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Many scholars argue that evangelical Christian beliefs and traditions are central to dominant conceptions of American national identity, but most empirical studies in this area focus on the activities and identities of evangelical Christians themselves. Missing is an assessment of how evangelical-infused understandings of national belonging shape the views of people outside the white evangelical subculture. We analyze how Americans of all religious backgrounds evaluate a secularized evangelical discourse (SED)—a repertoire of political statements that are phrased in religiously nonparticularistic terms, but have roots in evangelical Christian history and epistemologies and have been politicized through social movements and party politics. Using latent class analysis and nationally representative survey data, we identify four prevailing profiles of support for claims about public religious expression anchored in this repertoire: ardent opposition, moderate opposition, moderate support, and ardent support. We find that a majority of Americans, not just evangelicals, respond positively to propositions that employ SED. Consequently, we argue that conservative Christianity influences contemporary politics not only by furnishing individuals with beliefs and identities, but also by providing a durable and flexible source of boundaries around a culturally specific vision of national belonging that resonates far beyond the boundaries of the evangelical subculture.

Donald Trump's strong and persistent support among white evangelicals has renewed debate around a longstanding question: how do white evangelical Christian traditions shape prevailing understandings of national identity and belonging in the U.S.? Many Americans desire a stronger religious presence in public life (Pew Research Center 2014), and draw sharp symbolic boundaries around religion. A discourse of national identity rooted in white evangelical traditions is readily available for this purpose (Edgell and Tranby 2010; Wuthnow 2012).

In this regard, white evangelicalism is more than a religious subculture. It is also the primary historical source and contemporary institutional carrier of a broader discourse about the religious roots of citizenship and national identity (Williams 1999)—a discourse that has spilled out from evangelical institutions to provide symbolic backing to restrictive understandings of national membership (Braunstein 2017a). Culturally dominant throughout the nineteenth century

and into the twentieth, this discourse grew more contested with increasing pluralism (Wuthnow 1988, Jones 2016). Starting in the postwar period, conflict over it became a defining feature of the civic landscape, contributing to divisions between mainline and fundamentalist Protestants and sparking the growth of a multidenominational coalition that brought conservative Catholics and Jews into cultural affinity with white evangelical Protestants (Wuthnow 1988, Worthen 2013). This discourse is now employed not only by people in white evangelical denominations and congregations, but also by culturally conservative people in other faith traditions (Wuthnow 1988). It is not inherently politically conservative (Williams 1995), but throughout the twentieth century, it took on exclusionary meanings through the cultural work of Republican elites, who identified religious conservatives as a potentially powerful political constituency (Kruse 2016, McAdam and Kloos 2014, Worthen 2013, Wuthnow 2012). Its embrace by the Republican Party extended its appeal beyond evangelicals to include others whose understandings of national belonging reflect white Christian cultural heritage, if not Christian beliefs.

Therefore, to understand how contemporary repertoires of citizenship and belonging are shaped by evangelical Christianity, one must distinguish *cultural attitudes derived from evangelical belief and practice* from the more commonly analyzed *attitudes held by people who identify as evangelicals*. In this paper, we assess the former by examining how Americans' political attitudes are shaped by a discourse of national identity that has roots in evangelical Christian belief and practice, but which has become secularized—uprooted from its specific theological and institutional moorings and translated into a repertoire for political claimsmaking and boundary drawing (Williams 1995) that all Americans, not only evangelicals, can use.

Discourse matters because people draw upon multiple discourses across social settings, creating patterns of political thought, speech, and action that reflect idealized conceptions of

what is just or moral (Habermas 2001). Politicized through social movements (Kruse 2016, McAdam and Kloos 2014, Wuthnow 2012), institutionalized through party politics (Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014; Campbell, Green, and Layman 2011), and culturally entrenched through communicative action (Habermas 2001), the *secularized evangelical discourse* (SED) that we analyze has become a primary locus of political and cultural boundary work. Does SED comprise a moral language that rejects both religious nationalism and radical secularism, and which can hence transcend political and cultural polarization (Gorski 2017a)? Or do its roots in a particular religious tradition and its association with party politics render it divisive?

In answering these questions, our approach is similar to recent analyses of populism and nationalism. These frameworks do not have inherent political meanings, but are given meaning discursively as actors use them to articulate and justify their political viewpoints (Bonikowski and Gidron 2016; Brubaker 2004). Likewise, we analyze how *all* Americans—regardless of their religious identities—assess claims anchored in SED. Do they embrace or reject these claims? And which elements of the underlying discourse are the most salient, and the most divisive, today? Answering these questions will enhance our understanding how symbolic boundaries rooted in evangelical culture affect contemporary Americans' understandings of citizenship and belonging, and tell us whether SED more closely approximates the civil religious discourse that some scholars (Gorski 2017a; Habermas 2008) have argued that diverse societies need, or a religious nationalist discourse that divides more than unifies.

Using data from a nationally representative survey, we employ latent class analysis (LCA) to identify patterns of support for claims anchored in SED. LCA is useful for our research question because it lets us assess how people respond to claims rooted in SED in public life,

whether support or rejection of these claims divides people into empirically distinct groups, and what factors associate with support or rejection for SED.

Secularized Evangelical Discourse

The decline of religious belief and behavior in the U.S. has changed how religion shapes public life, but it has not significantly diminished its importance. Religion persists as a source of durable but flexible symbols that actors use in political speech and action (Chaves 1994; Williams 1995), and shapes the symbolic construction of the civic sphere (Alexander 2006). In the contemporary U.S., evangelical traditions are associated with a narrow vision of national belonging that often excludes nonwhites (Tranby and Hartmann 2008), the "undeserving" poor (Steensland 2007), atheists (Edgell et. al. 2016), Muslims (Braunstein 2017a), and gays, lesbians, and transgender people (Haider-Market and Taylor 2016).

