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Nathalie Jill Kun Baker

University of Pennsylvania, nathaliejkbaker@gmail.com

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This paper explores the relationship between religious affiliation and support for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, and how this relationship changes over the course of the campaign. There is a demonstrable connection between religious beliefs and partisan and ideological preferences in the United States (Patrikios 2008; Campbell 2007; Layman 2001). Using Proposition 8 in California (2008) as my primary case study, I consider how religion shapes voter behavior specifically in same-sex marriage ballot propositions and how moral policy decisions most clearly expose the link between religious beliefs and ideological preferences. I find that the predictive capacity of religion with respect to Proposition 8 vote choice increases for the non-Christian vote over the course of the 2008 campaign cycle. In contrast, religion produces stable voting preferences among Christian voters throughout the campaign. From these results, I conclude that the religion effect on non-Christian Proposition 8 vote choice is magnified when accompanied by campaign mobilization, same-sex marriage political salience and the effect of public opinion. My analysis shows that the religion effect, coupled with California's political opportunity structure, stabilizes Christian Proposition 8 vote preference, while increasing opposition amongst non-Christian Proposition 8 voters over the course of the campaign (Soule 2004). While campaign effects narrowed the gap between "yes" and "no" votes on Proposition 8, California's ballot initiative system ultimately favors moral policy outcomes that resonate with deeply held religious beliefs (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Drawing on survey data from the Public Policy Institute of California, I argue that same-sex marriage electoral outcomes are a product of timely campaign mobilization tactics, the unique California voter initiative system, and religion effects that simultaneously stabilize voting patterns among Christian voters and provide opportunities for non-Christian voters to mobilize against same-sex marriage bans.

Keywords

morality politics, religion, same-sex marriage, voter behavior, California, Proposition 8, ballot initiatives, campaign mobilization, You Tube, political opportunity structure, LGBT rights, Social Sciences, Political Science, Neil Malhotra, Malhotra, Neil

Disciplines

American Politics | Models and Methods | Political Science

Proposition 8

Religion, Morality Politics and California's Same-Sex Marriage Debate

Nathalie Baker
Undergraduate Honors Thesis in Political Science
University of Pennsylvania
Advisor: Dr. Neil Malhotra
April 8, 2011

Abstract

This paper explores the relationship between religious affiliation and support for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, and how this relationship changes over the course of the campaign. There is a demonstrable connection between religious beliefs and partisan and ideological preferences in the United States (Patrikios 2008; Campbell 2007; Layman 2001). Using Proposition 8 in California (2008) as my primary case study, I consider how religion shapes voter behavior specifically in same-sex marriage ballot propositions and how moral policy decisions most clearly expose the link between religious beliefs and ideological preferences. I find that the predictive capacity of religion with respect to Proposition 8 vote choice increases for the non-Christian vote over the course of the 2008 campaign cycle. In contrast, religion produces stable voting preferences among Christian voters throughout the campaign. From these results, I conclude that the religion effect on non-Christian Proposition 8 vote choice is magnified when accompanied by campaign mobilization, same-sex marriage political salience and the effect of public opinion. My analysis shows that the religion effect, coupled with California's political opportunity structure, stabilizes Christian Proposition 8 vote preference, while increasing opposition amongst non-Christian Proposition 8 voters over the course of the campaign (Soule 2004). While campaign effects narrowed the gap between "yes" and "no" votes on Proposition 8, California's ballot initiative system ultimately favors moral policy outcomes that resonate with deeply held religious beliefs (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Drawing on survey data from the Public Policy Institute of California, I argue that same-sex marriage electoral outcomes are a product of timely campaign mobilization tactics, the unique California voter initiative system, and religion effects that simultaneously stabilize voting patterns among Christian voters and provide opportunities for non-Christian voters to mobilize against same-sex marriage bans.

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I. Introduction

A. Religion and Morality Politics

Over the last half century, religion has been at the heart of battles about moral and cultural politics. Paradoxically, in a nation that values free exercise and religious pluralism, religion has become polarizing and religious affiliations play a decisive role in determining the political attitudes and behavior of American voters (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2009). These religious affiliations, while deeply connected to political attitudes, particularly those concerning moral and cultural issues, have the capacity to transcend partisan affiliations and other demographic allegiances and take on their own unique identities in the political sphere. Religious beliefs and political attitudes reinforce each other independent of other demographic identifications. On the one hand, religious experiences are frequently politicized; on the other, political behavior is frequently shaped by moral attitudes created and influenced by religious beliefs and religious traditionalism (Layman 2001; Patrikios 2008). As a result, moral policies are created when deeply held religious beliefs conflate with political attitudes and prevail over the attitudes of the so-called “religious left” coalitions, an amalgamation of religiously unaffiliated, moderate believers and generally self-identifying liberal individuals (Campbell 2007; Haider-Markel and Meier 1999; Layman 2001).

Although religion has always been a forceful presence and important foundation in American politics, its character has changed greatly over the last twenty years. The changing face of “political religion” attempts to satisfy the shifting needs of American

political parties, while adjusting to new salient issues, revolving and unpredictable issue coalitions, and shifting elite preferences (Layman 2001). Religion has the power to mobilize public opinion and ignite moral-centric political debates on hotly contested social issues such as same-sex marriage, abortion, gambling, assisted suicide, the death penalty, stem-cell research and prostitution (Mooney 1999). The interaction between same-sex marriage and religion and the resulting debates offer implications for policy outcomes of other morality-based issues. In particular, I will demonstrate that ballot initiative processes intensify moral policy mobilization and facilitate the enactment of same-sex marriage bans. Bringing contentious, morally grounded issues such as a same-sex marriage into electoral politics not only expands the scope of conflict among ordinary citizens, but it also capitalizes on pre-existing advantages: longstanding, strong religious institutions can more effectively reach voters and manipulate public opinion than their unaffiliated, non-religious counterparts (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Non-religious voting blocs rely on campaign strategies and elite allies and do not have the benefit of pre-existing institutional support.

The relationship between religion and politics is most entrenched in matters of sex and family (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Same-sex marriage falls within this classification and has become one of the most divisive and prevalent political issues in recent statewide elections. Attitudes toward same-sex marriage are closely tied to religiosity; the John Putnam and David E. Campbell “Faith Matters” survey reveals that as religiosity increases (as a function of church attendance), there is over a three-fold increase in opposition to same-sex marriage (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Furthermore, religious belief is highly correlated with Republican Party membership, suggesting a partisan preference for same-

sex marriage bans (Putnam and Campbell 2010; Campbell 2007). The moral underpinnings and recent legislative controversies that characterize same-sex marriage policy give the issue both religious context and political salience.

In light of existing scholarship, the relationship between religious beliefs and political attitudes in many ways defines the same-sex marriage debate. In recent years, both sides of the debate have accomplished significant statewide victories. States vary dramatically in their same-sex marriage laws, but electoral and legislative decisions do not always reflect the prevailing partisan coalitions and dominating political ideologies of the state (Lax and Phillips 2009). Reflecting on this possible inconsistency, I find that the correlation between religion, political partisanship and same-sex marriage policy outcomes is permeated by the degree religious beliefs exhibited by the electorate, ideological preferences of state legislative elites and the electoral institutions responsible for passing legislation (Campbell 2007; Layman 2001; Soule 2004). The same-sex marriage debate does not align directly along partisan and ideological lines (i.e. where liberal voters would oppose same-sex marriage bans, while conservative voters would support bans). The influence of religion is more complex; the total impact of religious belief and religious traditionalism on political ideology is indirect and most apparent when channeled through opinions on moral and cultural issues (Layman 2001).

Figure 5 represents Geoffrey Layman's sequence linking religious belief with political orientation and vote choice through the prism of moral and cultural attitudes. He argues that moral policymaking is the avenue through which religious belief produces ideological preferences (Layman 2001). The relationship between religious beliefs and political attitudes can be examined through the unique and telling lens of same-sex

marriage policymaking, and more specifically by examining the effect of religion on Proposition 8 vote choice in California (2008).¹

This paper contributes to the broad body of literature on same-sex marriage politics and, more generally, to literature on the relationships between social movements, public opinion and political opportunity structures and the affinity between moral policymaking, deeply held religious beliefs and citizen ballot initiatives in the United States (Soule 2004; Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Furthermore, this paper adds to the literature on the changing landscape of religious belief and political partisanship in the United States (Campbell 2007; Layman 2001; Putnam and Campbell 2010). In the context of Proposition 8, I examine the voting behavior of members of Christian denominations with relatively strong levels of religious devotion (Smidt et al., 2008). This broad coalition of religious individuals constitutes a formidable social movement that is and will continue to be profoundly engaged in same-sex marriage ban legislation. I also examine the way campaigns for or against same-sex marriage bans contribute to public opinion, specifically among non-religious voters opposed to same-sex marriage bans (Thorson et al. 2010). Morality politics theory, campaign effects, initiative systems and the relationship between religious beliefs, moral policymaking and political attitudes, provide specific lenses for the understanding and interpretation of the electoral outcome of Proposition 8 in California.

I combine multiple theoretical approaches, religiously and non-religiously focused, and use an empirical analysis to interpret the electoral outcome of Proposition 8 in

¹ Proposition 8 (November 2008) was a statewide ballot initiative in California. Proposition 8 was passed overturning a June 2008 Supreme Court of California decision and effectively banned same-sex marriages in the state.

² The Roman Catholic Church, The Knights of Columbus, the California Catholic Conference, The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, an Evangelical Christian group led by Jim Garlow and Miles McPherson and Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church all

California (2008). I will first provide more detailed background on same-sex marriage debates and policy explanations in the United States and specifically in California. After introducing my argument and hypotheses, I will proceed with a theoretical argument based on morality and interest group politics theory, the institutional strength of religious traditionalists, the California political opportunity structure, and the availability of elite fueled public opinion mobilization. I will conclude with an empirical analysis of Proposition 8 vote choice from the 2008 election cycle.

B. Same-Sex Marriage Policies in the United States

Same-sex marriage bans became an important part of electoral politics in the United States following the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) passed in 1996 by President Bill Clinton (Soule 2004). DOMA seeks to define marriage, at the federal level, as a legal union between one man and one woman. DOMA allows states to choose to void same-sex marriages performed legally elsewhere (Soule 2004). In effect, this legislation rendered same-sex marriage salient for voters, labeling it a moral and political issue that could be solved through both state and federal legislation. The passage of DOMA presented a critical juncture in the same-sex marriage debate and significantly influenced a string of same-sex marriage state bans over the next decade.

While DOMA contributed to the rise in state-level same-sex marriage legislation, the politicization of same-sex marriage existed prior to DOMA's passage. The first legislative ban on same-sex marriage came in 1973 in Texas. Between the 1970's and 1990's a slew of court cases contesting marriage licenses for same-sex couples surfaced in multiple states.

What was lacking was a codified decision-making apparatus for same-sex marriage bans. Until DOMA, same-sex marriage disputes were primarily decided on a case-by-case basis; DOMA made same-sex marriage bans a matter of public policy (Soule 2004). The legislation effectively removed same-sex marriage from the private sphere and created a space for ordinary citizens to push their states to adopt same-sex marriage legislation as a response to federal law. States with provisions for ballot initiatives facilitated the enactment of same-sex marriage legislation (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). The same-sex marriage debate fell onto ordinary citizens, particularly those with morally conservative views and a deep faith in biblical teachings. The passage of DOMA allowed these citizens ample opportunity to legislate morality in their respective states.

Currently, same-sex marriage is legal in five states: Vermont (2001), Massachusetts (2004), Connecticut (2008), Iowa (2009), and New Hampshire (2010). Same-sex marriage is also legal in Washington D.C. (2009) and in the Coquille Indian Tribe in Oregon (2009); however, even though Oregon voted to ban same-sex marriage in 2004 (freedomtomarry.org). Electoral institutions, ideological trends, elite preferences, public opinion and campaign trends in these states contributed to their same-sex marriage policy outcomes (Broder 2000; Layman 2001; Zaller 1992; Soule 2004). In these five states, Washington D.C. and the Coquille Indian Tribe, legislation legalizing same-sex marriages occurred under distinctive conditions that favored policymaking by elites, rather than ordinary citizens (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Government by ballot initiative on the other hand, conflates with religion to produce electoral outcomes that favor moral policymaking. This further exemplifies the strong, indirect effect that religion exhibits in moral issues, particularly same-sex marriage policies. Religion casts its influence through

mechanisms, such as ballot initiatives and ideological preferences to exert its influence in the same-sex marriage debate.

