



Cultural Continuity and the Rise of the Millennials: Generational Trends in Politics, Religion, and Economic Values

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*Cultural Continuity and the Rise of the Millennials:
Generational Trends in Politics, Religion, and Economic Values*

A dissertation presented
by
Ethan Fosse
to
The Department of Sociology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the subject of
Sociology

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Cultural Continuity and the Rise of the Millennials:
Generational Trends in Politics, Religion, and Economic Values

Abstract

Drawing on data from over 100,000 Americans from face-to-face structured interviews, in this dissertation I document large, statistically significant intergenerational shifts in party affiliation, religious identification, and economic values and beliefs. These differences remain even after adjusting for baseline controls as well as multilevel models that model age and year effects as distinct from cohort effects. There are three main findings regarding intergenerational change and cultural identity. First, I find that about half of millennials in America do not identify with a major political party, which is explained by changing demographic conditions as well as plummeting support for mainstream political parties. Second, I show that about one-third of millennials do not identify with any religious group, which is accounted for in part by a greater percentage growing up in non-traditional religious households as well as changing attitudes related to science and technology. Finally, regarding economic views I document growing support for government-led wealth redistribution combined with plummeting levels of trust across all measures. The most robust factor for these shifting economic views are greater levels of job insecurity among younger cohorts. Taken together, these findings underscore that, although emerging gradually from a continual process of intergenerational replacement, millennials have emerged as a distinct cultural group with the potential to significantly alter the political, religious, and economic lineaments of American society.

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Dedication

A careful reader will note that the chapter titles of this dissertation bear some similarity to the titles of the works (both written and unwritten) by the late sociologist Dan Bell. This is not an accident. Before his death, I became friends with Dan, who taught me, among other things, what Immanuel Kant really meant by a “critique” of pure reason, the usefulness of the phrase “be that is it may,” and the secret to writing a successful academic book. I dedicate this dissertation to Dan, whose insights have been an invaluable resource in my research.

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Chapter 1: Overview

The Rise of the Millennials

In recent years popular discussion of millennial generation, referring to those born roughly from the early 1980s to 2000s, has come to the fore of American society, even prompting the president of the United States to write an opinion piece directly at this emerging segment. Yet, while much has been written in the popular press, less attention has been paid towards an academic study of millennial youth in the United States. In this thesis I examine generational change in the United States, with particular emphasis on millennials. In this introductory chapter I provide a summary overview of the thesis.

In Chapter 2 (“Data and Methods”), I outline the data and methods as well as the overall theoretical framework for studying generational change in this thesis. Drawing on insights from Karl Mannheim, I distinguish among three kinds of generational effects. First, a generational effect is simply an observed difference on some variable between successive cohorts of individuals, measured either over time or at a cross-section in time. A second way to think about a generational effect is as a social and cultural process distinct from age and year effects. Each of these can be understood as a substitute for a different dynamic social or cultural process: Age effects result from an individual growing older, year or period effects result from factors specific to the year of measurement, and generation or cohort effects result from similarities between individuals born contemporaneously (for example, due to common factors affecting them in their formative years). Finally, a generational effect can be conceptualized as one or more mechanisms leading to a more-or-less common set of life conditions. According to this definition of a generational effect, birth year is a proxy for time- and age-specific events (e.g., the Great Depression for those born in the 1910s or 1920s). Thus, to understand generational effects one

needs to locate the important problems uniquely facing a particular generation and examine the consequences of these life-altering events.

The bulk of this dissertation is in Chapters 3 to 5, which focus on intergenerational changes in the politics, religion, and economics of Americans. In emphasizing these three substantive topics, I follow the tripartite distinction of Daniel Bell, who has written at length on the importance of analytically distinguishing among the political, cultural, and economic spheres of social reality. Each of these chapters has a similar structure. First, I examine generational effects as raw unadjusted differences, using latent class analysis to provide a clearer estimate of the clustering among younger cohorts. Second, I use multilevel models to examine generational effects after adjusting for year and age effects, extending recent sociological work on estimating generational trends. Finally, for each chapter I examine the moderators of generational effects, examining how generational trends may be proxies for other conditions and events (such as the poverty rate, the growth of the Internet, and demographic shifts). I now turn to the substantive findings from each of the chapters.

In Chapter 3 (“The Political Independent in an Age of Disjuncture”), I examine party disaffiliation across successive cohorts of Americans. Across a range of nationally-representative surveys, I show that Americans are losing traditional party affiliations, with a larger segment of the population identifying as a political independent (that is, without a traditional party attachment). Furthermore, this trend holds even when adjusting for age and year effects, under the assumption that age effects are modeled as a higher-order trend and year effects as varying intercepts. In the next part of this chapter I examine a range of mechanisms that plausibly account for the decline in party affiliation across generations, focusing in particular on demographic, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and technological explanations. Findings reveal that

party disaffiliation is related to demographic and socioeconomic changes in American society, but not technological changes. I also find that younger cohorts of Americans are abandoning party affiliation both because they perceive traditional party affiliations as either irrelevant or as corrupt (lending support to both the “neutrality” and “negativity” theses put forth by political scientists).

In Chapter 4 (“Generational Change and the Rise of Religious Nones”), I document a continual rise in religious nones has continued to across generations, finding that that approximately 35% of millennials identify as religiously unaffiliated in 2012. Additionally, I show that, using latent class models of religious affiliation and attendance, the actual percentage of millennials who are religious unaffiliated is likely closer to 40% due to social desirability bias from single-item survey questions on religious affiliation and behavior. Regarding mechanisms for religious change, I find strong support for demographic changes (in particular shifting cultural identities) as well as the growth of the Internet in moderating generational trends in religious disaffiliation. As well, I find that generational trends in religious disaffiliation are in part accounted for changing religious origins, with successive cohorts of Americans more likely to be born into households without traditional religious affiliations. I find little support for socioeconomic explanations for the rise of religious nones among young Americans; in fact, the evidence suggests that young Americans are religious despite relative economic difficulties.