This means that analyzing evangelicals' political attitudes gives an incomplete picture of how conservative Christian ideas affect politics and public life. As American religion has reorganized around an orthodox-modernist split (Wuthnow 1988), and many mainline Protestants, Catholics, and even Jews have adopted evangelical practices and attitudes, it is also important to assess how Americans of all religious backgrounds evaluate political claims that have cultural roots in, but have become institutionally untethered from, evangelical Christianity. Such claims cohere in an underlying repertoire that became polarizing in the 20th century through its association with party politics and social movements, beginning with fiscal conservatives' efforts in the 1930s to mobilize opposition to redistributive economic programs (Kruse 2016), and continuing with later movements to make wedge issues out of racial equality abortion, and gay marriage (McAdam and Kloos 2014),.

In this polarized environment, evangelical discourse has diffused widely and come to influence everyday Americans' views across a wide range of issues, including welfare policy (Davis and Robinson 2012), consumer taste (Massengill 2013), and Islamophobia (Braunstein 2017a; Brubaker 2013), with deep effects on the attitudes of not only evangelicals, but people of various religious identities. Here, we focus on four particularly important expressions, reflecting ideas that have roots in evangelical culture, but which are not tied to any particular social movement or campaign issue: claims that religious identity is important for good citizenship, that religious belief is a criterion for strong political leadership, that society's rules should be based on divine will, and that public institutions should broadly accommodate religious belief and practice. Existing research tends to presume that support for such claims will exist primarily among people who identify as evangelicals. We investigate how all Americans respond to them.

Recent political science research suggests that candidates and politicians employ SED in attempts to consolidate support among religious conservatives without explicitly embracing religious nationalism. Conservative candidates employ a "religious code" that they hope will be recognized and valued by evangelical voters, but pass unnoticed by others (Albertson 2015; Djupe and Calfano 2013). By using subtle cues to activate evangelicals' learned identities and associate them with nostalgia for a society unified around white Christian heritage (Campbell, Green, and Layman 2011), this tactic resonates among culturally conservative nonevangelicals as well as among evangelicals themselves. By employing it, candidates reinforce evangelical ideas' importance to U.S. political culture.

It is not only conservatives who endeavor to appeal to multiple audiences by invoking religious narratives of national belonging. Barack Obama, for instance, often employed a civil religious discourse as a candidate and as President (Gorski 2011). Yet the relative racial and

cultural homogeneity of the right makes its use of SED more effective, and more controversial, than the left's use of civil religious discourse. For example, although Mitt Romney failed to win the presidency in either 2008 or 2012, his use of evangelical-oriented religious language to demonstrate his conservative bona fides assuaged concerns about his own Mormon identity and reinforced skepticism on the right about Obama's faith (Crosby 2015). Donald Trump's rush to embrace conservative religious language during his candidacy helped solidify support among white evangelicals. The civil religious discourse employed by Obama and others on the left does not draw symbolic boundaries as sharply (Braunstein 2017b; Gorski 2017a), and has not appeared as frequently in mainstream political speech (Braunstein 2018).

The specific meanings that SED takes on when deployed in political speech fracture public opinion, not only regarding "religious" issues, like abortion and gay marriage, but also regarding the larger influence of religious culture on public institutions (Hout and Fischer 2014). This is because political parties, candidates, media organizations, and social movements have strategically linked white evangelical identity to narrow visions of national belonging (Bail 2014; Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014; Kruse 2016; McAdam and Kloos 2014). Americans outside evangelical subcultures are influenced when elite actors invoke evangelical traditions in their public rhetoric by using nonsectarian phrasings like "traditional family values," "wholesome school environments," "economic self-sufficiency," and "religious freedom" to describe policy preferences (Jones 2016). Thus, a discourse derived from evangelical traditions is used politically in ways that extend beyond its religious origins, and is inserted into political debates of all kinds.

Secularized Evangelical Discourse and Moral Foundations

Political discourses link the moral foundations that shape individual thought and action to specific social identities. Moral foundations shape political attitudes by refracting culture learned in early socialization onto the identities that people develop later in life (Vaisey 2009; Vaisey and Lizardo 2016). SED, in particular, gives voice to culturally conservative moral foundations, and provides a rhetorical scaffolding for the political attitudes they engender. SED is at the heart of debates between people who draw on culturally conservative moral foundations and those who employ modernized alternatives (Haidt 2013). Traditional frames such as the nuclear family, the small town community, and the hardworking American are juxtaposed against categories like the autonomous individual, the global community, and the cosmopolitan elite. Traditional frames implicitly signal support for the association of contemporary American belonging with the cultural legacy of white Christian America. Hence, people who feel marginalized by modernity and nostalgic for a more wholesome past take positions on issues like Walmart (Massengill 2013) and environmental preservation (Farrell 2015) that reflect the white Christian dominance of previous eras, even when these positions have no explicit connection to evangelical beliefs.

