Polarization and the Religious Floating Voter: Exploring Mechanisms for the Decline

Replication Paper responding to Corwin Smidt's "Polarization and the Decline of the Floating Voter" (2015) prepared for Gov 2001 at Harvard University

Michael O'Neil*and Amy Uden†

April 27, 2016

Partisan polarization has become a topic of increased scrutiny and concern in recent American politics. This literature has recently explored the link between elite polarization and voting behavior, suggesting that clearer distinctions in elite positions have caused formerly independent and detached voters to behave like partisans over time. Building particularly on Corwin Smidt's "Polarization and the Decline of the Floating Voter" (2015), we join this literature by moving toward a preliminary test of two proposed mechanisms outlined in Smidt's exploration of the decline of floating voters. We hypothesize that group identities have played a key role in voters' ability to sort candidates and issues into clearer partisan camps over time, and test this in the particularly salient context of religion and polarization. Our results provide mixed support for our hypothesis that elites' alignment with religious group issues and affiliations has contributed to the decline of the floating voter, but do not appear to eclipse alternative, policy-related mechanisms Smidt explores. We also clarify several quantities of interest from Smidt's analysis and examine the sensitivity of his "across-era effects" to other model specifications.

*Harvard Graduate School of Education
†Harvard Government Department

Partisan polarization has become a topic of increased scrutiny and, in some cases, concern in recent American politics. In the last several decades, evidence persistently suggests polarization is occurring among elites, particularly those in Congress (McCarty, Poole and Rosenthal, 2006). A considerable literature now explores the impact of this elite polarization on partisan attitudes and issue opinions (Druckman, Peterson and Slothuus, 2013), partisanship and vote choice (Bartels, 2000), and even the impact of partisan affect on interactions with members of partisan outgroups (Iyengar and Westwood, 2015). This literature has also explored the link between elite polarization and voting behavior (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, 2008; Wilson, 2015). One posited description of the relationship between the two suggests that clearer distinctions in elite positions have caused formerly independent and detached voters to behave like partisans. Building on Corwin Smidt's "Polarization and the Decline of the Floating Voter" (2015), we join this literature by moving toward a preliminary test of two proposed mechanisms outlined, though not fully developed, in Smidt's exploration of declines in independent and detached voting attitudes and behavior. We hypothesize that group affiliations have played a key role in voters' ability to sort candidates and issues into clearer partisan camps over time, and test this in the salient context of religion and polarization. Our results offer somewhat mixed support for our hypothesis that elites' alignment with religious group affiliations has contributed to the decline of the floating voter, and do not appear to eclipse alternative mechanisms Smidt explores.

1 Polarization and the Decline of the Floating Voter

Smidt explores the relationship between partisan elites and voting behavior in the context of partisan polarization since 1956. He posits that elite polarization can sustain itself over time because polarized elites provide clearer policy and candidate distinctions to voters. These distinctions lead independent or otherwise detached voters to behave similarly to partisans, a phenomenon which Smidt calls the "decline of the floating voter" (Smidt, 2015). He first examines the impact of a number of characteristics on key voter attributes of undecidedness and ambivalence. He then follows Key's (1966) coding of voters in to four categories of interest, in order to examine changes in the relevant groups over time. These categories include "standpatters (repeat voters with no change in major-party support), floating voters (repeat voters with a change in major-party support), surge-and-decliners (voted in only one election), or repeat nonvoters" Smidt (2015). Using ANES data from 1956 to 2008, his work examines empirical changes in the voting-eligible population over time, such as the link between certain demographic and voting attributes and important "floating voter" characteristics such as undecidedness and ambivalence, as well as the role that these characteristics play in predicting a voter's likelihood of falling a particular category in a given election.[1]

[1]We thank Professor Smidt for his very detailed and accessible replication data and code. We were able to replicate all those model coefficients which we attempted with a high degree of coefficient similarity, and found that all of his significant results held in our replications. We chose to replicate only those findings derived from ANES Time Series

We expand this work by clarifying key quantities of interest from Smidt's models, respecifying his model to explore an interaction between two variables, and adding covariates dealing with religious affiliation and religiosity, a dimension which we believe has been key to changes in voter behavior and polarization over the last several decades.

There are multiple avenues through which polarization may to link elite position-taking to voter behavior. As Smidt's central argument, he suggests "Americans are less ambivalent and more decisive in their presidential support, and these changes are relatively more prevalent among independents and the less aware (Smidt, 2015). His explanation for this greater clarity comes through two different potential mechanisms, between which his models do not attempt to differentiate. Voter clarity can either increase due to clearer distinctions in the policy consequences of a particular vote choice, or by "clarifying each party's association and agreement with other social identities and group attachments" (Smidt, 2015). Explorations of each of these mechanisms also occurs elsewhere in the literature (Muste, 2014; Hillygus and Shields, 2008), yet nowhere in a manner that explores them as explicit alternatives or seeks to link elite behavior and mass opinion over time. Based on these theorized mechanisms, we therefore expand on existing work in order to move toward a preliminary test of the presence of each of these mechanisms. For clarity's sake, we will describe these two mechanisms as the "policy consequences" mechanism and the "group identities" mechanism moving forward. We acknowledge throughout our extensions that it is unlikely that these two mechanisms are mutually exclusive. Instead, we add new data to Smidt's analysis, which we are able to leverage to provide preliminary evidence of these mechanisms at work, as well as some comments on their relative explanatory strength.

