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## The Effects of Candidate Religiosity and Candidate Secularism on Voters' Support for the Political Candidate

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

THE EFFECTS OF CANDIDATE RELIGIOSITY AND CANDIDATE SECULARISM  
ON VOTERS' SUPPORT FOR THE POLITICAL CANDIDATE

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS  
PROGRAM IN APPLIED SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

BY  
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But because I am a Catholic... it is apparently necessary for me to state once again... what kind of America I believe in.  
— John F. Kennedy

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the effects of candidate religiosity, candidate secularism, and voter fundamentalism on voters' support for a political candidate. Seven effects were tested: 1) *the religiosity effect*, which suggests that a religious candidate will be supported more than a nonreligious candidate; 2) *the secularism effect*, which suggests that a secular candidate will be supported more than a nonsecular candidate; 3) *the JFK effect*, which suggests that a secular religious candidate will be supported more than a nonsecular religious candidate; 4) *the deviant effect*—an opposite of the JFK effect—, which suggests that a secular religious candidate constitutes a group deviant, and thus will be supported less than a nonsecular religious candidate; 5) *the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism*, which suggests that low fundamentalists will display the secularism and JFK effects whereas high fundamentalists will display the religiosity and deviant effects; 6) *the controversial issue effect*, which suggests that, since secularism is a controversial issue, neither secular nor nonsecular candidates will be supported more than a candidate who says nothing about secularism; and 7) *the relative amount of information effect*, which suggests that adding more information about a candidate's issue positions will decrease the relative influence of other issue positions on voters' evaluation of the candidate.

The study employed an experimental design. To manipulate candidate religiosity, the candidate was either described or not described as religious. To manipulate



secularism, the candidate was described as favoring policies that endorsed religion-state separation, favoring policies that endorsed religion-state blending, or as not possessing any particular secularism policies. The dependent variables were the likelihood of voters to vote for the candidate, voters' attitude toward the candidate, and perceived competence and integrity of the candidate. The findings support the religiosity effect and the secularism effect, which was particularly strong among low fundamentalists—an evidence of the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism. The findings also support the controversial issue effect: neither the pro-blending nor the pro-separation candidate was supported more than the candidate who said nothing about secularism. Lastly, the findings support the relative amount of information effect in predicting voting likelihood: presenting information on secularism decreased the relative influence of voters' agreement with the candidates in other issues on their likelihood to vote for the candidates.

## CHAPTER ONE

### RELIGION AND POLITICS

Politics and religion seem to be inseparable from each other. Many examples of this phenomenon focus on how religion becomes a part of worldly politics. Most notable are cases that show how religion influences candidate evaluation. For example, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, who was the 35th president of the United States, was often questioned by his political opponents regarding whether he would be more loyal to the constitution of the United States or to the Pope. His answer to this question (among others, the famous Houston speech) reiterated his support for American secularism and possibly also helped him win the presidential election,

But because I am a Catholic... it is apparently necessary for me to state once again... what kind of America I believe in. I believe in America where the separation of church and state is absolute—where no Catholic prelate would tell the president... how to act.

In a more recent case of 2012 election, attacks on the Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney that focused on his Mormon belief also underline the relevance of religion in politics. Indeed, in the candidate evaluation literature, religion has been seen as one of the factors that shapes voters' evaluation of a candidate (e.g., Campbell, Green, & Layman, 2011; Cutler, 2002).

There are at least two explanations regarding why religion can be influential in shaping voters' preference. The first relates to social identity theory. The minimal group paradigm (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971) suggests that even a trivial group

categorization leads individuals to be more favorable toward their ingroup and less favorable toward outgroups. Moreover, Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman (2010) have argued that religion constitutes a powerful social identity. As an identity, religion offers ways to manage the complexity of social world (Savage & Liht, 2008) and grants eternal group membership. If even a trivial group membership can influence interpersonal attitudes, it is reasonable to argue that information regarding a candidate's religion, which is a much more meaningful type of group membership, will influence voters' evaluation of a political candidate, for example by decreasing their support for a candidate with disliked religion (Layman, Kalkan, & Green, 2009).

That voters are more likely to vote for a candidate who shares their religious views is also related to the similarity-attraction principle (Byrne, 1961; Sachs, 1975). Similar others serve as social evidence that one's view of the world (in this case, one's religion) is correct (Byrne, 1962). In Westmaas & Silver's (2006) words, "similar others validate and legitimize one's views of the world and satisfy the need for order, accuracy and consistency in interpreting the world"(p. 1538). Conceivably, candidates or parties can employ religious rhetoric to prime voters' identity and emphasize shared or similar worldviews, thus garnering support from them (e.g., Burhanuddin, 2008; Donahue & Nielsen, 2005; Rozeel, 2007)

A second explanation for the importance of religion in candidate evaluation comes from the incomplete information perspective. In an ideal world, it is assumed that voters have all the necessary information to make political judgments. However, rarely (if ever) does the real world work that way. In fact, information availability is often limited (e.g., Van Lange & Rusbult, 2011). An actor (e.g., a voter) might not know the full

motives and goals of the other actor (e.g., a candidate). In such cases, voters need to fill in the missing information and they do so by using, among other things, the candidate's personal attributes or characteristics (Kinder, 1986; Miller, Wattenberg, & Malanchuk, 1986) as a basis for making inferences about the candidate. For example, Cutler (2002) found that increasing the socio-demographic distance (reducing socio-demographic similarities) reduced support for the candidate among participants, regardless of the level of policy information that they possessed. Such a finding suggests that no matter the level of information that voters possess it is never perfect and there is always the need to infer some less obvious aspects of the candidate from his or her personal attributes.

Religion is arguably one of the most important personal attributes that can be used in the candidate evaluation process to fill in the incomplete information. Campbell et al. (2011) found that information about a candidate's religious affiliation affected voters' evaluation of the candidate. Specifically, affiliation to a religious group with clear partisanship to either the Democratic or Republic Party increased support for the candidate among Democrats or Republicans, respectively. When religious affiliation implied no clear partisan profile, however, no effect on voting preference was found.

One way to interpret the finding is that partisan religious profiles provide voters with clues about the candidate's ideology and where he possibly stands on various social issues, even when the candidate himself does not explicitly state the information. Affiliation to a religious group with no clear party preference, on the other hand, is less likely to provide voters with useful information about the candidate's issue positions.

Furthermore, religious affiliation-based inference of ideology seems to have solid ground as studies show that different religious denominations indeed align themselves

differently to either Democratic or Republic Party, and thus have different policy preferences and ideological perspectives (e.g., Glaeser, Ponzetto, & Shapiro, 2005; McTague & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2011; Punyanunt-Carter, Corrigan, Wrench, & McCroskey, 2010)

Obviously, the role of religion does not constitute the whole story of candidate evaluation. There are also the candidate's expressed issue positions (Ottati, Fishbein, & Middlestadt, 1988; Skitka & Mullen, 2002). Voters may judge a candidate based on how favorable the candidate's issue positions are for them. In addition, voters may also combine information from the candidate's positions and information from the candidate's personal attributes when forming their evaluative judgments.

It is this study's objective to examine the interaction between a candidate's religiosity as a personal attribute and the candidate's issue position in influencing voters' support for the candidate. Specifically, this study will examine how voters evaluate religious and nonreligious candidates who claim to support, oppose, or say nothing about secularism. Furthermore, this study will also examine how voters' fundamentalism moderates the evaluation process.

### **Secularism: Religion and the Political System**

Before examining secularism from a psychological perspective, it is useful to explain why such an effort is necessary. For this study, the justification will be drawn from political science and the sociology of religion as the two have studied secularism in a greater depth than has psychology. After describing the topic's importance, various conceptualizations of secularism will be discussed and the one that will be emphasized in this study will be more fully articulated.