This research suggests that many Americans respond positively to claims about the public good that are rooted in Christian worldviews, and recognize symbolic boundaries that reinforce Christian nationalism without explicitly invoking Christian precepts or affirming Christian identity. For example, holding an authoritarian image of god is associated with culturally exclusionary views, including intolerance of Muslims, discriminatory gender attitudes, and opposition to interracial marriage (Froese and Bader 2008; Perry 2013; Perry and Whitehead 2015; Whitehead 2014). Likewise, a "strict father" schema that arises from conservative Christian traditions (Lakoff 1996) is expressed in preferences for an authoritative figure to lead

the country. This helps to explain white evangelicals' support for Donald Trump (Gorski 2017b). By depicting himself as the only potential savior of a nation in decline, Trump appealed to evangelical moral foundations even as his words and behavior undercut evangelical standards regarding sexual modesty and personal humility. Gorski reads Trump's campaign rhetoric as a "secularized version of religious nationalism."

Secularized evangelical discourse (SED) takes on specific exclusionary meanings through social movements and electoral politics. The ideological structure of American politics in the current two-party alignment means that when a person makes a claim about any political issue, he or she is also taking a position on precepts that are implicitly tied to conservative Christian culture (Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014). Thus, SED matters for all political actors, not only evangelicals, but sociologists have not analyzed how Americans as a whole respond to claims made in the public arena that are rooted in this discourse. We do so here.

Measurement of SED

Our approach follows recent work that conceptualizes sentiments previously understood as coherent ideologies, such as populism and nationalism, as discursive resources for political speech and action (Bonikowski and Gidron 2016; Brubaker 2004). The ways that people combine different elements of a particular discursive framework, such as nationalism, populism, or SED, can help to explain their political attitudes and behavior (Habermas 2001). Since we are measuring the influence of a discourse that all Americans encounter and must evaluate, we analyze support for political propositions that are ostensibly non-particularistic, but have substantive roots in evangelical political theology. Previous literature directs us to four key ways such ideas permeate ostensibly secular political statements. By assessing how respondents

evaluate each, we can observe patterns in who responds positively and negatively to SED, and which of its elements are the most unifying and the most divisive.

First, American evangelical leaders have long constructed symbolic boundaries pertaining to religiosity and national belonging. Steensland and Wright (2014:706) argue that "concerns about secularism … were central to evangelicals' move to the right" in the 1940s and 50s, and Worthen (2013) shows that movement leaders marshaled concern about secular humanism to unite disparate religious conservative constituencies in campaigns against abortion, gay marriage, and women's equality. Other research has identified a view of nonreligious Americans as threatening to the public order as an influence on evangelicals' political behavior (Campbell 2006), and found that Americans of all religious backgrounds tend to mistrust atheists (Edgell et al. 2016). This suggests that concerns about secularism and humanism may have been brought into public consciousness primarily by evangelical leaders, but quickly became a broader concern amid the larger orthodox-modernist restructuring of American religion (Wuthnow 1988). We measure this dimension of SED by examining respondents' opinions about *whether one must be religious to be a good American.*

Second, many Americans have long expected moral guidance from elected officials, and evangelicals have looked to the President as a source for moral leadership. In their view, it is well if politicians are skilled orators, keen strategists, or proven problem solvers, but such criteria are secondary to the ability to provide strong moral guidance (Smidt 2006). Evangelicals look to the Presidency to defend "mythological narratives about America's distinctly Christian heritage and future" (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018:147; see also Gorski 2017), and evangelical leaders have dismissed concerns about Trump's past behavior by averring that he has been born again. Trump has nominated judges and supported policies that white evangelicals

widely approve of. That white evangelical leaders feel compelled to affirm his *personal* religiosity even as his policies and nominations advance their interests speaks to the importance that evangelical culture ascribes to personal moral leadership rooted in religious faith. We therefore analyze respondents' opinions regarding *whether it is important that a U.S. President have strong religious beliefs.*

Third, while biblical literalism is typically associated with Christian fundamentalism, a broader discourse of "Judeo-Christian heritage" informs a "contract" approach to the public good (Gorski 2017a; Williams 1995). This perspective argues that God has a special plan for America, and that to live up to it, the country must govern itself according to God's will. We measure this by evaluating responses about *whether society's rules should be based on God's laws.*

Fourth, while few Americans openly favor theocracy, many evangelicals prefer a government that affirms the importance of their beliefs and traditions, and they have sought broad accommodation to practice aspects of their faith that conflict with existing law. The proliferation of "religious freedom restoration" laws after the legalization of same sex marriage, for instance, marks an effort to carve out accommodations for people whose beliefs do not recognize the validity of same sex marriages (Haider-Market and Taylor 2016; Jones 2016). Conservative Christians previously lobbied to persuade the George W. Bush and Obama administrations to funnel social service and disaster relief money through religious organizations, which enabled them to reinforce racial and cultural boundaries in humanitarian programs (Hackworth 2012). To measure respondents' support for substantive government accommodation of religion, we analyze respondents' opinions about *how schools should handle prayer in the classroom* and *whether governments should fund religious charities.*

These measures reflect four key ways that discursive resources from white evangelicalism have spilled over into debates about national identity and belonging. Two analytical decisions regarding the selection of measures warrant further explanation. First, we considered including a measure of free market fundamentalism in the LCA model, but decided against it because research shows that the modern version of free market fundamentalism did not emerge from white evangelicalism, as some argue. Rather, free market champions marshaled white evangelicals' mistrust of nonwhite, non-Christian people during the cold war era to generate support for laissez-faire policies (Hicks 2006; Kruse 2016; McAdam and Kloos 2014). Moreover, a key mechanism of modern free market fundamentalism is the provision of social services through nongovernmental institutions, such as religious organizations (Davis and Robinson 2012). Our model already accounts for this by asking whether government should fund religious charities.