2 Religion and Polarization Trends

To select a set of group identities to use in exploring Smidt's mechanisms, we turn to religious affiliations. Religious group identification and political life have long been linked in America. In the last two to three decades in particular, scholars posit that religious affiliation or identity has been come increasingly intertwined with partisanship. Parallel to the polarization literature at large, the religion and polarization scholarship looks both at elite religious identities and affiliations (Wilson, 2015; D'Antonio, Tuch and Baker, 2013; McDermott, 2007) and those of the mass public (Mason, 2013; Baldassarri and Gelman, 2008). Polarization along the lines of religious values and identities has been deemed a "culture war" in American politics (Muste, 2014), though this framing has also received considerable scrutiny (Fiorina, Abrams and Pope, 2005; Patrikios, 2008).

Given the ambiguous linkage painted in the literature, we find religious affiliation an interesting testing ground for exploring the mechanism of group affiliation. Scholars of religion and partisan politics tend to discuss religious affiliation's impact on politics in terms of "belonging," "behaving,"

data, not those based on ANES Panel Data. Our findings diverged slightly from Smidt's only with reference to the across-era effects, where we utilized slightly different values for our weighted covariate means in each era.

and "believing" (Putnam, Campbell and Garrett, 2012; Friesen and Wagner, 2012). For purposes of this analysis, we will focus on the two aspects most easily captured in ANES data, religious belongingness/affiliation, defined as self-identified religious denomination or group, and religious behaving, measured as the self-reported frequency with which respondents attend religious services.[2] We intend to use religious service attendance as a proxy for religiosity, or the importance of religion in a respondent's life, following many others in the literature.

Given the unique modeling assumptions for the bivariate probit and multinomial logit models in use, it was important for the inclusion of these variables to ensure that no perfect prediction occurred between our added variables and the models' dependent variables, and to ensure a sizable sample in each unique "cell" created by the comparison between the new religion variables and the dependent variable levels (e.g., Mainline Protestant by Repeat Non-Voter). Since few respondents in the dataset reported non-Christian religions or "no religion," ultimately we collapsed the religious affiliation variable to focus on four categories of interest: Mainline Protestants, Evangelical Protestants, Catholics, and Others. While we acknowledge the normative difficulties in this coarse categorization, which regrettably combines all other Christian, non-Christian, and unaffiliated groups, these groups represent small portions of the sample distribution in the available data. Moreover, we expect Mainline, Evangelical, and Catholic group affiliates to have substantively distinct relationships with voting behavior and polarization across time.

In a cornerstone of the religious affiliation literature, for example, Wuthnow classically suggests that heightening in the 1970s and following, given significant controversies about the influence of church and state in public and private life caused denominationalism gave way to a liberal-conservative split in American Christianity Wuthnow (1989). Putnam and Campbell characterize this same divide as deepening in their description of several historical shifts that solidified the split between Mainline Protestants– those that fell on the "modernist" side of the divide outlined by Wuthnow– and Evangelical Protestants, the "fundamentalists." They argue that the rise of the Religious Right elites came in response to the opening of sexual mores in the 1960s Putnam, Campbell and Garrett (2012). They also suggest that reactions against this shift led to a deeper divide in public opinions. These theoretical motivations underpin our variable selection and recoding choices as we examine religious group affiliation in light of Smidt's conversation on "policy consequence" versus "group identity" mechanisms.

[2]Information on coding these variables is available in the Appendix. Generally, the religiosity variable represents a 5-step ordinal scale describing the frequency with which the respondent attends some sort of religious service, included in our models coded with 5 as "every week" and 1 as "never." This variable was available in every ANES Time Series Study in our sample. We collected the data and added it to the combined data file before recreating Smidt's sample weights. The religious affiliation/denomination variable was originally a 9-category variable developed from the most fine-grained description of religious denomination available in each year's data that included opportunity to differentiate between Mainline and Evangelical Protestants. No such data were available prior to 1960, as before this time a coarser "Protestant", "Catholic", or "Jewish" classification was used by the ANES. This question and the related codes used by the ANES varied from year to year, but we have provided a full description of our codes in our supplemental materials.

3 Design Overview

In light of this background in the literature, we first explore the evidence for the two mechanisms of voter clarity by respecifying his first model(Table 1 in Smidt; hereafter Model A), a bivariate probit model that predicts voter "undecidedness" and "ambivalence" based on a number of demographic characteristics. To probe the "policy consequences" mechanism, we add an interaction between Age and Recognition of Issue Differences to his model. We theorize that a significant interaction here would support lend preliminary support to Smidt's first mechanism, since older voters have greater experience in the policy domain and thus greater likelihood of having their recognition of issue differences provide clarity, reducing undecidedness and ambivalence.