## The Importance of Studying Secularism

Contrary to the popular conception that as humans become more modern and more rational the role of religion in public domains will decline and the world will become more secular (e.g., Bruce, 2002; Mills, 1959), a worldwide study by Norris & Inglehart (2004) found that the world as a whole actually had become more religious. This is attributed to what Norris and Inglehart called *existential security* or whether people find their basic needs (e.g., food, security, some sense of certainty for the future) fulfilled. According to this perspective, a lack of the security keeps religion influential. Considering that the majority of world's population lives in third world countries with many of them facing tough lives and that the populations of such countries grow faster than developed countries' (which are more likely to be secular), it should not be really surprising that after examining the data from the World Values Surveys, the authors came to that conclusion.

Consequently, one could argue that as the number of religious people grows, so will religion grow in political influence. This growth would not be important if religion and politics did not influence each other. However, as noted above, religion indeed influences political behavior. In addition, religion can be used to justify violent forms of political activity (e.g., Silberman, 2005; Van Bruinessen, 2002) and intergroup discrimination (Bowen, 2010).

When considering the effect of religion on political behavior, scholars have argued that the influence of religion on a political system is inversely related to the level of democracy (Brathwaite & Bramsen, 2011). Democracies tend to possess a greater

separation between state and religion (Fox, 2006; but see Stepan, 2000 for an alternative perspective).

Importantly, the relation between religion and politics is more bidirectional than unidirectional. It is not only that religion influences the political system, a political system too can place restrictions on religion and religious organizations. These restrictions can force religious groups to comply and may indeed moderate them (Bowen, 2010; Chernov-Hwang, 2009; Nasr, 2005). The assertion that the political system can limit religion's influence in politics draws attention to the candidate's position on secularism. This is based on the rationale that candidates are political elites who, after they are elected, will shape the political system (Jackman & Sniderman, 2002). If the elected candidate is a strong supporter of secularism, it is likely that he or she will limit the role of religion in politics and public space. On the other hand, if the candidate is favorable toward a greater role of religion in politics, he or she may blur the distinction between state and religion. From this perspective, it is clear how a psychological study of candidate evaluation that examines candidate religiosity and secularism might contribute not only to theoretical psychology but also to the advancement of democracy in this increasingly complex world.

### Defining Secularism

Defining secularism is not an easy task. The problem mainly lies in where to draw the line so that state and religious institutions can be seen as separate from each other. Such a separating line is necessary because, otherwise, the secular (the state) would become indistinguishable from the religious. Furthermore, even when the separation line has been set, it is still impossible to exclude religion from politics and policy making.

Religion is related strongly to moral teachings and politics is also about creating a moral and just society. Some religious teachings therefore might inevitably shape the state's policies, such as in the cases of abortion or same-sex marriage.

In such cases, Gamwell (1984) argued that just because some policies are in line with religious teachings, it does not mean secularism is not present. To the extent that the teachings have been successfully defended through rational arguments in open public discourses, they are no longer exclusively religious but instead become secular arguments, on which public policies can be based. Secularism, according to this argument, is when politics and policies are derived on the basis of healthy rational public debate (just like what Habermas, 1991 thought about public sphere), regardless of whether the arguments originate from religion or some other source.

Another complexity arises when one considers secularism from the perspective of what influences what. Most of the time, secularism is defined as the absence of religion's influence on politics. Such a perspective should not be very surprising because the idea was born in Europe, which had seen the authoritarian power of the Catholic church during the Dark Ages. Keeping religion distant from politics is thus considered necessary for democracy to thrive and civil society to exist. However, scholars have recently pointed out that true democracy and secularism ask not only for religion to not exert its values on politics, but also for the state to not regulate and restrict religions. In Stepan's (2000) words, democracy asks for "twin tolerations", that is for religions to respect state's authorities and for the state to not restrict religions. This is particularly problematic because some states that are commonly labeled 'secular' (e.g., France, Turkey) regulate religions, sometimes to the extent of restriction (Hurd, 2007; Kuru, 2007).



Acknowledging the importance of “twin toleration”, this study employs a definition of secularism that accommodates both the absence of too much religious influence on the state and the absence of state's restrictions on religion. Specifically, secularism is defined as *a degree of separation between state and religion, in which the state does not give uncontested preference for some religious views over the others nor does it put restrictions on the practice or teaching of any religions*. Such a definition is heavily influenced by the principle of rational public discourse and twin tolerations above, as well as by the definition used in the Religion and State project (e.g., Fox, 2006; Fox & Sandler, 2005). The project conducted extensive global studies on the extent of separation between religion and state in various countries and defined religion-state separation as *"no government support for religion and no government interference in the religious practices of both the majority and minority religions in a state"* (Fox, 2006, p. 538).

Five indicators were used by the project to measure the extent of secularism in a country. The first indicator is whether there exists a structural separation between state and religious institutions. The second indicator is whether the state puts restrictions on minority religions or gives preference to some religions over others. The third indicator is whether the state discriminates against minority religions. The fourth indicator is whether strict regulations are put on the majority religion and the fifth is whether the state accommodates religious laws into national laws.

Having discussed the political variables of this study, it is now time to turn to the psychological variables. Two psychological theories are of interest. The first is the theory of religious fundamentalism (e.g. Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, 2004, 2005).

Discussions about it are necessary considering the extensive description of how religion influences candidate evaluation above. In addition, fundamentalism has also been widely used as an individual-difference variable to predict various social and political phenomena (e.g., Moaddel & Karabenick, 2008; Rothschild, Abdollahi, & Pyszczynski, 2009; Thompson, 2007).

The second theory is social identity theory. Of particular interest is the relation between social identity and social judgment. The theory is worth discussion because this study's hypotheses regarding the effects of candidate religiosity and candidate secularism on voters' support for the candidate were derived from the social identity theory. In particular, social identity theory was used to derive hypotheses that predicted voters' fundamentalism would moderate the effects of candidate religiosity and candidate secularism on candidate evaluation.

### **Fundamentalism**

Fundamentalism can be seen as a specific form of religiosity. Altemeyer & Hunsberger (1992) defined religious fundamentalism as

the belief that there is one set of religious teachings that clearly contains the fundamental, basic, intrinsic, essential, inerrant truth about humanity and deity; that this essential truth is fundamentally opposed by forces of evil which must be vigorously fought; that this truth must be followed today according to the fundamental, unchangeable practices of the past; and that those who believe and follow these fundamental teachings have a special relationship with the deity (p.118)

Two correlates of fundamentalism have been evident in the past research. The first correlate is personality (e.g., Gibson, 1995; Stanley & Vagg, 1975; Streyffeler & McNally, 1998). A meta-analysis by Saroglou (2002a) found that, in term of big-five personality traits, fundamentalism is positively related to agreeableness and negatively

related to neuroticism and openness to experience. The second correlate is cognitive rigidity. Saroglou (2002b) found that fundamentalism is related to preference for order and predictability. One's IQ and performance in an elementary cognitive task were also found to be negatively related with one's literal belief in the scripture (Bertsch & Pesta, 2009; see Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005 for intra-textualism as the defining aspect of fundamentalism).

In the political domain, fundamentalism has been related to authoritarianism, particularly right-wing authoritarianism (RWA, Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005). If anything, the relation between the two is so strong that it is sometimes hard to differentiate them (Krauss, Streib, Keller & Silver, 2006), thus making it reasonable to propose that fundamentalism is authoritarianism in the religious domain (Altemeyer, 1996). It also shares with RWA the same aspects of conventionalism, dominance and submission (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2005).

Fundamentalism is related to strong social (religious) identity (Altemeyer, 2003). Religion is more than merely a divine guidance. It is also an identity—a special one indeed because its membership extends beyond this world (Hopkins, 2011; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Seeing religion as an identity enables one to employ concepts associated with social identity (e.g., ingroup-favoritism, stereotype against outgroup, or group's norm) to understand the effects of religion on political evaluation. Fundamentalism implies strong religious identity which affects voters' impressions of a political candidate.

## **Social Identity and Social Judgment**

### **Ingroup Favoritism and Outgroup Derogation**

One of the most intuitive consequences of strong group identification is ingroup favoritism. Individuals see their fellow group members more favorably than they see outgroup members (e.g., Tajfel et al., 1971). They also enhance intragroup similarities and overestimate intergroup differences (Hornsey, 2008).

