Will God's Grace Guide My Vote?

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Guiding Questions

1. Do subliminal religious primes influence political decision-making?
2. If yes, in which direction on the left-right scale?

Past Research

- Religion is a central aspect to American life
- Personal identities shape political decision-making processes
- Past research suggests that individuals who vote in churches, or who are reminded of their religiosity, tend to be more conservative
- High costs to voting leads to a greater reliance on heuristics

Hypotheses

1. Religious primes influence political decisions
2. People think more conservatively in the religious mindset

Experimental Method

Participants

- 304 of 356 original respondents incorporated in analysis (126 identify as female)
- Recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk
- Participants were paid $1 for their participation

Procedure

- Sentence Reorganization
- Statement and Agreement on Controversial Issue
- Religiosity Measure
- Demographic Questions
- Manipulation Check

Neutral Prime

Stimuli	Solution
appreciated presence was imagine her	Her presence was appreciated
fall was worried she always	She was always worried
shoes give replace old the	Replace the old shoes
retrace good have holiday a	Have a good holiday
more paper it once do	Do it once more
send I over it mailed	I mailed it over
rode hammer he the train	He rode the train
yesterday it finished track he	He finished it yesterday
sky the seamless blue is	The sky is blue
prepared somewhat I was retired	I was somewhat prepared

Religious Prime

Stimuli	Solution
appreciated presence was imagine her	Her presence was appreciated
his worships bent idol he	He worships his idol
more paper it once do	Do it once more
sacred was book refer the	The book was sacred
send I over it mailed	I mailed it over
the poor greed pray for	Pray for the poor
yesterday it finished track he	He finished it yesterday
her have in hair faith	Have faith in her
prepared somewhat I was retired	I was somewhat prepared
a eleven was miracle it	It was a miracle

Conservative Argument

The US needs to reduce the number of women having abortions!
The Government should stop supporting abortion providers like
Planned Parenthood and should make abortion illegal
Here are the reasons why:

1. Fetuses in the womb are unborn children – they feel pain and have the right to live

2. Women who have abortions often suffer physical consequences and mental anguish

3. It is unethical to use tax dollars to support abortion providers because so many Americans believe abortion is immoral

Liberal Stance

The US needs to ensure women have access to safe abortions! The Government should increase funding for abortion providers such as Planned Parenthood and should end abortion restrictions.
Here are the reasons why:

1. The government should not control women's bodies – forcing women to bear children against their will makes them second-class citizens

2. Making abortions illegal will result in women seeking out unsafe abortions, which are dangerous and sometimes result in death

3. It is unfair that many women who need abortions cannot afford them. The government should find a way to reduce the cost of abortions for low-income women.

Religiosity Survey

Each of the items here uses the following scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree

1. I believe the God exists
2. Prayer to God is one of my usual practices
3. Religion gives me a great amount of security in my life
4. I consider myself a religious person
5. My religion influences the way I choose to act in my routine life
6. I feel there are more important things in life than religion
7. I am interested in religion
8. Religious considerations influence my everyday affairs
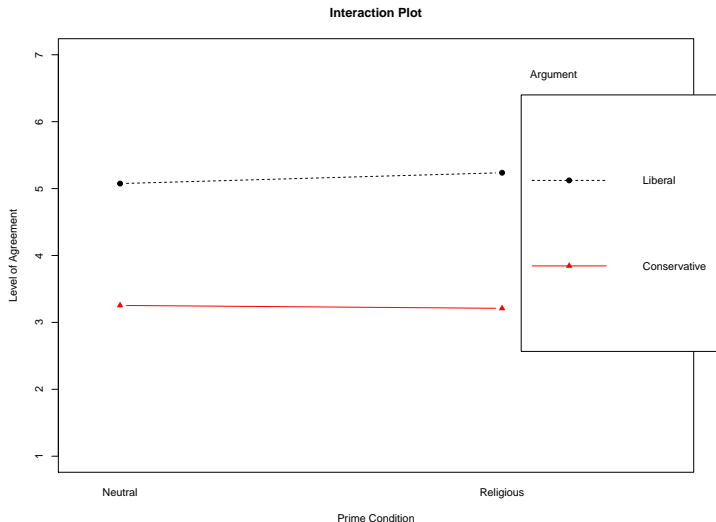
Results

Method of Analysis

- 2 (Prime Condition) $\times$ 2 (Issue Condition) ANOVA
  - Between-Subjects design
- $\alpha = .05$

Results

Variables	df	SS	MS	F	p-value
Prime Condition	1	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.984
Argument Condition	1	280.00	280.03	56.22	0.001***
Interaction	1	0.8	0.79	0.159	0.690
Residuals	288	1489.00	4.98		

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Interaction Plot

General Discussion

Conclusions

- Religious primes did not influence vote choice - No matter what priming condition participants were in, they were equally likely to voice support or reject the subject at hand
- Main effect present on Argument variable - Liberal position leads to greater agreement

Future Directions

- Limitations with Amazon Mechanical Turk and personal preconceptions
- Field experiment study and voter files reflecting precinct returns
- Use of a less polarizing subject as manipulation so that people would not enter the study with preconceived notions about the topic, which were largely reflected in their qualitative responses

Discussion and Questions