The findings in Chapter 5 (“The Cultural Contradictions of the Sharing Economy”) examines values related to the “sharing economy,” focusing in particular on generational differences towards wealth redistribution and social trust. The findings indicate strong intergenerational differences in wealth redistribution and social trust, with younger cohorts of Americans more likely to support wealth redistribution (although the results vary depending on

the phrasing of the question) while simultaneously much less likely to trust mainstream American institutions. This distrust is not limited to those of the government, but also includes institutions in the private sector, such as financial banks and major corporations. I further examine possible explanations for these generational shifts. Findings indicate that shifting views towards wealth redistribution and social trust are most strongly related to changing demographic and socioeconomic conditions. In particular, cohabiting moderates the intergenerational effect in trust, redistributive views, and economic perceptions. Furthermore, findings indicate strong effects for economic disadvantage on the cultural aspects of the sharing economy across a range of measures. The implication is that being unemployed as a millennial is related to higher levels of distrust and negative views of the economy than that of earlier cohorts.

Finally, in Chapter 6 (“The Cultural Worldviews of Millennial Youth”), I analyze delve in-depth on the political, religious, and economic values and beliefs of millennials. Using a unique sample of young Americans surveyed in 2012, consistent with the findings from Chapters 2 to 4, that a high percentage of millennials have no party affiliation, no religious affiliation, and express reserved support for wealth redistribution along with deep distrust of mainstream social institutions. Findings further suggest that millennials feel disconnected from mainstream institutions, including religious and political parties, in part because they are perceived as either irrelevant or contrary to their core values. I conclude in Chapter 7 with a brief outline for further research on generational change and cultural continuity, with an emphasis on how research can be used to further understand the cultural values and beliefs of young Americans.

Chapter 2:
Models of Millennials

Introduction: Data and Methods

In this chapter I discuss data and methods used in this dissertation. Since statistical analysis is necessarily intertwined with social theory (inasmuch every statistical model entails a theory of the underlying data generation process), in this chapter I focus on defining generations and generational effects theoretically before outlining the statistical methods. I contend that generational effects can be understood in at least three different ways, only one of which distinguishes between age and year effects in broad terms.

Part I: Data

The data in this thesis are derived from two types: cross-sectional and cross-sectional time-series. Regarding the cross-sectional time-series datasets, there are three main data sets: the Gender and Generations Survey, Pew Youth and Economy Survey, and the Millennial Survey. I review each of these respectively. The Gender and Generations Survey, sponsored by the Pew Research Center, is based on telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 2,410 adults living in the United States. A total of 1,442 interviews were conducted via landline and 968 by cell phone. The survey was conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International with interviews administered in English and Spanish by Princeton Data Source in the fall of 2011. The second cross-sectional dataset I used was the Pew Youth and Economy Survey, a nationally representative survey of American households with an oversampling of respondents aged 18-34. A total of 769 interviews were completed with respondents contacted by landline telephone and 1,279 with those contacted on their cell phone. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. Finally, I used the 2010 Millennial Survey, by the Pew Research Center,

obtained telephone interviews with a national sample of 2,020 adults including an oversample of 830 respondents aged 18 to 29 living in the United States.

For the time-series cross-sectional survey datasets I used the General Social Survey (GSS), American National Election Survey (ANES), and the Pew Values Survey (PVS). For these datasets I sought out datasets that included a large sample size and wide age range so I can more reliably estimate generational effects. In addition these datasets have a detailed set of survey questions that enable an analysis of most of the hypotheses considered in this chapter. Most importantly each of these datasets have measures of party affiliation over a long time period and in accordance with standard question wording (thus allowing some degree of comparability across the surveys).

The GSS is a nationally-representative survey of Americans on their cultural, social, and political beliefs and values. The surveys last about 90 minutes and are conducted primarily using face-to-face with an in-person interview by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago of adults 18 and older in randomly selected households. The survey was conducted every year from 1972 to 1994 (with the exception of 1979, 1981, and 1992). Since 1994, it has been conducted biannually. As of 2012 the survey includes 57,061 respondents and 5,551 variables had been collected. Interviews were conducted in English as well as other languages when needed.

The second time-series dataset is the ANES, a nationally-representative survey of American voters conducted before and after nearly every presidential election. Similar to the GSS, the ANES is primarily based on face-to-face interviews conducted by the University of Michigan and Stanford University. The standard cumulative file of surveys begins in 1948 and ends in 2008. To extend the series I merged the cumulative file with the 2012 ANES survey,

which includes an online-based survey design. For most items used in this analysis there were comparable items across the cumulative and 2012 ANES datasets. Findings remained substantively unchanged with the exclusion of the 2012 dataset. With the merged 2012 dataset the survey includes 55,674 respondents and 3,190 questions.

The third cross-sectional time-series dataset I used for this chapter was the Pew Values Survey (PVS). The PVS is a merged file of 15 separate surveys conducted from 1987 to 2012 by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press. The surveys from 1987 to 1990 were conducted face-to-face, while the subsequent surveys were conducted by phone with targeted cell phone subsamples. I further merged the cumulative PVS with a 2013 Pew Values Survey with identical or nearly identical questions. This expanded the dataset to the most current time available for a time-series cross-sectional survey-based dataset. The cumulative merged dataset includes 37,058 respondents and 304 variables. I now turn to the methods used in this thesis, first examining the meaning of generations and generational effects before discussing the statistical models in depth.

Part II: Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis is based on Karl Mannheim's locus classicus on what he called the "problem of generations" (1964). Mannheim appropriately points out that to study generations is to study cultural dynamics (rather than statics); as such, the study of generational change is really a form of "applied historical sociology" (15). The perspective taken here is a distinctly cultural view towards generational change: crucially, a generation is not tantamount to one's birth year, which is at best a distant proxy of one's generation qua cultural process.

A. Generational Change as Applied Historical Sociology

To clarify the sociological meaning of generational change, it is useful to distinguish among three related concepts: generation location, generation as actuality, and generation unit.

Mannheim argues that “Generation location is based on the existence of biological rhythm in human existence—the factors of life and death, a limited span of life, and aging. Individuals who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process (167).” Mannheim elaborates that “to share the same generation location, i.e. in order to be able passively to undergo or actively to use the handicaps and privileges inherent in a generation location, one must be born within the same historical and cultural region (182).” In the simplest framework, this means that regional differences matter in Mannheim’s framework, such that “young people in Prussia about 1800 did not share a common generation location with young people in China at the same period” (182). In short, generation location is one’s birth year as embedded in a particular regional context.