California, the most avid user of ballot initiatives in the United States, became particularly vulnerable to same-sex marriage bans *despite* dominant state political ideology (Broder 2000; Lax and Phillips 2009). Conversely, in states like Iowa that lack a ballot initiative policymaking apparatus, same-sex marriage bans are harder to accomplish *regardless of* dominant state political ideology. The presence of ballot initiative systems can be integrated with religious effects to shed light on the likelihood of same-sex marriage bans. Moral policies are more successful via ballot initiatives because versus legislative decisions, ballot initiatives involve more people and more diverse opinions and thus expand spheres of conflict and favor views that require low voter awareness. These policymaking conditions characterize morality politics theory (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Ballot initiatives and moral policies work in tandem to produce electoral outcomes that uphold more conservative worldviews. Initiatives in general do not ignite high levels of citizen participation, and since morally grounded issues rely less on the cognitive engagement of voters and more on intuitive beliefs, electoral outcomes will favor low-involvement decisions (Scholzman and Yohani 2008; Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). The combination of deeply held values and ballot initiatives make moral policies more salient for larger numbers of voters. On the other hand, states without a system of voter initiatives have more limited spheres of conflict and create conditions more favorable to interest group politics theory (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). When the decision makers are elites in state legislatures rather than ordinary citizens, lobbyists can successfully push their agendas using more discrete tactics and focusing more adeptly on those lawmakers

that are most sympathetic to their cause. These decisions can be made without actively alienating blocs of voters and rousing the emotionally driven sentiments of voters with deeply held moral values. The success of moral policymaking by ballot initiative was ultimately realized in the 2004 election. Multiple same-sex marriage bans passed during this election via ballot initiatives, whereas following 2004, the five states that legalized same-sex marriage did so through private, elite-focused means.

C. Same-Sex Marriage and Political Partisanship after 2004; Paving the Way to Proposition 8

Applying the framework of morality politics theory, and using the electoral outcome of 2004 as a compass, we can interpret more recent same-sex marriage debates. Following the passage of DOMA, the eruption of state initiatives both for and against same-sex marriage mobilized social movements. This type of group activity peaked during the 2004 Presidential election, when eleven states had same-sex marriage legislation on the ballot (Campbell 2007; Campbell and Monson 2007). Christian based religious groups and organizations (Protestants, Mormons, Catholics and non-denominational Christians) were some of the key actors in social movements favoring same-sex marriage bans.² The organizational behavior and strong institutionalism of these groups ultimately created conditions conducive to the type of voter behavior predicted by morality politics theory.

The 2004 election and the eleven same-sex marriage initiatives set the stage for California's

² The Roman Catholic Church, The Knights of Columbus, the California Catholic Conference, The Church of Jesus Christ and Latter Day Saints, an Evangelical Christian group led by Jim Garlow and Miles McPherson and Rick Warren, pastor of the Saddleback Church all endorsed and mobilized members in favor of Proposition 8.

action in 2008. While in 2004 the predictive capacity of same-sex marriage vote choice on presidential vote choice (i.e. for Bush or Kerry) was not statistically significant, revealing a gap between moral beliefs and partisan preferences, the increased prominence of the same-sex marriage debate created a new prism through which one can isolate the connection between religious belief and voter behavior.

David E. Campbell's *A Matter of Faith* examines moral policymaking after the 2004 election and considers the religion effect on voter behavior in a new framework. His work emphasizes religious traditionalism and religious orthodoxy, regardless of specific faith membership. When religious beliefs conflate with political attitudes, particularly those that are morally framed, denominational affiliations become less significant than devotional style or religious orthodoxy. Instead, a "coalition of the religious" emerges, where religious traditionalism, not religious membership, constrains opinions and ultimately lowers cognitive dissonance among voters across issue areas (Campbell 2007; Baron 2003).

While these religious coalitions are influential today, they are relatively new to the political sphere and their long-term survival remains untested. They encompass a wide range of contradictions that may ultimately prove disruptive to future success and fatal to their longevity (Campbell 2007). While the Religious Right was once comprised solely of white Evangelicals, these coalitions cast a wider net, fueled by partisan needs, campaign strategies and similar moral reference points. For example, despite many opposing beliefs, Evangelicals and Mormons now break bread together at the Republican table and advocate for the same moral policies (Campbell 2007; Perry v. Schwarzenegger 2010). Likewise, Democratic coalitions encompass the unaffiliated (i.e., agnostics and atheists), religious

minorities (i.e., reform and moderate Jews) and moderate Christians, each group with vastly divergent religious preferences and beliefs (Campbell 2007).

Despite the unpredictable long-term stability and success of these coalitions, they remain a crucial political fixture that is both unique and particularly important in deciphering the post-2004 same-sex marriage debate. These “left” and “right” coalitions produce different approaches to state politics. While orthodox coalitions confront policymaking from a spiritual and biblically motivated approach, less traditionalist coalitions adapt moral policy preferences from a social welfare perspective (Hutcheson and Taylor, 1973). Orthodox coalitions cite the bible in their opposition to same-sex marriage; conversely, “religious left” coalitions treat same-sex marriage as an equal rights issue. While the survey I use for my analysis does not contain a measure for religious traditionalism (i.e. church attendance), I cluster religious groups as Christian or non-Christian according to denominational membership and generally accepted church attendance trends (Smidt, et al. 2008).

Campbell’s analysis of the changing religious-political scene provides an apt foundation for interpreting the electoral outcome of California’s Proposition 8. While there may be conflict among religious coalitions in the Republican Party, the degrees of traditionalism and orthodoxy within these coalitions remain consistent; therefore, opinions in Republican religious coalitions are homogeneous regardless of faith membership. These voters do not have to fill gaps in their policy preferences according to heuristics and elite opinions, but can instead look inward to their deeply held values; their information search is internal and they adapt their policy preferences from previously absorbed teachings of their religious organizations. Meanwhile, opposing same-sex marriage coalitions must raise

awareness for their causes through external sources, such as elite endorsements and public opinion manipulation (Zaller 1992; Baron 2003). Thus, Republican religious coalitions have to adjust their views on moral and cultural policies less than their Democratic counterparts revealing a bias toward conservative moral policymaking (Campbell 2007; Baron 2003). Issues like the Iraq War and the economy align more clearly along partisan lines and create a more level playing field for Republicans and Democrats (Layman 2001). However, moral and cultural issues disrupt and fragment these partisan identifications and ultimately favor the Republican Party and the Religious Right. Campbell's characterization of the "religious left" (i.e., religious minorities, centrists and the unaffiliated and non-believers) suggests a grim outcome: irreconcilable ideological heterogeneity yields more limited abilities to communicate, recruit and mobilize existing and potential members. While the Religious Right can be located via churches and other institutionally grounded faith-based organizations, the "religious left" is less concentrated and thus much harder to locate, target and mobilize. It should also be noted that Campbell's identification of this group as "religious" is loose and used more to parallel the "Religious Right" designation, rather than characterize the group as religious at all. My analysis of the role of religion in the electoral outcome of Proposition 8 will extend Campbell's framework and elucidate the consistent institutional strength of the Religious Right, particularly in the context of moral ballot initiatives. Furthermore, my analysis will explain the No on 8 campaign and highlight the weaknesses of the "religious left" and their failure to achieve success in moral legislation.

Campbell's broad evaluation of the religion factor in the 2004 election considers how religious beliefs shaped moral policy attitudes and how these policy preferences ultimately shaped presidential vote choice. His caveat is that when scholars attempt to

interpret same-sex marriage outcomes as a function of presidential vote choice and vice versa, overall election outcomes become harder to interpret (Campbell 2007). My analysis of Proposition 8 vote choice uses Campbell's framework to isolate same-sex marriage and make sense of the electoral outcome in California. This interpretation will clarify the relationship between religious beliefs, political attitudes and same-sex marriage policymaking. Furthermore, this relationship can be extrapolated to interpret outcomes of other types of moral policymaking.

D. Religion, Politics and Same-Sex Marriage in California

Proposition 8, also known as the *California Marriage Protection Act*, "eliminates the right of same-sex couples to marry" (California Voter Information Guide, 2008). Passage of the initiative amended the California constitution and provided that "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California" (California Voter Information Guide, 2008). A "yes" vote on Proposition 8 was a vote in support of a ban on same-sex marriage in California. A "no" vote on Proposition 8 was a vote in support of keeping same-sex marriage legal in California.³

The unique context of ballot initiatives and the California political scene contribute to Proposition 8's importance as a case study. California, known as a liberal "blue" state when Proposition 8 was first petitioned for the November 2008 ballot, seemed determined

³ Same-sex marriage became legal in California on June 16, 2008. The Supreme Court of California invalidated Proposition 22 (2000), the first same-sex marriage ban in California, based on an equal protection argument. Proposition 8 was thus a reaction to this court ruling. Proposition 8 was launched by the religious coalition, Protect Marriage, in an effort to ban same-sex marriage in California immediately following its legalization in June 2008.

to defeat the Proposition and uphold the June 2008 court decision legalizing same-sex marriage. The state has historically leaned democratic and the major state newspapers, as important public opinion manipulators, have a liberal bias. However, California is not as whole-heartedly liberal minded as conventional wisdom seems to espouse. The liberal areas of the state rest predominately in concentrated sections of northern and southern California clustered around Los Angeles and San Francisco (Figures 3 and 4). The power and resolve of the other parts of the state to defeat same-sex marriage was significantly underestimated; these regions appeared too sparsely populated, and too spread out to be effectively mobilized before the Proposition 8 election. However, the strength of religious coalitions overrode this apparent weakness (Figures 3 and 4).

The California ban on same-sex marriage was unexpected for many voters. More striking was not just that California was less liberal than expected, but that other states, like Iowa, could pass legislation legalizing same-sex marriages. While Iowa is not a decisively conservative or liberal state, the Republican Party has made significant gains over the past several years and the state is home to many conservative Christians and Evangelicals (Des Moines Register 2010). However, in 2009, Iowa legalized same-sex marriage by a unanimous Iowa Supreme Court vote. Iowa's state constitution cannot be amended by a simple vote of the people as in California; legislation must pass through both houses, making citizen initiatives much more complicated and the window for passage into law severely limited. Offering an interesting comparison with California, this provision of the Iowa state constitution constrains the scope of conflict in Iowa politics and provides an opportunity for interest group politics theory to prevail over morality politics theory (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999).

The outcome of Proposition 8 not only demonstrates a case where morality politics theory prevails, but also validates the concept of “political religion” as another advantage for religiously motivated campaigns. “Political Religion” is best understood in light of moral policymaking and describes the process in which religion exerts its most powerful political influence when moral policies are at stake, like same-sex marriage (Patrikios 2008; Campbell 2007; Layman 2001). Thus, while there may be a bidirectional link between religious beliefs and political attitudes (i.e., conservative or liberal), this link is most likely *indirect*, and political attitudes are most reliably a function of religion when viewed through the prism of moral policymaking (Patrikios 2008; Layman 2001). An examination of the effect of religion on Proposition 8 voting behavior and campaign strategy suggest moral policy electoral outcomes fall in line with the notion of “political religion.” The Proposition 8 outcome connects religious belief with vote choice and a resulting ideological preference or attitude. By looking at the intersection of religion and political ideology, my analysis will consider nuances in the path connecting religious beliefs, political ideology and moral attitudes (Figure 5). Specific to Proposition 8 in California, my analysis will examine the role of campaign effects through time, particularly among the non-religious, as another factor in this trajectory. Religious effects, campaign strategies, institutional structures of religious and nonreligious groups and state decision-making apparatuses can be integrated to explain the magnified influence of religion preceding the Proposition 8 election and the role of political religion in deciding same-sex marriage policies.

This paper examines the precarious space that religion occupies in the same-sex marriage debate in California. While existing literature on same-sex marriage focuses on the impact of public opinion, social movements and political opportunity structure and the

distinction between morality politics and interest groups politics, religion is often left out as a distinct type of social movement organization that functions according to unique rules and norms, specifically in the realm of morality politics (Soule 2004; Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). The broad literature on religious beliefs and morality legislation may perhaps encourage a search for other, non-religious based explanations for same-sex marriage bans. However, based on Layman's trajectory (Figure 5), religion cannot be easily extracted from moral policymaking. This paper considers non-religious framework, such as public opinion, social movements and political opportunity structure, but places these factors in a religious context. Public opinion is examined in light of religious and non-religious mobilization and rhetoric and media endorsements; social movements focus on religious groups and coalitions; and political opportunity structure analysis incorporates the ballot initiative process as a religion-friendly institution.