We then explore the "group identities" mechanism with the addition of the religion variables. We anticipate that religiosity and religious denomination will not necessarily decrease voters' predicted probabilities of being undecided or ambivalent toward particular candidates or elections, even if they impact voting behavior. This is because group identities may guide overall voting actions without necessarily activating the underlying opinion changes predicted by Model A. Turning to the multinomial logit model (Table 3 in Smidt, hereafter Model B) predicting voter categorization, we will check the sensitivity of one of Smidt's key quantities of interest. We will then compare the interactive model described above with another specification adding the religiosity and religious denomination variables. We expect these respecified models to have improved explanatory power compared to the original models. We will report first differences on key covariates for the model predicting voter behavior, demonstrating the relative strength of the "policy consequences mechanisms" and the "group identity mechanism."

4 Voter Undecidedness and Ambivalence

As noted above, a significant portion of Smidt's argument stems from two tables, one of which includes a bivariate probit analysis looking at the effect of several covariates on voter undecidedness and ambivalence to explain changing attitudes and voter interest over time in voting.[3] We found no evidence of in a change in voters' predicted probabilities of being undecided or ambivalence when including either the religious affiliation or religiosity variable. Each variable was not significant for either specification of the model.

In contrast, we note that, in respecifying Model A, there is a significant interaction between respondents' age and their recognition of differences between candidates and issues. This interaction, which we theorize results from older voters' greater experience and ability to see policy distinction, is responsible for declining ambivalence and undecidedness in our model. This provides

[3]We were able to replicate Smidt's results on Ambivalence and Undecided voters. To view outcomes of both Ambivalence and Undecidedness which are binary variables that may be related on some, but not all independent variables, we followed Smidt in using a bivariate probit model. These results were robust to checks of model dependence and observation sensitivity.

preliminary evidence of the "policy consequences" mechanism at work. Table A in the Appendix presents model coefficients for these two outcomes, across all available years in the data.

5 Exploring Across-Era Effects

Before proceeding to explore these mechanisms, we begin by clarifying some of Smidt's key results. First, we consider one quantity of interest, "across-era effects." To alleviate challenges in interpreting results for bivariate probit and multinomial logit models, Smidt presents these across-era effects, which are difference in predicted probability for his dependent variables when holding remaining covariates constant at their mean prior to 1980 and after 2000. While these point estimates are somewhat substantively easier to interpret, they rely on a limited number of years in the data. Moreover, the sample provides considerably more pre-1980 data than post-2000 data, creating concerns that across-era effects are driven by statistical unbalance between the two eras. While there are historical and theoretical reasons to believe that the 1980 and 2000 cut-offs would capture any substantial changes in partisan activity, we test the sensitivity of Smidt's results to these cut-off points by assigning different cut-off years for the "eras" and re-running Smidt's multinomial logit model predicting probabilities of various voter types. Table 1 displays the results of this sensitivity analysis in terms of the across-era change in an ANES's predicted probability of being a Floating Voter.[4] Each alternative specification of across-era effects (calculated by changing the relevant variable from its Era 1 mean to its Era 2 mean while holding all other variables at their observed values, using bias-corrected bootstrapped coefficients) resulted in effects similar in their direction and significance, though varying in their magnitude. [5]

Seeing some variation in across-era effects, we then proceed to respecify a model that allows for some flexibility in across-year effects. We do this be including a binary "era" variable, with a cut-off of pre-and post-1990, in Smidt's original model. This era variable is significant in Model B for all levels of the dependent variable, though interacting this dichotomous era variables with key clarity

[4]Our recreation of Smidt's across-era effects will differ slightly because we used a recoded dependent variable in our extension multinomial logit models, with repeat non-voter as the base level, rather than standpatter, which is a value of interest to us. This will not affect predicted probabilities presented elsewhere.

[5]To further account for concerns regarding the differences in the ANES data in the two eras, we also pruned the data by using Mahalnobis Distance Matching to select the pre-1980 cases that were most similar to the post-2000 cases in the sample along the demographic and election-specific covariates. By doing this "pruning," we effectively make any resulting across-era effects more conservative estimates, by ensuring that we are using equally-sized samples before 1980 and after 2000, and that these samples include those individuals in the data who are most similar along relevant demographic covariates. After conducting Mahalanobis Distance matching, our sample size is approximately 1,662, with equal proportions of individuals in the pre-1980 era and post-2000 era. The balance between this sample and the others utilized throughout the paper is displayed in Table B in the Appendix. With the exception of slightly higher levels of individual education and slightly lower year-to-year growth income, the samples' demographic characteristics in the matched data are roughly similar to those in the original dataset. We then proceed to explore Across-Era effects using the same procedure outlined by Smidt, though including additional covariates. These results were more noticeably different from Smidt's across-era effects.

of choice variables in the model did not produce significant effects on voters' likelihood of being floating voters. However, a change from one era to the other in a model including a pre-/post-1990 era variable alone, holding all other variables at their observed values, results roughly no decrease in a voter's predicted probability of being a floating voter in this model.As such, we decided to proceed with Smidt's original use of of the pre-1980 and post-2000 eras for examining across-era effects.

