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Philip Schwadel

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, pschwadel2@unl.edu

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The Republicanization of evangelical Protestants in the United States: An examination of the sources of political realignment

Philip Schwadel

University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 740 Oldfather Hall, P.O. Box 880324,
Lincoln, NE 68588-0324, USA; email pschwadel2@unl.edu

Abstract

Although the association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations is now a fundamental aspect of American politics, this was not the case as recently as the early 1980s. Following work on secular political realignment and the issue evolution model of partisan change, I use four decades of repeated cross-sectional survey data to examine the dynamic correlates of evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations, and how these factors promote changes in partisanship. Results show that evangelical Protestants have become relatively more likely to attend religious services and to oppose homosexuality, abortion, and welfare spending. Period-specific mediation models show that opposition to abortion, homosexuality, and welfare spending have become more robust predictors of Republican affiliation. By the twenty-first century, differences in Republican affiliation between evangelical Protestants and other religious affiliates are fully mediated by views of homosexuality, abortion, and welfare spending; and differences in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and the religiously unaffiliated are substantially mediated by views of homosexuality, abortion, welfare spending, and military spending. These

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results further understanding of rapid changes in politico-religious alignments and the increasing importance of moral and cultural issues in American politics, which supports a culture wars depiction of the contemporary political landscape.

Keywords: Religion, Politics, Political party, Mediate, Homosexuality, Abortion, Welfare, Military, Social change, Republicans

Although evangelical Protestants are now considerably more likely than other Americans to identify as Republican and to vote for Republican candidates, this politico-religious alignment is comparatively new (Brooks and Manza, 2004; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2007). Three trends contributed to the political realignment that produced the current politico-religious configurations. First, since the early 1980s Americans who affiliate with evangelical Protestant denominations have become increasingly likely to also affiliate with the Republican Party (Brooks and Manza, 2004; Fowler et al., 2014; Layman, 2001). Second, there was a decline in Republican affiliation and voting for Republican candidates among non-evangelicals, and especially religiously unaffiliated Americans (Green, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2015). Third, there was notable apostasy or religious disaffiliation among politically liberal Americans (Hout and Fischer, 2014; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). The result of these trends is that religious affiliation, particularly evangelical Protestant affiliation, is now more strongly associated with party choice than are education, income, age, gender, marital status, and union membership (Abramowitz and Saunders, 2008). This article clarifies the mechanisms producing politico-religious realignment and the issues that explain politicoreligious alliances by examining the temporally dynamic nature of factors that mediate the confluence between evangelical Protestantism and affiliation with the Republican Party.

Divisive “takeoff issues” (Baldassarri and Bearman, 2007) related to sexuality and reproduction are now fundamental to party polarization. As DiMaggio et al. (1996:738) conclude, there has been a “striking divergence of attitudes between Democrats and Republicans.” This party polarization, or party sorting (Fiorina and Abrams, 2008), is most evident in increased differences between the parties in their views of abortion and sexuality (Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009; Ura and Ellis, 2012). These same issues are strongly influenced by religion (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2005; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2007).

Americans have become more divided on what are often referred to as “moral” or “cultural” issues, and these divisions have been increasingly reflected in party loyalties (Abramowitz and Saunders, 1998; Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008). Consequently, after decades of party dealignment, there has been an increase in party loyalty; but, unlike older forms of partisanship, this new partisanship is highly ideological (Abramowitz, 2010; Bafumi and Shapiro, 2009; Levendusky, 2009). As partisanship became more ideological in nature, it also became more closely associated with religion; and, as I demonstrate with the analyses below, the issue composition of ideological partisanship largely explains the religious nature of contemporary American partisanship.

This article expands on previous research by 1) simultaneously modeling the influence of multiple potential mediators on the association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations, 2) addressing temporal changes in this mediation, 3) quantifying indirect effects to evaluate relative mediating impact, and 4) distinguishing differences between evangelicals and other religious affiliates from differences between evangelicals and the disproportionately liberal and rapidly growing group of religiously unaffiliated Americans. Following the traditional approach to mediation (Baron and Kenny, 1986), I first examine temporal changes in the association between evangelical Protestantism and both Republican affiliation and the potential mediating factors. Following that, the focal analyses employ non-parametric bootstrapped standard errors to assess the significance of standardized direct and indirect effects in the association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations. With repeated cross-sectional survey data from 1973 through 2012, I conduct separate analyses for four roughly decade-long periods. Ancillary analyses address alternative modes of social change, causality, and the potential impact of omitted variables.

The results show that differences in Republican affiliation between evangelical Protestants and other religious affiliates are predominantly due to differences in views of homosexuality and abortion. While differences in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and the religiously unaffiliated are similarly motivated by views of reproduction and sexuality, views of government spending on the military and welfare also mediate much of the difference between evangelicals and the unaffiliated, particularly in the twenty-first century.

I conclude by discussing how these trends run counter to the assumption of crosscutting interests in American politics (Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008), are antithetical to the liberal viewpoint (Rawls, 1993) and secularization theories (Gorski, 2000) that emphasize a clear separation between religion and the state, and support the culture wars perspective (Hunter, 1991) by demonstrating how contemporary political mobilization relies on divisive cultural issues.

1. Potential causes of evangelical-Republican confluence

The increased confluence between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations since the 1980s is characteristic of what Key (1959:199) termed secular political realignment: “a movement of the members of a population category from party to party that extends over several presidential elections and appears to be independent of the peculiar factors influencing the vote at individual elections.” The sources of secular political realignment manifest in both direct and indirect effects. The distinction here is between changes in the effect of being evangelical Protestant itself and changes in mediating factors associated with both evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations. In regards to direct effects, the evangelical community may have become more Republican—and the non-evangelical community less Republican—due to qualities intrinsic to affiliating with specific religious organizations. For instance, political cues from the pulpit and from face-to-face interactions with other churchgoers can influence political perspectives and loyalties (Wald et al., 1988; Welch et al., 1993). In particular, the growth of the Christian Right in the 1980s could have promoted political realignment by drawing evangelicals to the Republican Party, by pushing non-evangelicals away, and by encouraging liberals to change religious affiliations or disaffiliate from organized religion (Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

As Wald and Calhoun-Brown (2007:229) note, however, “At best, the Christian Right intensified changes that were already underway.” It did so, they argue, by emphasizing moral and social issues, and differences between candidates on these issues. Thus, rather than religious affiliation itself, it may be views on specific issues that lead evangelical Protestants to affiliate with the Republican Party, lead

non-evangelicals to not to affiliate with the Republican Party, and potentially lead some liberal evangelicals to change affiliations or disaffiliate altogether. In other words, there may have been changes in the indirect effects of religious affiliation on Republican identification. This comports with the depiction of political realignment as a response to issue evolution (Carmines and Stimson, 1989). In this case, the evolution of issues that resonate with the evangelical Protestant constituency and that are central to the Republican Party Platform. The question remains, what are the key factors mediating differences in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and other Americans? And how have these mediating factors changed over time?

1.1. Abortion and homosexuality

Although other issue domains may be relevant to the confluence between evangelical and Republican affiliations, abortion and sexuality should be the most prominent. Several researchers suggest that the mutual emphasis on “traditional values,” “family values,” or “moral values” is a key component in the connection between evangelical Protestantism and the Republican Party (e.g. Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008; Layman and Carsey, 2002); and, as Greeley and Hout (2006: 134) note, in the evangelical community “‘Family values’ and ‘moral values’ apparently means abortion and homosexuality.” Not only are evangelicals relatively opposed to legalized abortion, but their opposition to abortion has increased (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2005). Evangelical Protestants are also disproportionately likely to oppose homosexuality (Bolzendahl and Brooks, 2005), to such an extent that there is a “subcultural orientation” on the issue (Gay et al., 1996). This gap in views of homosexuality increased as other Americans rapidly adopted more liberal views on the issue (Sherkat et al., 2011). Evangelicals are particularly likely to perceive political cues related to both sexual behaviors and abortion from their pastors (Welch et al., 1993), and such religious origins give political cues greater weight (Djupe and Gwiasda, 2010). Thus, not surprisingly, Americans who oppose abortion and homosexuality view those issues as highly politically salient (Putnam and Campbell, 2010).