Aggregating the religious and non-religious approaches to same-sex marriage legislation will mirror Kenneth Wald's analysis of Evangelical Protestant mobilization. Wald uses three non-religious independent variables: (i) social influences, (ii) institutional influences and (iii) values, and considers how changes across these three parameters operate within Evangelical Protestant groups and produce change in Evangelical Protestant mobilization (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). My analysis demonstrates how morally framed issues capitalize on deeply held values and preexisting religious beliefs to sustain and stabilize bases of support. By contrast, opposition groups depend on time-sensitive campaign effects and strategies, such as elite endorsements, via both traditional media and new social media outlets (e.g. YouTube), to achieve their desired election results. Overall, I find that religious support for Proposition 8 remained relatively unchanged and strong in

the months leading up to the election, while non-religious opposition increased significantly only in October 2008, the month before the election.

The survey data used for this paper reveals that the religion effect was relatively limited until October 2008, when it became the second most significant Proposition 8 vote predictor following political ideology orientation. The religion effect is thus most potent when combined with the effects of Proposition 8 campaigns. Furthermore, in California specifically, both the religion effect and campaign effect are magnified by the ballot initiative system's inclination for moral policymaking. I expand on Donald Haider-Markel and Kenneth Meier's previously described morality politics theory to conclude that ballot initiatives facilitate the enactment of legislation for same-sex marriage bans. By contrast, when same-sex marriage legislation is introduced via discrete lobbying and sympathetic policymakers, legalization of same-sex marriage becomes more likely.

II. Theoretical Argument

A. Argument and Hypotheses

As discussed earlier, while DOMA increased the saliency of same-sex marriage bans, it also questioned the traditional alignment between Democrats and liberal policymaking (i.e. pro same-sex marriage policies) and Republicans and conservative policymaking (i.e. anti same-sex marriage policies). DOMA was not a partisan piece of legislation and thus reinforces the notion that Democrats, more than Republicans, experience more cognitive dissonance in their ideological preferences and less opinion constraint; in some cases, their

moral preferences are misaligned with their partisan affiliations (Baron 2003; Campbell 2007). Democratic President Bill Clinton signed DOMA into law, and its passage highlights the preeminence, and not the alignment, of religious and ideological affiliations over partisan affiliations in moral policy spheres. Democrats are expected to be allies of same-sex marriage legalization efforts, while Republicans are expected to champion family values and morally grounded policies (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Consistent with these alignments, Republicans introduced 87 percent of all state-level same-sex marriage bans leaving the Democratic passage of DOMA in 1996 largely unexplained (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). Applying the logic of partisan-ideology alignment, it is expected that on a statewide level there will be a general congruence between state policy making and majority public opinion (Lax and Phillips 2009). “State political structures appear to do a good job in delivering more liberal policies to more liberal states and more conservative policies to more conservative states. Across a range policies, public opinion counts” (Erikson, Wright and McIver; Hutcheson and Taylor 1973).

However, this assertion is not consistent with the case of Proposition 8 in California, an outcome that suggests, like DOMA, a partisan-ideology misalignment. Jeffrey Lax and Justin Phillips put forth an alternative theory that explains the Proposition 8 exception. They stress that minority religious conservative groups are often powerful enough to block public opinion and disrupt policy congruence. This condition presents a different policymaking context where church strength, regardless of majority public opinion, has a “systematic relationship” with public policy (Fairbanks 1977). In this environment, religiously orthodox denominations become influential subcultures in state politics (Fairbanks 1977). Therefore, these traditionalist coalitions will have a powerful impact on

policy (Campbell 2007). Following this argument, religion will dictate stable Proposition 8 vote preferences among Christian voters across time, and the Yes on 8 campaign will benefit from the strong religious institutions and religious beliefs that give rise to these consistent voting preferences.

In light of the narrow Yes on 8 campaign victory, I expect that support for Proposition 8 among Christian individuals will remain strong prior to the election as a result of internal institutional strengths and favorable external electoral conditions. Religion creates stable moral beliefs that predict Proposition 8 vote choice and ultimately expose ideological preferences among Christian voters. My first hypothesis is that the religion effect primes Proposition 8 vote choice and creates stable ideological preferences in favor of same-sex marriage bans among Christian voters. Conversely, the religion effect combines with campaign effects to produce a change in non-Christian Proposition 8 vote choice over time. As campaign effects become stronger between August 2008 and October 2008 and combine with elite and media manipulated public opinion, the religion effect is most powerful for non-Christian voters and predicts increased non-Christian opposition to Proposition 8 over time (*H1*). A regression analysis of 2008 election survey data will provide insights for this claim.

According to a Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) study published in December 2008, *Californians and Their Government (2008)*, Californians generally believe that policies decided by ballot initiatives are preferable to those decided by the governor or the state legislature. However, there was also wide agreement that the voter initiative system should be changed to make initiative wording less complex and confusing and more accessible to the average voter. A majority of Californians said they would agree to

implement measures that would demand that the state legislature and initiative sponsors attempt to reach a compromise before an initiative was officially placed on the ballot. In this survey, California Republicans and Independents disproportionately favored the initiative process compared with their Democratic counterparts, a finding that is consistent with morality politics theory (Californians and Their Government 2008; Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). If ballot initiatives, *regardless* of moral content, are more prone to satisfy Republican and Independent voters, their effect will be magnified when there *is* a simultaneous appeal to moral values. Finally, because moral issues require less cognitive engagement and voter involvement, voters with deeply held religious beliefs are less likely to be deterred by complex wording, further enhancing the morally conservative position.

Not only was the outcome of Proposition 8 a product of religious and non-religious mobilization and campaign effects, but it was also the product of California's electoral structure. My second hypothesis is that California's ballot initiative system favors policies grounded in deeply rooted religious values; government by initiative supports morality politics theory, rather than the more rational interest group theory. Voter behavior is derived not only from religion and timely campaign effects but it is also dependent upon state institutions and the policymaking norms associated with them (*H2*).

The paper will proceed as follows: First, religious groups mobilized for Proposition 8 will be contrasted with non-religious groups opposed to Proposition 8 in terms of morality and interest group politics theory. There will be a detailed analysis of how religious groups in favor of Proposition 8 function internally as organizations and externally as important actors in social movements and architects of public opinion. These behaviors will be compared with the campaign tactics and mobilization efforts of non-

Christian groups opposed to Proposition 8. Next, an alternate interpretation of political opportunity structure will provide evidence in support of my second hypothesis. A movement bolstered by elite allies and innovative campaign tactics appeared to many as strong mobilization against Proposition 8. By aggregating morality politics theory and the conservative tendency to support ballot initiatives over legislative and judicial policymaking, I will explain the actual election results. Finally, there will be an empirical analysis of voter data from the three months preceding the November 2008 election. I use regression analysis to demonstrate the isolated effect of religion over the three time waves and to highlight other important demographic and ideological influences on Proposition 8 vote choice.

B. Waging a Moral Policy Campaign; Morality Politics Theory vs. Interest Group Politics Theory

Religious groups have been avid supporters of morally grounded policies for over half a century. Regardless of denomination, the more religiously orthodox hold more morally conservative and ultimately more discriminatory views towards minorities, like gay and lesbian individuals (Finkel 2001). In particular, the 1980's presented a unique opportunity for religious fundamentalism and politics. After a decade of pivotal court decisions on public school prayer and abortion, the Evangelical religious-political institution known as the Religious Right sprouted from a disgruntled and economically weakened nation. The Religious Right assumed a heavily partisan character, acting both as a lifeline and identity building tool for the struggling Republican Party and the American

Conservative movement (Micklethwait and Wooldridge 2009). The Religious Right provided another avenue for Conservatives to maintain a following. This coalition capitalized on the discriminatory attitudes of fundamentalist religious groups (Finkel 2001).

The Religious Right became further politicized by actively championing moral policies and legislation. The movement's prominence in policymaking and lobbying has strengthened the link between religion and partisanship, and reinforced the Republican Party's proclivity toward moral conservatism. The politics of morality differs significantly from other policymaking trends and is defined by a unique set of characteristics. Moral policies are effectively a legal sanction of what is right or wrong and what society chooses to validate as a set of both basic and important values. Furthermore, moral policies define and simultaneously alienate one or more minority groups. With any moral policy, at least one minority group will conflict with the agreed upon "value" at stake (Mooney 1999). In the case of Proposition 8, the gay and lesbian community constituted that minority. The policy outcomes of moral ballot initiatives or legislation disclose "potent symbols of what a polity believes and stands for" (Edelman, 1964; Mooney 1999 pg. 675).

Protest-style social movements and religious groups dominate mobilization for moral policies (Thorson et al. 2010). These advocacy groups set the terms of the debate: they classify a value or principle as either a sin or moral virtue and then demand that society choose which value to validate (Mooney 1999). Faith-based groups are usually favored because the general population absorbs moral issues more easily than other types of policies. People's attitudes concerning same-sex marriage are generally more absolute and straightforward than their attitudes towards a change in state property taxes (Mooney

1999). While individuals may be significantly affected by an increase or decrease in property taxes, this type of voting decision requires more voter education relative to moral policy issues, and thus citizens will be less likely to engage on either side of the debate. On the other hand, because moral policies touch on deeply held principles and values that strike religious chords and often echo biblical commands, individuals require less external information to choose sides and they are thus more likely to become involved, and at a minimum, vote (www.biblegateway.com). In sum, moral policy debates draw high participation and provide a more dynamic set of variables and characteristics that contribute to final policy outcomes. However, moral policymaking is complicated because there is essentially no mechanism for compromise. People align on either side of the debate and there is rarely room for effective negotiation; deeply held values are often most difficult to let go of.

Morality politics theory predicts that ballot propositions, such as Proposition 8, ignite a high level of citizen participation, and religious groups that champion moral values will be most vocal, passionate and involved in the campaign and will have a significant impact on the electoral outcome. Morality politics theory also suggests that because Proposition 8 was a ballot initiative, not a piece of legislation introduced by lobbyists in Sacramento, the No on 8 campaign would be disadvantaged and less adept at stabilizing support. Finally, moral policymaking creates conditions that trigger high levels of support from religious organizations and make religion a more salient indicator of vote choice (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999). These vote preferences can be successfully embedded in and justified by previously held religious beliefs. Moral policy campaigns are successful in ballot initiative contexts because they can effectively capitalize on pre-existing religious

groups and create new coalitions grounded in a broader faith context based on religious traditionalism. These trends are particularly prevalent in California and explain why religion is an important indicator of Proposition 8 vote choice and election outcome. In light of morality politics theory, religious groups and coalitions will be more likely to wage a successful Proposition 8 campaign because of the biases of the ballot initiative system and institutional and behavioral advantages of religious organizations.

C. Religious Coalitions and Political Religion; Religious Group Behavior

The interest groups and social movements that dominate campaign discourse shed light on electoral outcomes and voting behavior (Soule 2004; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2007). The religious groups and social movements that mobilized in favor of Proposition 8 bridged denominational gaps and created a strong and far-reaching religious force for the Yes on 8 campaign. While the most notable donors to the Yes on 8 campaign were members of the Mormon Church and members of religiously oriented family values organizations, support was not limited to these pre-existing groups. Proposition 8 built new coalitions grounded in religious ideology and faith-based politics. These coalitions support David E. Campbell and Geoffrey Layman's concept of linkages *between* the religiously orthodox, not *within* religious denominations. The presence and unparalleled strength of these coalitions amplified the pre-existing relationship between church strength and state public policies (Fairbanks 1977). According to Schubert and Flint Public Affairs, the public relations firm behind the Yes on 8 campaign, "Members of the Mormon faith played an important part of the Yes on 8 coalition, but they were only a part of our winning coalition. We had the

support of virtually the entire faith community in California. Prop. 8 didn't win because of the Mormons. It won because...we built a diverse coalition; and, most importantly, because we activated that coalition at the grassroots level" (Politics Magazine 2009). Schubert and Flint's winning coalition was denominationally diverse, and thus gained strength from its commitment to religious traditionalism.

As an extension of Layman's model (Figure 5), religious behavior is increasingly linked with ideological and partisan preferences (Patrikios 2008). Stratos Patrikios describes a bidirectional causal relationship between religious behavior and ideology. Ideology has a profound impact on religious behavior; likewise, religious behavior (i.e. church attendance and religious traditionalism) reinforces partisan and ideological preferences. In particular, religious behavior becomes more predictive of political behavior when salient ideological preferences or moral decision-making infuses religious organizations. Same-sex marriage is an important issue for religious voters. Thus, ideological preferences for same-sex marriage bans reinforce religious behavior, while religious behavior reinforces ideological preferences through the prism of same-sex marriage policymaking.