However, generational location is simply a potentiality as a sociological phenomenon. Mannheim accordingly emphasizes the generation as actuality, which “exists only where a concrete bond is created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic destabilization” (182-183). The main difference between generational location and actuality is that the latter entails a matrix of cultural and social interaction. As Mannheim contends: “Individuals of the same age, they were and are, however, only united as an actual generation in so far as they participate in the characteristic social and intellectual currents of their society and period, and in so far as they have an active or passive experience of the interactions of forces, which made up the new situation (183).” In other

words, generation as actuality is not just birth year but a set of social and cultural processes unifying those in a particular generation location.

Mannheim further distinguishes between a generation unit and generation as actuality (emphasis in original): “The *generation unit* represents a much more concrete bond than the actual generation as such. *Youth experiencing the same concrete historical problems may be said to be part of the same actual generation; while those groups within the same actual generation which work up the material of their common experiences in different specific ways, constitute separate generation units* (184).” In other words, individuals in an actual generation may in fact be embedded in smaller generation units, which in turn constitute a generation as actuality.

The astute student of sociology will note that Mannheim’s theory of generations parallels Weber’s view of social classes: generational location is an objective condition, just as one’s class location is in Weber’s sociology. The only difference is that while class location is based on the economic, and power structure of society, generation location is based on the “biological rhythm of human existence” such as the “factors of life and death, a limited span of life, and aging (180).” However, to become a distinctly sociological phenomena, generational location must be understood culturally.

Following Mannheim, I refer to the tendency to view birth year as tantamount to one’s generation as the “demographic fallacy.” Mannheim points out: “Now, one might assume that the sociological phenomenon of location can be explained by, and deduced from, these basic biological factors. But this would be to make the mistake of all naturalistic theories which try to deduce sociological phenomena directly from natural facts, or lose sight of the social phenomenon altogether in a mass of primarily anthropological data (175).” To put it another way, birth year is the basis of generational location (and in turn generation as actuality), but it is

not deducible from this demographic variable. The key variable is social interaction, as Mannheim points out: “Were it not for the existence of social interaction between human beings—were there no definable social structure, no history based on a particular sort of continuity, the generation would not exist as a social location phenomenon; there would merely be birth, aging, and death (165).”

Crucially, a structural location does not give a uniform cultural experience: “It may be said in general that the experiential, intellectual, and emotional data that are available to the members of a certain society are not uniformly ‘given’ to all of them; the fact is rather that each class has access to only one set of those data, restricted to one particular “aspect.” Thus within any generation there can exist a number of differentiated, antagonistic generation units. Together they constitute an “actual” generation precisely because they are oriented toward each other, even though only in the sense of fighting one another.

B. The Varieties of Generational Effects

Mannheim’s overview of generational change from a sociological perspective underscores that birth year is not tantamount to an actual generation, but represents at most potentiality.

Accordingly, a generational effect can be conceived in at least three broad ways with differing methodological implications. First, a generational effect in common usage can be understood as the observed social and cultural differences in young people over time or across age groups in a given cross-section of time. No distinction is made, if at all, between so-called “age” and “year” effects in this everyday characterization of a generational effect (see Eyerman and Turner 1998). Using this definition a generational effect is the relatively straightforward process of comparing successive cohorts of young adults over time. This is not to say, however, that this kind of

analysis is unimportant. In fact, for the purposes of public interest this sort of basic analysis is of immense value and can provide the basis for more detailed analyses.

A second way to think about a generational effect is as a social and cultural process distinct from age and year effects. Each of these can be understood as a substitute for a different dynamic social or cultural process: Age effects result from an individual growing older, year or period effects result from factors specific to the year of measurement, and generation or cohort effects result from similarities between individuals born contemporaneously (for example, due to common factors affecting them in their formative years).

Finally, generational effects can be viewed as proxies for time- and age-specific events that impact a group of people, possibly altering their life trajectories. For example, growing up during the Great Depression is a generational effect (Bartels 2001; Bell 1965). The most important thinker on the topic of generational change, Karl Mannheim, referred to generations in exactly this manner: that is, he viewed a generation as a group of people experiencing similar life-altering events at particular moments in time (Mannheim 1964). Using this definition of a generational effect, birth year is a proxy for time- and age-specific events (e.g., the Great Depression for those born in the 1910s or 1920s). Thus, to understand generational effects one needs to locate the important problems uniquely facing a particular generation and examine the consequences of these life-altering events. For millennials this would entail, for example, examining the impact of the growth of the Internet (being born as “digital natives”) and the Great Recession of 2007-08 onwards as they become young adults.¹

¹ This is a similar theoretical approach to the mechanism-oriented framework advocated by Winship and Harding (2008). In both approaches the aim is to find the mechanisms underlying broad generational effects, but in my analysis I use covariates for the year-level effects and interaction terms to examine what may account for the cohort effect that is observed after conditioning on the year-level effects.

Part II: Methods

In this thesis I examine variants of all three of the generational effects discussed in the previous section. To examine generational effects as raw observed differences, I use cross-tabulations to determine the extent of, for example, part disaffiliation across successive birth cohorts in a given year. I further examine the possibility of variation among the millennial generation through latent class analysis. This can be understood conceptually as a way of examining the extent there are, to use Mannheim's phraseology, differing generational units within a generation location. To examine generational effects as distinct from broad age and year effects, I use multilevel models that partition out effects for age, cohort, and year. As well, to study generational effects as individual- and context-specific mechanisms, I run a set of multilevel models with interaction terms for hypothesized mechanisms and contextual conditions. Lastly, since many variables are used in some of the chapters, I use clustering algorithms to reduce the complexity of the outcomes under analysis. I review each of these methods in turn.

A. Multilevel Models of Generational Effects

Unlike the first and second theoretical definitions of generational effects, this carries methodological challenges. As is well-known, year, cohort, and age are perfectly collinear, such that the value of one is determined by the values of the other two. Accordingly, it is impossible to determine which of these processes produced the data at hand. Methodologically there is what has become known as the APC identification problem, referring to age, period, and cohort. Although this has been part of the sociological literature for decades (Bell and Jones 2013b), there remains serious misunderstandings across the social sciences (Bell and Jones 2013a).

Crucially, no statistical analysis can “solve” this problem since the problem is “in the population, not just in the sample” and thus it “cannot simply be solved by manipulating the data or the model” (Bell and Jones 2013b). This is in contrast to other problems of inexact collinearity in which additional data collection would where collecting more data could be a solution to the problem. Despite the impossibility of deriving unique effects without additional assumptions (that is, guidance from theory), many have attempted to solve the so-called identification problem statistically (Bell and Jones 2014a; Yang and Land 2006). For example, some researchers have simply grouped birth cohorts together to remove the exact collinearity, thereby producing results that arbitrarily depend on the chosen grouping (Norval 1976; Rodgers 1982).