Table 1: Across Era Effects Compared by Era & Model Specifications:
Era-to-Era Percentage Point Change in Probability of Being a Floating Voter by Key Covariates

	Recreation of Table 3 Pre-80/Post-00	Sensitivity Check 1 Pre-72/Post-90	Sensitivity Check 2 Pre-90/Post-90
Recognition of Differences	-1.09	-0.40	-0.61
Undecided	-0.42	-0.44	-0.32
Ambivalent	-0.37*	-0.27*	-0.27*
Efficacy	-0.03	0.00	0.00
Number of Likes/Dislikes	0.13*	-0.02*	0.08*
n	14,493	14,493	14,493

** $p < 0.05$.*
All predicted values are based on bootstrapped coefficients, with covariate means changing from pre-cutoff era weighted means to post-cutoff era weighted means, with all other variables held at observed values.

6 Religion and the Floating Voter

With this information about era effects in mind, we move to our second key model (Model B),[6] Smidt uses a multinomial logistic regression to predict an ANES respondent's probability of being in each of the four key voting types (Repeat Non-Voter, Standpatter, Floating Voter, and Surge & Decliner) for each presidential election year since 1956.[7] The graphs below (Figures 1 and 2) provide predicted probabilities of ANES respondents being a floating voter or a standpatter from year to year, comparing various specifications of Smidt's model. Point estimates are predicted probabilities of being either a Standpatter or a Floating Voter each year, vertical bars represent one standard deviation above and below these quantities of interest in a vector of predicted probabilities based on clustered bootstrapped coefficients.

The first panel of Figure 1 shows predicted probabilities for the chief outcomes in the original model.[8] The second shows the same predicted probabilities for a model which includes an interaction between re-

[6]See Table 2 in Smidt, 2015.

[7]Smidt argues that this is the appropriate model choice because the probabilities of being in each of these categories are independent but are predicted by the same voter-level and election-level covariates. He utilizes clustered bootstrapped standard errors to account for the problem of a small number of election years in which the data are clustered across time. We replicated the model completely. As noted above, we conducted several diagnostic tests, both with and without our new religion variables, and found Smidt's basic modeling assumptions satisfactory. Throughout the following analysis, we have chosen not to present model coefficients, as they are not easily interpretable for multinomial logit models. These coefficients are available in the supplemental materials for the paper.

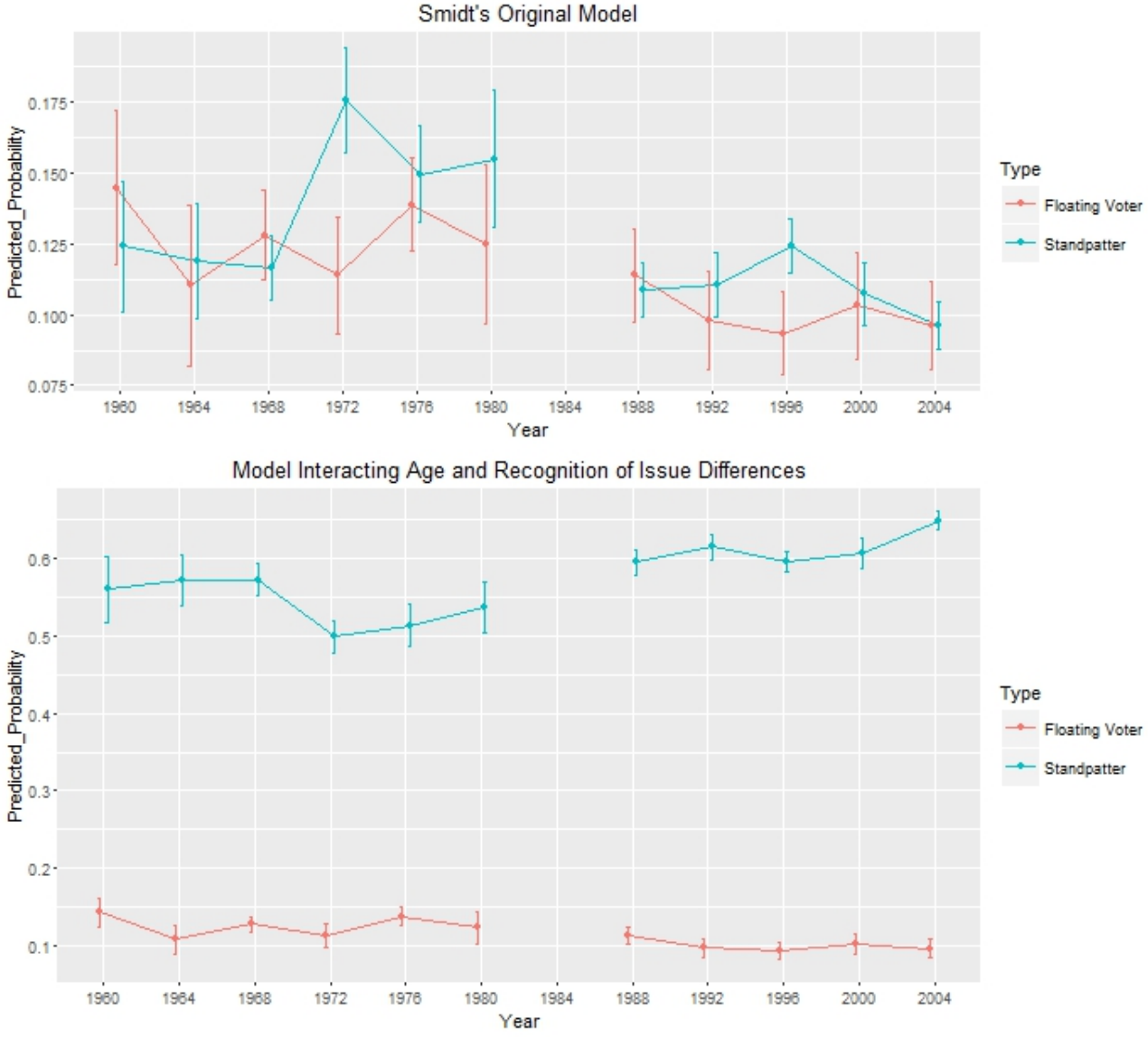
[8]The dependent variable for this model is not available in 1984, resulting in a skip in the graphs. Several independent variable are not available in 1952-1956 and post-2004. For consistency's sake their predicted probabilities are not presented here.