According to Patrikios, "the politically charged American religious landscape...can lead individuals to react by altering their religious behavior" (Patrikios 2008, p. 369). Patrikios coins the concept of "political religion" and asserts that the politicization of religious organizations is a growing trend. Ideology profoundly shapes behavior within religious groups via politicized moral issues. This link is becoming institutionalized to the point where churches are increasingly politically homogeneous; dissenting church members remove themselves from their religious organizations as ideological and religious

behaviors become increasingly intertwined and aligned. As dissenters leave, religious organizations become more homogeneous and ideological preferences congeal around morally compelling issues. If ideology sustains religious coalitions despite denominational differences, then the religion effect on voter behavior is in fact an *indirect* product of homogeneous political ideologies that operate within faith-based organizations (Patrikios 2008; Layman 2001).

Faith-based organizations capitalize on these ideological (and as a result partisan) similarities in political decision-making. Faith-based organizations, like churches, can be politically effective through the practice of “political religion” and because they are formal social movements with strong organizational capacities. Not only are political preferences easily reinforced within these organizations, but also, churches have a clearly defined infrastructure and well-treaded institutional channels for decision-making (Andrews 2001). Church group behavior is in many ways analogous to that of interest groups; both exhibit the same type of political influence and policymaking intent and both abide by institutionalized rules and norms. Religious organizations constitute a potent combination of homogeneous moral beliefs and partisan ideology, and institutional strength, and, as such, are an important factor in the study of the relationship between individuals and their religiously motivated voting behavior.

D. Non-Christian Mobilization against Same-Sex Marriage Bans: Elite Allies, Media Endorsements, YouTube and Campaign Effects

While opponents of same-sex marriage bans would have benefitted if California electoral institutions favored interest group politics theory, the No on 8 campaign could not capitalize on morality politics theory as effectively as the Yes on 8 campaign. Furthermore, the No on 8 campaign did not possess the same homogeneity of beliefs as the Yes on 8 religious coalition. Even though both coalitions included a range of groups, the coalition of the religious had more common ground than the coalition of the non-religious (Campbell 2007). Thus, the No on 8 campaign relied on different appeals to attract support; it had to find ways to mitigate the dramatic effects of mass-based religious and moral appeals.

This paper juxtaposes the No on 8 campaign's apparent lack of a religious basis with Campbell's notion of a "religious left" and the results of my regression analysis, which suggest that religious affiliation predicts non-religious opposition to Proposition 8 over time. To offset disadvantages posed by morality politics, the No on 8 campaign found an alternative way to morally implicate voters. It argued that voting for Proposition 8 was a vote for the oppression of equal human rights, while a vote against Proposition 8 embraced equality and freedom for all (Thorson et al. 2010, Perry v. Schwarzenegger 2010). Although the No on 8 campaign did not capitalize on this appeal to its fullest extent, it did popularize a new, groundbreaking type of political campaigning and mobilization by fundamentally changing the way YouTube and social media could be utilized as a political tool and campaign platform. Furthermore, the campaign was strengthened by endorsements from well-known media outlets, large, influential tech companies like Google and Apple, political

elites and popular celebrities. These endorsements bolstered public opinion in favor of the No on 8 campaign, increased the salience of same-sex marriage as a basic, constitutionally guaranteed human right and acted as a counterweight to the strong institutions and coalitions of the Religious Right.

The Los Angeles Times endorsed a “no” vote on Proposition 8 on August 8, 2008, just prior to the first Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) survey used in my analysis. Their endorsement declared that “by banning same-sex marriage, Proposition 8 would create second class citizens” and stated that the California Supreme Court had “ruled that marriage was a fundamental right under the state constitution. As such it should not be denied to...gay and lesbian couples.” The Los Angeles Times countered religious arguments for Proposition 8, expressing their hope “that voters whatever their personal or religious convictions [would] shudder and vote no on Proposition 8” (Los Angeles Times, August 8, 2008).

In September, The San Diego Union Tribune adopted the same view, asserting, “Gay and lesbian couples deserve the same dignity and respect in marriage that heterosexual couples have long enjoyed.” The San Diego Union Tribune specifically refuted points made by the Yes on 8 campaign; their endorsement countered that, “debate about child rearing is entirely beside the point, because Proposition 8 is about marriage only” (San Diego Union Tribune, September 18, 2008).

The San Francisco Chronicle endorsed a “no” vote in October. The Chronicle cited the California state constitution, stating that it is a “fundamental constitutional right to form a family relationship.” Singling out a group was thus an “ugly distortion of the very purpose of a constitution” (San Francisco Chronicle, October 1, 2008). The New York Times

recommended a “no” vote in September. Their endorsement applauded the June 2008 overturning of Proposition 22 (2000) and declared, “it is our fervent hope that Californians will reject this mean spirited attempt to embed second class treatment of one group of citizens in the state constitution” (New York Times, September 28, 2008).

As a policy, Google prefers not to make political statements; however, in September 2008, Sergey Brin, co-founder and President of Technology, wrote on the Official Google Blog: “it is the chilling and discriminatory effect of the proposition on many of our employees that brings Google to publicly oppose Proposition 8...we see this fundamentally as an issue of equality” (The Official Google Blog, September 26, 2008). In October 2008, Apple posted on CNet news that “a person’s fundamental rights should not be affected by their sexual orientation” and pledged to contribute \$100,000 to the No on 8 campaign (CNet News, October 24, 2008).

Political elites like Senators Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein (D-CA) also supported the No on 8 campaign. Unexpectedly, Republican governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who previously supported Proposition 22 (a ballot initiative that banned same-sex marriage in California in 2000) and had vetoed two separate marriage equality bills in California (2005 and 2007) because he claimed to be in favor of “the will of the people,” shifted his position and endorsed the No on 8 campaign. At the beginning of 2008, when Proposition 22 was still making its way through the courts, Governor Schwarzenegger told the Log Cabin Republicans, a Republican group in favor of gay marriage, that he “[would] always be there to fight against [same-sex marriage bans]” (Huffington Post April 19, 2008). This strong elite consensus created a space for non-Christian voters to adjust and crystallize their views. Political elites provide powerful

informative cues from which ordinary citizens can glean their own policy preferences and justify their vote choices (Zaller 1992).

Brad Pitt, Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks were just a few of the prominent celebrities who publicly supported and made significant contributions to the No on 8 campaign. Like political elites, celebrities are powerful influencers of public opinion. They expose ordinary citizens to their opinions via highly publicized messages and campaign dollars. Through these means, celebrities become a source of voter education and leaders of voter awareness and involvement (Zaller 1992). Celebrities engaged voters, improved No on 8 mobilization and ultimately induced a reverse religion effect against Proposition 8. Their influential celebrity status was well suited to successfully manipulate the fluid and unstable opinions of non-Christian voters in California. These voters rejected religious messages and rationalized their preferences through the political discourse of these entertainment elites. Entertainment elites, political elites and media outlets countered the message of the Yes on 8 campaign for non-Christian voters. As leaders of public opinion, they disputed and rejected Yes on 8 campaign rhetoric and created instead an a-religious narrative for non-Christian voters, grounded in appeals to constitutionality and universal equal rights. Elite messages made same-sex marriage a salient political issue for non-Christian voters in the same way that religious beliefs made same-sex marriage a salient political issue for Christian voters, and contributed to the high importance of Proposition 8 outcome for non-Christian versus Christian voters. Christian voters maintained stable same-sex marriage preferences over time, and they tended to rank the importance of Proposition 8 lower than non-Christian voters. As non-Christian voters increased their support for same-sex marriage, their perception of the importance of the Proposition

seemed to grow, further contributing to the narrowing space between “yes” and “no” Proposition 8 vote choice.

The No on 8 campaign’s use of social media highlights how the use of an alternative campaign platform can both aid and hinder a ballot initiative campaign. The YouTube campaign reinforced and complemented elite endorsements; however, the campaign also serves as an example of a strategy that was not well suited for the ballot initiative electoral context. The No on 8 YouTube campaign disseminated content that closely resembled and emulated protest movement qualities, rather than follow organized interest group and social movement protocols. However, YouTube differentiated itself from protests because it could unite geographically dispersed individuals and promote solidarity amongst Proposition 8 opposition (Thorson et al. 2010). In Thorson et al’s analysis of YouTube and the Proposition 8 campaign, 75.3% of the Proposition 8 videos were disseminated by No on 8 supporters, while only 10.5% were for the Yes on 8 campaign and 14.2% were informational and espoused no stance. Furthermore, the Yes on 8 videos were disproportionately created by professional filmmakers, compared with the No on 8 “homegrown” videos (Thorson et al. 2010). This finding further supports the Yes on 8 campaign’s institutional and organizational advantage.

Although YouTube videos were used as a campaign tactic by both sides of the Proposition 8 campaign, most of the videos posted were resoundingly opposed to Proposition 8. To assess the full effect of the No on 8 campaign and interpret non-Christian Proposition 8 vote choice, the YouTube campaign must be combined with the influences of political, entertainment and media elite messages. YouTube viewership is both self-selecting and skewed towards a younger demographic, including those ineligible to actually

vote; thus, the campaign had to rely on other platforms to reach out to voters (Thorson et al 2010). The YouTube campaign lacked the mass dissemination, strategy and organization of the Yes on 8 campaign; it relied on elite messages and user generated YouTube content, instead of creating a coherent, controlled narrative for the campaign. In an attempt to capitalize on new social media, the No on 8 campaign created forceful and compelling content, but lacked a coherent narrative to ensure a winning strategy.

Exposure to online political content must be sought, and generally, those who choose to be exposed are already interested in the issue and come with a previously formulated opinion. While individual voters have to choose to go to a website or click on a YouTube video, they do not choose what commercial appears on their television screen, what letters are delivered to their mailbox or who calls their phone. Thus, the YouTube audiences were self-selecting; the content targeted voters who already supported same-sex marriage and not potential supporters in need of more information and prompting.

Despite these weaknesses, the YouTube campaign helps explain why non-Christian Proposition 8 opposition increased as an effect of religion closer to the election. Thorson et al's study explains that even though there were more No on 8 videos than Yes on 8 videos posted, the Yes on 8 videos had more viewers. In addition, the Yes on 8 videos had overall lower average ratings than No on 8 videos. Two insights, according to Thorson et al's study, can explain this phenomenon. The sheer number of videos available diluted the viewership data for the No on 8 videos, resulting in fewer viewings for each unique No on 8 video. Furthermore, many No on 8 supporters watched Yes on 8 videos, while Yes on 8 supporters did not watch No on 8 videos to the same extent. The No on 8 supporters are therefore responsible low average ratings of Yes on 8 videos. This viewership data suggests that

because No on 8 supporters watched Yes on 8 videos, many of which used religious appeals, the religion factor had an adverse effect on opponents of same-sex marriage bans.

Ultimately, the YouTube campaign was an informal social movement organization with a limited capacity to access lobbyists and influence policymaking and policy change (Andrews 2001; Zaller 1992). This type of campaign method echoes David E. Campbell's characterization of the "religious left" discussed above. The "religious left" coalition of the unaffiliated and less devotional is wrought with internal contradictions and thus has more difficulty formalizing its political presence. Furthermore, the "action-reaction" model holds that activities of social movement organizations, such as protests, are disruptive and threatening to elites; these movements may raise awareness and support for their cause, but ultimately hinder the implementation of tangible policy decisions by upsetting access to elite sympathizers (Andrews 2001). This model counters interest group politics theory and prescribes an inauspicious future for these loosely defined groups and movements. In light of morality politics theory, an attempt to remove a ban on same-sex marriage would have been best served through more institutional means, such as lobbying, litigation and taking greater advantage of elite allies capable of influencing statewide public opinion (Zaller 1992). Therefore, while YouTube sought to be an effective and innovative channel of influence, it was the wrong platform for the No on 8 campaign because of its niche audience. Although elite messages were powerful motivators for the No on 8 campaign, surpassing the reach of the YouTube campaign and successfully narrowing the gap between "yes" and "no" votes, the ballot initiative context of Proposition 8 muffled the influence of these elite endorsements.

E. Political Opportunity Structure in California: Ballot Initiatives and Ideological and Partisan Divides

Political opportunity structure theory asserts that political elites significantly influence public opinion and the success of social movements (Soule 2004; Guigni and Passy 1998; Zaller 1992). By this logic, the effectiveness of social movement mobilization is a product of relationships with elites. When social movements have the benefit of desired political conditions, such as elite allies, favorable policy outcomes will be easier to achieve. A more dramatic political opportunity structure model suggests that social movements are able to impact policy change *only* when powerful elites are sympathetic to their cause (Soule 2004; Guigni and Passy 1998). This model theoretically predicts a favorable electoral outcome for the No on 8 campaign. However, in California, elite influence is limited by the popularity of ballot initiatives and thus government by initiative has replaced elite decision-making as the preferred policymaking mechanism (Californians and their Government, 2008). There is a general consensus in existing literature that, while ostensibly a pure form of democracy, government by initiative in fact threatens democratic processes and reveals an electoral institution with biased ideological preferences. Given the dominance of this type of policymaking, electoral institutions such as ballot initiatives must be viewed as an integral part of California's political opportunity structure.