Related to fundamentalism, Galen, Smith, Knapp & Wyngarden (2011) found that participants high in religious fundamentalism were more likely than participants low in fundamentalism to use religiosity as a basis for judging someone's morality. Specifically, high fundamentalists judged the religious target as more moral than did low fundamentalists judged him. In addition, not only did the high fundamentalists rate a religious target as more moral than a non-religious target, they were also less willing to socialize with the less religious person than were the low fundamentalists.

Galen and colleagues argued that the results were partially attributed to stronger group identification (i.e., as religious people) among high fundamentalists. In this sense, fundamentalists exhibited ingroup bias. The same bias was less likely to occur among low fundamentalists, however, presumably because an ingroup of non-fundamentalist is less concrete and more difficult to define than an ingroup of strong believers.

Furthermore, it is not only ingroup favoritism that operates in such phenomena. Galen et al. (2011) also pointed to outgroup derogation as an explanation of why high fundamentalists refused to socialize with the non-religious target. They argued that such an avoidance could be motivated by the desire to avoid moral contamination by immoral outgroups. This is arguably related to outgroup stereotyping. Believers tend to perceive

non-believers as hedonistic and impulsive whereas non-believers tend to see believers as conservative (Saroglou, Yzerbyt, & Kaschten, 2011).

Though not as extensively studied, one can derive arguments that suggest fundamentalists also harbor unfavorable attitudes or beliefs toward those who believe in the separation between religion and state. Gamwell (1984), for example, noted that the debate between secularists and believers is hard to resolve because believers are predisposed to see secularists as having an agenda of completely removing religion from state affairs and public sphere. The antagonism between the two has also manifested in various public issues such as public expression of religion or public funding for religious education (Kuru, 2007).

When it comes to Islam, Sageman (2004) pointed out that some terrorist groups fight against the government of Islamic countries as they believe that the governments separate religious from worldly matters, thus hindering the application of God's laws in all aspects of life. Another study conducted by Muluk, Sumaktoyo, & Ruth (2013) based on a national survey also found that the support for Islamic law increased as the level of religious fundamentalism increased. In short, in the eyes of fundamentalists, the terms "religious" and "secular" are antithetical. For them, a truly religious person will not limit the influence of religion to state affairs (as everything needs to be based on God's commands). Opposing a separation between the secular and the sacred (endorsing a blending between the two) can then, in a sense, be seen as a norm among fundamentalists. An important question, then, is what would happen if someone who claims being religious endorsed religion-state separation and opposed religion-state

blending? To address the question, we need to examine the literature on conformity and group deviance.

### Conformity and Deviance

Social psychology is packed with early thought-provoking studies on conformity (e.g., Asch, 1955; Milgram, 1963). Such studies highlight how humans are prone to give in to the situation or group pressure, even though it means going against one's own attitudes, beliefs, or values. One reason for such conformity is avoidance of social exclusion. Being socially excluded hurts as much as physical pain hurts (Adolphs, 2009) and damages self-esteem (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995).

Regarding individuals with high fundamentalism or religiosity, some studies indicate that they are on average more conformist than those with low fundamentalism or religiosity (e.g., Potvin, Westoff, & Ryder, 1968; Tittle & Welch, 1983; Welch, Tittle, Grasmick, 2006). Using an experimental design, Saroglou, Corneille, & Van Cappellen (2009) confirmed this notion as they exposed participants to religious priming and measured the extent of their submission and conformity. In experiment one, they found that, when primed with religious words, participants were faster in recognizing submissive words than they were when primed with neutral words. In experiment two, further confirming the finding, they found that relative to participants primed with neutral words, participants primed with religious concepts conformed more to social influence advocating they take revenge on an evaluator who previously over-criticized the participant's work. Importantly, however, these effects only emerged among participants who were chronically submissive.

The issue becomes more interesting as we acknowledge that some people do not conform to the group or social pressure easily and prefer to go their own way. Schachter (1951) noted that deviants were more likely to be excluded by other group members than conformists, and that this was particularly true for cohesive groups. This makes sense if we make the reasonable assumption that in highly cohesive groups group members tend to hold a strong group identity. A deviant is thus seen as a threat to group identity as a whole (Hutchison, Abrams, Gutierrez, & Viki, 2008).

Considering that fundamentalists tend to harbor a strong group identity and that, from the review above, one of the norms among fundamentalists is to let all aspects of life be guided by divine laws, it can be proposed that a person who says he or she is deeply religious but supports a clear separation between state and religion counts as a deviant. This is because such a person deviates from the expectation that a deeply religious person will not separate religion from politics. In the context of candidate evaluation, such a scenario constitutes an interaction between the candidate's religiosity and the candidate's position on secularism (i.e., to support or oppose secularism). It is this study's objective to examine this interaction, as well as how voters' level of fundamentalism moderates it.

### **Hypotheses**

Seven hypotheses are derived from the literature review above. First, this study will test *the religiosity effect*, which suggests that a religious candidate will be supported and evaluated more positively than a candidate who is not described as religious. This effect is derived from the discussion above regarding the effect of religion on social perception. The second effect to test is *the secularism effect*, which suggests that a

candidate who supports a separation between state and religion (pro-separation) will be supported and evaluated more positively than a candidate who supports a blending between the two (pro-blending). This effect is derived from the notions that Indonesia, where the sample was drawn, is a democracy and that democracies endorse secularism. As can be seen, the two main effects are ironic. On the one hand, a religious candidate will be supported and liked the most. On the other hand, a pro-blending candidate will be supported and liked the least.

The third and fourth hypotheses involve interactions between candidate religiosity and candidate secularism. The third, *the JFK effect*, states that a pro-separation religious candidate will be supported and evaluated more positively than a pro-blending religious candidate. This effect is named after John F. Kennedy who because of his Catholic faith needed to assure the voters of his secularism in the Houston speech. Kennedy's association with the Catholic religion needed to be neutralized by endorsing secularism. *The deviance effect*, the fourth effect, is the opposite of the JFK effect. It suggests that a pro-separation religious candidate constitutes as a group deviant, who will be supported and evaluated less positively than a pro-blending religious candidate.

The fifth effect involves the moderating role of voter fundamentalism. It is expected that fundamentalist voters will display the religiosity and deviant effects, whereas non-fundamentalist voters will display the secularism and JFK effects.

The sixth effect is *the controversial issue effect*, which suggests that, because secularism is a controversial issue, taking clear positions on it will lead to a less positive attitude and attenuate voters' support for a candidate. This effect is derived from studies



that show how ambiguity may help in politics (Page, 1976; Tom & Van Houweling, 2009).

The seventh hypothesis addresses how voters integrate information about a political candidate. Borrowing from Anderson's (1981) weighted average model, *the relative amount of information effect* suggests that presenting more issue positions to voters will decrease the relative potencies of other issue positions in shaping the voters' evaluation and support for a political candidate. In this study, since information on secularism positions (pro-blending and pro-separation) supplement the information on the candidate's positions on four filler issues (taxation, social welfare, crime, and education), it is then hypothesized that the secularism positions will attenuate the effect of issue agreement on the filler issues on voters' support and attitude toward the candidate

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODS

#### **Participants**

Participants were 200 Indonesian internet users. Data gathering was done online between January 2012 and January 2013 using SNAP Survey Software. The survey was presented in Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian). The author, with the help of a friend, posted the link of the survey on Indonesian mailing-lists, social media, and online discussion forums. The description of the purpose of the study in the recruitment posts was kept minimal and described only that the researcher was interested in examining factors that influenced voters' evaluations of a political candidate. Participants received no material reward for their participation.

In regard to the demographics of the participants, the mean age of participants was 28.81, with standard deviation of 9.31. Most of the participants (54%) were female, with 1.5% not indicating their gender. 80% of the participants had college degrees or higher, 17.5% reached only high school level, and 1% indicated middle school as their highest education. 155 participants indicated their religion, of which 68.4% were Muslims, 39.7% were Christians or Catholics, 0.6% was a Hindu and 1.3% were Buddhist. The relatively high educational level and non-Muslim percentage suggest that the participants were not representative of Indonesian population in general, which has lower educational level and much higher (88%) Muslim percentage.