spondents' age and their recognition of issue differences. Smidt's original model, voters' likelihoods of being Standpatters or Floating Voters both tend to decline over time, though they are fairly indistinguishable at a single standard deviation. The second panel, which interacts respondents' age with their recognition of issue differences, shows the relationship Smidt theorizes much more clearly. This new specification of the model provides more cleanly predicts respondents' likelihood of falling into one or the other of these voting behaviors. The predicted probability of being a standpatter is much higher, and increasing over time. In contrast, the predicted probability of being a floating voter declines over time. This suggests that the interaction adds some explanatory power to Smidt's model. The interaction term is also significant in the model. However, since the increase in the McFadden's R^2 is not necessarily as large as might be expected given such a visible change in the predicted probability graphs, we also cross validate the model using smaller subsets of the data, and find similarly significant results. We take the added explanatory power of this interaction term as evidence for the "policy consequences" mechanism. If voter's behavior can be explained with a combination of their age and political sophistication, here operationalized as their recognition of issue differences, it suggests that elites may indeed be using the mechanism of clearer policy alternatives to motivate partisan-like behavior among floating voters.

Likewise, Figure 2 depicts predicted probabilities of being a Standpatter and a Floating Voter in a specification of Smidt's Model B that adds a religiosity variable and a religious denomination variable (without the age by issue differences interaction). Panel 1 suggests that on their own, these variables do not dramatically increase the explanatory power of the models, though each is significant for at least some levels of the dependent variable.[9] In the second panel, which includes the age by recognition of issue differences interaction, the relationship is again much more clear.

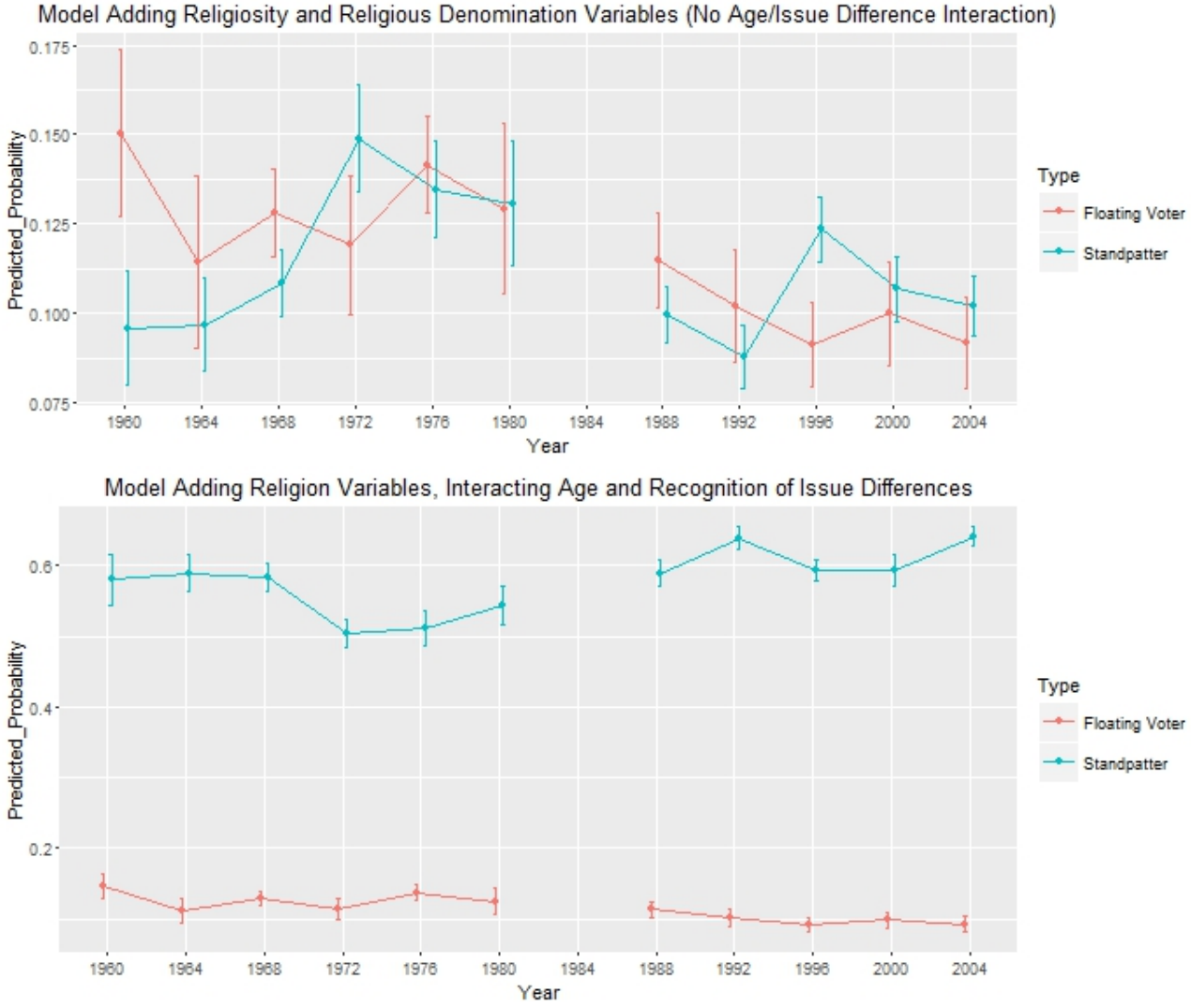
[9]Coefficient tables are available in the supplementary materials.