David S. Broder sharply critiques government by initiative, stating that it is "not a government of laws but laws without government" (Broder 2000, p.1). While initiatives began with the populist movement, this type of policymaking has shifted from the margins to the mainstream. Instead of remaining an effective aid for labor and agrarian interests,

government by initiative is now a tool wielded by big business; success in initiative elections is largely a product of campaign spending and the institutional strengths of social and interest groups (Ellis 2002). According to Richard J. Ellis, “the initiative literally belongs to the few who write the measures, not the many who vote” (Ellis 2002, p. 79). Initiatives are subject to convoluted wording and framing that undermine the power of the individual voter and subject him or her to manipulation by the most well-funded campaign. As discussed above, the moral nature of Proposition 8 made the Yes on 8 campaign accessible to a wider range of voters than the No on 8 campaign. The Yes on 8 campaign relied more on emotional appeals than voter involvement and thus struck more powerful chords with the electorate. The outcome was a direct vote of a largely uninvolved public (Broder 2000). Thus, the campaign that requires less involvement is more likely to prevail. Broder’s insights, combined with the implications of morality politics theory, reveal that California’s ballot initiative system favored the Yes on 8 campaign. In order to gain ground, the No on 8 campaign needed to use emotional appeals more effectively to recruit voters and needed more time to raise voter awareness and involvement.

This paper broadens the scope of political opportunity structure theories to include not only elites such as legislators and judges, but also the institutions within which they function. In California, the ballot initiative system is a dominant lawmaking institution. In the case of Proposition 8, there seems to be a divergence between elite sympathies and institutional preferences. While the ballot initiative system is sympathetic to moral and religious legislation, elites were more sympathetic to the counter-movement. The California Supreme Court’s decision to legalize same-sex marriage was the impetus for Proposition 8. In the aftermath of Proposition 8, United States district court Judge Walker

overturned the legislation in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* (2010) stating that it was a violation of equal rights.⁴ The interplay between the California ballot initiative system and judicial action reveals that certain policymaking institutions are better suited for certain types of legislation. Even though elites were firmly supportive of the No on 8 campaign, their influence was mitigated by California's ballot initiative political opportunity structure. While this paper focuses on the religion effect in passing Proposition 8, careful attention must also be paid to how political opportunity structure interacts with religious affiliations, the implications of morality politics theory, campaign effects and public opinion manipulation, the political strength of churches and other demographic variables such as political ideology orientation and political party identification. Looking at the Proposition 8 outcome through the prism of political opportunity structure theory supports my hypothesis that moral policy ballot initiatives tend to produce more conservative electoral outcomes than moral policies that are decided by other legislative means. In the next section, a regression analysis will interpret the most important predictors of Proposition 8 vote choice.

III. Empirical Analysis

A. Research Design

To empirically evaluate the relative influence of religion and campaign effects on Christian and non-Christian Proposition 8 vote choice, I examined data from three

⁴ The plaintiffs in *Perry v. Schwarzenegger* "allege that Proposition 8 deprives them of due process and of equal protection of the laws contrary to the Fourteenth Amendment" (1). Judge Walker sided with the plaintiffs, citing that "Proposition 8 both unconstitutionally burdens the exercise of the fundamental right to marry and creates an irrational classification on the basis of sexual orientation" (109).

statewide surveys administered by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) in August, September and October of 2008. After eliminating respondents who failed to answer questions, the representative sample included 3,854 individuals from California. PPIC conducts its surveys through random-digit-dialing and samples both landlines and cell phone lines.

Past research accounts for the stable preferences of Christian voters and predicts the success of the Yes on 8 campaign given its moral standing and electoral context. However, such research does not include theories suggesting a narrow vote margin and changes in No on 8 vote over time (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999; Soule 2004).

Case Selection

Proposition 8 is the primary case study for several reasons. The Proposition appeared on the ballot in 2008, the same year as a presidential election. Examining initiatives in presidential election years controls for voter participation discrepancies (Scholzman and Yohani 2008). Midterm elections have lower overall participation and thus more unpredictable electoral outcomes. Presidential elections attract more voters; therefore, Proposition 8 voter turnout was more representative of the California population (Scholzman and Yohani 2008). Thus, the capacity to mobilize and recruit voters on both sides was maximized.

Proposition 8 was also a citizen driven ballot initiative, punctuated by pivotal judicial action. This unique context contrasts direct democracy with representative governance. The court cases prior to and following Proposition 8 favored same-sex marriage; however, when intersected by popular decision-making, the same-sex marriage

ban was favored. California is commonly known as a liberal state; House and Senate representatives are disproportionately Democratic and in every presidential election since 1992, the state's 55 electoral votes have gone to the Democratic candidate. The discrepancy between direct and representative patterns in California and the unique interaction between ballot initiatives and their policy outcomes highlight the moral power vested in ballot initiatives and the capacity of religion to mobilize people, not leaders.

Finally, 2008 was a pivotal year for social media-based campaign strategies. This new platform altered the way many voters received and digested information. Such a unique blend of characteristics makes California's Proposition 8 both a compelling case study and an important lesson in citizen participation and religious mobilization.

Survey Methodology

The three surveys consistently asked demographic and politically motivated questions. In order to isolate the connection between religion and Proposition 8 vote choice, two questions were of particular interest:

"Proposition 8 is called the "Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry Initiative Constitutional Amendment." It changes the California Constitution to eliminate the right of same-sex couples to marry. It provides that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. Fiscal impact over the next few years includes potential revenue loss, mainly sales taxes, totaling in the several tens of millions of dollars, to state and local governments. In the long run, it will likely have little fiscal impact on state and local governments. If the election were held today, would you vote yes or no on Proposition 8?

- 1 yes
- 2 no
- 8 [VOL] don't know
- 9 [VOL] refuse"

"What is your religious preference—is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?"

IF SOME OTHER RELIGION, ASK: Which one would that be?

- 1 Protestant [INCLUDE: Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Pentecostal, Church of Christ, etc.; if ANY question punch <97> and specify]
- 2 Catholic
- 3 Jewish
- 4 no religion (includes: not a believer, not religious, atheist, agnostic)
- 5 Buddhism
- 6 Christian; just Christian
- 7 Hinduism
- 8 Islam (Muslim)
- 9 Jehovah's Witness
- 10 Latter Day Saints, LDS, Mormon
- 11 Native American
- 12 Non-denominational
- 13 Orthodox Christian (e.g., Greek/Russian/Serbian/etc.)
- 97 some other religion [SPECIFY]
- 99 [VOL] don't know/refused"

Survey respondents were asked questions regarding Proposition 8 vote choice only if they were either a registered voter or if they could clearly define themselves as leaning mostly Democratic or mostly Republican. Respondents who did not know or were not registered voters and who could not define themselves according to a political party were not asked about their views on Proposition 8. The regression was then used to predict Proposition 8 vote choice across the set of demographic and other variables provided by PPIC.

Measures

The main independent variable was a dummy variable indicating whether respondents were "Christian" or "non-Christian," with non-Christian voters as the baseline. While this method of sorting does not faithfully track Campbell and Layman's argument that the religion impact on modern politics is a function religious traditionalism, not

denominational membership, the Christian and non-Christian groups do combine multiple denominations roughly based on orthodoxy. The PPIC survey did not contain a measure for religiosity (i.e. church attendance or daily prayer), and therefore I was unable to account specifically for these factors in predicting Proposition 8 vote choice. However, the Christian denominations (Protestants, Mormons, non-denominational Christians) were selected in order to reflect trends in religious orthodoxy (Smidt et al. 2008). While specific measures were not used, the Christian group should exhibit greater overall religious traditionalism (church attendance) than the non-Christian group. To ensure that the measured effects on Proposition 8 vote choice were strictly a function of religious preferences, multiple control variables were included. Scales were used for age, number of children, marital status, party registration, income, education attainment, political-ideological orientation, political awareness and importance of Proposition 8 and dummy variables denoted African Americans, Hispanics, Asians, Whites and Males. Using these controls, I also compare the religion effect with other predictive demographic variables.

The specific control variables were selected based on their expected relative importance and impact on Proposition 8 vote choice. It is anticipated that homogeneous groups have similar voting patterns, particularly homogeneous ethnic groups and especially homogeneous political party and political ideology groups (Pew 2008). In this analysis, political ideological preference is differentiated from political party affiliation. Therefore, both measures were included. Education often predicts more liberal views, while older people are generally more conservative, and younger individuals are generally more liberal (Kanazawa 2010; Ray 1985). Finally, individuals in heterosexual marriages and individuals with children might exhibit certain views that incline them to vote for or against

Proposition 8 regardless of their political party, ethnicity or educational attainment. Heterosexual couples may feel that condoning same-sex marriage dilutes their relationships and marriages (The Conservative Case for Gay Marriage; Perry v. Schwarzenegger p.60). Furthermore, individuals with children may be less inclined to support Proposition 8 because of the widely circulated belief that passage of the Proposition would require teaching same-sex marriage in California public schools (Perry v. Schwarzenegger p.60, 105).

Political orientation, as a component of “political religion” will be compared with the religion effect to parse out Patrikios’ bidirectional causal theory (2008). The following question was asked:

“Q45. Next, would you consider yourself to be politically:
[READ LIST, ROTATE ORDER TOP TO BOTTOM]

- 1 very liberal
- 2 somewhat liberal
- 3 middle-of-the-road
- 4 somewhat conservative
- 5 very conservative
- 8 [VOL] don’t know
- 9 [VOL] refuse.”

Incorporating political orientation reinforces the importance of “political religion,” in interpreting election results (Patrikios 2008).

The religion scale assigned values of 0 or 1 to survey respondents. Non-Christians were coded as 0 and Mormons, Protestants, Catholics and non-denominational Christians were coded as 1. Proposition 8 vote was coded on a similar scale with 0 indicating a “no” on Proposition 8 vote and 1 indicating a “yes” on Proposition 8 vote. Respondents with children were coded as 0, and those without children were coded as 1. Registered Democrats were coded as 0 and registered Republicans as 0.

Income, education, age, political orientation, political awareness, importance of Proposition 8 and marital status were coded linearly to lie between 0 and 1 (0 meant lowest income, lowest education, lowest age, liberal, lowest political awareness, lowest importance of Proposition 8, married; 1 meant highest income, highest education, highest age, conservative, highest political awareness, highest importance of Proposition 8, never married). The age variable aggregated two different responses. Respondents either reported their actual numerical age or reported their age within a range. Respondents who reported their real age were added to their appropriate age range in order to define only one age variable. Race and gender were coded as indicator variables, and included males, Whites, Hispanics, Asians and African Americans. All variables were coded to lie between 0 and 1 so that a one-unit change in the independent variable infers a 100β percentage point change in the dependent variable, Proposition 8 vote choice.

My hypothesis predicts that the religion effect on Christian voters should be highest in the last time wave. To test this, I conducted a regression of religion and Proposition 8 vote for each time wave (August, September and October), including all control variables. In addition, I created an interaction model to test whether the religion coefficients in August and September were significantly different from the religion coefficient in October. If my hypothesis is supported, then the religion coefficient should be largest in October when non-Christian voters should be more likely to vote against Proposition 8 because of campaign effects and elite influences, and Christian voters should maintain stable voting preferences.

Model Specifications

To observe the effect of religion in each time wave separately, I estimate the following regression via ordinary least squares:

$$P_{Time\ i} = \alpha + \beta_1(RG_i) + \beta_2(D_i) + \beta_3(R_i) + \beta_4(E_i) + \beta_5(I_i) + \beta_6(A_i) + \beta_7(O_i) + \beta_8(W_i) + \beta_9(B_i) + \beta_{10}(H_i) + \beta_{11}(AS_i) + \beta_{12}(M_i) + \beta_{13}(C_i) + \beta_{14}(IN_i) + \beta_{15}(ME_i) + \beta_{16}(AG_i) + \varepsilon_i$$

In this model, P represents the predicted Proposition 8 vote choice in a given time wave, and each β represents an independent variable coefficient or estimated impact of the independent variable on Proposition 8 vote choice. **RG** stands for religion, **D** for Democrat, **R** for Republican, **E** for education, **I** for importance of Proposition 8 outcome, **A** for political awareness, **O** for political orientation, **W** for white, **B** for African American, **H** for Hispanic, **AS** for Asian, **M** for married, **C** for children, **IN** for income, **ME** for male and **AG** for age. Finally, ε_i represents random error. A separate model was used for each of the three time waves using all of the same independent variables.