## Design

This study employed an experimental design. The independent variables were the experimental manipulations of candidate religiosity (religious and no-information) and candidate secularism (no-issue, pro-blending, and pro-separation) and the measure of voters' fundamentalism level, whereas the dependent variables were the likelihood to vote for the candidate, attitude toward the candidate, and trait ratings of the candidate. The cover story was that the researcher was interested in examining the electability of a gubernatorial candidate given his positions on several key issues. The description of the candidate was presented as if the text read by the participant were a summary of a question-and-answer session between the candidate and potential voters.

For the *candidate religiosity manipulation*, the candidate was described as answering a voter's question, "How would you describe your religiosity?" For participants in the no-information condition, this question was deleted. For participants in the religiosity condition, the candidate answered the question with "I believe in God. I pray regularly. If I do something good, it is because I believe that is what God and the scripture ask us to do. Whatever I do, I try to bring my action into line with my faith in God. Religion is for me very important."

For the *candidate secularism manipulation*, the candidate was described as answering three questions: 1) "Some people teach their own versions of religious doctrines, which in some cases are remarkably different from mainstream religious teachings that we have in this country. Some teachings even blaspheme our faith. Do you think the government should do something about it?" 2) "What do you think about accommodating religious laws into formal laws or public policies, especially when it

comes to moral issues? Would you do such thing?" 3) "What is your thought on how the government should treat various religious groups? Must they be treated equally regardless of their numbers or what?" In the pro-blending condition, the candidate answered the questions respectively as favoring a monitoring of nonmainstream religions, favoring the legislation of religious laws into national laws, and preferring the majority religion to minority religions. In the pro-separation condition, the candidate gave answers opposite to the ones given by the pro-blending candidate. In the no-issue condition, participants were not presented with the questions. Instead, they read only the candidate's positions on four filler issues that remained constant across experimental groups. The filler issues covered taxation, social welfare, crime and education. The full text of the candidate description is presented in Appendix A.

Following the description of the candidate, the dependent variables were measured. Participants were asked "On the scale of 1-10 (1 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely), how likely is it for you to vote for the candidate?" Before answering this question, however, participants were asked how much they liked the candidate, how competent they thought the candidate was, their perceptions of the candidate's personal integrity, and their perceptions of the candidate's religiosity. The *level of liking* toward the candidate was measured by asking the participant "On the scale of 1-10 (1 = total dislike, 10 = total liking), how much do you like the candidate?" The *perception of competence* was measured by the question "On the scale of 1-10 (1 = very incompetent, 10 = very competent), how competent do you think the candidate is to serve as governor?" On the same 1-10 scale, the perceptions of candidate's *personal integrity* and *religiosity* were

each measured by the questions "Where do you think the candidate stands related to the level of personal integrity?" and "How religious do you think the candidate is?"

Following the dependent variables, the survey assessed the participant's demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education, and religion. Political knowledge, interest, and exposures were also measured on a 1-10 scale. Political knowledge was measured by the question "How much knowledge related to political process and political world that you know about?" Political interest was measured by the question "How interested are you in political process and political world?" And political exposure was measured by the question "How much time do you spend to attend political news in television, radio, newspaper or other types of mass media?" In the analysis, these items were combined to form a single political expertise/interest variable.

*Voter religious fundamentalism* was measured using the scale developed by Altemeyer & Hunsberger (2004). It had 12 items tapping into the fundamentalism concept described earlier. Sample items include: 1) No single book of religious teachings contains all the intrinsic, fundamental truths about life (reverse-scored); 2) It is more important to be a good person than to believe in God and the right religion (reverse-scored); and 3) To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion. Response options ranged from 1 to 7 with 1 represented strong disagreement and 7 represented strong agreement. The Cronbach's alpha was .866.

*Issue agreement* was measured by asking participants whether they agreed or disagreed with the candidate on the four filler issues (taxation, education, crime, and social welfare). Response options ranged from 1 to 7 with 1 represented strong disagreement and 7 strong agreement. A composite measure of issue agreement for each

participant was calculated by averaging the participant's responses across the four filler issues

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

#### **Manipulation and Issues Comprehension Check**

Before testing the hypotheses, it would be beneficial to check whether the manipulation worked as intended. The inclusion of an item measuring voters' perception of the candidate's religiosity makes possible a check of whether the candidate's self-declaration of his religiosity really made him looked religious. Table 1 presents the regression analysis with voters' perception of the candidate's religiosity as dependent variable ( $R^2=.17$ ;  $F(6,190)=6.38$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

Table 1. The Regression of Perceived Candidate Religiosity Manipulation Check

Predictors	Perceived Candidate Religiosity
Intercept	5.38*** (.29)
Political Expertise	.06 (.15)
Issue Agreement	.82*** (.15)
Candidate Religiosity	.70** (.30)
Pro-blending positions	.64* (.36)
Pro-separation positions	-.04 (.38)
Fundamentalism	-.01 (.15)

\* p-value<.10 \*\* p-value<.05 \*\*\*p-value<.01

The regression analysis indicates that the religiosity manipulation worked as expected. The candidate who was presented as affirming his religiosity was perceived as

more religious by the participants. Furthermore, it is also evident that the candidate who was described with pro-blending positions on secularism issues was perceived as marginally more religious than the candidate who was not described with such issues. A separate analysis also indicates that the pro-blending candidate was perceived as marginally more religious than the pro-separation candidate ( $B=.68$ ;  $S.E.=.36$ ;  $t(190)=1.88$ ;  $p<.10$ ).

Another check that can provide insight regarding the quality of the data involves an issue comprehension check. The survey incorporated three questions that tested how well the participants in the experimental conditions, that is those who were presented with pro-separation and pro-blending candidates, comprehended the secularism positions of the candidate they just read. For the pro-separation condition, 38 out of 67 participants (57%) answered all three issues comprehension questions correctly, 19 (28%) answered two out of three questions correctly, and 10 (15%) answered only one question correctly. As for the pro-blending condition, 45 out of 72 participants (63%) answered all three questions correctly, 15 (21%) answered two questions correctly whereas the rest answered only one or none of the questions correctly.

While imperfect, the issues comprehension check suggests that the majority of participants correctly understood the positions of the candidates. The subsequent analysis, however, chose not to exclude those who performed poorly in the comprehension check. This is because research indicates issue agreement determines voters' decision even when the voters themselves are unable to accurately remember the candidate's issue positions (Lavine, 2002; Lodge, Steenbergen, & Brau, 1995).



### Hypotheses Testing

Table 2 presents the distribution of participants in the experimental groups. To test the hypotheses, a hierarchical regression analysis with interaction terms was employed (Aiken & West, 1991). Categorical variables (i.e., the experimental treatments) were dummy-coded. Specifically, for the religiosity manipulation, the no-information candidate was coded as 0 whereas the religious candidate was coded as 1. As for the candidate secularism manipulation, two dummy variables were used—one was for pro-blending and the other was for pro-separation position. The no-issue condition served as the reference group. Prior to the analysis, all continuous variables (political expertise, religious fundamentalism and issue agreement) were standardized so as to have mean zero and standard deviation one.