These same “moral” issues have become central to the Republican Platform and to members of the Republican Party. The Republican

Platform has increasingly denounced abortion, and Republicans are now relatively likely to oppose legal abortion (Layman, 2001; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). Opposition to homosexuality, particularly same-sex marriage, has also become central to the Republican Platform and ubiquitous among members of the Republican Party (Layman, 2001; Ura and Ellis, 2012). Among white Americans, for example, the correlation between opposition to homosexuality and Republican affiliation tripled between 1985 and 1995 (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). The increased emphasis on issues such as abortion and homosexuality by Republican politicians (Glaeser and Ward, 2005) has led to greater political participation among evangelical Protestants (Camp, 2008). In other words, it may be views on abortion and homosexuality rather than religious affiliation itself that leads many evangelicals to affiliate with the Republican Party. Not inconsequentially, these same issues may lead some non-evangelicals to choose not to affiliate with the Republican Party, and the politicization of these issues can potentially promote apostasy among more liberal religious affiliates (Hout and Fischer, 2014). The mutual and intensified weight given to these issues among evangelicals and Republicans combined with opposition to the politicization of these issues among liberals and non-evangelicals suggests that views of abortion (*Hypothesis 1*) and views of homosexuality (*Hypothesis 2*) increasingly mediate the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations.

1.2. Government spending

The confluence between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations may also be influenced by shared views of the proper role of government. In particular, the Republican Party has repeatedly opposed the expansion of welfare and championed limiting government's role in the redistribution of wealth (Layman and Carsey, 2002; McCarty et al., 2006), and Americans who affiliate with the Republican Party are relatively likely to oppose increased spending on welfare (Schneider and Jacoby, 2005). While evangelical organizations historically supported economic reforms (Wilson, 2009), and continue to express "concern and compassion for the poor" (Hackworth, 2010:92), "almost every reference to welfare [now] includes an implied or direct critique of government-based efforts to solve it." Consequently,

evangelical Protestants are now relatively likely to oppose the government's role in the redistribution of wealth (Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2007). Views of welfare spending should therefore increasingly mediate the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations (*Hypothesis 3*).

In contrast to its view of welfare spending, the Republican Party often supports spending on the military. Since the 1960s, Republican politicians have generally favored military growth more than Democrats (Fordham, 2007), and Republican voters disproportionately support increased military spending (Goertzel, 1987). Contemporary evangelical Protestants express similar views on the military (Layman and Hussey, 2007). Evangelical Protestant support for military and defense spending was spurred on by Christian Right organizations that gained prominence beginning in the 1980s (Himmelstein, 1983), and the increasing emphasis those organizations placed on the importance of protecting Israel (Guth, 2009). Evangelical Protestants are now relatively likely to support increased military spending (Kohut et al., 2000). Consequently, views of military spending should increasingly mediate the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations (*Hypothesis 4*).

Evangelical Protestants and other religious affiliates often differ in their "social traditionalism," but less so in their economic conservatism (Johnson and Tamney, 2001). Thus, while abortion and homosexuality may be key factors mediating differences in party choice between evangelicals and other religious affiliates, views of spending on the military and welfare may not be as relevant. Secular or non-religious Americans, however, have a long history of emphasizing social justice (LeDrew, 2015). Although denominational differences in support for the redistribution of wealth appear to have declined, religion itself remains relevant (Davis and Robinson, 1996; Wuthnow, 1988). Opposition to war is also a hallmark of the secular community. Leaders of the contemporary atheist movement, for example, often depict religion as the primary motivation for war (Atran and Ginges, 2012); though only about a third of religiously unaffiliated Americans are atheist or agnostic (Sherkat, 2008). Religiously unaffiliated Americans more broadly are relatively likely to emphasize international cooperation (Greeley and Hout, 2006) and oppose doctrines such as preemptive and unilateral military action (Guth, 2009). Consequently,

evangelicals and non-religious Americans are especially likely to diverge in their views of the military and the redistribution of wealth (Kohut et al., 2000; Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2007). Therefore, views of welfare (*Hypothesis 5*) and military (*Hypothesis 6*) spending should play a particularly large role in mediating differences in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and the religiously unaffiliated.

1.3. Other factors: religious participation and region

Moving beyond political perspectives, the confluence between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations may be influenced by a shared propensity for religious participation (Fowler et al., 2014). Evangelical Protestants attend religious services more frequently than affiliates of other major religious traditions and, of course, more so than the religiously unaffiliated (Schwadel, 2010). Religious service attendance has similarly become a key component of Republican affiliation (Manza and Brooks, 1999). Americans who regularly attend religious services (Kellstedt et al., 2007), particularly those who attend evangelical churches (Patrikios, 2008), are relatively likely to be Republican. Moreover, evangelicals' views on issues such as homosexuality and abortion are reinforced by their frequent service attendance (Sherkat et al., 2011), which further suggests that evangelicals' religious participation may promote Republican affiliation. Conversely, non-evangelicals' relatively infrequent religious participation may lead to less support for the Republican Party and its stances on issues such as abortion and homosexuality. High levels of religious participation in the evangelical Protestant community combined with growth in the importance of religious participation among Republicans suggests that religious service attendance increasingly mediates the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations (*Hypothesis 7*).

Finally, location may play a role in politico-religious realignment. The South has long been disproportionately evangelical Protestant (Shibley, 1996). While the South was once a bastion of the Democratic Party, it has become more Republican (Black and Black, 2003). This change in southern political culture may influence evangelical Protestants' political preferences (Bass and Rozell, 2009), particularly since growth in Republican affiliation in the South began more than

a decade before growth in Republican affiliation among evangelicals (Layman, 2001). Conversely, secular Americans are particularly unlikely to live in the South (Baker and Smith, 2009). The regional concentration of religious affiliations combined with political changes in the South suggest that southern residence increasingly mediates the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations, particularly differences between evangelicals and the unaffiliated (*Hypothesis 8*).

2. Data

I use data from the 1973 to 2012 General Social Survey (GSS) to examine changes in the factors that mediate the confluence between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations. The GSS is a nationally-representative survey of noninstitutionalized adults living in the United States. The survey has been administered annually or biennially since 1972. The response rate ranges between 70 and 82 percent across years of the survey, according to Response Rate 5 as defined by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (2008). Several key questions were not included in the 1972, 1975, 1978, 1983, and 1986 surveys, and were only asked of subsamples of respondents beginning in 1988. Although 15,760 cases include data on the focal variables, 1,280 of those are missing data on control variables, resulting in 14,480 cases.¹ See Smith et al. (2013) for more information on the GSS.

The primary dependent variable is a dichotomous measure of affiliation with the Republican Party. The GSS asks respondents “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?” The dependent variable contrasts respondents who answer strong Republican or not very strong Republican (= 1) with strong and not very strong Democrats, Independents, and affiliates of other parties (= 0). The mean of Republican affiliation is 0.252 (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics).

¹ While 1,143 cases are missing income data, fewer than 45 cases are missing data on each of the other control variables. Religious affiliation is unrelated to missing income data (7.2% of evangelicals, other affiliates, and the unaffiliated are missing income data). Eight percent of Republican and 6.9% of non-Republican respondents are missing income data.

Table 1. Variable means and standard deviations.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Dev.</i>
Dependent variable		
Republican affiliation	0.252	
Mediating/dependent variables		
Religious service attendance	3.835	2.664
Anti-abortion scale	0.333	0.330
Anti-homosexual	0.701	
Too much on welfare	0.498	
Too little on military	0.233	
South	0.343	
Independent variables		
Evangelical protestant	0.246	
Non-evangelical protestant religious affiliate	0.651	
No religious affiliation	0.103	
Time	1.170	1.084
Age	43.973	16.708
Female	0.522	
African American	0.134	
Other race	0.036	
White	0.831	
Bachelor's degree	0.208	
Family income (log)	10.357	0.955
Married	0.570	
Children in home	0.412	
Urban	0.229	
Suburban	0.243	
Other Urban	0.387	
Rural	0.141	

N = 14,480

The focal independent variables assess religious affiliation using the denomination classification developed by Steensland et al. (2000). The models include dummy variables for non-evangelical affiliates (NEAs) and the religiously unaffiliated (i.e. no religious preference). The NEA category is composed of all religious affiliates other than evangelical Protestants, including Protestants affiliated with non-evangelical denominations, other Christians, and affiliates of non-Christian religions. Evangelical Protestant is the omitted reference category. This approach allows mediating variables to have disparate effects on differences between evangelicals other religious affiliates and differences between evangelicals the religiously unaffiliated.