Figure 1: Predicted Probabilities of Being a Standpatter or Floating Voter Across Time, Model Specifications on Original Covariates



Note: Point estimates are the predicted probability of a respondent being a Standpatter or Floating Voter, with all covariates held at their means for the year, using clustered bootstrapped coefficients in predictions. Error bars represent one standard deviation around these estimates.

Figure 2: Predicted Probabilities of Being a Standpatter or Floating Voter Across Time, Model Specifications with Religion Covariates

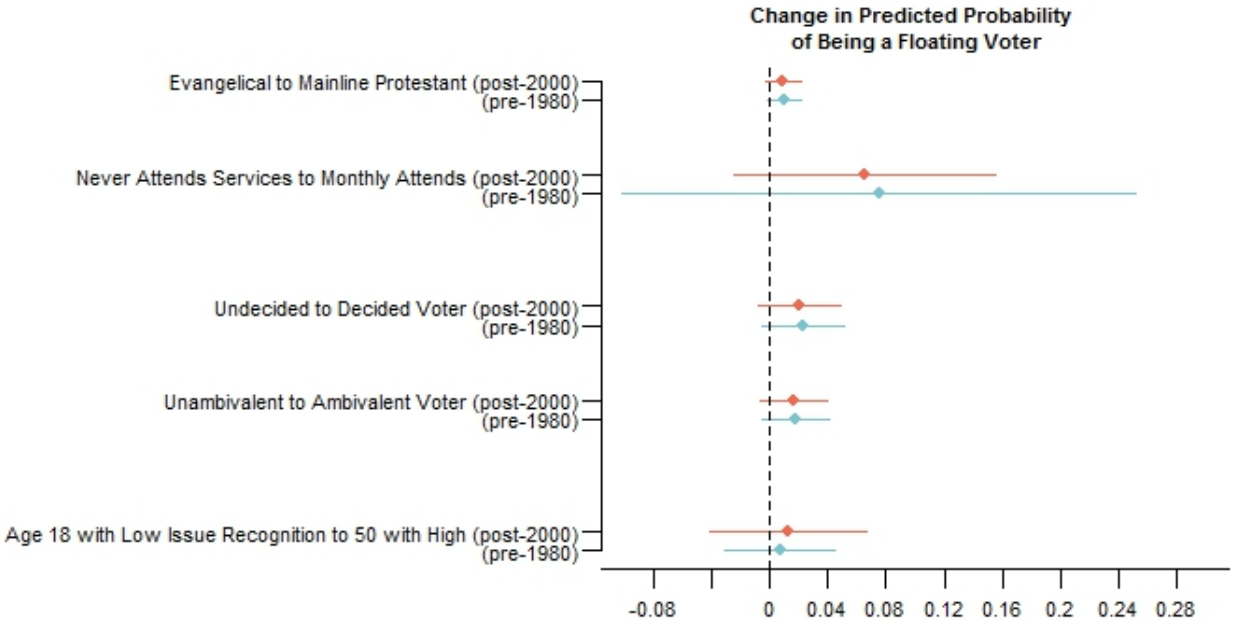


Note: Point estimates are the predicted probability of a respondent being a Standpatter or Floating Voter, with all covariates held at their means for the year, using clustered bootstrapped coefficients in predictions. Error bars represent one standard deviation around these estimates.