Second, one might argue that school prayer should not be included in an evaluation of SED, because it is often explicitly Christian, and hence not secularized. School prayer is more particularistic than our other indicator variables, but it is appropriate to include because schools are venues of moral socialization where debates about moral discourse are contested. School prayer is more than a unique flashpoint over the public accommodation of Christianity in the U.S.: it is a locus of contention over what kinds of moral commitments are necessary for good citizenship and whether government institutions should use religion to cultivate such commitments among children (Schwadel 2013). Accordingly, we include attitudes about school prayer among our measures.

We do not contend that only white evangelicals will support any or all of these items. Rather, we argue that these measures capture some key elements of a discourse through which

evangelical culture might continue to influence American political life in an era of declining religious affiliation and increasing cultural polarization. By identifying patterns in how Americans – evangelical or not—evaluate these propositions, we can better understand the role of evangelical ideas as discursive resources shaping American public life.

Data

We use data from the nationally representative 2014 Boundaries in the American Mosaic Survey (N=2521, response rate 57.9%). Participants were drawn from GfK Group's KnowledgePanel, a probability-based online panel consisting of approximately 50,000 non-institutionalized adult members of English and Spanish-speaking households recruited using a combination of probability-based random address sampling and random digit dialing; multiple sequential samples drawn from this rotating panel membership each reliably represent the U.S. population (Callegaro and DiSogra 2008). GfK's methods produce less random measurement error and less social desirability bias than telephone sampling (Chang and Krosnick 2009) and self-selection bias is not an important factor for participating in these surveys (Cameron and DeShazo 2013; Heeren et al. 2008). GfK provides computers for respondent households that lack internet access. The BAM survey respondents included over-samples of 400 African-American and 400 Hispanic respondents. Sample weights developed according to 2010 Current Population Survey benchmarks were used to adjust for these oversamples.

Method

We use Latent Class Analysis (LCA) to identify respondents' attitudes regarding SED. LCA identifies unobserved constructs that explain associations between observed variables

(Bonikowski and DiMaggio 2016; Linzer and Lewis 2011). Here, the unobserved constructs are underlying attitudes toward SED that produce patterns of responses to our five observed measures. These observed measures include three symbolic expressions: religion as a marker of good citizenship (a person must be religious to be a good American), as a set of rules for living together (society's rules should be based on God's laws), and as an aspect of political leadership (a President should have strong religious beliefs); and two institutional expressions: school prayer (how should public schools handle the issue of prayer in the classroom?) and social service provision (government should financially support the charitable works of religious organizations). This group of variables is similar to scales used in previous studies to measure attitudes about evangelical culture and traditions (Froese, Bader, and Smith 2008; Perry and Whitehead 2015); our analysis builds on these by using LCA instead of additive scales to identify the latent preferences that drive patterns of responses. LCA is preferred to additive scales because it identifies discrete groups of respondents with distinct sets of attitudes, rather than presuming that the input of each measure to a continuous or ordinal scale is logically equivalent. It can distinguish between groups of respondents whose total affinity for SED is similar in magnitude, but qualitatively different because it is driven by preferences for different elements of the discourse.

Each of our observed measures except school prayer used a Likert-style scale of four response choices, where one is "strongly agree" and four is "strongly disagree." The school prayer question offered four response choices, which we recoded so a response of one ("they should say a Christian prayer that refers to Jesus") reflected the strongest preference for traditionally Christian culture, and a response of four ("they should avoid it entirely") reflected the strongest aversion. We fit LCA models from these five variables. Descriptive statistics are

shown in Table 1. For each symbolic item, the mean response is closer to one than four, suggesting that, on average, respondents prefer that ideas with roots in evangelical culture have some effect on public and political life. For both institutional items, however, the mean response is closer to four than one, indicating that respondents generally oppose the infusion of SED into the affairs of government institutions.

Table 1 about here.

After choosing these variables as indicators of respondents' preferences, we fit LCA models[1] to identify patterns of affinity for SED that could explain the associations between the observed variables. LCA estimates two parameters. First, latent class probabilities indicate the probability that a randomly chosen respondent will be a member of a given class. These are analytically equivalent to the proportion of the sample that belongs to a class (Vermunt and Magidson 2003). Because LCA estimates a mixture model, these parameters represent theoretical probabilities rather than true class membership shares, but they are reliable estimates of each class's prevalence in the population (Linzer and Lewis 2011). Second, class-conditional response probabilities indicate the probability that a member of a given class will give a particular response to an indicator variable. These parameters are interpreted as the classes' substantive characteristics.

Determining what number of latent classes best fits a given data set involves statistical and theoretical considerations (Nylund, Asparouhov, and Muthén 2007). Fit statistics include the Bootstrap Likelihood Ratio Test and the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC), but these must be balanced against theoretical concerns. Occasionally, statistical indicators suggest models with dozens of latent classes, which offer no explanatory power (Nylund et al. 2007). After fitting

models ranging from two to seven classes, we determined that a four class model fits the data best. This solution produced the best BIC and makes theoretical sense, as we discuss below.