Six mediating variables are used to test the hypotheses. All mediating variables are coded so they should be positively associated with evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations. Religious service attendance ranges from never (= 0) to several times a week (= 8). The views of homosexuality variable compares those who say “sexual relations between two adults of the same sex” is always wrong or almost always wrong (= 1) with those who say it is wrong sometimes or not wrong at all (= 0). Views of abortion are measured with a scale created from six survey items that ask respondents if they believe abortion should be legal in various circumstances (0 = yes, 1 = no).² Responses are summed and divided by six (Cronbach’s α = 0.854). A dichotomous variable compares those who believe we spend too much (= 1) on welfare with those who say welfare spending is too little or about right (= 0). Another dichotomous variable compares those who think we spend too little (= 1) on “military, armaments, and defense” (henceforth referred to as military) with those who say we spend too much or about the right amount (= 0). Region is assessed with a dummy variable indicating the South Census Region. All models include controls for age, sex, race, education, family income, marital status, the presence of children in the home, and urbanity.³

The coding of time balances the focus on temporal change with retaining enough respondents in each period for period-specific models. Consequently, I compare respondents across four roughly decade-long periods: 1973–1980, 1982–1991, 1993–2002, and 2004–2012. This coding scheme is manifested in both an ordinal time variable (coded 0 for 1973–1980, 1 for 1982–1991, 2 for 1993–2002, and 3 for 2004–2012) and in separate models for each period.

² The circumstances are “if there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby,” “if she is married and does not want any more children,” “if the woman’s own health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy,” “if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children,” “if she became pregnant as a result of a rape,” and “if she is not married and does not want to marry the man.”

³ Age is coded in years of age. Age is centered on its mean and age-squared is included in the models when statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Dummy variables for female, African-American, and “other” race respondents control for sex and race. Social class is measured with a dummy variable for college graduates and the log of family income in constant (2000) dollars. Household composition is based on dummy variables for married respondents and those with children under the age of 18 currently living in their homes. Dummy variables for the 100 largest SMSAs (“urban”), suburbs of the 100 largest SMSAs (“suburban”), and rural areas, with “other urban” as the reference, control for city size.

3. Analysis techniques

The analysis proceeds in three steps. First, I present results from OLS and binary logistic regression models of Republican affiliation and the proposed mediating variables using aggregate GSS data. The models include interactions between religious affiliations and time, thus establishing temporal changes in the association between 1) religious affiliation and Republican affiliation and 2) religious affiliation and the proposed mediating variables. These models address key requirements for mediation according to Baron and Kenny (1986): the independent variable must be associated with both the mediating variables and the dependent variable. While Baron and Kenny's (1986) influential "causal steps" approach informs the general modeling strategy, it cannot quantify multiple indirect effects or indicate if some pathways are irrelevant (Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon et al., 2007).

The product of coefficients approach to mediation (Alwin and Hauser, 1975; see review by MacKinnon et al., 2007) addresses this problem. Consequently, the second step is to estimate direct and indirect effects of religious affiliation on Republican affiliation in each of the four time periods using the product of coefficients approach. This method of quantifying indirect effects requires a series of models of the mediating variables as well as both reduced-form and full models of the dependent variable, which are used to estimate the relevant coefficients (see Hayes and Preacher, 2010). The direct and indirect effects below are derived from standardized coefficients to compensate for the mix of dichotomous and continuous mediating variables (MacKinnon and Dwyer, 1993). Focal odds ratios from full (i.e. including mediating and control variables) binary logistic regression models of Republican affiliation are also reported.

The standardized direct and indirect effects reported below employ non-parametric bootstrapped standard errors based on resampling the data 5000 times with replacement, which should provide reliable estimates of the standard errors (Guan, 2003). This is the preferred method for estimating indirect effects when there are multiple, mixed-form mediators (Preacher and Hayes, 2008). This approach provides greater statistical power and less rigid assumptions about the distribution of standard errors than other methods (Bollen and Stine, 1990; Preacher and Hayes, 2004). Percentile bootstrapped standard errors

are used to limit the potential for type I error (Hayes and Scharkow, 2013). Given the method of estimating standard errors, it is important to note that none of the effects that are flagged as statistically significant contain zero in the 95% confidence interval (confidence intervals not shown).

Third, I discuss results from analyses that address alternative modes of social change, causal direction, and other potentially salient social and political perspectives. Specifically, I report results from age-period-cohort models to assess the potential for generational change, models that separate religious switchers from those who were raised and remain evangelical to account for the possibility that political party influences religious affiliation, and models with views of race and sex roles to gauge other potential mediating factors. Relevant operationalizations and methodologies are discussed as those models are introduced.

4. Results

4.1. Effects of religious tradition on mediating variables and Republican affiliation

Table 2 reports focal results from OLS and binary logistic regression models of Republican affiliation and the mediating variables, with interactions between time and religious affiliations (see Appendix A for control variable results). Figs. 1 and 2 depict changes in the effects of religious affiliations from the statistically significant interactions. The results from logistic regressions shown in Fig. 1 are reported in odds ratios. Odds ratios above one indicate positive effects and those below one indicate negative effects.

The interactions in the model of Republican affiliation indicate that differences between evangelicals and both nonevangelical affiliates ($b = -0.230$) and the unaffiliated ($b = -0.309$) increased over time. Non-evangelical affiliates (NEAs) were no less likely than evangelicals to affiliate with the Republican Party in 1973–80 (NEA main effect = 0.000, n.s.). As Fig. 1a shows, by 2004–12, NEAs' odds of Republican affiliation were 50% less than the odds for evangelical Protestants. The odds of Republican identification for the unaffiliated were

Table 2. Focal results from OLS and binary logistic regression models of Republican affiliation, living in the south, religious service Attendance, and views of homosexuality, abortion, welfare spending, and military spending.

	Binary logistic regression					OLS regression	
	Republican	Anti-homosexual	Too much on welfare	Too little on military	South	Anti-abortion	Attendance Service
Non-evangelical affiliate^a	0.000 (0.069)	-0.798*** (0.089)	-0.026 (0.061)	-0.323*** (0.067)	-1.331*** (0.063)	-0.040*** (0.009)	-0.417*** (0.071)
*Time	-0.230*** (0.042)	-0.136** (0.051)	-0.083* (0.038)	0.023 (0.043)	0.208*** (0.039)	-0.044*** (0.006)	-0.167*** (0.044)
Unaffiliated^a	-0.677*** (0.145)	-1.865*** (0.127)	-0.186 (0.108)	-0.498*** (0.132)	-1.587*** (0.127)	-0.196*** (0.016)	-3.375*** (0.124)
*Time	-0.309*** (0.075)	-0.112 (0.068)	-0.086 (0.057)	-0.052 (0.071)	0.173** (0.064)	-0.042*** (0.009)	-0.087 (0.066)
Time	0.290*** (0.035)	-0.274*** (0.046)	-0.090** (0.033)	-0.074* (0.036)	-0.028 (0.032)	0.062*** (0.005)	0.032 (0.038)

Fig. 1. Changes in effect of non-evangelical affiliate and unaffiliated (relative to evangelical protestant) on dichotomous outcomes. Figure depicts results from models in Table 2.

Fig. 2. Changes in effect of non-evangelical affiliate and unaffiliated (relative to evangelical protestant) on anti-abortion scale and religious service Attendance. Figure depicts results from models in Table 2.

approximately 50% less than evangelicals' odds in 1973–80, and by 2004–12 this difference in odds increased to 80% (Fig. 1b). These results demonstrate that evangelicals became increasingly likely to affiliate with the Republican Party (time main effect $b = 0.290$), and differences between evangelicals and other Americans increased considerably.