Table 2. Distribution of Participants in the Experimental Groups

Group	Frequency	Percent
Religious candidate endorsing RS-separation	37	18.5
Religious candidate endorsing RS-blending	36	18
Religious candidate with no secularism-related issues	24	12
No-info candidate endorsing RS-separation	30	15
No-info candidate endorsing RS-blending	36	18
No-info candidate with no secularism-related issues	37	18.5
Total	200	100.0

### Predicting Voting Likelihood

Table 3 presents the regression coefficients in the first and second steps of the regression analyses of voting likelihood and attitude toward the candidate. In the first step of the voting likelihood regression ( $R^2=.30$ ;  $F(6,193)=13.58$ ;  $p<.01$ ), three variables significantly predicted the likelihood of participants to vote for the candidate: issue agreement, candidate's religiosity, and candidate's pro-blending position. The significance of issue agreement tells us that the more participants agreed with a candidate's positions,

the more likely they were to vote for the candidate. The significance of candidate religiosity indicates that the religious candidate was supported more than the candidate who was not described as religious, therefore lending support for the religiosity effect. As for the significance of pro-blending, it says that the pro-blending candidate was supported less than the candidate who was described with no secularism issue. A separate analysis showed that the pro-blending candidate was also supported less than the pro-separation one ( $B=1.80$ ;  $S.E.=.41$ ;  $t(193)=4.36$ ;  $p<.01$ ). Taken together, both findings indicate that the pro-blending candidate was supported the least. This supports the secularism effect hypothesis.

Adding the interaction terms yielded significant two-way interactions ( $\Delta R^2=.11$ ;  $\Delta F(5,188)=6.73$ ;  $p<.01$ ), but nonsignificant three-way interactions ( $R^2=.00$ ;  $\Delta F(2,186)=.278$ ;  $p>.10$ ). Since the three-way interactions were nonsignificant, Table 3 includes only the two-way interactions. As can be seen, the interaction between candidate secularism and voter fundamentalism was significant. Figure 1 provides evidence regarding the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism on the secularism effect. The support for the pro-separation candidate was particularly strong among low fundamentalists (simple slope  $B=-1.35$ ;  $S.E.=.35$ ;  $t(188)=-3.90$ ;  $p<.01$ ) whereas support for the pro-blending candidate was stronger for high than low fundamentalists (simple slope  $B=.91$ ;  $S.E.=.30$ ;  $t(188)=3.00$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

Figure 1 also provides evidence for the controversial issue effect. The effect suggests that since secularism is a controversial issue, then taking a clear position on it will not benefit, or may even damage, the support of a political candidate. As the figure shows, even among low fundamentalists, the pro-separation candidate ( $M=6.48$ ;

S.E.=.53) was only marginally more supported ( $B=1.12$ ;  $S.E.=.66$ ;  $t(188)=1.70$ ;  $p<.10$ ) than the candidate who was not described with secularism issues ( $M=5.36$ ;  $S.E.=.43$ ). As for high fundamentalists, the support for the controversial issue effect was more evident. Among high fundamentalists, there was no difference ( $B=-.86$ ;  $S.E.=.71$ ;  $t(188)=-1.22$ ;  $p>.10$ ) between the candidate who was pro-blending ( $M=4.55$ ;  $S.E.=.51$ ) and the candidate who was not described with secularism issues ( $M=5.41$ ;  $S.E.=.53$ ).

Table 3. The Regression Analyses of Voting Likelihood and Attitude toward the Candidate on Fundamentalism

Predictors	Voting Likelihood		Attitude toward Candidate	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Intercept	5.17*** (.33)	5.38*** (.37)	5.82*** (.27)	6.03*** (.30)
Political Expertise	.04 (.17)	.15 (.16)	.13 (.14)	.21 (.13)
Issue Agreement	1.05*** (.18)	1.06*** (.17)	.88*** (.14)	.89*** (.13)
Candidate Religiosity	.95*** (.34)	.43 (.62)	.64** (.28)	.20 (.50)
Pro-blending positions	-1.64*** (.41)	-1.74*** (.53)	-1.52*** (.33)	-1.83*** (.42)
Pro-separation positions	.16 (.43)	-.25 (.55)	.13 (.35)	-.06 (.44)
Fundamentalism	-.05 (.17)	.02 (.30)	.02 (.14)	.07 (.24)
Religiosity * Pro-blending		.45 (.82)		.78 (.65)
Religiosity * Pro-separation		1.07 (.83)		.55 (.66)
Religiosity * Fundamentalism		-.04 (.33)		-.18 (.27)
Pro-blending * Fundamentalism		.88** (.39)		.82*** (.31)
Pro-separation * Fundamentalism		-1.37*** (.42)		1.00*** (.34)

\* p-value<.10 \*\* p-value<.05 \*\*\* p-value <.01

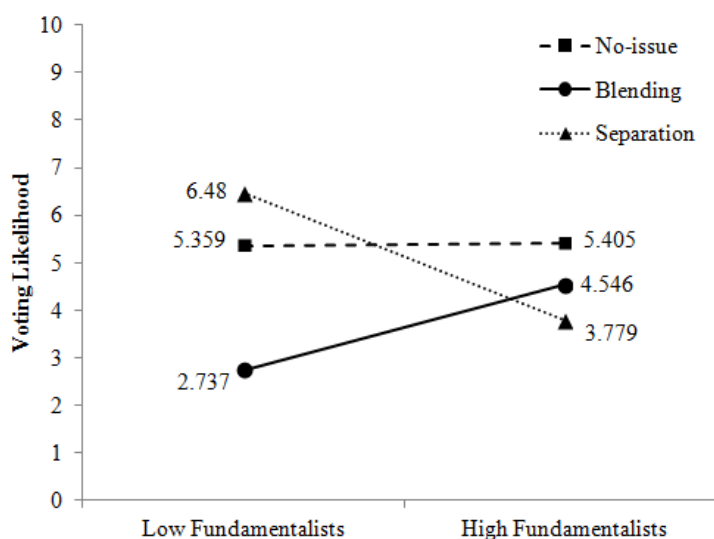


Figure 1. The Interaction between Candidate Secularism and Voter Fundamentalism in Predicting Voting Likelihood

The findings suggest that expressing certain position on secularism did not bring any clear advantage to the candidate. The candidate who was not described with any secularism position was in fact being advantaged as by saying less (i.e., expressing positions only on the filler issues) he received just the same, or in some cases even higher, level of support as the pro-blending and pro-separation candidates who said more. Indeed, the candidates who expressed their secularism positions actually alienated a certain segment of the population. The pro-blending candidate alienated low fundamentalist voters, as is evident by significant means difference ( $B=-2.62$ ;  $S.E.=.60$ ;  $t(188)=-4.38$ ;  $p<.01$ ) between the no-issue ( $M=5.36$ ;  $S.E.=.43$ ) and pro-blending candidates ( $M=2.74$ ;  $S.E.=.45$ ). The pro-separation candidate, on the other hand, alienated high fundamentalist voters, as the mean of support for the no-issue candidate ( $M=5.41$ ;  $S.E.=.53$ ) was significantly different ( $B=-1.63$ ;  $S.E.=.73$ ;  $t(188)=-2.22$ ;  $p<.05$ ) from the mean of support for the pro-separation candidate ( $M=3.78$ ;  $S.E.=.54$ ).

To test the relative amount of information hypothesis, another regression analysis was done. Since the hypothesis suggests that presenting more information on a candidate's positions will decrease the relative potencies of other positions in influencing voters' support for the candidate, one may conceive that presenting information on secularism positions (i.e., pro-blending or pro-separation) will decrease the influence of issue agreement on filler issues on voters' support for the candidates. Issue agreement should be less influential in increasing voters' support for pro-separation and pro-blending candidates than in increasing their support for the candidate who was not described with secularism issues..

Table 4 provides regression coefficients for the analysis, controlling for voters' fundamentalism ( $\Delta R^2=.05$ ;  $\Delta F(5,188)=2.60$ ;  $p<.05$ ). The expected interactions between candidate secularism and issue agreement turned out significant for the pro-separation and pro-blending candidates, even though for the pro-blending it was only marginally. Figure 2 plots the interactions. In the case of low issue agreement, the no-issue candidate ( $M=3.56$ ;  $S.E.=.48$ ) was not different ( $B=-1.04$ ;  $S.E.=.73$ ;  $t(188)=-1.42$ ;  $p>.10$ ) from the pro-separation ( $M=4.60$ ;  $S.E.=.59$ ) but still marginally different ( $B=1.25$ ;  $S.E.=.65$ ;  $t(188)=1.918$ ;  $p<.10$ ) from the pro-blending ( $M=2.31$ ;  $S.E.=.48$ ) candidates. As for those with high issue agreement, the no-issue candidate ( $M=7.63$ ;  $S.E.=.58$ ) was different from both the pro-separation ( $M=5.94$ ,  $S.E.=.49$ ;  $B=1.69$ ,  $S.E.=.73$ ,  $t(188)=2.30$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and pro-blending ( $M=.47$ ,  $S.E.=.53$ ;  $B=2.93$ ,  $S.E.=.76$ ,  $t(188)=3.88$ ,  $p<.01$ ) candidates. The findings support the relative amount of information hypothesis. The more issue positions voters know about a candidate (i.e., the positions on secularism), the less influential issue agreement on the filler issues becomes in determining voters' support for the candidate.