Having established that these additional variables improve the explanatory power of our model, we proceed to explore the relative impact of the two mechanisms through comparing first differences for the key covariates in the full model specification used for Panel 2 in Figure 2 (both religion variables plus age and issue differences interaction). Figure 3 depicts the change in predicted probability of being a floating voter based on all data before 1980 and after 2000, as a voter changes from one value of interest to another on the following variables: Religious Denomination; Religiosity (Service Attendance); Undecidedness; Ambivalence; and the Interaction of Age by Recognition

of Issue Differences. To clarify the substantive meaning of these first differences, for example, with all other covariates at their observed values, as a respondent goes from being one who "never" attends religious services to a self-reported "once or twice a month" attender of religious services, her probability of being a floating voter would increase by about 0.075 in the era prior to 1980, and by about 0.065 in the post-2000 era.

Figure 3: Relative Effects: First Differences by Era for Key Covariates



Note: Point estimates are the change in predicted probability of a respondent being a Floating Voter when changing from one value of interest to another on a single covariates. All other covariates' expected values are used to calculate these values. Error bars represent one standard deviation around these estimates.

This figure is of interest in allowing a comparison of the impact of different explanatory variables in a manner that is substantively interpretable across different voter characteristics of interest. It also permits an examination of across-era comparisons in a manner more intuitive than Smidt's use of era-specific means, since the "mean" respondent has arbitrary and potentially uninteresting characteristics. The first and most striking result in this figure is the suggestion that, in both eras, moving from being an "undecided" to a "decided" voter, with all other variables at their observed values, actually *increases* a respondents' predicted probability of being a floating voter. This increase (0.023 and 0.020, respectively by era) is a slight one in comparison to overall probabilities of being a floating voter, but is still of interest, as it calls into question Smidt's theory related to declining detached voters through a decline in undecidedness.

Also of interest is a comparison between those who never attend religious services and those

who do periodically. While standard error is higher on this measure than other first differences, the larger difference between the two "persons" of interest, the church-goer and the non-church-goer, suggest that the "group identity" mechanism might be at work. Likewise, the first differences between different groups within Protestantism is similar in magnitude to some of Smidt's other key covariates. Religiosity represents the "first difference" with the most across-era change, as well. Before 1980, becoming a church attender caused more of an increase in floating voter behavior than it does in the present era. We also explore the possibility that the shift from never attending religious services to attending monthly is a large one. Examining the change in predicted probability from "never" attending to attending "a few times a year" also has magnitude similar to other covariate first differences (0.04), while a shift to "weekly" attendance produces even higher shifts in predicted probability (0.15). We take these first differences as mixed support for our hypothesis. First, they suggest that to some degree, religiosity matters in voting behavior. However, this is in the opposite direction from that which we would expect, as religiosity actually increases a voter's predicted probability of being a floating voter, which would be contrary to our expectation based on the alignment of various denominations with partisan stances in the modern era. One plausible explanation for this unexpected effect come from declining overall religiosity in America, particularly among younger Americans. If religious Americans have higher predicted probabilities of being floating voters for any number of potential reasons, then the reduced number of this type of voter over time in the sample (seen in the rising portion of "nones" in the ANES sample, coded in our collapsed "other" category) may contribute to the decline Smidt identifies. Our null results for religious denomination and religiosity's effects on undecidedness and ambivalence may sugget that this effect does not occur through the attitude clarity path generally hypothesized by Smidt.

Overall, while it is difficult to compare the relative magnitude of switching from being a "never" to "sometimes" church attender as compared to changing in age, recognition of issue differences, or ambivalence, these first differences nevertheless assist us in conceptualizing how these different mechanisms are at work. However, our test provide preliminary evidence that group identities are functioning alongside the recognition of policy differences.

7 Conclusions and Future Directions

Our analysis supports the hypothesis that the last several decades have seen a decline in "floating voter" behavior in response to elite polarization, while strengthening his model by acknowledging the linkage between age and a respondents' potential to recognize issue differences. Additionally, we provide a preliminary test of two mechanisms, a "policy consequences" mechanism for voter clarity, and a "group identities" mechanism. We test these mechanisms by exploring the group identity of religious affiliation in different eras, as well as its strength relative to voter sophistication on issue differences in driving voting behavior. We find that religious identity does not significantly impact voters' undecidedness or ambivalence over time, but nevertheless does significantly impact

voting behavior in the modern era, though not prior to 1980. Religiosity's impact on probability of being a floating voter is comparable in magnitude to other covariates such as age and issues differences. However, this impact did not occur in the direction we expected, suggesting further exploration may be needed. While group identity mechanism appears to be at work in the modern era, it does not necessarily eclipse more policy-oriented mechanisms, but functions alongside them in determining voting behavior. Future research might benefit from exploring these mechanisms with other group identities and affiliations, within the context of a single party, and with data that allows clearer identification of identities throughout time and into the future. While providing only a preliminary test, our respecifications begin to offer insights as to the mechanisms at work when voters perceive clearer choices among candidates, contributing to our overall understanding of the decline of the floating voter.