In the final model, interaction terms were created for each independent variable with the first two time waves. This model determines whether time significantly impacts the effect of each independent variable on Proposition 8 vote choice.

$$P_i = \alpha + \beta_1(RG_i) + \beta_2(T_1) + \beta_3(T_2) + \beta_4(RG_i \times T_1) + \beta_5(RG_i \times T_2) + \dots + \beta_{48}(AG_i) + \beta_{49}(AG_i \times T_1) + \beta_{50}(AG_i \times T_2) + \varepsilon_i$$

In this model, T is the interaction term "Time," in either Time 1 (August) or Time 2

(September). The model has been abbreviated to show only the first independent variable (religion) and the last independent variable (age); however all independent variables were included in the same fashion in the interaction regression model.

B. Results

Table 2 presents the effect of religion (with controls) on Proposition 8 vote choice in each time wave (August, September and October 2008). Table 3 presents the regression results of the interaction model with independent variables and August and September time waves. The interaction model confirms that the predictive power of religion and other key predictive independent variables on Proposition 8 vote choice are also dependent on the given time wave. Thus, Proposition 8 vote choice depends not only on the unique levels of each independent variable, but also on the interaction between the independent variable and the time period in which it is measured.

Descriptive statistics demonstrate that the propensity to vote “yes” on Proposition 8 decreases with time among non-Christian voters, while Christian voters maintain stable voting preferences (Figure 1). Regression results confirm this trend and accurately predict an amplified religion effect in the October time wave, when non-Christian opposition to Proposition 8 is strongest (Tables 2 and 3). The coefficients show that between August and September 2008, religion had a relatively small, though still significant, impact on Proposition 8 vote choice, but by October 2008 the religion effect more than doubled from 8% in August to 18% in October. Figure 1 demonstrates that this effect was a result of

increased *non-Christian* opposition to Proposition 8, not increased Christian support for Proposition 8 increased. This suggests a campaign effect among non-Christian voters.

Figure 1 separates the religion variable into Christian and non-Christian bins and examines changes in vote choice across time. In August, non-Christian support for Proposition 8 was 45.09%, increasing to 47.23% in September and then decreasing quite dramatically to 34.13% by October. Christian support for Proposition 8 was relatively constant over the three-month period: 64.30% in August, 65.92% in September, and then 63.87% in October. The religion effect, when aggregated with campaign effects such as influential elite discourse and media endorsements, motivates non-Christian opposition, while keeping Christian support for Proposition 8 relatively constant. Consistent with evidence from the No on 8 campaign analysis discussed earlier, it appears that non-Christian respondents were encouraged by the campaign to adjust their vote choice closer to the election. Campaign effects on Christian voters are not demonstrated by these regression results. Their stable preferences seem impervious to the effects of either campaign. The deeply held values of Christian voters produced vote preferences independent of campaign effects, and presumably before the PPIC surveys were conducted. Voter education and awareness does not seem to play a role for Christian voters, their deeply held values were not stirred directly by campaign appeals, but appear to stem from pre-existing, immutable beliefs. Religion's most significant effect is as a predictor of non-Christian opposition to Proposition 8, not Christian support for Proposition 8.

Consistent with my first hypothesis, there is a strong relationship between religion and Proposition 8 vote choice. Over time, the religion effect increasingly distinguishes "yes" and "no" votes on Proposition 8 based on Christian and non-Christian religious

identifications. In order to abate the inherent advantages of the Yes on 8 campaign, non-Christian religious differentiation combines with No on 8 campaign effects, elite messages and media endorsement to create a narrower vote margin between Proposition 8 supporters and opponents. While ballot initiatives are inherently biased towards conservative policies, these effects narrowed the gap between “yes” and “no” on 8 votes.

Table 6 shows the regression results of the interaction model with religion, all of the control variables, and the first two time waves. I multiply the estimated total effect of each independent and control variable by the first two time waves (August and September). These interaction terms measure the importance of changes in time in relation to the effect of specific variables, thus accounting for the strength of the variables as a function of time. Holding all other variables constant, I find that the effect of religion in the last time wave is both high and significant, and unique to the third time wave. The religion coefficient in the first time wave is both positive and statistically significant ($\beta=.09, p=.001$, two-tailed). In the third time wave, religion’s predictive power peaks ($\beta=.18, p=.000$, two-tailed). Thus, the effect of religion on vote choice is twice as big in October compared to August, suggesting that campaign effects made religion more salient among non-Christian voters and motivated them to vote “no” on Proposition 8. This effect is both large and significant when compared with changes in other vote predicting variables over time.

While religion is a statistically significant variable in all three time models ($p_{\text{august}} < .005$; $p_{\text{september}} < .001$; $p_{\text{october}} < .0001$), its significance increases with each time wave, further highlighting the importance of the religion and time interaction. I conducted F tests on model significance and find that the increase in the religion effect in August 2008 and October 2008 and between September 2008 and October 2008 is significant ($p < .0001$),

while the difference between the religion effects in August 2008 and September 2008 is not statistically significant ($p = .58$). This measure of model significance underscores the impact of campaign effects and elite messages for the No on 8 campaign, particularly in the last time wave. Furthermore, the model demonstrates the increasing importance of religious identification as a means distinguishing between Proposition 8 support and opposition.

Several expected significant control variables ultimately produced insignificant regression results. Higher education typically forecasts more liberal attitudes and should predict a “no” on 8 vote. While the negative coefficients for education demonstrate this theory, the coefficients were not statistically significant (Kanazawa 2010). Education does predict opposition to Proposition 8, but other effects have more significant predictive power relative to vote choice. Similarly, the coefficients for African American and Hispanic individuals were insignificant even though the vast majority of individuals in these ethnic groups belong to Christian religious groups that were expected to vote in favor of Proposition 8 (New York Times, September 20, 2008). These results suggest that in determining Proposition 8 vote choice, the religion factor supersedes the race factor. Marital status was also an insignificant predictor. Heterosexual married couples are often less likely to support same-sex marriage out of a fear that their marriage will somehow be weaker if same-sex marriage is legalized (The Guardian, September 16, 2008). In terms of a “family effect,” having children seems to be a better predictor of Proposition 8 vote choice than the marital status of the voter.

The more limited predictive capacity of political party registration in 2008 underscores the importance of the religion factor. Partisanship should be a powerful

predictor of views on same-sex marriage bans (Pew 2008; Campbell and Monson 2007). Partisanship is in many ways analogous with ideological homogeneity, and thus political party identification should strongly predict with homogeneous views on same-sex marriage policy. The registered Democrat coefficient is $-.099$; registered Democrats are *less* likely to vote “yes” on Proposition 8 than Republicans. The registered Republican coefficient is $.086$, indicating that Republicans are *more* likely to vote “yes” on Proposition 8 than Democrats. While these results accurately reinforce the ideological trends of Republicans and Democrats, party identification is less predictive of vote choice than religion. This supports the notion that moral policy preferences transcend partisan lines and religious identification proves stronger than partisan identification when moral policies are at stake. These results can be extrapolated to explain Democratic President Bill Clinton’s passage of DOMA in 1996. Both Republican and Democrat identification coefficients are statistically significant ($p_{democrat}=.002$; $p_{republican}=.015$) but, unlike religion, neither changes significantly over time in predictive capacity. Thus, in determining Proposition 8 vote choice, the religious identification coefficient tells a more interesting story that more aptly links to campaign effects and predicts Proposition 8 vote choice. Partisanship, often considered to be a powerful predictor of same-sex marriage attitudes, is eclipsed by the growing impact of religion over time.

Other control variables demonstrate other significant findings. Consistent with previous research, political orientation has a significant effect on Proposition 8 vote choice (Patrikios 2008). Political orientation is consistently the strongest predictor of vote choice across the three time waves. However, the greater significance of religion is highlighted because its predictive capacity remains weak until the last time wave, when it becomes the

second most foretelling variable of vote choice, after political orientation. The joint impact of political orientation and religion supports Patrikios' political religion hypothesis: that the bidirectional causal relationship between religion and partisanship accounts for both religious affiliations and political policy proclivities. In my model, respondents that identified with a conservative political orientation were 48% more likely to vote "yes" on Proposition 8, holding all other variables constant ($p=.000$). This joint effect reinforces the bidirectional relationship between religious affiliations and ideological preferences; however it poses a problem for Layman's path model (Patrikios 2008; Layman 2001-Figure 5). In this case, religious traditionalism is not funneled through moral policy preferences to produce ideological preferences; instead, religious traditionalism and ideological preferences appear to exert a joint, simultaneous influence on moral policy preferences. The relationship between political orientation and religion underscores the importance of examining both religion and political ideology as factors that reinforce each other and work in tandem to create policy preferences (Patrikios 2008).

Gender, age, respondent's number of children, and perceived importance of Proposition 8 all exhibit significant predictive capacities ($p_{gender}<.10$; $p_{age}<.001$; $p_{children}<.001$). Older voters were more likely to support Proposition 8, consistent with the notion that older individuals hold more conservative values both absolutely and relatively (Ray 1985). While older voters appear may liberalize over time according to changing social and political norms, they still hold more conservative views relative to the general population (Ray 1985). They exhibit a higher propensity to vote in favor of same-sex marriage bans, as opposed to their younger counterparts ($p=.001$). The regression results indicate that the interaction between age and time parallels the religion effect in predicting

Proposition 8 vote choice. The impact of age on Proposition 8 vote choice increases with time. Overall, older age predicts a “yes” vote; however, time interactions show that *middle age* voters gradually increase their opposition to Proposition 8, while support of Proposition 8 increases among older voters. Between August and October, the predictive capacity of age doubles, with statistically significant results both in the interaction model and the base model for September and October. Campaign effects can account for this change among middle age voters. As No on 8 campaign arguments became stronger and more accessible through media and elite endorsements, on a whole, voters between ages 34 and 64 became more supportive of same-sex marriage between August and October 2008. Voters between ages 34 and 44 increased their opposition to Proposition 8 from 39% to 43% opposed to Proposition 8. Voters between ages 44 and 54 increased their Proposition 8 opposition from 40% to 50% between August and October, the most significant increase of all age segments surveyed. The oldest segment, voters over age 64, increased their *support* of Proposition 8 by a small margin in the October time wave. Campaign effects support this result through two lenses. The No on 8 campaign was least accessible to older voters; tactics targeted young voters through social media, and endorsements by popular public figures were less salient for the over 64 age group. Thus, the Yes on 8 campaign was more accessible to older voters and produced a magnified age effect in the last time wave. Overall, the age effect is most dramatically seen in middle age voters, while the youngest group of voters maintained stable preferences over time in favor of same-sex marriage. Older voters maintained mostly stable preferences in support of Proposition 8, with a small jump in support closest to the election.

Voters with children were almost 7% more likely to support Proposition 8, a finding that closely parallels campaign strategies (Campbell 2007). A critical strategy for the Yes on 8 campaign was to target voters with children by capitalizing on an ambiguously ascertained belief that California public elementary schools would be required to teach same-sex marriage should same-sex marriage become legalized (Perry v. Schwarzenegger p. 105). The Yes on 8 campaign used this non-religious and non-partisan appeal to attract a new voting bloc that could widen their base of support instead of restricting it to those who were already ideologically and religiously inclined to favor same-sex marriage bans (California Voters Guide, 2008).

The impact of gender on Proposition 8 vote choice was limited, but significant. Men were 4% more likely to support the ban on same-sex marriage than women ($p=.080$), again consistent with studies that suggest that men are not only more conservative than women on the whole, but also hold more hostile views towards homosexuality than women (Herek 1988).

Finally, voters who believed that the outcome of Proposition 8 was “very important” (versus “not important at all”) were less likely to support same-sex marriage bans ($p=.000$). This finding contradicts morality politics theory and offers a more favorable and successful outlook for the No on 8 campaign. Moral politics theory predicts that individuals with deeply held religious beliefs assume powerful and compelling policy preferences and become invested in electoral outcomes, thus increasing their political participation (Haider-Markel and Meier 1999; Campbell and Monson 2007). However, those who viewed Proposition 8 as more important were less likely to vote in favor of it. An explanation for this effect lies in the decrease in non-religious support for Proposition 8 in

the last time wave. As campaign strategies increased mobilization against Proposition 8 and elite messages and media endorsements became more frequent and influential, the perceived importance of the election for non-Christian voters increased. In contrast, Proposition 8 supporters with intuitive policy preferences were less compelled to become involved because their decisions required less external information gathering. Therefore, while the views of Proposition 8 supporters may have been strong in an absolute sense, the importance of Proposition 8 outcome as perceived by Christian voters within the greater 2008 election context was marginal, paralleling similar findings from same-sex marriage ballot propositions in the 2004 election (Campbell 2007).