Table 4. The Regression Analyses of Voting Likelihood and Attitude toward the Candidate on Issue Agreement in Step 2

Predictors	Voting Likelihood	Attitude toward Candidate
Intercept	5.59*** (.39)	6.11*** (.32)
Political Expertise	.00 (.17)	.10 (.14)
Fundamentalism	-.00 (.17)	.05 (.14)
Candidate Religiosity	.26 (.63)	.05 (.51)
Pro-blending positions	-2.09*** (.55)	-2.06*** (.45)
Pro-separation positions	-.33 (.58)	-.11 (.48)
Issue Agreement	2.04*** (.36)	1.28*** (.29)
Religiosity * Pro-blending	.72 (.83)	1.04 (.68)
Religiosity * Pro-separation	1.22 (.86)	.57 (.71)
Religiosity * Issue Agreement	-.41 (.35)	-.20 (.28)
Pro-blending * Issue Agreement	-.84* (.44)	-.45 (.36)
Pro-separation * Issue Agreement	-1.36*** (.44)	-.37 (.36)

\* p-value < .10 \*\* p-value < .05 \*\*\* p-value < .01

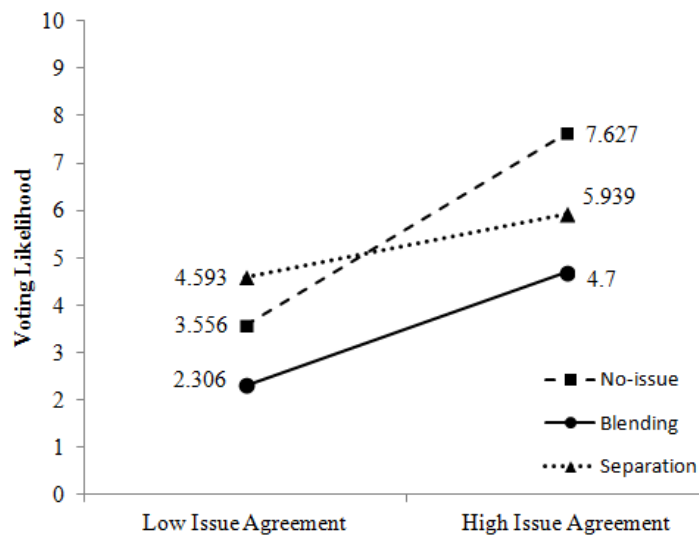


Figure 2. The Interaction between Candidate Secularism and Issue Agreement in Predicting Voting Likelihood

### Predicting Attitude toward the Candidate

The right panel of Table 3 presents the regression analysis of voters' attitude toward the candidate. Coefficients in step 1 of the analysis ( $R^2=.33$ ;  $F(6,194)=15.58$ ;  $p<.01$ ) indicate that candidate religiosity and issue agreement have positive effects on voters' attitude toward the candidate. The religious candidate was liked more than the candidate who was not described as religious. Voters also liked the candidate more if they found the candidate's issue positions agreeable. As was evident in the regression of voting likelihood, pro-blending positions led voters to have unfavorable attitudes toward the candidate. Voters liked the candidate less if the candidate was pro-blending.

In regard to the interaction effects, the regression analysis of attitude toward the candidate exhibits the same pattern as the regression of voting likelihood. The two-way interactions were significant ( $\Delta R^2=.11$ ;  $F(5,189)=7.22$ ;  $p<.01$ ), but not the three-way interactions ( $\Delta R^2=0.00$ ;  $F(2,187)=.04$ ;  $p>.10$ ). Figure 3 presents the interaction between candidate secularism and voter fundamentalism in predicting voters' attitude toward the candidate. The pattern of the interaction supports the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism. The pro-blending candidate was liked less by low than high fundamentalists (simple slope  $B=.89$ ;  $S.E.=.24$ ;  $p<.01$ ). The pro-separation candidate, on the other hand, was liked more by low than high fundamentalists (simple slope  $B=-.92$ ;  $S.E.=.28$ ;  $p<.01$ ).

Figure 3 also supports the controversial issue effect. As in the case of level of support, neither pro-blending nor pro-separation candidate was liked more than the candidate who was not described with secularism issues. For low fundamentalists, the mean of attitude toward the pro-separation candidate ( $M=6.89$ ;  $S.E.=.42$ ) differed only

marginally ( $B=.94$ ;  $S.E.=.53$ ;  $t(189)=1.77$ ;  $p<.10$ ) from the mean of the no-issue candidate ( $M=5.96$ ;  $S.E.=.34$ ). For high fundamentalists, the mean of attitude toward the pro-blending candidate ( $M=5.09$ ;  $S.E.=.41$ ) was marginally lower ( $B=-1.01$ ;  $S.E.=.56$ ;  $t(189)=-1.80$ ;  $p<.10$ ) than the mean of attitude toward the no-issue candidate ( $M=6.10$ ;  $S.E.=.42$ ). The findings underline that, relative to the no-issue candidate, neither the pro-separation nor pro-blending candidate was being advantaged by stating their positions on secularism issues.

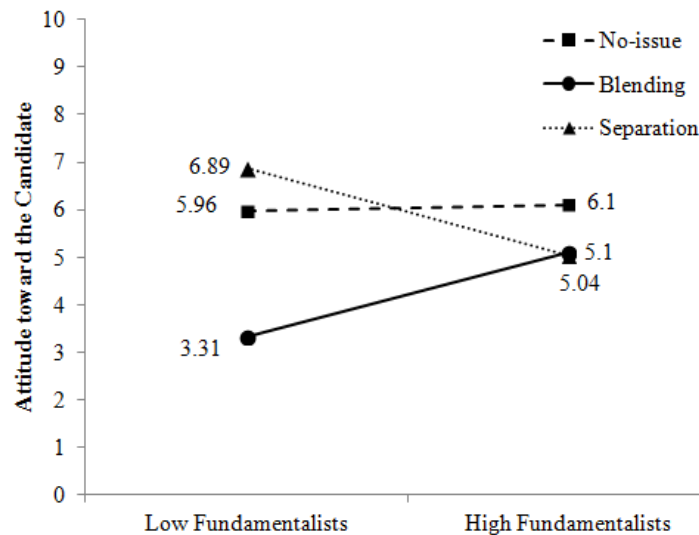


Figure 3. The Interaction between Candidate Secularism and Voter Fundamentalism in Predicting Attitude toward the Candidate

The difference between the regressions of voting likelihood and attitude toward the candidate is evident in Table 4. While the interaction between candidate secularism and issue agreement was significant for the voting likelihood regression, it was not significant for the attitude toward the candidate regression. The magnitude of the effect of issue agreement on voters' attitude toward the candidate was the same regardless of whether or not the voters received additional information about the candidate's position on secularism issues. The findings for perceptions of candidate competence and candidate



integrity basically follow the same pattern as the findings of attitude toward the candidate. The results of regression analyses with perceptions of competence and integrity as dependent variables are presented in Appendix B.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

#### **Discussion**

The purposes of this study were twofold. The first was to examine how a candidate's religiosity and position on secularism influences voters' support and attitude toward the candidate. In other words, the study tries to examine the interaction between personal characteristics and issue positions in the candidate evaluation process. Secularism was chosen as the topic of interest given its importance in the contemporary world that witnesses the revivalism of faiths and religions.