As a result of the exact collinear of generation, year, and age, it is impossible to predict generational effects with the third definition outlined above without making assumptions regarding at least one of generation, year, or age effects. To deal with partitioning generation, year, and age effects, I use a multilevel model that, following Bell and Jones (2014), extends the Hierarchical APC (HAPC) model (Yang and Land 2006). As Bell and Jones have shown (2014a, 2014b), the HAPC model has notable flaws that can be easily corrected. In particular, the model arbitrarily assumes the generational effect has no polynomial trend. Given that generations are cohorts of people moving through time and social space, the assumption of no polynomial trend for generational effects is unnecessarily strong. Moreover since the model includes intercepts for both years and cohort there is enough pooled information to model the generational effect while including the year effect as varying intercepts cross-classified with the cohort groups. As well the HAPC model can be extended to include spatial contexts such as U.S. census region as well as other geographic regions.

Below I consider the Hierarchical APC (HAPC) model (Yang & Land, 2006, 2013), since it is adapted for use in this dissertation. It also accords with the theoretical definition of generation effect used in this chapter, since it can be extended with interaction terms that may moderate the generational effect. This cross-classified multilevel model treats years and cohorts as contexts in which individuals reside, and can be specified as a micro observation-level and a macro higher-level equation as follows:

$$y_{i(j_1j_2)} = \beta_{0(j_1j_2)} + \beta_1 Age_{i(j_1j_2)} + \beta_2 Age_{i(j_1j_2)}^2 + e_{i(j_1j_2)}$$

$$\beta_{0j_1j_2} = \beta_0 + \mu_{1j_1} + \mu_{2j_2}$$

$$e_{i(j_1j_2)} \sim N(0, \sigma_e^2), \mu_{1j_1} \sim N(0, \sigma_{\mu_1}^2), \mu_{2j_2} \sim N(0, \sigma_{\mu_2}^2)$$

In this equation j_1 and j_2 indicate the years and cohorts with a residual associated with each year (μ_{1j_1}) and cohort group (μ_{2j_2}), with variances estimated as $\sigma_{\mu_1}^2$ and $\sigma_{\mu_2}^2$, respectively. The age effect, however, is estimated as a polynomial function with parameters β_1 and β_2 . The advocates of this framework for modeling year and cohort effects contend that the “identification” of the collinearity age, year, and cohort is “solved.” For example, Yang and Land (2006: 84) write: “The underidentification problem of the classical APC [Age-Period-Cohort] accounting model has been resolved by the specification of the quadratic function for the age effects.” They further state that this “contextual approach ...helps to deal with (actually completely avoids) the identification problem.” Although they can estimate the varying intercepts for year and cohort while also including a polynomial function for age, researchers have shown that the HAPC can produced wildly inaccurate estimates (see Bell and Jones 2014).

The basic problem with their approach is that the HAPC assumes there are no higher-order trends in generational effects. This assumption is unnecessarily strong, since it can be easily incorporated into the multilevel framework. Further the multilevel framework is intuitive in that years and cohorts are contexts, and it can easily be extended to incorporate other levels with varying intercepts and slopes (e.g. spatial indicators). However, first certain assumptions need to be made so that the results found are non-arbitrary. As argued above, one can assume that year effects are modeled not as a trend but as deviations from a baseline (that is, as varying intercepts cross-classified cohort groups), and thus the HAPC can be extended by including a cohort polynomial in the fixed part of the model:

$$\begin{aligned}
y_{i(j_1j_2)} &= \beta_{0(j_1j_2)} + \beta_1 Age_{i(j_1j_2)} + \beta_2 Age_{i(j_1j_2)}^2 + e_{i(j_1j_2)} \\
\beta_{0j_1j_2} &= \beta_0 + \beta_3 Cohort_{j_2} + \beta_4 Cohort_{j_2}^2 + \mu_{1j_1} + \mu_{2j_2} \\
e_{i(j_1j_2)} &\sim N(0, \sigma_e^2), \mu_{1j_1} \sim N(0, \sigma_{\mu_1}^2), \mu_{2j_2} \sim N(0, \sigma_{\mu_2}^2)
\end{aligned}$$

In this extended HAPC model the parameters β_3 and β_4 estimate the cohort trend with μ_{2j_2} estimating the variability around this trend at the cohort level. The inclusion of this parameter avoids the unnecessarily strong assumption of the HAPC model that cohort effects have entail no polynomial function. I further extend this model by including variables for year-level characteristics, such as the inflation rate, GDP growth per capita, shifts in the unemployment rate, changes in Internet use, among other variables. All models include higher-order terms unless they were not statistically significant in a model without additional controls.

B. Social Mechanisms and Year-Level Effects

To examine the hypotheses discussed in the previous section, I also include interaction terms with the polynomial function for the cohort trend and the focal covariate. Because of the difficulty of interpreting higher-order terms (which is in effect a three-way or higher interaction effect), in all instances I also calculated the predicted probabilities for the interaction effect. These are shown graphically in this chapter for most interaction effects and aid in the substantive interpretation of the model. Unless otherwise specified all effect plots were calculated using the mean values of the other covariates.

By extending the HAPC model and fitting a set of interaction terms with the generation effect, the approach taken in this chapter can be viewed as a hybrid of the second and third definitions of generational effects outlined earlier. The extended multilevel model estimates an overall generation effect capturing a set of cultural and social processes and then in terms of Mannheim's mechanism-oriented definition of generational effects I examine how this effect is modified by specified levels of another covariate.

To examine the explanations for generational effects in party disaffiliation, I draw on two sets of data: recent cross-sectional surveys and time-series cross-sectional surveys. The cross-sectional surveys are used to examine the approximately current views and beliefs of millennials, while the time-series data are used to examine generation, year, and age effects as well as fit interaction terms that are thought to moderate these effects. I review each of these two groups of datasets below.

For the cross-sectional analyses I sought data that not only had relevant questions on party affiliation as well as hypothesized predictors, but also a youth oversample. Given that many surveys are conducted in part by phone using landlines during the day, this can result in

samples that skew towards an older age bracket. Although sampling weights effectively adjust the sample, there may nonetheless be not enough variation in the youth subset to reliably estimate generational differences with any degree of precision.