C. Discussion and Conclusions

This regression analysis allows one to compare different vote-predicting variables across time. For example, how does religion compare to political orientation or party registration in predicting Proposition 8 vote choice? Furthermore, religion effects can be compared with the effects of other demographic variables such as age and gender. These results can then be used to more effectively frame campaign narratives and implement campaign strategies supporting or opposing same-sex marriage bans. Strategies can be adjusted and adopted to operate in a morally biased electoral context, or to attempt to change the legislative context in order to make policymaking conditions more conducive to the success of the campaign.

Further research can delve more deeply into the specific devotional patterns of the Christian and non-Christian groups used in my research design. The PPIC survey did not

account for religion in any quantifiable way, such as church attendance or frequency of prayer, two commonly used measurements of religion (Smidt et al 2008; Campbell 2007). Thus, the results do not provide an entirely precise comparison between religious traditionalists and “religious left” coalitions. I measure religion as it affects Christian and non-Christian vote choice, but I could not examine and compare practicing versus non-practicing Christians and evaluate the differences and similarities in their voter behavior. While the Christian and non-Christian groups were selected based on commonly held conceptions of devotional styles, an additional measure for religious orthodoxy should be included in further research.

The results of my analysis do allow a comparison of Christian and non-Christian policy preferences over time. By juxtaposing vote choice changes between August and October 2008, the results reveal that while Christians had consistent policy preferences, non-Christians changed their policy preferences closest to the election as a result of elite messages, enhanced campaign effects and strong media endorsements. Christian support for same-sex marriage bans was independent of time change, while non-Christians adjusted their support as campaign effects increased over time. Campaign effects facilitated a change in policy preferences only among non-Christians, while policy preferences among Christian voters remained stable over time, consistent with morality politics theory. Applying these conclusions to create a more successful campaign strategy, Proposition 8 opposition could have started their campaign efforts earlier, accelerating effects that did not appear until October 2008 when it was too late to significantly impact election results. Earlier efforts, such as reaching out to potential elite endorsers, may have allowed the

ascending trend of No on 8 support to peak by November, instead of after the 2008 election.

This research lays the groundwork for future studies on religion, campaign effects and same-sex marriage ballot initiatives. While ballot initiatives are controversial, ostensibly affirming pure democratic processes, they inevitably alienate some minorities. This research interprets the Proposition 8 election outcome and shows how same-sex marriage supporters can adjust policymaking conditions and campaign strategies to best achieve their goals within the framework of a ballot initiative. Future research should investigate states where efforts to legalize or ban same-sex marriage are exercised through different institutions, either judicial or legislative, and compare these results with those of ballot initiatives. Research should also be done to compare the Proposition 8 political climate and vote-predicting variables with other states that have recently participated in same-sex marriage debates (e.g., Hawaii, the 11 states that participated in same-sex marriage elections in 2004, and the five states where same-sex marriage is currently legal). Such research should look at campaign effects and delve more deeply into the religion factor by looking at measured levels of religiosity instead of “yes” or “no” identifications.

The role of the Christian vote as revealed by this research holds implications for campaigns and ballot initiatives in general. From the perspective of the Yes on 8 campaign, these results indicate that there should be less of a focus on voters who already identify as Christian and more focus on voters without a clearly defined religious position. The success of morality politics theory with respect to vote choice on same-sex marriage bans further suggests that the pro same-sex marriage ban campaigns should continue to use universal and religiously grounded moral appeals to sustain their religious coalitions. Furthermore,

because Christian voters will likely have consistent views, relatively unchanged by campaign messages, pro same-sex marriage ban campaigns can use other appeals that will not alienate non-Christian voters. These voters will be more susceptible to campaign effects but may not respond well to religious messages. In the case of Proposition 8, the appeal to families with children was a successful non-religious strategy for the Yes on 8 campaign.

Conversely, for the No on 8 campaign, the results indicate that campaign messages are crucial, because pro same-sex marriage arguments are intuitively grounded in deeply held moral values. This campaign should focus on non-Christian voters who will be more easily swayed by campaign messages. Furthermore, it should capitalize on elite sympathies and the power and influence of elite messages to manipulate public opinion. This campaign can also attempt use of alternative, non-religious moral appeals. Although morality politics theory was not originally intended for application in “anti-moral” cases (i.e. pro same-sex marriage), perhaps moral appeals can be successful in a non-religious, non-biblical framework. For example, equality and human rights are universal moral principles that could be utilized by pro same-sex marriage campaigns. While the No on 8 campaign used this method, the electoral context muted some of the effects of these messages and weakened the persuasive power of legislative, entertainment and media elite messages. More research should be conducted on the effect of these “reverse” moral appeals, to determine what campaign conditions and content platforms are most favorable.

My analysis shows that religion can significantly differentiate “yes” and “no” Proposition 8 voters. While religion consistently predicts moral voting preferences of Christian individuals, it also combines with campaign effects and elite preferences to

predict the voting behavior of non-Christian individuals. Furthermore, political orientation and ideology are important factors in these vote decisions and must be viewed as part of a symbiotic relationship with religion (Campbell 2007; Layman 2001; Patrikios 2008). This research reveals ways in which religion benefits from political opportunity structure, and how it can be wielded in morally based campaigns to alter voter behavior and manipulate public opinion. Conversely non-religious appeals supporting same-sex marriage will be more successful if they take the form of more discrete policymaking approaches that seek to directly influence elites, rather than the ordinary citizens.

This finding has significant implications for the future of same-sex marriage legislation and minority rights legislation in general. If moral decisions are made in obscurity, has the democratic process necessarily been compromised? Is it more important to sacrifice direct democracy to protect minority rights, or to protect an ostensibly pure democratic institution at the expense of minority rights? David Campbell's analysis of the 2004 election argues that the election in some ways became a "plebiscite on private beliefs," rather than a "reaffirmation of shared democratic beliefs." He asserts that the "nonbargainable" nature of moral policies "can tax and even shut down democratic discourse" (Campbell 2007, p. 116). If this is the case, then perhaps government by representation is more "democratic" than direct democracy (Broder 2000; Scholzman and Yohani 2008). Further research can examine the relationship between moral policymaking and adherence to democratic processes and values.

According to a Gallup poll, support for same-sex marriage in the United States has been gradually increasing over the last four years across religious groups, ethnic groups, gender, age groups and political parties (Saad 2010). Given this trend, it will be important

to measure the success of same-sex marriage ballot initiatives in the future and note whether religious and non-religious groups make adjustments in their campaign strategies and policymaking methods. Of particular interest will be examining the ways in which religious traditionalists reconcile their moral views with a majority public opinion that is becoming increasingly opposed to their worldview. If same-sex marriage bans continue to dominate state legislation, then the strength of these religious institutions will be reinforced. However, if same-sex marriage bans decrease with time, this could be a reflection on the changing strategies of pro same-sex marriage groups, evolving and increasingly liberal public opinion and/or a decrease in the absolute impact of religious-political coalitions.

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Appendix

Table 1: Proposition 8 Vote and Religious Affiliations Across Time

Survey Date	Proposition 8 Vote	Christian	Non-Christian	N	χ^2 (1)	P
August	Yes on 8	64.30%	45.09%	775		
	No on 8	35.70%	54.91%	625		
	Total	100%	100%	1,400	52.033	P< .001
September	Yes on 8	65.92%	47.23%	806		
	No on 8	34.08%	52.77%	601		
	Total	100%	100%	1,407	49.91	P< .001
October	Yes on 8	63.87%	34.13%	746		
	No on 8	36.13%	65.87%	714		
	Total	100%	100%	1,460	126.58	P< .001

Figure 1: Differences between Christians and Non-Christians in Proposition 8 Vote Choice Across Time

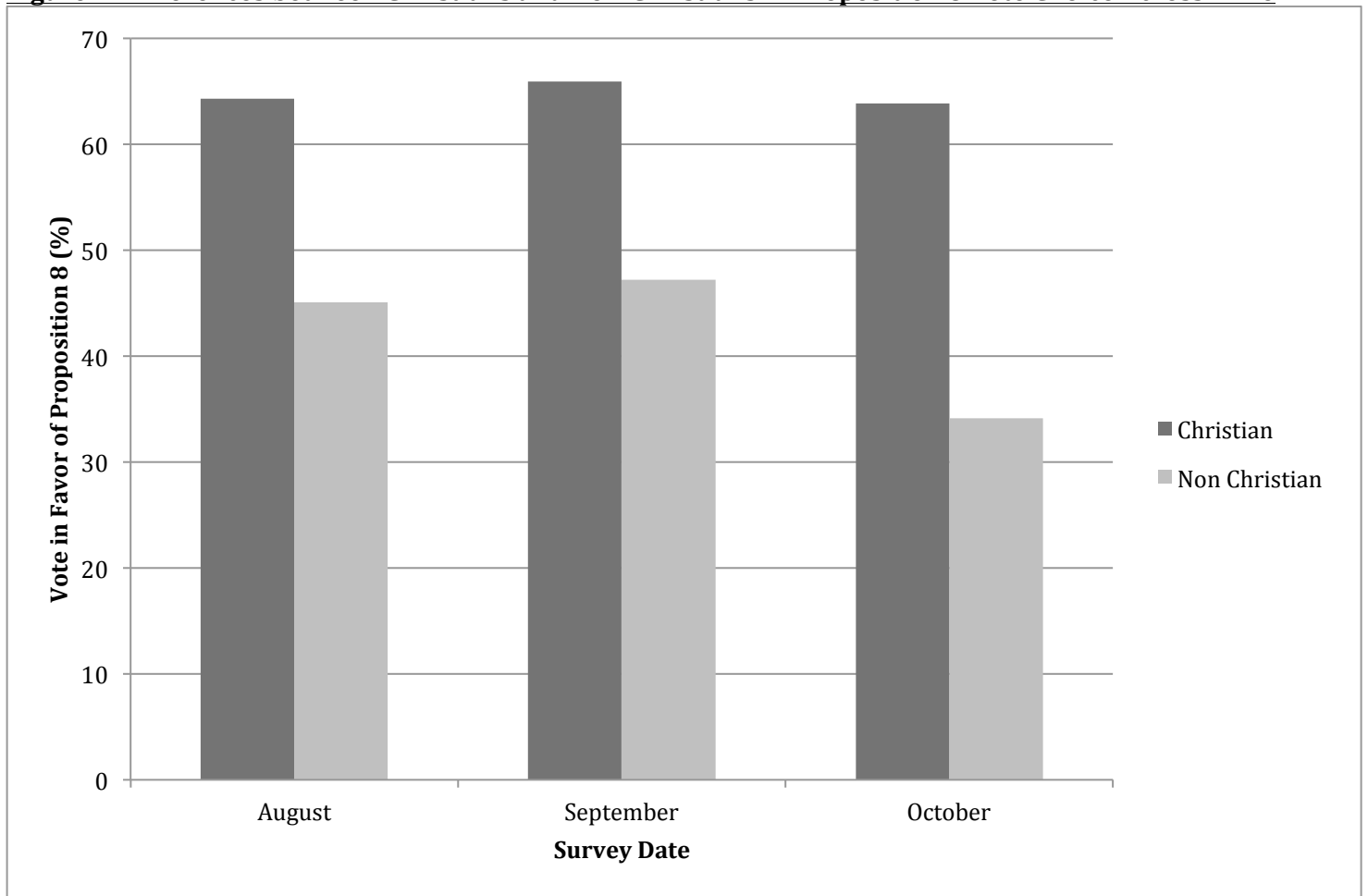


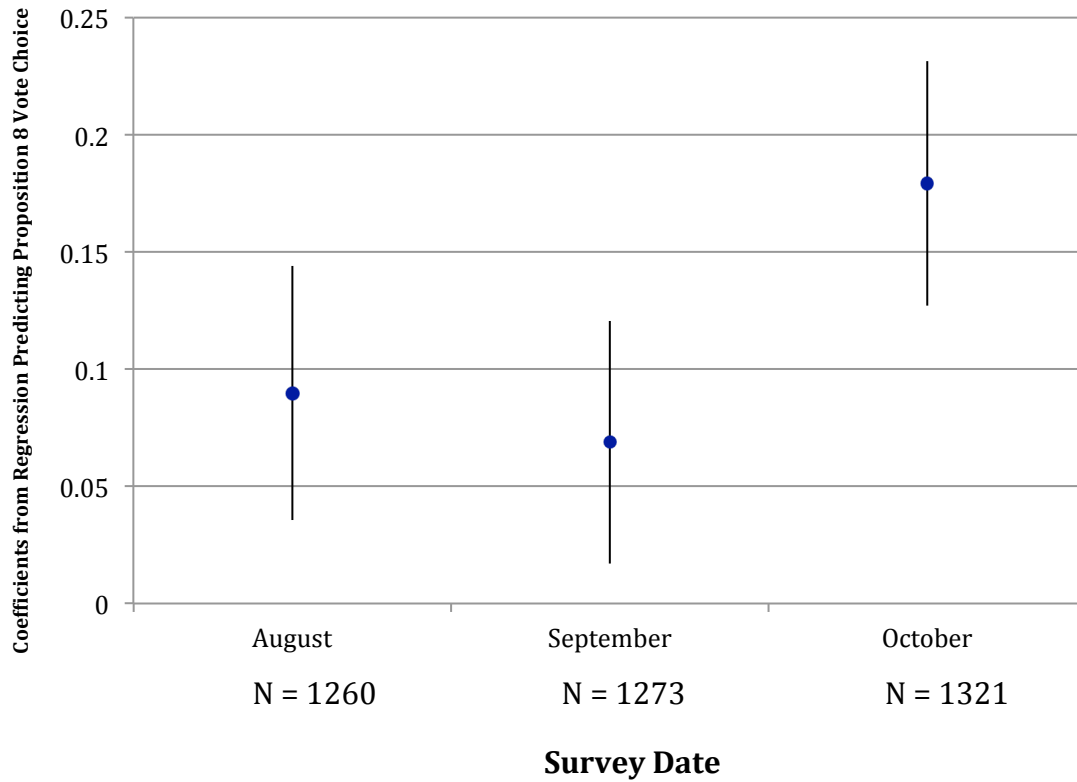
Table 2: OLS Regression Predicting Proposition 8 Vote Choice