After choosing the four class model, we used a multinomial logit latent class regression model (Yamaguchi 2000) to examine covariates' effects on respondents' probabilities of membership in each class. This model estimates logistic regression coefficients indicating the change in the probability that a respondent will belong to a given class against a reference class, given a one-unit change in the covariate. We set the ardent opposition class as the reference class and examined covariates' effects on the probability of respondents' membership in the three classes showing stronger affinity for SED. This allowed us to assess whether variables of theoretical interest, including religious affiliation, religious attendance, religious salience, attitudes about race, and views on public morality, are associated with affinity for SED.[2] This procedure generates unstandardized logit coefficients, such that the log-ratio probability P of a respondent's membership in a given class C_j as against the reference class C_1 is estimated as:

$$\ln(P(C_j)/P(C_1)) = M + \sum_{i=1}^{i} \beta_i X_i$$

Results

Latent Class Model: Four Orientations to Secularized Evangelical Discourse

Our model identified four prevailing sets of attitudes toward SED: ardent opposition, moderate opposition, moderate support, and ardent support. While research responding to the culture wars thesis argued that U.S. society was characterized by liberal and conservative fringe factions bracketing a broad center (DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1996), subsequent work identifies a cleavage that divides the center into liberal and conservative wings (Baldassarri and

Goldberg 2014; Sherkat et al. 2011). Our solution aligns with these findings, since our four-class model fits the data better than a three-class solution that would force together the two moderate classes into a unified central bloc.

Results, shown in Figure 1, indicate that about 17% of Americans are ardent opponents of SED, 25% are moderate opponents, 34% are moderate supporters, and 24% are ardent supporters. Together, the moderate and ardent supporters constitute a majority (58%) of respondents who prefer that SED infuse politics to some degree, compared to 42% who believe its influence should be minimal or nonexistent. Notably, the 58% who are at least moderate supporters is much larger than the proportion of respondents in the sample who are white evangelicals (24%), confirming that support for ideas rooted in evangelical culture is not limited to white evangelicals themselves. This evangelical repertoire for political claimsmaking resonates among many outside the white evangelical subculture.

Figure 1 about here.

Extreme Classes – Severe Polarization

Class-conditional response probabilities (Figure 1) give the probability that a member of a given class will provide a particular response to an indicator question. They allow us to assess how the four sets of attitudes are driven by specific reactions to the different components of SED. Additive scales summed across the five measures would offer no way to determine how responses to specific propositions combine to create different profiles of support for SED; using LCA enables us to identify specific preferences that drive class membership. This allows us to observe that the symbolic dimensions of SED are more divisive than the institutional dimensions, as we explain below.

Approximately 41% of respondents are ardent opponents or ardent supporters. These classes capture starkly different views about the association of religion with national identity and belonging. While it is not surprising that we found two classes with polarized views, it is notable that their attitudes regarding the three symbolic measures diverge much more sharply than do their views on the two institutional measures. We find striking disagreement about how SED should infuse symbolic political culture, but the disagreement is less severe concerning how state institutions should handle religious accommodation.

Ardent opponents have a high probability of strongly disagreeing with the use of religion as a citizenship marker (.82), as a set of rules for living together (.90), and as an arbiter of strong political leadership (.63). They also are highly likely to prefer that schools avoid prayer entirely (.73), and to strongly disagree that government should fund religious charities (.66). In contrast, ardent supporters tend to strongly agree that SED should infuse symbolic politics, with high probabilities of strongly agreeing that one must be religious to be a good American (.55), that society's rules should be based on God's laws (.83), and that a President should be religious (.65). But they are more skeptical that public schools should offer explicitly Christian prayers. They are about as likely to support a moment of silence (.28) or a general prayer that refers to God, but not to a specific religion (.31), as an explicitly Christian prayer that refers to Jesus (.30). Also, their probability of strongly agreeing that government should fund religious charities (.32) is much lower than their probabilities of strong agreement on the symbolic measures. While ardent opponents' disapproval of SED spans symbolic and institutional dimensions, ardent supporters employ SED to construct symbolic boundaries more readily than to support institutional accommodation of religion.

This finding points to evangelical culture's continuing importance in the construction of symbolic boundaries in the public sphere. Ardent supporters use SED to distinguish between good and bad citizens, laws, and leaders, but they do not advocate for a theocracy. Their strongest support among these symbolic statements is not for claims about individual citizens' religious identities, though these are important, but for statements about the importance of religious symbols for establishing political authority and shared standards of right and wrong. In contrast, ardent opponents recoil from SED and favor a political culture devoid of religious symbols and boundaries. It is not only political elites who are divided about the appropriateness of constructing symbolic boundaries distinguishing morally worthy, "true" Americans from dubious outsiders (Williams 2013; Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018); we find the same division among ordinary Americans.

The Moderate Classes: A Unified Center?

What of the 59% of Americans who hold moderate opinions regarding SED? We find that they do not constitute a unified center, but are split into distinct groups: moderate opponents and moderate supporters (c.f. Baldassarri and Goldberg 2014; Sherkat et al. 2011). These groups hold different ideas about the symbolic measures, but they have similar opinions on institutional accommodation. Moderate opponents tend to oppose SED's symbolic dimensions, but not to strongly oppose them, like ardent opponents do. Likewise, moderate supporters tend to agree with the symbolic claims, but not to strongly agree, like ardent supporters do. While these groups hold distinct attitudes regarding SED's symbolic dimensions, their opinions on institutional accommodation are similar. Both moderate opponents (.47) and moderate supporters (.55) are more likely to prefer that schools hold a moment of silence in the classroom than to support

avoiding prayer entirely or offering full-on prayers. Moderate opponents are likely to disagree with the government funding of religious charity (.60), but much less likely to strongly disagree (.22). Moderate supporters are equally likely to agree (.41) or disagree (.41) that the government should fund religious charities, and more likely to strongly disagree (.13) than to strongly agree (.05).