The second purpose was to examine how voter fundamentalism moderates the effect of candidate religiosity and candidate secularism on voters' support and attitude toward a political candidate. Secularism is a religious issue and fundamentalism is a religious concept that scholars have used in explaining various social and political phenomena (e.g., Salzman, 2008; Savage & Liht, 2008). It was expected that voters' fundamentalism would alter the nature of these effects.

Seven hypotheses were derived from the literature. The first hypothesis tested the religiosity effect, which suggested that a religious candidate would be supported and evaluated more positively than a candidate whose religiosity was less clear. The second hypothesis concerned the secularism effect, which suggested that in democratic countries a candidate who endorsed a separation between state and religion (pro-separation) would

be more supported and evaluated more positively than a candidate who endorsed a closer relationship between the two (pro-blending). The third hypothesis addressed the JFK effect, which suggested that a religious candidate would be more supported and evaluated more positively if he was pro-separation than pro-blending. The fourth hypothesis was related to the deviant effect, which suggested that a religious candidate who was pro-separation constituted a group deviant, thus would be less supported and evaluated less positively than a religious candidate who was pro-blending. The fifth hypothesis focused on the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism on the previous described effects. It was hypothesized that the religiosity and deviant effects would apply to high fundamentalists whereas the secularism and JFK effects would apply to low fundamentalists. The sixth hypothesis tested the controversial issue effect. This hypothesis states that, since the issue of religion-state separation is a controversial and divisive issue, a candidate who said nothing about the issue would be at greater advantage—thus more supported and liked more—than a candidate who either endorsed or opposed secularism. The seventh hypothesis dealt with the relative amount of information effect. This hypothesis suggests that adding more issue information would decrease the relative influence of other issue positions on voters' support and attitude toward a political candidate.

Regression analyses conducted on the data with voting likelihood and attitude toward the candidate as dependent variables supported the religiosity effect, the secularism effect, the moderating effect of voters' fundamentalism on the secularism effect, and the controversial issue effect. The regression analysis of voting likelihood, but

not of attitude toward the candidate, also offered evidence for the relative amount of information effect.

The candidate who was described as religious received higher support and was evaluated more positively than the candidate who was not described as religious. This finding adds to the social perception literature which suggests religiosity creates a positive social impression (e.g., Galen et al., 2011). Religiosity serves as a cue to infer an individual's characteristics beyond what is explicitly stated or visible. The schema "religious" is often equated with morality (Hout & Fischer, 2002) and prosociality (Saroglou, Yzerbyt, & Kaschten, 2011). Furthermore, this finding also supports the notion of voters' need to evaluate a candidate based on the candidate's personal attributes, regardless of the level of knowledge that the voters possess about the candidate's policy positions (Cutler, 2002).

The second supported hypothesis was the secularism hypothesis, which predicted that the pro-separation candidate would be supported and evaluated more positively than the pro-blending one. The analysis revealed that the pro-blending candidate was supported less and evaluated less positively than the candidate who was pro-separation and the candidate who said nothing about secularism. From the perspective of the sample origin, this piece of evidence supports the claim that Indonesia is a secular democracy (Barton, 2010; Mujani & Liddle, 2009). It also adds to the literature that argues a democratic country favors religion-state separation more than religion-state blending (Brathwaite & Bramsen, 2011).

At this point, it is intriguing to note that the religious candidate was supported and liked the most and the pro-blending candidate the least. It is even more interesting to

recall that the manipulation check for candidate religiosity suggested that pro-blending positions actually made a candidate appear more religious than the candidate who either said nothing about secularism or was pro-separation. How could, then, the voters support the religious candidate but oppose the pro-blending candidate while at the same time believing the pro-blending candidate was more religious than the other candidates?

The question seems to suggest two levels of religious influence. The first level is personal level. Religion causes a halo effect and helps a political candidate by portraying the candidate, for example, as a moral or prosocial figure (Galen et al., 2011). In this case, because the halo effect is socially ubiquitous and politically neutral, there is no reason to suspect that voters in democratic and non-democratic countries are different from each other.

The second level is policy level. While being religious as a personal attribute is a positive thing, an inability to leave religion behind when entering the political stage brings disaffection. At the very least, it violates the principle of impartiality. A political elite who blatantly favors his or her religion would look partial and induce a sense of insecurity among the voters in general. The case is particularly true in democratic countries, where voters are well-aware of the notions of civil rights, religious freedom, and political liberty. This might explain why the candidate who was pro-blending, even though was regarded as more religious than the other candidates, received the lowest support of all.

Regarding the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism, the findings indicated that the secularism effect manifested among low, but not high, fundamentalists. For high fundamentalists, the pro-separation and pro-blending candidates were not different in

term of voters' level of support or evaluation. This serves as an evidence for the moderating effect of voter fundamentalism. High fundamentalists favor the idea of separating religion and state affairs less than low fundamentalists do.

Indeed, Salzman (2008) argued that fundamentalism is a response to globalization, which among other things promotes the—supposedly Western—concept of religion-state separation. Fundamentalists also disagree with modern or secular interpretations of the scripture and instead encourage literalism (Hood, Hill, & Williamson, 2005). Related to the notion of jihad among Indonesian Muslims, for instance, fundamentalists oppose the secular interpretation of jihad as a war against poverty and endorse the more literal interpretation of jihad as a war against enemies of Islam (Muluk, Sumaktoyo, & Ruth, 2013).

This study also supports the controversial issue effect. Even among low and high fundamentalists, the candidates who were pro-blending or pro-separation did not receive higher support or a more positive evaluation than the candidate who was described with no secularism issue position. Ambiguous statements from a candidate allow individuals to incorporate their own expectations in interpreting the statements, thus providing them with some space to create interpretations that are "just right" for them. Instead of understanding the candidate's true position, voters might instead project their own positions on the candidate (Conover & Feldman, 1982). Clear and unambiguous issue positions, on the other hand, do not leave much room for such open interpretations. The positions might end up too extreme or not extreme enough for the voters, thus negatively affecting their supports for the candidate.

A study by Tomz & van Houweling (2009) supported the projection model. They found that ambiguity was particularly rewarding in highly partisan settings. In such settings, voters tend to optimistically, rather than pessimistically, infer that the candidate agrees with them—a "partisan optimism" (p.96). Campbell (1983) found that winning candidates in the 1968-1980 presidential elections were more likely to be ambiguous than the losing candidates when it came to issues where public opinion was divided, again highlighting the advantage of being ambiguous in controversial issues. Relating the literature on candidate ambiguity to the present study, we can argue that candidates who were described as pro-separation and pro-blending alienated pro-blending and pro-separation voters, respectively. This resulted in neither candidates ever receiving support higher than the candidate who was described with no secularism issue position.

Lastly, the study also supports the relative amount of information effect when it comes to predicting voting likelihood. The effect of issue agreement on voting likelihood was smaller for participants who were presented with secularism positions (i.e., participants in the pro-blending and pro-separation conditions) than for participants in the no-issue condition. This supports Anderson's (1981) weighted average model. In term of political practicality, the findings suggest that a political candidate might want to limit himself to address only a limited issues—ones that are most agreeable for the voters—, rather than talking about a broad range of issues which just would make the relative influence of each issue smaller.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

Notwithstanding the insights this study adds to the literature on religion and politics, several limitations are evident. The first limitation is methodological. It might be

the case that the wordings in the stimulus material were too extreme. It could be this extremity that attenuated the support for the pro-separation and pro-blending candidates, rather than the candidates' positions on secularism themselves. Future studies can try to rule out this alternative explanation by employing different stimulus materials. For example, the stimulus materials might be presented in third-person description or as a newspaper article.

A second limitation relates to the nature of ambiguity. It is clear that this study did not employ ambiguity in its literal sense. Rather than describing the candidate as explaining his positions vaguely, the study simply described a candidate possessing no secularism issue position. Future study may try to address this limitation by incorporating an experimental condition where the candidate describes his position on religion-state separation ambiguously.