Polarization between evangelicals and other Americans is evident in the remaining models in Table 2. For instance, there was growth in the difference between NEAs and evangelical Protestants in their likelihood of both opposing homosexuality ($b = -0.136$) and agreeing that we spend too much on welfare ($b = -0.083$). As Fig. 1a shows, NEAs' odds of opposing homosexuality were 55% less than the odds for evangelicals in 1973–80 and 70% less in 2004–12. While NEAs' odds of saying we spend too much on welfare were basically equivalent to evangelicals' odds in 1973–80, in 2004–12 their odds were 24% less than the odds for evangelicals. The unaffiliated were considerably less likely than evangelicals to oppose homosexuality in 1973–80 (unaffiliated main effect $b = -1.865$), and this did not change significantly. Similarly, while both the unaffiliated and NEAs were less likely than evangelicals to say we spend too little on the military in 1973–80 (see main effects), this did not change over time. Unlike the other potential mediators, differences in the likelihood of living in the South between evangelicals and both NEAs and the unaffiliated declined over

time. For instance, NEAs' odd of living in the South were 74% less than the odds for evangelicals in 1973–80 and 51% less in 2004–12.

The statistically significant interactions from the models of service attendance and opposition to abortion are depicted in Fig. 2. Both NEAs (main effect $b = -0.040$) and the unaffiliated (main effect $b = -0.196$) were less likely than evangelicals to oppose abortion in 1973–80, and these differences increased over time ($b = -0.044$ and -0.042 , respectively). This equates to an estimated 0.98 standard deviation difference in the anti-abortion scale between evangelicals and the unaffiliated in 2004–12, and a 0.52 standard deviation difference between evangelicals and NEAs. Similarly, the already notable difference in religious service attendance between NEAs and evangelicals in 1973–80 more than doubled by 2004–12 (Fig. 2), resulting in an estimated 0.35 standard deviation difference in service attendance between evangelicals and NEAs in 2004–12. The gap in service attendance between evangelicals and the unaffiliated was substantial in 1973–80 (main effect $b = -3.375$, which equates to a 1.23 standard deviation difference in attendance), and did not change meaningfully over time. In sum, evangelicals remained relatively likely to attend religious services, support military spending, live in the South, and oppose abortion, homosexuality, and welfare spending, which means any of these factors may mediate the association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations. Nonetheless, the decline in evangelicals' relative likelihood of living in the South suggests that region does not explain the increasing confluence between religion and politics. Conversely, growth in evangelicals' relative likelihood of frequent service attendance and opposing homosexuality, welfare, and abortion suggest that these factors may play key roles.

4.2. Direct and indirect effects of religious tradition on Republican affiliation

The top portion of Table 3 reports focal results (odds ratios) from full (i.e. including both control and mediating variables) binary logistic regression models of Republican affiliation. The bottom portion of Table 3 reports standardized total, direct, and indirect effects of NEA and unaffiliated on Republican affiliation. Total effects are derived from models without the mediating variables and direct effects are

Table 3. Focal odds ratios from binary logistic regression models of Republican affiliation, and standardized direct and indirect effects of non-evangelical affiliate and unaffiliated on Republican affiliation.^a

<i>Odds ratios (full model)</i>	<i>1973–1980</i>		<i>1982–1991</i>		<i>1993–2002</i>		<i>2004–2012</i>	
Non-evangelical affiliate ^a	1.083		0.756**		0.733**		0.821	
Unaffiliated ^a	0.590**		0.504***		0.509***		0.369***	
South	0.828*		0.912		1.026		1.020	
Religious service attendance	1.060***		1.030		1.025		1.044	
Anti-abortion scale	0.574***		0.900		1.896***		1.545*	
Anti-homosexual	1.305**		1.704***		1.709***		1.715***	
Too much on welfare	1.486***		1.430***		1.759***		2.083***	
Too little on military	1.305***		1.244*		1.955***		2.321***	

<i>Direct & indirect effects</i>	<i>1973–1980</i>		<i>1982–1991</i>		<i>1993–2002</i>		<i>2004–2012</i>	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>
Non-Evangelical Affiliate ^a								
Total effect	0.015	0.021	–0.103	0.023***	–0.162	0.026***	–0.145	0.033***
Direct effect			–0.071	0.024**	–0.079	0.026***	–0.050	0.034
Total indirect effect			–0.033	0.010**	–0.083	0.012***	–0.096	0.015***
Indirect effects:								
Religious service attendance			–0.005	0.003	–0.004	0.003	–0.011	0.007
Anti-abortion scale			0.003	0.003	–0.020	0.005***	0.018	0.008*
Anti-homosexual			–0.031	0.007***	–0.038	0.009***	–0.045	0.012***
Too much on welfare			–0.004	0.002	–0.005	0.004	0.013	0.006*
Too little on military			–0.002	0.002	–0.014	0.005**	–0.008	0.006
South			0.007	0.007	–0.002	0.006	0.001	0.006
Unaffiliated ^a								
Total effect	–0.100	0.026***	–0.142	0.027***	–0.227	0.029***	–0.362	0.035***
Direct effect	–0.072	0.027**	–0.097	0.028***	–0.116	0.031***	–0.192	0.041***
Total indirect effect	–0.028	0.009**	–0.044	0.011***	–0.111	0.016***	–0.169	0.022***
Indirect effects:								
Religious service attendance	–0.028	0.007***	–0.014	0.008	–0.014	0.011	–0.032	0.019
Anti-abortion scale	0.015	0.004***	0.004	0.005	–0.029	0.007***	–0.028	0.012*
Anti-homosexual	–0.015	0.005**	–0.034	0.008***	–0.047	0.010***	–0.059	0.016***
Too much on welfare	–0.004	0.002	–0.001	0.002	–0.011	0.004**	–0.019	0.006**
Too little on military	–0.006	0.002**	–0.004	0.002	–0.009	0.004*	–0.030	0.007***
South	0.010	0.005*	0.005	0.005	–0.001	0.0005	–0.001	0.007
N	5191		3924		3073		2292	

All models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, and urbanity.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test).

a. Evangelical Protestant omitted reference category.

derived from models that control for mediating variables. Interpreting the substantive impact of the standardized direct and indirect effects is complicated by the lack of observed variance for the dichotomous mediators (see MacKinnon and Dwyer, 1993). Consequently, I focus on comparing the relative size of the standardized effects. The odds ratios indicate magnitude of the direct effects.

In accord with the earlier results, the 1973–80 results in Table 3 show that NEA was not associated with Republican affiliation in the first time period (total effect = 0.015, n.s.) while unaffiliated had a strong, negative effect on Republican affiliation (total effect = -0.100). Unaffiliated also had a robust, negative *direct* effect (-0.072) in this first time period. In other words, large differences in party affiliation between evangelicals and the unaffiliated persist after controlling for the mediating variables. The magnitude of the direct effect is evident from the odds ratio (0.590), which indicates that the odds of Republican affiliation were 41% less for the unaffiliated than for evangelical Protestants. The standardized effects show that almost one-half of the effect of unaffiliated (total effect = -0.100) was mediated by religious service attendance, opposition to homosexuality, and support for military spending (-0.028 þ -0.015 þ -0.006 = -0.049) in 1973–80. Conversely, views of abortion exacerbated differences between evangelicals and the unaffiliated (Beta = 0.015). This is due to the strong, negative effect of the anti-abortion scale on Republican affiliation in 1973–80 (odds ratio = 0.574).

The total effects indicate that both NEA (-0.103) and unaffiliated (-0.142) were strongly and negatively associated with Republican identification in 1982–91. Just under a third of these effects were mediated (total indirect effects = -0.033 and -0.044, respectively), primarily by opposition to homosexuality (Beta = -0.031 for NEA and -0.034 for unaffiliated). Unlike the first time period, religious service attendance, views of abortion, and living in the South were not significantly associated with Republican affiliation in 1982–91 (see odds ratios at top of Table 3). Despite the strong mediating role of views of homosexuality, unaffiliated and NEA had robust, direct effects on Republican identification in 1982–91—the odds of Republican affiliation were 24% less for NEAs than for evangelicals (odds ratio = 0.756) and 50% less for the unaffiliated than for evangelicals (odds ratio = 0.504).

