	.112
Remarr_relig	.1894	.2175	.870	.385	-.240	.619
Widow_relig	-.3457	.3975	-.870	.386	-1.130	.438
DivSep_relig	.4463	.1822	2.450	.015	.087	.806
MarPar_relig	-.4893	.1720	-2.840	.005	-.829	-.150
Agnostic	-.4575	.2227	-2.050	.041	-.897	-.018
HighPow	-2.1524	.3433	-6.270	.000	-2.830	-1.475
Godsometimes	-2.8905	.3892	-7.430	.000	-3.658	-2.123
Goddoubts	-3.3658	.3570	-9.430	.000	-4.070	-2.661
Godnodoubt	-4.2277	.3768	-11.220	.000	-4.971	-3.484
Skeptic_tx	.0222	.0327	.680	.497	-.042	.087
Godsome_tx	.0538	.0218	2.470	.015	.011	.097
Godnodoub~tx	.0909	.0246	3.700	.000	.042	.139
Skeptic_cx	.0043	.0182	.240	.814	-.032	.040
Godsome_cx	.0733	.0166	4.400	.000	.040	.106
Godnodoub~cx	.0523	.0197	2.660	.009	.013	.091
_cons	.4745	.4108	1.160	.250	-.336	1.285