C. Latent Class Models of Millennials

For examining generational effects as raw observed differences I used cross-tabulations as well as latent class models. The advantage of latent class models is that they allow for modeling observed indicator variables as functions of unobserved (or latent) variables. For example, suppose there are $J = 2$ polytomous categorical variables, referred to as the “manifest” variables, each of which contains K_j possible outcomes for individuals $i = 1 \dots N$. Here J refers to the two categorical variables in the analysis, one for party affiliation and another for political ideology, with the value of K_j differing for each outcome. The index j here is required since the manifest variables may have different numbers of outcomes. Further denote as Y_{ijk} the observed values of the J manifest variables such that $Y_{ijk} = 1$ if the respondent i gives the k th response to the j th variable and $Y_{ijk} = 0$ otherwise, with $j = 1 \dots J$ and $k = 1 \dots K_j$. The latent class model approximates the observed joint distribution of the party affiliation and political ideology (that is, the manifest variables) as the weighted sum of a finite number, denoted by R , of the constituent cross-classification tables.

Since R is fixed prior to estimation on the basis of model fit, it is necessary to use fit statistics or theory to determine the value of this quantity. Since the analysis here is inductive, I use fit statistics as the guide for fixing the value of R . To determine the number of classes I first fit a complete “independence” model with an $R = 1$, and then iteratively increased the number of latent classes. For each model I calculated four fit statistics: χ^2 Goodness of Fit, Likelihood

Ratio, AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), and BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion). As I iteratively fixed R to a higher value I plotted these fit statistics as shown in Figure 2. These can be interpreted similar to the scree plots commonly used in factor analysis: the “break” in the plot suggests the number of latent classes to fit to the data. For each of these statistics the aim is to minimize these values without estimating an excessive number of parameters. As can be seen in Figure 2, the fit statistics suggest a value of $R = 3$, corresponding to a “break” in the scree plot. If there is ambiguity in the fit statistics, then BIC is typically preferable since it adds a penalty to the inclusion of more parameters, as indicated by the rising value for $R > 3$.

Now that the number of classes is fixed, the next step is to calculate the probability that each individual belongs to each class and then calculate the modal posterior probabilities. This gives an indication of the overall partitioning of latent class membership in the population.

Let π_{jrk} denote the class-conditional probability that an observation in class $r = 1 \dots R$ produces the k th outcome on the j th variable. Within each class and for each manifest variable $\sum_{k=1}^{K_j} \pi_{jrk} = 1$. Further denote as p_r the R mixing proportions that provide the weights in the weighted sum of the component tables, with $\sum_r p_r = 1$. The probability that an individual i in class r produces a particular set of J outcomes on the manifest variables (with the assumption of local independence) is thus the product:

$$f(Y_i; \pi_r) = \prod_{j=1}^J \prod_{k=1}^{K_j} (\pi_{jrk})^{Y_{ijk}}$$

Accordingly, the probability density function across all classes is the weighted sum:

$$P(Y_i | \pi, p) = \sum_{r=1}^R p_r \prod_{j=1}^J \prod_{k=1}^{K_j} (\pi_{jrk})^{Y_{ijk}}$$

The latent class model gives estimates of the parameters p_r and π_{jrk} . Given estimates for these parameters, the posterior probability that each individual belongs to each class conditional on the observed values of the manifest variables is simply calculated using Bayes' formula for combining probabilities:

$$\hat{P}(r|Y_i) = \frac{\hat{p}_r f(Y_i; \hat{\pi}_r)}{\sum_{q=1}^R \hat{p}_q f(Y_i; \pi_q)}$$

The estimated posterior probability of class membership for each individual can then be summarized as an estimate of the population distribution, typically by calculating the modal posterior probability of membership for each latent class.

D. Clustering Algorithms for Outcome Variables

A further methodological advancement of this dissertation concerns the clustering of the outcome variables. Common practice in the social sciences (with the notable exception of psychology) is to lump items together with little attention to the underlying fit statistics and clustering options. Moreover, to the extent analyses are conducted using, for example, factor analysis, most analysts based the extraction of factors on correlation matrices in which the categorical nature of the variables are ignored. This is particularly problematic for cultural analysts, who often deal with categorical variables that should not be modeled as continuous. This methodological advancement also have important theoretical implications: rather than assuming socio-cultural variables constitute a single homogeneous entity, the analysis in this chapter uses the data at hand as well as algorithmic and simulation-based techniques to uncover how the items cluster. For all analyses in this chapter I ran the multilevel models using all scales

uncovered from these techniques but for purposes of presentation I have covered only a portion of the trends.

Specifically, I used two clustering techniques. Note that often researchers cluster individuals (e.g., through latent class analysis), but the aim here is to cluster items. First, I ran an item-based hierarchical clustering algorithm first conceived and later modified by Revelle, which he has termed the ICLUST algorithm (1978, 1979, 2012). The goal of this algorithm is to create a composite scale of items capturing underlying constructs thought to be of theoretical or practical importance. Typically researchers do this “by hand,” creating scales and comparing various measures of reliability and validity, such as Cronbach’s α . In contrast, the ICLUST algorithm entails the following steps, performed computationally: (1) find the proximity matrix (i.e., the correlation matrix); (2) identify the most similar pair of items; (3) combine this most similar pair of items to form a new variable (termed a cluster); (4) find the similarity of this cluster to all other items and clusters; (5) repeat steps 2 and 3 until there is a failure to increase the reliability coefficients Cronbach’s α or Revelle’s β ; (6) purify the solution by reassigning items to the most similar cluster center. The underlying assumption is that the correlations among items reflect the fact that each item loads at most one cluster and furthermore that items loading on these clusters correlate as a function of their cluster loadings as well as their correlations across clusters. Based on the constituent items, I then interpreted these composite scales and used them as outcome variables in the subsequent analyses.