The total effects of NEA (-0.162) and unaffiliated (-0.227) were large in 1993–2002. Just over half of the NEA effect was mediated by views of homosexuality, abortion, and military spending (total indirect effect = -0.083). Just under half of the unaffiliated effect was mediated by views of homosexuality, abortion, welfare spending, and military spending (total indirect effect = -0.111). Similar to the previous time period, in addition to these robust indirect effects, NEA and unaffiliated also had large direct effects on Republican identification in 1993–2002: the odds of Republican affiliation were 27% less for NEAs than for evangelicals (odds ratio = 0.733) and 49% less for the unaffiliated than for evangelicals (odds ratio = 0.509).

The total effects of unaffiliated (-0.362) and NEA (-0.145) on Republican identification remained robust in 2004–12. In contrast to the previous two time periods, however, the effect of NEA was fully mediated (direct effect = -0.050 , n.s.). This is primarily due to differences in views of homosexuality (Beta = -0.045), though opposition to abortion (Beta = -0.018) and welfare spending (Beta = -0.013) were also relevant. Unaffiliated continued to have a strong, direct effect on Republican affiliation in 2004–12—the odds of Republican affiliation were 63% less for the unaffiliated than for evangelicals (odds ratio = 0.369). Nonetheless, just under half of the total effect of unaffiliated was mediated. Similar to NEA, the effect of unaffiliated was primarily mediated by views of homosexuality (Beta = -0.059) and to a lesser extent opposition to abortion (Beta = -0.028) and welfare spending (Beta = -0.019). Unlike NEA, views of military spending also mediated a notable proportion of the difference in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and the unaffiliated (Beta = -0.030).

Comparing across time periods, the effects of opposition to homosexuality, opposition to welfare spending, and support for military spending on Republican affiliation increased considerably, and the effect of opposition to abortion reversed direction (see odds ratios at top of Table 3). These findings are indicative of party polarization. Early growth in differences in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and other religious affiliates was primarily due to the direct effects of religious affiliation. While less than one-third of the effect of NEA was mediated in 1982–91, by 2004–12 differences in Republican identification between NEAs and evangelicals were fully mediated by opposition to homosexuality, abortion, and welfare spending. There was

also considerable growth in the proportion of the total effect of unaffiliated that was mediated: 28% in 1973–80, 31% in 1982–91, 49% in 1993–2002, and 47% in 2004–12. Still, evangelicals and the unaffiliated appear to differ in their political party preferences for reasons not captured by either the mediating or control variables included in the models in Table 3 since unaffiliated continued to have a significant, direct effect in all four time periods.⁴

4.3. Additional considerations: cohorts, causality, and omitted variables

There are several noteworthy limitations to the above analysis that can be at least partially addressed using alternative analysis techniques and additional GSS data. For instance, while I focus on changes over time, contemporary political theory contends that party identification is resistant to change over the life course (Patrikios, 2008). This suggests that political realignment (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991), particularly growth in the association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations (Putnam and Campbell, 2010), occurs predominantly across birth cohorts. I examined this possibility using hierarchical age-period-cohort (HAPC) models of Republican affiliation. These models treat time periods (i.e. survey year) and birth cohorts (i.e. year of birth)⁵ as cross-classified level-2 units of analysis in a multilevel model (see Yang and Land, 2013). A logit link function compensates for the dichotomous outcome.

Random effects from HAPC models of Republican affiliation, with and without mediating variables, are reported in Appendix B. The

⁴ An alternative approach to mediation is to employ Structural Equation Models. Using such an approach provides the same conclusions as the results reported here. For instance, a Generalized SEM using the 2004–2012 data shows that NEA does not have a direct effect but unaffiliated does; NEA is fully mediated by views of homosexuality and abortion, and to a lesser extent welfare spending; and unaffiliated is partially mediated by views of homosexuality and abortion, and to a lesser extent welfare and military spending. Period-specific SEM results available on request.

⁵ Birth cohorts are coded in five-year intervals, from 1900–04 to 1980–84. Respondents born before 1900 are grouped into a single cohort, and those born after 1984 are grouped into a single cohort.

results indicate that the effect of NEA varied across periods (variance component = 0.064) but not across cohorts (variance component = 0.001, n.s.). Moreover, period variation in the effect of NEA declines considerably when mediating variables are added to the model (variance component = 0.035), which suggests that the mediating variables explain much of the growth in the association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations. In contrast to expectations from political theory, the confluence between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations does not appear to occur across birth cohorts.

The dynamic nature of religious affiliation, with about a third of Americans switching religious traditions (Loveland, 2003), complicates causal assumptions. Although social science research has generally focused on the potential effects of religion on politics, political preferences can also influence religious orientations and affiliations in the contemporary milieu where religion and politics have become so intertwined (Hout and Fischer, 2014; Patrikios, 2008). For instance, Putnam and Campbell (2010) suggest that some political conservatives switched to evangelical churches in response to the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and that some political liberals disaffiliated from religion in the 1990s and 2000s in response to the politicization of religion.

This limitation can also be partially addressed with GSS data, which include measures of religious affiliation at 16 years of age. I used this retrospective information to replicate the mediation models in Table 3 with the addition of a dummy variable for switching to evangelical Protestant.⁶ The omitted reference category thus becomes those who were raised and remained evangelical. As the results in Appendix C show, those who switched to evangelical denominations were more likely than those raised evangelical to identify as Republican in 1982–91. This suggests that early adoption of the Republican identity among evangelical Protestants was disproportionately influenced by

6 Retrospective measures of religious affiliation are used to divide evangelical Protestant respondents into those who were affiliated with an evangelical denomination at age 16 and at the time of the survey (“raised and remain evangelical”) and those who were affiliated with a different religious tradition when they were 16 (“switched to evangelical”). There is no available information about religious affiliation between 16 years of age and the time of the survey.

religious switchers, which lends some support to Putnam and Campbell (2010) argument that cultural “shocks” in the 1960s and 1970s led some conservatives to switch to evangelical denominations in the 1980s. In 1993–2002 and 2004–12, however, there were large differences in Republican affiliation between those who were raised evangelical and both NEAs and the unaffiliated, and no significant differences between those raised evangelical and those who switched to evangelical denominations. Models that split the unaffiliated category show similar patterns for those raised unaffiliated and those who disaffiliated in both 1993–2002 and 2004–12 but not in the earlier two time periods (not shown).⁷ These findings suggest that the causal arrow may run both ways. The early confluence between religious and political affiliations—particularly in the 1980s—may have been partially the result of political ideology causing changes in religious affiliations, but in the 1990s and 2000s it appears to be largely due to evangelicals choosing the Republican Party and non-evangelicals shunning the Republican Party.

Failure to address other issues that are associated with both evangelical Protestantism and conservative politics is perhaps the most serious limitation to the above analysis. Two conspicuous omitted variables are views of women’s roles in society and the causes of racial inequality. Evangelical Protestants are relatively likely to support traditional gender roles (Gay et al., 1996) and political conservatism has become more highly correlated with support for traditional gender roles (Saunders and Abramowitz, 2007). There is a similar pattern with views of structural causes of inequality. Evangelical Protestants are relatively unlikely to support structural attempts to alleviate racial inequality (Taylor and Merino, 2011). Since the mid-1960s, there

⁷ I examined models identical to those in Appendix C but with two unaffiliated dummy variables: raised unaffiliated and switched to unaffiliated (results available on request). The patterns for the two unaffiliated groups (relative to raised evangelicals) are very similar in 1993–2002 and in 2004–12. In 1973–80 and 1982–91, however, switched to unaffiliated had a strong, negative effect on Republican affiliation that was partially mediated while raised unaffiliated did not have a significant effect on Republican affiliation. These results are likely influenced by the small sample size of raised unaffiliated as there were relatively few raised unaffiliated respondents in 1973–80 ($N = 44$, 0.86% of sample) and 1982–91 ($N = 54$, 1.39% of sample) compared to 1993–2002 ($N = 110$, 3.64% of sample) and 2004–12 ($N = 122$, 5.44% of sample).

has also been increasing polarization between Democrats and Republicans in their views of government-funded attempts to alleviate racial inequality (Carmines and Stimson, 1989).