In other words, the moderates are not a unified central bloc, but two distinct groups. They hold similar opinions about government accommodation of religion, but they disagree about symbolic political culture. One group of moderates envisions a public sphere in which symbolic boundaries informed by religion matter, even if they are less rigid than those envisioned by the ardent supporters. The other group of moderates rejects the notion that religious criteria are an appropriate basis of such boundaries.

Implications of the Four Classes

These results deepen our understanding of evangelical Christian ideas' enduring cultural influence in three ways. First, by measuring how respondents of all religious backgrounds respond to propositions that are substantively but not formally associated with evangelical traditions, we provide evidence that propositions connected to evangelical culture and practice, which were marshaled and politicized by social movement actors and Republican party leaders throughout the twentieth century (Kruse 2016), continue to appeal to many Americans. While its demographic preeminence has evaporated (Jones 2016), white Christian America's cultural influence remains profound, furnishing symbolic boundaries that appeal to many whose religious identities do not reflect the symbols' religious roots. While these boundaries are more porous than they once were, our findings indicate that they are still at least tacitly recognized as valid by

many today, but rejected by nearly as many. Hence, they constitute a more important source of polarization than the institutional dimensions of SED we measured.

Second, even among the moderates, consensus about religion's symbolic role is limited. People generally agree about how governments should accommodate religious belief and commitment, but the role of evangelical ideas in symbolic boundary making remains a source of contention. If a civil religious discourse is to provide a basis for compromise and cooperation among Americans who hold moderate views on religion and politics, as Gorski (2017a) has recently argued, our findings suggest that this discourse will need to be more clearly separated from the legacy of white Christian America, and the symbolic boundaries associated with it, than SED is. Third, the evidence that even strong supporters of SED hesitate to support explicitly Christian prayers in schools and government funding of religious charities suggests that even the most culturally conservative Americans use religious ideas as a source of symbolic boundaries more than as a basis for law and policy.

Composition of the Four Classes: Latent Class Regression Model

The analysis above does not tell us which Americans possess each set of attitudes. We use a multinomial logit latent class regression model (Yamaguchi 2000) to determine sociodemographic covariates' relation to the probability that a given respondent falls into a particular class. We analyze the effects of three types of variables.[3] First, we consider the effects of religious attendance, salience (as measured by the question "how important is your religion to you?"), and identification.[4] Second, we include a question asking whether leaders of racial minority groups have too much power in American society. We chose this measure because research indicates that some Americans favor a strong religious presence in public debate to

protect "a moral order underpinned by shared values and a history of a unified, white Christian culture" (Edgell and Tranby 2010:176), and that conservative Christians often object to the explicit use of race as a social category (Emerson and Smith 2001; Perry and Whitehead 2015). Asking respondents about their views regarding leaders of racial minority groups, rather than racial minorities in general, brings out possible objections to the idea that racial minority groups are systematically disadvantaged and thus require specific leaders and movements to advance their interests. This allows us to see whether skepticism of structural racism is associated with affinity for SED. Finally, we include a variable that asks whether a lack of shared morals is a problem. This allows us to examine the degree to which generalized concerns regarding public morals are associated with support for the strong symbolic boundaries proposed by SED. By observing which classes are most attractive to respondents who believe that a lack of shared morals is problematic, we can assess whether Americans' concerns about public morality associate with the culturally narrow preferences of the ardent supporters or the more inclusive preferences of the moderate classes.

Tables 2 and 3 about here.

Religious Commitment

Table 2 shows means and standard deviations for the regression covariates, and Table 3 shows regression coefficients.[5] Even after controlling for religious affiliation, political ideology, and other factors, religious attendance and salience are strongly associated with increased affinity for SED. Religious attendance has a positive association with membership in the strong support class, and religious salience's effects are positive and increase in magnitude with the distance from ardent opposition.

Both mainline and conservative Protestantism associate positively with increased support for SED. This demonstrates two important dynamics. First, it is not only evangelicals who use SED to construct symbolic boundaries. Mainline Protestants are also significantly more attracted to moderate opposition, moderate support, and ardent support than to ardent opposition; Catholics are attracted to moderate opposition and moderate support, but not ardent support. Second, religion in general has been politicized by conservative social movements' appropriation of conservative Christian discourse. Many who are bothered by the tightening bonds between evangelical discourse and the Republican party have disaffiliated from religion entirely (Hout and Fischer 2014), while Christians who remain, including Catholics and mainline and conservative Protestants, support propositions associated with SED to protect society from the decline of public morality that they perceive to be occurring. The exception to this pattern is Catholicism's lack of any significant association with strong support. We cannot say with certainty why this exception exists, but we can posit several potential explanations. First, progressive Catholic social teaching remains salient in many parishes. Second, there is a high proportion of Latinos, who do not exhibit affinity for SED in our results, among U.S. Catholics. Third, Catholic lay leaders tend to be politically progressive compared to their mainline and evangelical Protestant counterparts (Bean and Martinez 2015). Fourth, Catholic parishes typically exhibit more internal political diversity than Protestant churches do (Putnam and Campbell 2010). However, the association of Catholicism with moderate support for SED, combined with our other findings, indicates the lasting influence of evangelical-rooted traditions on visions of national belonging not only among evangelicals, but also among mainline Protestants and Catholics. In all, we find that Christians of all denominations (except Black Protestants, who we cannot analyze due to data sparseness; see Note 4) generally support using

SED as a way to delineate national belonging, while having a religious identity other than white evangelical, mainline Protestant, or Catholic has no association with support for claims rooted in SED. This suggests that even while SED has bubbled out of evangelical institutions and into political rhetoric, it retains a symbolic specificity that excludes non-Christians.