Besides the ICLUST algorithm, I also ran a simulation-based factor analysis estimated from tetrachoric/polychoric correlations, which is suitable for categorical data. These analyses proceeded in three steps. First, when using categorical variables I calculated the tetrachoric/polychoric correlation matrix. Next, rather than using a visual inspection of a scree

plot of eigenvalues to determine the number of factors in the correlation matrix, I used a simulation-based “parallel” analysis. In this approach the scree of the factors of the observed data matrix are compared to a scree of a random data matrix the same size as that observed. From this the number of factors was automatically derived. Third, based on the pattern of loadings I interpreted the factors and then extracted them for subsequent analysis as outcome variables in the multilevel models for year, age, and generation effects. I now turn to the empirical chapters of this dissertation, first turning to generational shifts in party affiliation.

Chapter 3:
The Political Independent in an Age of Disjuncture

Introduction: Whither the American Voter?

The erosion of partisan loyalties within the American electorate has been called one of the most important political developments over the past four decades (DeSart 1995). Fewer citizens identify with either of the two major parties in American politics (Magleby and Nelson 2012). Most striking is the pronounced party disaffiliation among millennials, defined here as those born in 1980 onwards (Bump 2014; Drake 2014). According to some recent estimates at least half of all millennial youth in 2012 identify as a political independent, with only weak attachments to either the Republican or Democratic Party (Kowske, Rasch, and Wiley 2010; Lenhart et al. 2010a).

In this chapter I examine the generational change in party disaffiliation in the United States, uncovering the extent of the trend as well as likely explanations for the erosion of partisan loyalties. My analysis is based on six parts. First, I identify the major theories for the generational shift towards political independents over time, drawing relevant hypotheses for the analysis. Second, I outline the data and methods for the chapter. Third, based on cross-tabulations from several recent cross-sectional surveys directly targeting millennials, I demonstrate that the shift towards party disaffiliation is not an artifact of survey design or sampling procedures. This is further supported by a latent class analysis of millennials, which shows that approximately 45% of millennials in 2012 identified as a political independent. Fourth, using cross-classified multilevel models to adjust for age and year effects, I estimate the overall trends for party disaffiliation using three nationally-representative datasets covering over 60 decades of American history. Fifth, based on the major theories of generational shift in party disaffiliation outlined in the first section, I extend these multilevel models to include interaction effects for demographics, socioeconomics, technological beliefs and values, sociocultural

variables, and contextual effects, in particular the level of Internet access and poverty levels across U.S. census regions. Finally, I conclude with an overview of the findings and an outline for further research on generational change, political disaffiliation, and cultural continuity.

Part I: Theoretical Perspectives

Over half a century ago, the authors of *The American Voter* asserted (Campbell 1980) that: Few factors are of greater importance for our national elections than the lasting attachment of tens of millions of Americans to one of the parties. These loyalties establish a basic division of electoral strength within which the competition of particular campaigns takes place.... Most Americans have this sense of attachment with one party or the other. And for the individual who does, the strength and direction of party identification are facts of central importance in accounting for attitude and behavior.

The so-called “Michigan model,” with its emphasis on the fundamental importance of long-standing partisan loyalties, dominated the subsequent decade of academic research on voting behavior. In this framework structural variables, in particular social class background and occupation, were viewed as distal causes to the proximate social-psychological causes, mainly partisan affiliation, which predicted voting behavior (Manza, Hout, and Brooks 1995).

The similarly eponymously-titled “Columbia School” (Berelson et al. 1954; Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet 1968; Lazarsfeld and Oberschall 1965) also provided an explanation of voting in which party identification was the foundational. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues at the Bureau of Applied Social Research at Columbia made landmark contributions in the 1940s. They compiled evidence of a social basis for political behavior in election surveys in Erie County, Ohio (1940) and Elmira, New York (1948). From these studies Lazarsfeld’s team developed a

carefully-constructed sociological model of voting behavior. However, as Hout, Brooks, and Manza note (1995): “The core of their findings was the discovery of very high levels of stable partisanship on the part of voters, and that voters susceptible to changing their votes in the context of the campaign were those least interested in politics.

Developed in the 1940s to 1960s, changes in the social and cultural milieu seemed to be rendering the “Michigan” and “Columbia” models of voting behavior increasingly obsolescent, if not obsolete. By the early 1970s, scholars were pointing to the increasing proportion of political independents in surveys and the increasing prevalence of split-ticket voting as indications of a significant decline in partisan affiliation (Clarke and Suzuki 1994; Crewe, Särilvik, and Alt 1977; Crewe 1983; Dalton 1984a). By the mid-1970s, some political scientists were extrapolating from a decade-long trend to project a steep decline in partisan affiliation. For example, Niemi and Weisberg (1969) wrote that:

Of all the developments in contemporary electoral politics, the most remarkable is the increase in the number of independents after the mid-60's.... Significantly, the increase was greatest among the young, suggesting that the electorate may become still more independent as older voters who are more partisan die off.... That these developments signify the end of parties appears even more reasonable when one realizes the large number of changes in American society that have affected the party system.... In today's circumstances, organized political parties may be an anachronism.

Although there was initial skepticism among sociologists and political scientists that there had been a growth in the number of political independents in the 1960s and 1970s, the trends were unmistakable and too numerous to ignore. Since that time period partisan affiliation

has continued to decline with successive cohorts, notwithstanding some evidence of a slight increase in partisanship in the early 1990s² and a modest increase during the 2008 U.S. presidential election campaign. What can explain this cultural shift in the American landscape? I turn to several theoretical frameworks scholars have offered for this cultural transformation.

There are four set of hypotheses explaining the apparent rise of party disaffiliation in the United States since World War II. Broadly speaking these can be categorized into four main explanatory factors: demographic changes, socioeconomic conditions, sociocultural factors (including political ideology), and technological change (in particular the rise of the Internet and technocratic alternatives to traditional party allegiances). I review each of these in turn.

First, there are *demographic explanations* for the rise of party disaffiliation. These explanations are rooted in the apparent increased importance of cross-cutting, non-class forms of social divisions in the politics of postindustrial capitalist democracies (see Brooks and Manza 1997; Chhibber and Torcal 1997; Zielinski 2002). This is related to the wide range of theories of working class fragmentation extant in the literature. Other new or reemerging divisions are based on ascribed characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or linguistic differences, as the “identity” struggles of social groups such as movements of gays and lesbians, regional movements, and others (Bondi 1993; Calhoun 1994; Crenshaw 1991). Many of these divisions have long historical roots that can be traced back to earlier political divisions which have often been dormant throughout the twentieth century (Zielinski 2002).