GSS data include relevant measures of views of both women's roles in society and structural causes of racial inequality, but these questions were only included in select years of the GSS, and in some years administered to only a subset of respondents. I replicated the mediation analysis in Table 3 with the addition of scales of support for traditional gender roles⁸ and opposition to structural causes of racial inequality⁹ as mediators. Due to the limited sample size, however, the models are not divided into four time periods but instead employ aggregate GSS data from 1985 to 2012.¹⁰ The results are reported in Appendix D. Support for traditional gender roles did not have a direct effect on Republican affiliation, nor did it mediate the effects of either nonevangelical affiliate or unaffiliated. Conversely, opposition to structural causes of racial inequality was positively associated with Republican affiliation, and it meaningfully mediated the effects of both NEA and unaffiliated. Nonetheless, the mediating role of views

8 Respondents were asked their views (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree) of the following statements: "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works," "it is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family," and "a working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work" (last variable reverse coded; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.723$).

9 Respondents were asked if the following are reasons for income, housing, and job differences between African Americans and whites (0 = yes, 1 = no): "mainly due to discrimination," "Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) don't have the chance for education that it takes to rise out of poverty," or "Because most (Negroes/Blacks/African-Americans) just don't have the motivation or will power to pull themselves out of poverty" (last variable reverse coded; Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.541$). While these results should be interpreted with caution due to the marginal α , this does not necessarily indicate lack of unidimensionality, particularly with the downward bias associated with non-continuous items (see Liu et al., 2010; Sijtsma, 2009). A related "in-born ability" variable is not included in the scale because few respondents agree that inequality is due to in-born differences (Schuman et al., 1997) and because it lowers the reliability of the scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.510$).

10 These variables were also included in the 1977 GSS. The 1977 survey is not included because the positive association between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations did not develop until the 1980s.

of structural causes of racial inequality was relatively small. For instance, views of homosexuality mediated more than four times as much of the effect of unaffiliated and more than five times as much of the effect of NEA. These results suggest that shared opposition to structural attempts to alleviate racial inequality do promote evangelical-Republican confluence, but to a considerably lesser degree than do shared views of homosexuality.

5. Discussion

In the 1970s, evangelical Protestants' odds of identifying as Republican were not meaningfully different from the odds for other religious affiliates. In contrast, evangelicals are now considerably more likely than both the unaffiliated and other religious affiliates to identify as Republican. This confluence between evangelical Protestantism and the Republican Party is characteristic of Key's (1959) description of a secular political realignment. As Key suggested, members of a population category—evangelical Protestant—changed party affiliation over an extended period of time. Over the same period of time, non-evangelicals disproportionately left the Republican Party. While individual elections may have been influential, these patterns were not confined to a single election. This too comports with Key's portrayal of a secular political realignment.

The secular political realignment that promoted the confluence between evangelical Protestant and Republican affiliations appears to be largely motivated by moral and cultural issues. Evangelical Protestants' relative likelihood of opposing homosexuality increased considerably, particularly compared to other religious affiliates. It is important to emphasize *relative* here, as opposition to homosexuality declined in the larger population, but evangelicals did not keep pace on this issue. Evangelicals' relative likelihood of opposing abortion also increased markedly, compared to both other religious affiliates and the unaffiliated. At the same time, views of abortion and homosexuality became increasingly associated with Republican affiliation. This is not only due to evangelicals with these views joining the Republican Party but also to the departure of those with disparate views from the Party. Consequently, by 2004–12, views of homosexuality and abortion were largely responsible for fully mediating differences in

Republican affiliation between evangelical Protestants and other religious affiliates, which supports Hypotheses 1 and 2.

These findings comport with the issue evolution model of partisan dynamics (Carmines and Stimson, 1989). According to this perspective, long-term changes in a group's partisanship will impact the party system so that parties develop clear reputations on issues that attract those constituents (Carmines and Wagner, 2006). Indeed, there was a shift in the content of the Republican Platform to emphasize opposition to abortion and homosexuality (Layman, 2001; Levendusky, 2009). "Frame extension" (Snow et al., 1986) of this sort supports the confluence between evangelical and Republican affiliations by broadening the Republican agenda to include beliefs and values that are increasingly prevalent in the evangelical Protestant community; or, in the case of opposition to homosexuality, decreasing in prevalence outside of the evangelical community. These shifts in emphasis provide cues that influence evangelical Protestant voters in particular (Calfano and Djupe, 2009). Of course, such cues may be off-putting to others. If, for example, support for homosexuals' civil rights continues to increase (see Schwadel and Garneau, 2014), this strategy may no longer prove useful, and the Republican Party may change course.

Views of abortion and homosexuality are not the only relevant mediators. Views of government spending on welfare and the military became increasingly robust predictors of Republican affiliation. Evangelical Protestants also became relatively more likely to oppose welfare spending. Consequently, views of welfare spending partially mediated the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations in 2004–12. This finding supports Hypothesis 3, but it does not support Hypothesis 5 since views of welfare spending had a relatively similar mediating impact on differences between evangelicals and both the unaffiliated and nonevangelical religious affiliates. These results comport with research depicting evangelical Protestants as concerned with the wellbeing of the poor but increasingly critical of government attempts to alleviate poverty through the redistribution of wealth (e.g. Hackworth, 2010). They also draw attention to the causal limitations inherent in repeated cross-sectional data as it is possible that evangelicals' connection to the Republican Party, along with associated culture such as the consumption of particular media, led them to change their views of welfare spending (Layman et al., 2010; Layman et al., 2006).

Although the association between views of military spending and religious affiliation did not change over time, evangelicals were considerably more likely than other religious affiliates and especially the unaffiliated to support increases in military spending. Views of military spending mediated some of the difference in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and other religious affiliates in 1993–2002, but not after. In the post-9/11 period, however, views of military spending mediated a notable proportion of the difference in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and the unaffiliated. This finding partially supports Hypothesis 4 and strongly supports Hypothesis 6. Evangelical Protestants and the religiously unaffiliated now comprise two of three largest religious traditions in the U.S. (Putnam and Campbell, 2010). The fact that these groups tend to have opposing views on key issues and to affiliate with different parties is likely to characterize American politics for some time to come.

Conversely, southern residence was not associated with Republican affiliation after 1980, and evangelicals' relative likelihood of living in the South declined. Although previous research argues that southern residence mediates the association between evangelical and Republican affiliations (e.g. Bass and Rozell, 2009; Layman, 2001), there is no support for Hypothesis 8. Evangelical Protestants did become more likely than other Americans to frequently attend religious services, but service attendance was also not associated with Republican affiliation after 1980. Despite the emphasis on the mediating role of religious participation in the extant literature (e.g. Fowler et al., 2014; Layman, 2001), there is no support for Hypothesis 7. Conclusions from previous research may be influenced by the strong correlations between service attendance and opposition to both homosexuality and abortion¹¹ as well as moderate correlations between living in the South and opposition to homosexuality and abortion.¹² When not modeling views of abortion and homosexuality concurrently with service attendance and region, results may suggest that religious participation and living in the South promote the confluence between evangelical and Republican affiliations.

11 The correlation between frequency of church attendance and opposition to homosexuality is 0.276 ($p < 0.001$). The correlation between frequency of church attendance and the anti-abortion scale is 0.357 ($p < 0.001$).

12 The correlation between South and opposition to homosexuality is 0.140 ($p < 0.001$). The correlation between South and the anti-abortion scale is 0.102 ($p < 0.001$).

There are, of course, important limitations to the analyses in this article. For instance, the models assess party affiliation but not electoral behavior. The pattern of change in the association between evangelical Protestant affiliation and voting for Republican candidates may be quite different (Brooks and Manza, 2004). Similarly, the results may vary with alternative measures of religious identity. While there is considerable overlap between those who are affiliated with evangelical Protestant denominations and those who self-identify as evangelical, there are also notable differences (Hackett and Lindsay, 2008). Measures of a broader moral traditionalism that is not issue-specific may also mediate the association between religious affiliation and party identification (Brint and Abrutyn, 2010). After September 11, 2001, it is possible that views of Islam are relevant to the relationship between religious and political affiliations, but unfortunately measures of such views are not available across years of the GSS. The relationships identified in this article are also likely to vary by race because the association between religious divisions and political orientations is more salient in some minority communities (Kelly and Kelly, 2005) than in others (McDaniel and Ellison, 2008).