References

Baldassarri, Delia and Andrew Gelman. 2008. "Partisans without constraint: Political polarization and trends in American public opinion." *AJS; American journal of sociology* 114(2):408.

Bartels, Larry M. 2000. "Partisanship and voting behavior, 1952-1996." *American Journal of Political Science* pp. 35–50.

D'Antonio, William V, Steven A Tuch and Josiah R Baker. 2013. *Religion, politics, and polarization: how religiopolitical conflict is changing Congress and American democracy*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Druckman, James N, Erik Peterson and Rune Slothuus. 2013. "How elite partisan polarization affects public opinion formation." *American Political Science Review* 107(01):57–79.

Fiorina, Morris P, Samuel A Abrams and Jeremy C Pope. 2008. "Polarization in the American public: Misconceptions and misreadings." *The Journal of Politics* 70(02):556–560.

Fiorina, Morris P, Samuel J Abrams and Jeremy Pope. 2005. *Culture war?* Pearson Longman New York, NY.

Friesen, Amanda and Michael W Wagner. 2012. "Beyond the Three Bs: How American Christians Approach Faith and Politics." *Politics and Religion* 5(02):224–252.

Hillygus, D. Sunshine and Todd G. Shields. 2008. *The persuadable voter: wedge issues in presidential campaigns*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Iyengar, Shanto and Sean J Westwood. 2015. "Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization." *American Journal of Political Science* 59(3):690–707.

Key, Valdimer Orlando and Milton Curtis Cummings. 1966. *The Responsible Electorate: Rationality in Presidential Voting, 1936-1960,[by] VO Key, with the Assistance of Milton C. Cummings; Foreword by Arthur Maass*. Harvard University Press.

Mason, Lilliana. 2013. Behavioral Polarization and Partisan Sorting: How Identity Alignment Drives Polarized Politics PhD thesis State University of New York at Stony Brook.

McCarty, Nolan, Keith T Poole and Howard Rosenthal. 2006. *Polarized America: The dance of ideology and unequal riches*. Vol. 5 Mit Press.

McDermott, Monika L. 2007. "Voting for Catholic Candidates: The Evolution of a Stereotype*." *Social Science Quarterly* 88(4):953–969.

Muste, Christopher P. 2014. "Reframing Polarization: Social Groups and Culture Wars." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 47(02):432–442.

Patrikios, Stratos. 2008. "American Republican religion? Disentangling the causal link between religion and politics in the US." *Political Behavior* 30(3):367–389.

Putnam, Robert D, David E Campbell and Shaylyn Romney Garrett. 2012. *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. Simon and Schuster.

Smidt, Corwin D. 2015. "Polarization and the Decline of the American Floating Voter." *American Journal of Political Science* .

Wilson, J Matthew. 2015. "Religion, Politics, and Polarization: How Religiopolitical Conflict Is Changing Congress and American Democracy." *Journal of Church and State* 57(2):394–396.

Wuthnow, Robert. 1989. *The restructuring of American religion: Society and faith since World War II*. Princeton University Press.

Appendices and Supplemental Materials

Table A: Model Coefficients for Interaction Model, Voter Ambivalence and Undecidedness

	Ambivalence	Undecidedness
Intercept	-0.808	-0.499
	(0.070)	(0.104)
Education	0.095	0.022
	(0.012)	(0.022)
Age	0.000	0.006
	(0.001)	(0.002)
Female	-0.031	0.095
	(0.025)	(0.033)
Recognition of Issue Differences	0.230	-0.307
	(0.057)	(0.113)
Black	-0.375	0.043
	(0.062)	(0.060)
Number of Likes/Dislikes	0.079	-0.032
	(0.003)	(0.004)
Strength of Partisanship	-0.302	-0.512
	(0.014)	(0.023)
Change in Per Capita Income	-0.045	-0.023
	(0.012)	(0.012)
Reelection Campaign	0.006	-0.134
	(0.051)	(0.071)
Age by Recognition of Issue Differences	-0.011	-0.003
	(0.001)	(0.002)

Note: All variables achieve significance.

Table B: Covariate Balance Across Samples- Covariate Means by sample

	Original Covariates	Religion Added	1984 Only	Matched (MD)
Recognition of Difference Scale	0.52	0.53	0.62	0.63
Undecided	0.098	0.096	0.11	0.047
Ambivalent	0.26	0.26	0.24	0.21
Efficacy	0.58	0.56	0.63	0.52
Number of Likes/Dislikes	8.64	8.62	8.24	9.02
Strength of Partisanship	1.22	1.22	1.17	1.27
Age	46.2	46.9	44.41	47.64
Female	0.56	0.57	0.56	0.55
African American	0.11	0.12	0.12	0.16
Education	1.41	1.44	1.47	1.78
Change in per Capita Income	2.85	2.98	6.50	2.61
Reelection Campaign	0.46	0.34	1.00	0.96
Religiosity	-	2.75	2.97	3.07
Denomination	-	13.25	13.21	11.94
n	14,493	11,249	2,257	1,662