Second, numerous scholars have put forth *socioeconomic explanations* for the decline in party affiliation across generations. Among the most well-known of these is the claim that the declining significance of class has weakened traditional party affiliations (Offe 1985). The

² For instance, Bartels (2001) documents an apparent “revival” of partisanship in the early 1990s.

simplest framework emphasizes presumed material interests as the foundation for class voting. For example, Lipset and his colleagues contended in 1954 that class voting is a matter of "...simple self-interest. The leftist parties represent themselves as instruments of social change in the direction of equality; the lower-income groups will support them in order to become economically better off, whereas the higher-income groups will oppose them in order to maintain their economic advantages" (Lipset 1954). Indeed, this assumption that material class interests provide the foundation for class voting has remained the standard explanation shared by virtually all analysts to some degree or another (Evans 2000). Although the status of the extent of the "democratic class struggle" (Hout, Brooks, and Manza 1995; Korpi 1983; Lipset 1966; Nieuwbeerta 1995) has been widely subjected to debate (for example, see (Manza et al. 1995), it is undeniable that in the aggregate social class has had a weakening predictive power on voting behavior across cohorts and decades.³

Relatedly, some scholars have focused on the growth of educational attainment for erasing partisan loyalties (e.g., Gelman 2009). According to these explanations, the increased capacity of a better-educated citizenry is able to make political decisions independent of the constraints of class loyalty or other social attributes, to the point of rejecting partisan affiliation altogether (Dalton 1984a; Rose and McAllister 1990). Voters are viewed as increasingly capable of rational assessment of party and candidate platforms and therefore less likely to rely on simple partisan affiliations as cues (Dalton 1984a). Inglehart (1971, 1977) has described this process as one of "cognitive mobilization," while other scholars have characterized it as the emergence of "open" electoral competition (Rose and McAllister 1986, 1990).

³ In fact, arguably the writings of Seymour Martin Lipset reflect the erosion of the social bases of partisan voting. In the 1960 edition of *Political Man* he argued that, even in the United States, Republicans and Democrats "represent the interests of different classes" (230). However by the early 1980s Lipset had updated *Political Man* to emphasize that class voting is no longer a salient phenomenon in Western capitalist democracies (Clark and Lipset 2001).

Other scholars have pointed out that economic insecurity, such as long-term unemployment or unstable living conditions, can lead to feelings of alienation from the political system. According to these theorists, economic problems can lead to a rejection of party affiliation entirely. In fact, some studies have shown that, if anything, social class is more systematically related to party disaffiliation rather than party affiliation. Thus, to the extent class matters in partisanship, it is in part because lower social classes exhibit lower levels of partisanship. Some scholars have gone further to argue that the declining political salience of other social divisions as well as social class is leading to increased political instability in the form of new political movements, new parties, and even politicians standing for office completely outside traditional party systems (Kriesi 1995).

Third, there are *sociocultural explanations* the growth of political independents in the United States. The fundamental factor for these theories is an emphasis a shift in values or ideologies. Also regarding sociocultural explanations, among the most influential has been the argument that there has been a systematic shift has taken place in values on the part of younger cohorts born into relative affluence during the post-World War II period (Inglehart 1981, 1997; Norris and Inglehart 2011). These younger cohorts are said to be increasingly concerned with post-materialist priorities while rejecting the “materialist” concerns of earlier cohorts born in a less affluent period (Inglehart 1971). A process of generational replacement is thus occurring in which post-materialists are gradually becoming the dominant segment of the population in postindustrial. To the extent that these post-materialist values upend traditional party loyalties (i.e, the “democratic class struggle”), an increasingly larger portion of the electorate may opt out of either political party. It has been further suggested that party disaffiliation is linked to the emergence of contemporary political discontent, a phenomenon whose origins can be traced to

approximately the same historical moment at which the shift toward independence first began to occur (i.e., the mid-1960s).

A related literature on the “Two Lefts” may also account for the erosion of partisan loyalties (for example, see Weakliem 1991). According to this argument, the historical links between workers and parties of the left have weakened at the same time that a “second” left rooted in segments of the middle class has grown up (Offe 1985; Tilley and Evans 2014).⁴ This is said to have produced a global trend toward declining class voting for two principal reasons. First, as left parties have altered their appeals to become more inclusive, their appeal to workers concerned with “material” issues has weakened (Przeworski, Stokes, and Manin 1999; Przeworski 1985). Second, the increased proportions of left party support drawn from middle class sectors have weakened the class coherence of party platforms as “new” issues such as concerns about environmental protection, peace, civil rights for previously ignored groups such as women and gays and lesbians, and more generally quality-of-life issues have arisen (Barnes et al. 1979; Lewis-Beck 2009; Offe 1985).

Some scholars have also focused on the cultural framing rather than content of the issues and concerns facing voters. Scholars have termed this the “neutrality-versus-negativity” debate of partisan disaffiliation (Craig 1985).⁵ Proposing a “negativity” argument, Nie and colleagues (1979) contend that the salient issues of the 1960s and 1970s, a period that coincided with a large growth in political independents, did “not clearly coincide with party lines” and accordingly the parties offered “no meaningful alternatives that might tie citizens more closely to them.” Under such circumstances, the claimed result is that citizens “come to look at the parties in more

⁴ In a related way Inglehart and his colleagues argue that the emergence of “post-materialist” values transformed the class basis of the left by engendering a culture clash between the traditional working-class left and the nontraditional post-materialist left (Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Inglehart 1977).

⁵ This has also been referred to as the “apolitical or political alienation” debate (Wattenberg 1981).

negative terms; they also begin to abandon the parties in growing numbers (283).” This was a popular explanation for party disaffiliation at the time, but the negativity thesis was challenged vigorously by Wattenberg (Wattenberg 1981b, 1987), who argued that declining partisanship reflects a feeling of neutrality, rather than negativity, on the part of the mass public. That is, the long-term trend toward party disaffiliation does not involve an active rejection of the major parties so much as it does a belief by many Americans that the parties have become “less relevant in solving the most important domestic and foreign policy issues of the day (1984).” In other words, the “neutrality hypothesis” implies that the erosion of partisan loyalties in the United States reflects neither a growing sense of alienation from the party system nor a loss of public confidence in political parties generally (for a similar view, see DeSart 1995). Rather, the claim is that many political independents simply regard the parties as irrelevant in their daily lives or for even solving national problems.