Another limitation concerns the NEA category, which is an aggregation that may mask important variation. Alternative analyses that compare evangelicals to affiliates of various religious traditions (not shown) support the general conclusions here in that evangelicals are now relatively more likely than most other religious affiliates to identify as Republican, and these associations are disproportionately mediated by views of homosexuality and abortion.¹³ Nonetheless, future

13 I examined mediation models of Republican affiliation similar to those in Table 3 but with mainline Protestant, black Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, other religion, and unaffiliated as the focal independent variables (evangelical is omitted reference category). The results show a similar pattern to those in Table 3. In 2004–2012, each tradition except black Protestant has a negative total effect on Republican affiliation ($p < 0.05$) (these models control for race, which is strongly associated with party choice, as shown in Appendix A). Catholic has a moderate direct effect, but none of the other religious traditions have direct effects. Opposition to homosexuality is the most robust mediator for each religious tradition. The anti-abortion scale is also a robust mediator for each religious tradition. There are two notable differences across the religious traditions: opposition to welfare spending is particularly important in mediating differences in Republican affiliation between evangelicals and Jews, and support for military spending is particularly important in mediating differences between evangelicals and affiliates of “other” religions.

research can add to the above results by examining temporal variation in the direct and indirect effects of other religious affiliations on party identification. Finally, the analyses in this article are based on repeated cross-sectional data and thus cannot definitively establish causality. Despite the general assumption that religion influences political perspectives, the alternative analyses using retrospective measures of religious affiliation suggest that politics may have influenced religious affiliations, particularly in the 1980s, though longitudinal data is required to make a strong argument concerning causal direction.

6. Conclusions

The politico-religious realignment that led evangelical Protestantism to be strongly associated with Republican affiliation has fundamentally changed American politics. Affiliates of one of the largest religious traditions in the United States now disproportionately identify with one political party. Unlike most forms of political change, where constituencies are strongly influenced by early life experiences that produce relatively slow, cohort-based social change (Alwin and Krosnick, 1991), the confluence between evangelical and Republican affiliations happened rapidly. In just a few years, the evangelical Protestant community transitioned from relatively bipartisan to the core constituency of the Republican Party. This politico-religious realignment is problematic according to theories that support a diversity of political powers and separation of religion and the state (e.g. Rawls, 1993). The strong connection between one of the two major political parties and a specific religious perspective also runs counter to expectations derived from the secularization paradigm. At the core of the secularization paradigm is the theory of differentiation, which specifies that “religious and nonreligious institutions have become increasingly distinct from one another” (Gorski, 2000:143). While this article focuses on individuals’ propensities for affiliations, not institutional ties directly, the results suggest that evangelical Protestantism and the Republican Party have become less distinct from one another, not more distinct.

Finally, the robust associations between political affiliations and views of homosexuality and abortion suggest that culture wars are

pervasive in the United States. In his influential work on the subject, Hunter (1991) argued that contemporary political elites seek to mobilize constituencies through divisive cultural issues, such as sexual orientation, women's roles in society, contraception, and abortion. While empirical research is divided on the existence and growth of culture wars in the United States (e.g. Davis and Robinson, 1996; Fiorina, 2011), the findings in this article lend support to the culture wars thesis. Views of abortion and homosexuality have become pivotal to party choice, which comports with Hunter's description of deep divisions based on views of sex, gender, and reproduction. The Republican Party has reframed itself to emphasize its opposition to abortion and homosexuality (Calfano and Djupe, 2009; Glaeser and Ward, 2005; Layman, 2001; Levendusky, 2009), which aligns with Hunter's depiction of elites seeking to mobilize constituencies through the use of divisive cultural issues. Political polarization may be limited to a few "takeoff issues" (Baldassarri and Bearman, 2007), but these issues are salient enough to motivate political allegiances.

Contemporary American society appears to provide an ideal context for culture wars and the blending of religious and political identities, with prominent policy issues such as abortion and homosexuals' civil rights that are directly related to religious perspectives, religious institutions and networks of communication that emphasize such connections between religion and politics, and political actors that seek to capitalize on these connections (Layman and Green, 2005). Indeed, for decades now Republican politicians have used the 1973 Supreme Court decision in *Roe v. Wade* to attract religious conservatives and depict American society as embroiled in a battle between the religious and the secular (Adams, 1997; Greenhouse and Siegel, 2011). The 2015 decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that legalized same-sex marriage may provide a similar target for conservative politicians to draw on the culture war ethos to maintain the connection between evangelical Protestantism and the Republican Party.

Supplementary data — Supplementary data (**Appendix E**) follows Appendices A–D, following the References.

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Appendix A. Control Variable Results from Models in Table 2.

	<i>Binary logistic regression</i>					<i>OLS regression</i>	
	<i>Republican</i>	<i>Anti-homosexual</i>	<i>Too much on welfare</i>	<i>Too little on military</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>Anti-abortion</i>	<i>Service Attendance</i>
Constant	−4.076*** (0.290)	4.098*** (0.278)	−3.022*** (0.240)	−0.498*** (0.132)	1.522*** (0.228)	0.687*** (0.034)	2.599*** (0.260)
Age	0.003 (0.001)	0.025*** (0.001)	0.003** (0.001)	0.015*** (0.001)	−0.005*** (0.001)	0.001*** (0.000)	0.017*** (0.001)
Age-Squared ^a	0.047*** (0.007)	0.024** (0.008)	−0.027*** (0.006)	−0.030*** (0.007)		0.003*** (0.000)	0.030*** (0.007)
Female	0.067 (0.040)	−0.435*** (0.042)	−0.005 (0.035)	−0.223*** (0.041)	−0.049 (0.038)	−0.010 (0.005)	0.580*** (0.040)
African American ^b	−1.623*** (0.103)	0.998*** (0.070)	−0.948*** (0.059)	−0.252*** (0.068)	1.186*** (0.056)	0.087*** (0.008)	0.920*** (0.063)
Other Race ^b	−0.640*** (0.126)	0.601*** (0.107)	−0.530*** (0.098)	−0.337** (0.126)	−0.140 (0.106)	0.069*** (0.014)	0.350*** (0.110)
Married	0.076 (0.047)	0.443*** (0.048)	0.043 (0.041)	0.067 (0.048)	0.209*** (0.044)	0.041*** (0.006)	0.320*** (0.047)
Children in Home	−0.078 (0.047)	0.152*** (0.047)	−0.113** (0.041)	−0.056 (0.048)	−0.118** (0.043)	0.045*** (0.006)	0.236*** (0.047)
Bachelor's Degree	0.334*** (0.050)	−0.757*** (0.049)	−0.384*** (0.045)	−0.526*** (0.058)	0.179*** (0.049)	−0.056*** (0.007)	0.604*** (0.052)
Family Income	0.270*** (0.028)	−0.189*** (0.026)	0.351*** (0.023)	−0.001 (0.025)	−0.140*** (0.022)	−0.037*** (0.003)	0.107*** (0.025)
Urban ^c	−0.237*** (0.058)	−0.465*** (0.055)	−0.244*** (0.048)	−0.181*** (0.056)	−0.359*** (0.051)	−0.046*** (0.007)	−0.210*** (0.054)
Suburban ^c	0.020 (0.051)	−0.202*** (0.052)	−0.163*** (0.045)	−0.137** (0.053)	−0.439*** (0.050)	−0.032*** (0.007)	−0.212*** (0.052)
Rural ^c	0.159** (0.060)	0.507*** (0.074)	0.015 (0.054)	−0.113 (0.061)	0.369*** (0.055)	0.039*** (0.008)	0.073 (0.062)

Standard errors in parentheses; N = 14,480.

a. Coefficient and standard error multiplied by 100.

b. White omitted reference category.

c. Smaller urban areas omitted reference category.

* p ≤ 0.05 ; ** p ≤ 0.01 ; *** p ≤ 0.001 (two-tailed test).