Race

Previous literature has argued that white evangelical Protestantism is associated with negative views of racial diversity (Perry 2013; Perry and Whitehead 2015) and opposition to social programs designed to address racial inequities (Edgell and Tranby 2007). We find a positive association between the belief that leaders of racial minority groups have too much power and membership in the more supportive classes, and the effects are strongest for ardent support. Existing literature notes the tension between conservative Christian theology and race-focused movements and policies. Our analysis shows that it is not only evangelical identity that correlates with this skepticism, but also preference for implicit evangelical influence on public life. This extends the argument that white evangelical identity is as much a racial identity as a religious one (Bracey II and Moore 2017; Edgell and Tranby 2010; Gorski 2017b) by demonstrating that mistrust of leaders of racial minority groups is associated not only with conservative Christian identity and belief, but with support for the use of evangelical ideas as symbolic racialized boundary markers.

In light of this finding, it may seem puzzling that Black identity is positively associated with affinity for SED. Yet prior research has shown the appeal that religious nationalist discourse holds to many members of Black churches (Barnes 2005; Nelson 2005; Straughn and Feld 2010). This constitutes further support for our argument that SED is highly flexible, transcends any

single racial or religious identity, and has social meanings that are contingent on the ways it is invoked by social movement actors and political leaders. It is plausible that for many whites, this discourse is filtered through a contract vision of the public good (Williams 1995), in which U.S. society has a divine mission that it is currently failing to fulfill. In contrast, some African-Americans, especially those steeped in the social gospel of Martin Luther King, Jr., may interpret the same underlying discourse through a covenant vision, in which racism is viewed as a national, collective sin (Billingsley 1999; Pattillo-McCoy 1998). Therefore, Blacks' affinity for SED does not necessarily mean that they employ this discourse in the same way whites do, but that SED can support various political positions based upon the distinct social meanings that different racial, religious, and cultural groups ascribe to it.

Shared Morals

The final covariate we included measures respondents' agreement that "a lack of shared moral values is a major problem in U.S. Society." Results show that agreement is strongly associated with membership in the ardent support class, and not in the moderate classes. This is evidence that, similar to "the traditional family," "shared moral values" functions as an ideological code (Smith 1993) for a narrow vision of national identity that excludes the nonreligious, and suggests that any potential "sacred center" (Gorski 2017a) that might emerge around a shared moral language will need to explicitly distinguish itself from the historical legacy of white conservative Christianity.

Conclusion

We introduced SED to capture the ways discursive resources from evangelical culture might potentially contribute to the symbolic construction of the public sphere and the boundaries people draw around national identity. We identified four profiles of support for this discourse. Our findings show that SED, beyond evangelical identity itself, is an important means of maintaining symbolic boundaries. It is primarily through boundary drawing, and not the institutional accommodation of religion, that culturally conservative Americans espouse a narrow vision of national identity and belonging. This vision appeals not only to evangelicals, but to other Christians as well. It shows no signs of appealing to the nonreligious or to people with other religious identities. However, it is important to note that additional research using larger subsamples of religious minority groups such as Black Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and others would be necessary to evaluate how people in each of these groups evaluate SED.

Some observers might argue that the relative lack of support for institutional accommodation that we identified in this study means that SED is not divisive, because even its strongest supporters are not theocrats. We counter that the sharp disagreement regarding the role of evangelical ideas in defining good citizenship, laws, and leadership provides an empirical backing to some of the claims made by Gorksi (2017a), who points to the division between religious nationalists and radical secularists as a problem for American democracy (see also Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018). By providing a means of articulating support for a set of nominally pluralistic but culturally narrow criteria for good citizenship, effective leadership, and societal rules, SED undergirds a desire to protect a public sphere dominated by Christian values and traditions, if not Christian belief or identity. This is a key way religion shapes political culture even as rates of individual belief and affiliation diminish.

We also found reason to suspect that the cultural center is not as unified as some scholars suggest (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Our data were fit better by a four-class solution with a divided center than by a three-class solution with a unified center. The break that we identified between the two moderate classes is evidence that SED's symbolic role is not only a source of division among radical secularists and religious nationalists, but also divides moderates, echoing earlier findings by Baldassarri and Goldberg (2014). Ardent opponents and ardent supporters of SED may be responsible for much of the discord rampant in U.S. society today (Gorski 2017a), but religious discourse is also a notable source of cultural division for moderates.

Our regression results show that ardent support for SED is associated not only with evangelical Christian identity, but also with mainline Protestant identity, and to a limited degree, with Catholic identity. Even when we control for religion, affinity for SED positively associates with concern about a lack of shared morals and skepticism about the role of leaders of racial minority groups. These preferences have no explicit relationship to evangelical Christianity, but they associate with affinity for SED even when we control for conservative Christian identification, religious attendance, religious salience, and political conservatism. These findings demonstrate the religious categories' durability as boundaries around a view of national identity that has no explicit relationship to any particular denomination or creed, but draws its symbolic underpinnings from the narrow repertoire of citizenship and the public good that has emerged from conservative Christian culture. They corroborate the theory that evangelical discourse props up a racially exclusionary political theology (Tranby and Hartmann 2008). This discourse has become unmoored from its doctrinal and traditional roots, and now links religious categories with ethnic nationalism (Braunstein 2017a; Gorski 2017b).