	<u>August 2008</u>	<u>September 2008</u>	<u>October 2008</u>
β_1 : Religion	0.09*** (.028)	0.07** (.026)	0.18*** (.027)
β_2 : Registered Democrat	-0.06+ (.033)	-0.12*** (.033)	-0.10** (.031)
β_3 : Registered Republican	0.10** (.037)	0.05 (.037)	0.09* (.035)
β_4 : Education	-0.03 (.052)	-0.02 (.048)	-0.04 (.048)
β_5 : Prop 8 Important ¹	-0.20*** (.042)	-0.27*** (.039)	-0.26*** (.041)
β_6 : Political Awareness	0.04 (.052)	0.05 (.0537)	0.05 (.050)
β_7 : Political Orientation ²	0.46*** (.051)	0.53*** (.049)	0.48*** (.047)
β_8 : White	-0.02 (.078)	-0.07 (.067)	-0.17* (.071)
β_9 : African American	0.09 (.092)	0.01 (.081)	-0.02 (.084)
β_{10} : Hispanic	0.08 (.084)	0.01 (.073)	-0.07 (.076)
β_{11} : Asian	0.10 (.097)	0.03 (.098)	-0.003 (.086)
β_{12} : Married	-0.02 (.029)	0.01 (.029)	0.02 (.028)
β_{13} : Children	0.07* (.030)	0.05+ (.030)	0.07* (.029)
β_{14} : Income	-0.11* (.051)	-0.10* (.048)	-0.04 (.048)
β_{15} : Male	0.09*** (.026)	0.06* (.025)	0.04+ (.024)
β_{16} : Age	0.08 (.052)	0.14** (.051)	0.16*** (.048)
α : Constant	0.14 (.101)	0.17* (.088)	0.22* (.092)
N	1260	1273	1321
R ²	.21	.26	.28

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$; + $p < .10$ (two-tailed) standard errors in parentheses

¹ Survey respondents who were asked to give their Proposition 8 vote preference were asked a follow up question to determine how important they felt the outcome of the proposition was: "How important to you is the outcome of the vote on Proposition 8—is it very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important?" The negative coefficient means voters who voted "no" on Proposition 8 ranked the proposition as more important.

² Survey respondents were asked to describe their ideological political preferences on a scale from very liberal to very conservative. The following question was asked, "Next, would you consider yourself to be politically:" The positive coefficient means that voters who voted "yes" on Proposition 8 were more likely to be conservative.

Figure 2: Religion Coefficients with Confidence Intervals across Time³

³ Center points represent actual religion coefficients in each time wave. Lines represent 95% confidence intervals.

Table 3: OLS Regression Predicting Proposition 8 Vote Choice (Including Time Interactions)

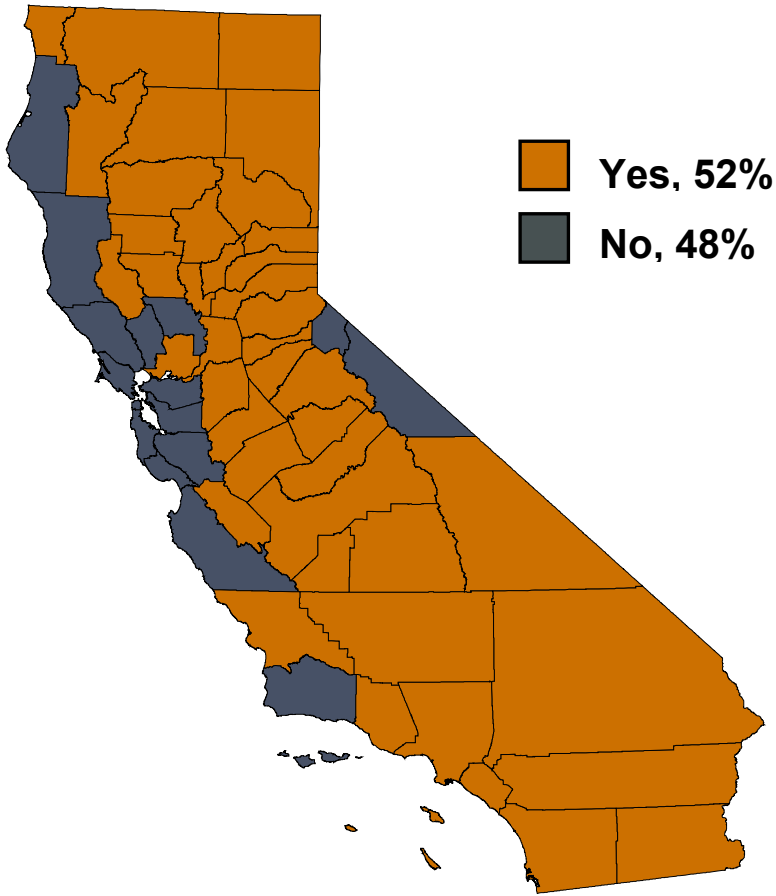
Religion	0.18*** (.027)
Religion*August	-0.08* (.038)
Religion*September	-0.11** (.038)
August	-0.09 (.136)
September	-0.11 (.129)
Registered Democrat	-0.10** (.032)
Reg. Democrat*August	0.04 (.045)
Reg. Democrat*September	-0.02 (.047)
Registered Republican	0.09* (.036)
Reg. Republican*August	0.02 (.051)
Reg. Republican*September	-0.04 (.051)
Education	-0.04 (.050)
Education*August	0.02 (.071)
Education*September	0.03 (.070)
Prop 8 Important	-0.26*** (.041)
Prop 8 Important* August	0.06 (.058)
Prop 8 Important * September	-0.01 (.057)
Political Awareness	0.05 (.051)
Political Awareness*August	-0.01 (.071)
Political Awareness*September	0.0001 (.074)
Political Orientation	0.48*** (.047)
Political Orientation*August	-0.02 (.068)
Political Orientation*September	0.05 (.068)
White	-0.17* (.072)
White*August	0.15 (.104)
White*September	0.10 (.099)
African American	-0.02 (.086)

Continued

African American*August	0.11 (.124)
African American*September	0.03 (.119)
Hispanic	-0.07 (.077)
Hispanic*August	0.15 (.112)
Hispanic*September	0.08 (.106)
Asian	0.00 (.087)
Asian*August	0.11 (.129)
Asian*September	0.03 (.132)
Married	0.02 (.028)
Married*August	-0.04 (.040)
Married*September	-0.01 (.040)
Children	0.07* (.029)
Children*August	0.00 (.041)
Children*September	-0.01 (.042)
Income	-0.04 (.049)
Income*September	-0.07 (.069)
Male	0.04+ (.024)
Male*August	0.05 (.035)
Male*September	0.01 (.035)
Age	0.16*** (.049)
Age*August	-0.09 (.070)
Age*September	-0.03* (.071)
α: Constant	.22 (.093)
N	3854
R²	.25

*** p <.001; ** p <.01; * p <.05; + p <.10 (two-tailed) standard errors in parentheses

Figure 3: Proposition 8 Voting Distribution in California



Source: "PPIC Statewide Survey: Californians and their Government" Public Policy Institute of California, December 2008 http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/survey/S_1208MBS.pdf

Figure 4: California Population Density

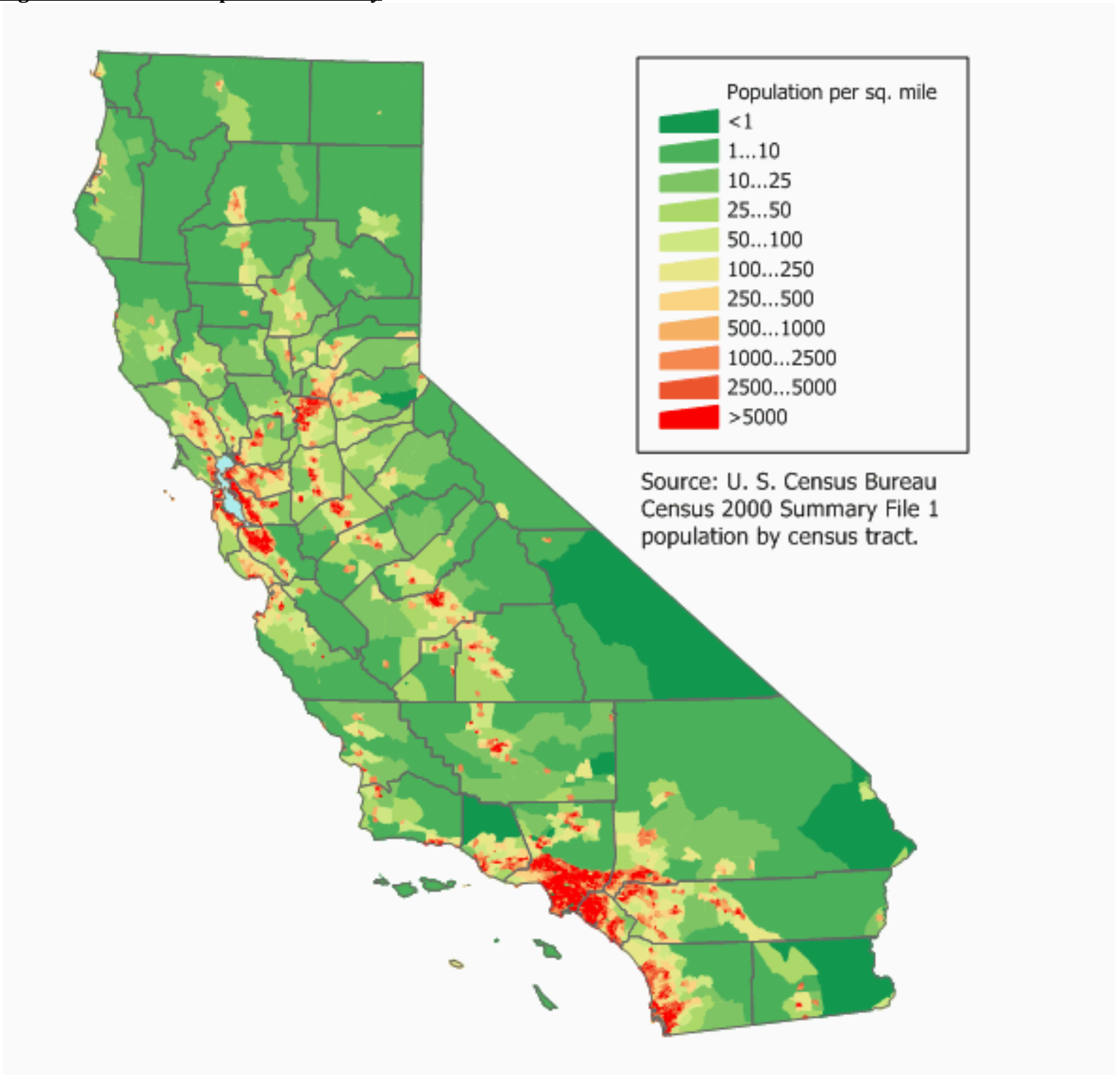


Figure 5: Geoffrey Layman's Path Model of Religious Influence on Political Behavior (Layman 2001, 253)