In addition to addressing the limitations, future research might also pursue two other potential avenues. The first is to try better understand the difference between religious influence on personal and policy levels. In this study, religious influence on the policy level (i.e., the pro-blending position) reduced support for the candidate because it favored one religion over others. This violates the spirit of democracy and political equality. It would be interesting to see what would happen if religious influence on the policy level manifested in policies that specifically emphasize equality or social justice. Examining this question would help us to distinguish whether it is the religious influence on policy itself or the type of the policy (consistent or inconsistent with democratic value) that influenced voters' support for the candidate.



The second potential research avenue might involve systematically manipulate a candidate's specific religious affiliation. Perhaps voters would be more supportive toward a pro-blending candidate if the candidate was of the same religion as the voters. Perhaps the aversion toward a pro-blending candidate would be magnified if the candidate came from majority religion.

APPENDIX A  
STIMULUS MATERIAL

The following conversations happened during a meeting between the candidate and potential voters. We have reworded the questions and the answers in such a way that will help you understand them easily. Please read all of them carefully and try to form an impression of how you like this candidate. Following this description, you will be asked to evaluate the candidate and recall his or her positions on some issues.

QUESTION: Do you mind to tell us how you define and live your faith? Are you a religious person?

ANSWER: I believe in God. I pray regularly. If I do something good, it's because I believe that's what God and the scripture ask us to do. Whatever I do, I try to bring my action into line with my faith of God. Religion is for me very important.

QUESTION: What is your position in social welfare issues? Do you think that we must provide healthcare benefit to people who even don't contribute very much to the budget by paying taxes?

ANSWER: I believe that every person deserves a minimal, basic assistance. But I also believe in healthy budgeting. My plan is to provide assistance to the unemployed only for a specific time period. If the unemployed person can't find a job in that time period, the assistance will be stopped.

QUESTION: In some neighborhoods, people are experiencing an increase in crime rates. How would you deal with it? How would you give the population security?

ANSWER: My answer will be very clear. All we need are tougher laws and greater budget allocation for the police department.

QUESTION: More and more people can't afford to put their children to college due to unreasonably high tuitions. Sometimes they need to borrow money from relatives or banks. Tell me that you have a way out for this problem.

ANSWER: Education is expensive, that's the fact. But I will allocate more money to make it more affordable. Of course we can't make it affordable for all, but at least it must be for a significant percentage of the people. I will also try to provide scholarships for excellent local students. I think that's the best way to do it.

QUESTION: Do you support a tax increase or not?

ANSWER: I support a tax increase but not for income tax. In my view, what needs to be increased is the tax for luxurious consumer goods. Since those goods aren't crucial for daily life then increasing tax for them won't affect the life quality of many people.

QUESTION: Youth is probably the most important agent of change. They are also the ones who will shape the future of our country. Yet, current government seems to pay only little attention to them. Do you have any plan related to youth development?

ANSWER: Definitely. The first and most important thing is education. We must ensure they have access to quality education. The second most important is community

engagement. Our youth must not only be smart but also socially responsible. They must play an active role in the development of local communities.

QUESTION: Some people teach their own versions of religious doctrines, which in some cases are very different with mainstream religious teachings that we have in this country. Some teachings even blaspheme our faiths. Do you think that the government should do something about it?

RELIGION-STATE BLENDING: We definitely need a public office whose task is to monitor non-mainstream religions, to make sure they don't deviate from acceptable religious practices, and to disband them if necessary. Such an office will ensure proper respect for religions. I will definitely found such an office.

RELIGION-STATE SEPARATION: We don't need a public office whose task is to monitor non-mainstream religions, to make sure they don't deviate from acceptable religious practices, or to disband them. Such office will threaten religious freedom. I definitely will not found it.

QUESTION: What do you think about accommodating religious laws into formal laws or public policies, especially when it comes to moral issues? Would you do such thing?

RELIGION-STATE BLENDING: When dealing with policies related to moral issues, I will use religious laws as the primary reference in legislation process. I believe religion must guide our policy making.

RELIGION-STATE SEPARATION: When dealing with policies related to moral issues, I will not use religious laws as the primary reference in legislation process. I believe a policy must be religiously neutral.

QUESTION: What is your thought about how a government should treat various religious groups? Must they be treated equally regardless of their numbers or what?

RELIGION-STATE BLENDING: I believe that in every region, local administrations must give greater attention and preference to the majority religion of that region. It does not make sense to give equal treatments to the majority and the minority.

RELIGION-STATE SEPARATION: I believe that in every region, local administration must not give greater attention and preference to the majority religion of that region. Equal treatments must be given to the majority and the minority.

## APPENDIX B

### TABLES

Table 5. The Regression Analyses of Perceived Candidate Integrity and Competence on Fundamentalism

Predictors	Candidate Integrity		Candidate Competence	
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2
Intercept	5.60*** (.27)	5.86*** (.29)	5.78*** (.26)	6.03*** (.29)
Political Expertise	.04 (.14)	.11 (.13)	.09 (.13)	.13 (.13)
Issue Agreement	.83*** (.14)	.85*** (.13)	1.07*** (.14)	1.09*** (.13)
Candidate Religiosity	.69** (.28)	.17 (.48)	.44 (.27)	-.07 (.49)
Pro-blending positions	-.72** (.33)	-1.06** (.41)	-1.21*** (.32)	-1.61*** (.42)
Pro-separation positions	.32 (.35)	.06 (.44)	.01 (.34)	-.18 (.44)
Fundamentalism	-.12 (.14)	.05 (.25)	.06 (.14)	.22 (.24)
Religiosity * Pro-blending		.85 (.64)		.94 (.65)
Religiosity * Pro-separation		.65 (.65)		.52 (.66)
Religiosity * Fundamentalism		-.33 (.26)		-.28 (.27)
Pro-blending * Fundamentalism		.75** (.31)		.49 (.31)
Pro-separation * Fundamentalism		-1.09*** (.34)		-.77** (.34)

\* p-value &lt; .10 \*\* p-value &lt; .05 \*\*\* p-value &lt; .01

Candidate Integrity Step 1:  $R^2 = .25$ ;  $F(6,189) = 10.40$ ;  $p < .01$ Candidate Integrity Step 2:  $\Delta R^2 = .14$ ;  $F(5,184) = 8.12$ ;  $p < .01$ Candidate Competence Step 1:  $R^2 = .28$ ;  $F(11,184) = 6.55$ ;  $p < .01$ Candidate Competence Step 2:  $\Delta R^2 = .06$ ;  $F(5,188) = 4.05$ ;  $p < .01$



Table 6. The Regression Analysis of Perceived Candidate Integrity and Competence on Issue Agreement

Predictors	Candidate Integrity	Candidate Competence
Intercept	5.91*** (.31)	5.97*** (.31)
Political Expertise	.01 (.14)	.08 (.13)
Fundamentalism	-.08 (.14)	.08 (.14)
Candidate Religiosity	.04 (.50)	-.07 (.49)
Pro-blending positions	-1.25*** (.45)	-1.69*** (.43)
Pro-separation positions	.11 (.48)	-.09 (.46)
Issue Agreement	1.33*** (.30)	.97*** (.28)
Religiosity * Pro-blending	1.12* (.67)	1.10* (.65)
Religiosity * Pro-separation	.73 (.70)	.28 (.68)
Religiosity * Issue Agreement	-.31 (.28)	.23 (.28)
Pro-blending * Issue Agreement	-.27 (.36)	-.02 (.35)
Pro-separation * Issue Agreement	-.70* (.37)	.02 (.35)

\* p-value <.10 \*\* p-value < .05 \*\*\* p-value <.01

Candidate Integrity:  $R^2=.28$ ;  $F(11,184)=6.55$ ;  $p<.01$

Candidate Competence:  $R^2 = .36$ ;  $F(11,188) = 9.73$ ;  $p < .01$

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At Loyola, he continued to pursue his research interest in religion and politics and joined Dr. Victor Ottati's Social Psychology of Religion and Politics Lab. He interned as a summer analyst at the Obama Campaign Headquarters, which sparked his interest in American politics. He won the graduate student research scholarship from the department, which he used to conduct research on social and political intolerance.