Our findings speak to the persistent, polarizing influence of a discourse that infuses public culture with specific instantiations of conservative Christian ideas and traditions. They also align with a theoretical model that understands public opinion and political ideology as sets of expressive cultural standpoints and elective affinities (Jost, Federico, and Napier 2009; Perrin and McFarland 2011), rather than policy preferences alone. This literature, paired with work on the cultural turn in the sociology of religion (Edgell 2012), can help us to better understand the nature of symbolic boundaries that Americans cast around religious identities, and how those boundaries influence other attitudes.

Notes

[1] Analyses were conducted using the Stata LCA Plugin from the Penn State University Methodology Center (Lanza et al. 2014). We produced Figure 1 by replicating the baseline analysis using the R package poLCA (Linzer and Lewis 2011).

[2] Research advises caution in conducting latent class regression models, because errors in the original class assignment can introduce bias into the covariates. A number of methods have been proposed to control for this (Bakk, Tekle, and Vermont 2013; Clark and Muthén 2009). We employ the "one step" correction method in which our model simultaneously estimates class assignments as it models the relationship between covariates and class membership—an approach validated by this literature. We also evaluated the entropy statistic for our class assignment model. Entropy was 0.731, indicating negligible potential bias on the covariates from the class assignment (Clark and Muthén 2009).

[3] Besides these substantive variables of interest, we include controls for household income, age (measured ordinally with 7 categories), parental status, having at least one parent who was an immigrant, political conservatism (measured on a 1-7 subjective scale), race, sex, marital status (married or not), and possessing a college degree.

[4] We use the RELTRAD classification (Steensland et al. 2000). Religious nones are the reference category; Black Protestants and Jews were included in the Other Religion category due to small subsamples.

[5] The beta coefficients in multinomial logit latent class regression models can only be compared within variables, not between them. For instance, we can say that religious salience has a stronger association with strong support (1.20) than with moderate support (0.98), but we cannot say that religious salience has a stronger association with strong support than religious attendance does, even though its coefficient is larger. Therefore, we report only unstandardized coefficients; a detailed explanation can be found in Yamaguchi (2000:1707–12).

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Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations for LCA Indicator Variables

	Scale	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
One must be religious to be a good American	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	2.41	1.04	2503
Society's rules should be based on God's laws	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	2.33	1.06	2431
A president should have strong religious beliefs	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	2.28	.94	2431
How should public schools handle the issue of prayer in the classroom?	1 = Christian prayer 2 = general prayer 3 = moment of silence 4 = avoid completely	2.88	.91	2446
Government should provide financial support for the charitable works of religious organizations	1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree)	2.78	.94	2431

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Regression Covariates

Variable	Scale	Mean	Standard Dev.
Household Income	1-20 (categorical)	11.89	4.40
Age	1-7 (categorical)	4.08	1.69
Parent	Dummy (0=No)	.69	.46
Immigrant Parent	Dummy (0=No)	.21	.41
Female	Dummy (0=No)	.50	.50
Other Race	Dummy (0=No)	0.08	0.34
Black	Dummy (0=No)	0.16	0.36
Hispanic	Dummy (0=No)	0.17	0.37
Southern Residence	Dummy (0=No)	0.19	0.41
Political Conservativism	1-7 (categorical; 7 = most conservative)	2.75	1.68
Married	Dummy (0=No)	0.54	0.44
College Degree	Dummy (0=No)	0.31	0.46
Catholic	Dummy (0=No)	0.23	0.45
Other Religion	Dummy (0=No)	0.08	0.46
Conservative Protestant	Dummy (0=No)	0.24	0.43
Mainline Protestant	Dummy (0=No)	0.12	0.46
Religious Salience	1 (not important) through 4 (very important)	3.08	1.07
Religious Attendance	1-7 (categorical)	3.49	2.21
Racial leaders have too much power	1 (strongly disagree) through 4 (strongly agree)	2.59	0.91
Lack of shared morals is a major problem	1 (strongly disagree) through 4 (strongly agree)	3.08	0.84

Table 3: Unstandardized Regression Coefficients

	Moderate Opposition			Moderate Support			Ardent Support	
	Beta	Std. Error		Beta	Std. Error		Beta	Std. Error
Income	-.02*	.01		-.05***	.01		-.06***	.01
Age	.04	.03		.06***	.03		.06**	.03
Parent	.27***	.10		.07	.09		.03	.11
Parent was immigrant	.15	.12		-.30***	.11		.05	.12
Female	-.13	.09		-.18**	.08		.03	.09
Other Race	.50***	.18		.55***	.18		.80***	.19
Black	.18	.14		.76***	.14		.71***	.14
Hispanic	-.19	.15		.33***	.14		.21	.16
Southern Residence	.01	.10		.07	.08		.09	.09
Politically Conservative	.15***	.03		.25***	.03		.37***	.03
Married	-.04	.10		.16*	.09		.04	.10
College Degree	-.22***	.09		-.43***	.08		-.56***	.10
Religious Attendance	-.03	.03		-.01	.03		0.24***	.03
Religious Salience	.52***	.06		.98***	.06		1.20***	.06
Catholic	.78***	.14		1.08***	.12		.10	.15
Other Religion	-.07	.20		.25	.17		-.17	.20
Conservative Christian	.41***	.14		1.03***	.13		.61***	.14
Mainline Protestant	1.32***	.16		1.71***	.15		1.09***	.16

Racial leaders have too much power	.20***	.05		.34***	.05		.60***	.06
A lack of shared moral values is a problem	.09	.05		.38***	.05		.81***	.06

Note: Ardent opposition is the reference class. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Figure 1: Class-Conditional Response Probabilities