Appendix B. Random Effects from Hierarchical Age-Period-Cohort Models of Republican Affiliation with Random Slopes for Religious Traditions

	<i>Partial model</i> <i>Variance component</i>	<i>Full model</i> <i>Variance component</i>
<hr/>		
Period		
Intercept	0.028***	0.044***
Non-evangelical affiliate ^a	0.064***	0.035**
Unaffiliated ^a	0.083	0.019
Birth cohort		
Intercept	0.053***	0.062***
Non-evangelical affiliate ^a	0.001	0.001
Unaffiliated ^a	0.001	0.005
<hr/>		

Both models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region; full model also includes religious service attendance, and views of abortion, homosexuality, military spending, and welfare spending; each survey year is a period (period $N = 24$); birth cohort is coded in five-year intervals from 1900–04 to 1980–84 with those born before 1900 grouped into one cohort and those born after 1984 grouped into one cohort (cohort $N = 19$); individual $N = 14,480$.

a. Evangelical Protestant omitted reference category.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test).

Appendix C. Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of Switched to Evangelical, Non-Evangelical Affiliate, and Unaffiliated on Republican Affiliation^a

	1973–1980		1982–1991		1993–2002		2004–2012	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>
Switched to Evangelical ^a								
Total effect	–0.019	0.022	0.059	0.023**	–0.037	0.025	–0.002	0.031
Direct effect			0.062	0.022**				
Total indirect effect			–0.003	0.006				
Indirect effects:								
Religious service attendance			0.002	0.002				
Anti-abortion scale			0.000	0.001				
Anti-homosexual			–0.003	0.004				
Too much on welfare			–0.002	0.002				
Too little on military			–0.001	0.001				
South			0.002	0.003				
Non-evangelical affiliate ^a								
Total effect	0.008	0.023	–0.075	0.026**	–0.177	0.028***	–0.152	0.037***
Direct effect			–0.039	0.026	–0.095	0.029***	–0.074	0.037*
Total indirect effect			–0.036	0.011**	–0.083	0.013***	–0.078	0.016***
Indirect effects:								
Religious service attendance			–0.003	0.002	–0.003	0.003	–0.009	0.005
Anti-abortion scale			0.003	0.003	–0.020	0.005***	–0.015	0.007*
Anti-homosexual			–0.033	0.008***	–0.037	0.009***	–0.040	0.011***
Too much on welfare			–0.005	0.002*	–0.007	0.004	–0.012	0.007
Too little on military			–0.003	0.002	–0.015	0.005**	–0.002	0.007
South			0.006	0.008	–0.001	0.006	0.000	0.006
Unaffiliated ^a								
Total effect	–0.104	0.027***	–0.126	0.027***	–0.238	0.030***	–0.366	0.037***
Direct effect	–0.079	0.028**	–0.080	0.028**	–0.128	0.032***	–0.209	0.041***
Total indirect effect	–0.025	0.009**	–0.046	0.012***	–0.110	0.016***	–0.157	0.022***
Indirect effects:								
Religious service attendance	–0.027	0.007***	–0.013	0.008	–0.013	0.011	–0.031	0.017
Anti-abortion scale	0.013	0.003***	0.004	0.005	–0.028	0.007***	–0.026	0.011*
Anti-homosexual	–0.014	0.005**	–0.035	0.008***	–0.046	0.010***	–0.056	0.015***
Too much on welfare	–0.003	0.002	–0.002	0.002	–0.012	0.004**	–0.018	0.007**
Too little on military	–0.006	0.002**	–0.005	0.003	–0.010	0.005*	–0.026	0.008***
South	0.013	0.005*	0.004	0.006	–0.001	0.005	0.000	0.007
N	5145		3892		3021		2242	

All models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, and urbanity.

a. Raised and remain evangelical Protestant omitted reference category.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test).

Appendix D. Focal Odds Ratios from Binary Logistic Regression Model of Republican Affiliation, and Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of Non-Evangelical Affiliate and Unaffiliated on Republican Affiliation,^a with Views of Women's Roles in Society and Structural Causes of Racial Inequality, 1985–2012

		<i>Odds ratio</i>
Non-evangelical affiliate ^a		0.768**
Unaffiliated ^a		0.410***
Religious service attendance		1.044*
Anti-abortion scale		1.332*
Anti-homosexual		1.652***
Too much on welfare		1.479***
Too little on military		1.783***
Anti-structural view of causes of racial inequality		1.179***
Support for traditional gender roles		1.035
<i>Direct & indirect effects</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>se</i>
Non-evangelical affiliate ^a		
Total effect	–0.128	0.025***
Direct effect	–0.067	0.024**
Total indirect effect	–0.061	0.009***
Indirect effects:		
Anti-structural view of causes of racial inequality	–0.005	0.002*
Support for traditional gender roles	–0.004	0.003
Service attendance	–0.006	0.003*
Anti-abortion scale	–0.008	0.004*
Anti-homosexual	–0.028	0.007***
Too much on welfare	–0.004	0.003
Too little on military	–0.006	0.003
Unaffiliated ^a		
Total effect	–0.262	0.028***
Direct effect	–0.152	0.030***
Total indirect effect	–0.110	0.013***
Indirect effects:		
Anti-structural view of causes of racial inequality	–0.010	0.003***
Support for traditional gender roles	–0.005	0.003
Service attendance	–0.026	0.011*
Anti-abortion scale	–0.013	0.006*
Anti-homosexual	–0.041	0.009***
Too much on welfare	–0.007	0.003**
Too little on military	–0.009	0.004*

All models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region; N = 3584.

a. Evangelical Protestant omitted reference category.

* $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$ (two-tailed test).

Reviewer Appendix A. Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of
Religious Traditions (Evangelical Protestant Reference) on Republican Affiliation, 2004-2012

	Mainline Protestant ^a		Black Protestant ^a		Catholic ^a		Jewish ^a		Other Religion ^a		Unaffiliated ^a	
	<u>Beta</u>	<u>se</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>se</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>se</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>se</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>se</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>se</u>
Total Effect	-.064	.032*	-.100	.062	-.152	.034***	-.087	.035*	-.095	.032**	-.361	.036***
Direct Effect	.010	.031			-.075	.034*	-.026	.032	-.019	.029	-.190	.041***
Total Indirect Effect	-.074	.014***			-.077	.015***	-.061	.016***	-.077	.013***	-.171	.023***
Indirect Effects:												
Religious Service Attendance	-.010	.006			-.009	.005	-.006	.004	-.008	.005	-.033	.019
Anti-Abortion Scale	-.020	.008**			-.012	.005*	-.011	.004*	-.014	.006*	-.031	.012*
Anti-Homosexual	-.030	.009**			-.039	.011***	-.021	.008**	-.028	.008**	-.057	.016***
Too Much on Welfare	-.013	.006*			-.008	.006	-.013	.006*	-.010	.005	-.019	.006**
Too Little on Military	-.001	.006			-.009	.006	-.010	.008	-.017	.007*	-.030	.007***
South	-.000	.003			-.000	.006	-.000	.002	-.000	.004	-.001	.007

Notes: Models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, and urbanity; N=2292.

^a Evangelical Protestant omitted reference category

* p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01 *** p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test)

Reviewer Appendix B. Focal Results from Generalized Structural Equation Model, 2004-2012

Notes: Model controls for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, and urbanity; N=2292.

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed test)

Reviewer Appendix C. Indirect Effects on Republican Affiliation Derived from Generalized Structural Equation Model, 2004-2012

	Independent Variables			
	Non-Evangelical Affiliate		Unaffiliated	
	b	se	b	se
Direct Effect	-.132	.076	-.542	.119***
Indirect Effects				
Religious Service Attendance	-.003	.003	-.042	.023
Anti-Abortion Scale	-.130	.051*	-.334	.124**
Anti-Homosexual	-.192	.056***	-.389	.109***
Too Much on Welfare	-.072	.030*	-.126	.041**
Too Little on Military	-.033	.034	-.234	.057***
South	-.001	.029	-.002	.045

Notes: Model controls for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, and urbanity; see Reviewer Appendix B for structural equation model results; N=2292.

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed test)

Reviewer Appendix D. Percent Republican, 1973-2012

Reviewer Appendix E. Ratio of Republican Affiliation—Evangelical Protestant Percent
Republican ÷ Non-Evangelical Percent Republican