Finally, some scholars have proposed that *technological change* may account for the rise of political independents among younger cohorts (Benkler and Nissenbaum 2006; Benkler 2004). Although not subjected to systematic analysis, several scholars have posited that the Internet allows citizens to retrieve more information and learn more about the complexities of political discourse. By opening the channels of communication and increasing transparency, the Internet thus has an effect similar to educational attainment in cognitively mobilizing the public (Bimber and Davis 2002). The implied result is a weakening of partisan affiliations, with voters making decisions based on the information at hand rather than longstanding loyalties. However, some scholars, most notably the legal analyst Cass Sunstein (2001; see also Ulen 2001), have argued that because of free choice over online news consumption, many citizens self-select into news stories that confirm their prior cultural beliefs, thus leading to more extreme viewpoints

(Sunstein 2001). Whether this is thought to translate into stronger partisanship attachments is unclear and to date has not been systematically examined (Ulen 2001).

Part II: Hypothesized Mechanisms

Based on previous theories, methodology, and dataset, I outlined four main sets of hypotheses. The first of GSS questions involve demographics, which are expected to partially moderate the expected upward trend in party disaffiliation by cohorts. Drawing on the literature on identity and politics, I expect in particular that immigrants, unmarried households, and those living in large cities or urban areas less likely to have partisan attachments (Chilton 1988; Crewe 1983; Mainwaring 1998; Meckler 2014). For the GSS, items include whether or not the respondent is Hispanic (Yes = 1, No = 0), lives in a multiracial household (Yes =1, 0 = No), cohabiting with a partner (Yes = 1, 0 = No), living in a metropolitan area (“Urban,” “Suburbs,” or “Rural”), and living in a large city (population size in thousands). The ANES includes a similar set of variables as well as an additional input for whether or not the respondent is multilingual (Yes =1, 0 = No). Both the ANES and PVS also include a variable on whether or not the respondent was born abroad (Yes =1, 0 = No).

For the second set of explanatory factors I examine socioeconomic factors hypothesized to moderate the putative interaction between generation and party disaffiliation. Based on the large (albeit circumstantial) literature on economic insecurity and “contradictory class locations” on weakened party affiliation (for example, see Anand and Lea 2011; Barnes et al. 1979; Brooks and Manza 1997; Western 1995), I include several sets of focal variables measuring various aspects of economic and social conditions of the respondents. For the GSS these items include work status (“Working full-time,” “Working part-time,” “Unemployed,” “In School,”

“Retired,” Disabled,” “Homemaker or Other”), whether or not the respondent is self-employed (Yes = 1, 0 = No), educational attainment (“High School or Less,” “Some College,” “Bachelor’s Degree or Higher”), and household income (standardized as a scale ranging from approximately -2 to +2). As well, because some scholars have highlighted the declining role of labor unions in the decline in party affiliation (Bendix and Lipset 1954; Farber and Western 2002; Korpi 1983; Lipset, Bendix, and Malm 1954; Wallerstein and Western 2000; Western 1996), I also include a variable on whether or not the respondent and related family members are members of a labor union (“Respondent is a Union Member,” “Respondent’s Partner is a Union Member,” “Both are Union Members,” “Neither are Union Members”). Given the causes and aftermath of the 2007-08 Great Recession on the life outcomes of young Americans (Burd-Sharps and Lewis 2013; MacDonald 2008; Wight et al. 2010), I also include questions, when available, on housing insecurity of the respondent (“Paying Rent,” “Own a Home,” “Other Living Arrangement”). For the ANES I include a similar set of focal variables but I also include two long-standing questions in the series on recent job loss and payment cuts. Specifically, the item on pay cuts, asked only for those who are working, asks respondents whether or not they have had working hours or pay cut in the last 6 months up to the date of the interview (Yes = 1, 0 = No), while the item on job loss asks if respondents had been laid off in same time period (Yes = 1, 0 = No). Due to the smaller scale of the dataset, the PVS only includes items on work status, housing insecurity, educational attainment (scaled as standardized score from -2 to +2), and income (coded as factor levels for comparability across the series).

The third set of explanatory variables deals with sociocultural factors. For the GSS I include measures of political ideology (measured as a factor with levels for “Very Conservative,” “Conservative,” “Somewhat Conservative,” “Moderate,” “Somewhat Liberal,” “Liberal,” and

“Very Liberal”). In addition I include measures of trust in the federal government and the U.S. Congress (“Great Deal,” “Only Some,” “Hardly Any”). As well, because of the influential literature on post-materialist value shifts in Western society (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Inglehart 1981, 1990), I include three measures of post-materialism. Respondents in the GSS are asked to give their first and second priorities among four sets of value orientations (“Maintaining the order in the nation,” “Giving people more say in important political decisions,” “Fighting rising prices,” “Protecting freedom of speech”). In this classic formulation of Inglehart’s post-materialist thesis (for example, see 1977), the first and third value orientations are theorized as materialist while the second and fourth are categorized as post-materialist. From the responses given to these two questions, I calculate three different variables on post-materialism. The first is a categorical variable with four levels depending on the responses to these questions (“Materialist,” “Hybrid Materialist,” “Hybrid Post-Materialist,” “Post-Materialist”), the second is a quantitative index that ranges from approximately -2 to +2 on a score for post-materialism (with higher values indicating a higher level of post-materialist value orientations), and the third is the actual response of the first value orientation (“Maintaining the order in the nation,” “Giving people more say in important political decisions,” “Fighting rising prices,” “Protecting freedom of speech”).

For the ANES I include an item on political ideology (with a similar coding to that in the GSS). Based on the debate over the “negativity-versus-neutrality” thesis (e.g., DeSart 1995), I also include items capturing perceived alignment with the Republican and Democratic Parties. These are measured as feeling thermometers scored from 0 to 100, with 0 representing a “cold” response and 100 representing a “warm” response. I also include a variable for the respondent’s level of interest in public affairs and politics (“No interest,” “Some interest,” “Great deal of

interest”). For the PVS I include a measure of political ideology but also various items measuring levels of neutrality and negativity towards the political system and political parties, specifically the respondent’s perception of having “no influence” in electoral politics (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), that politicians have “lost touch” of their constituents (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), that politicians “don’t care” about their constituents (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the importance of elections in today’s society (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), and the assertion that “what goes on in Washington, DC is dull” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0).

The fourth set of inputs deal with values and beliefs about science and technology. For the GSS I use a basic question about Internet access in the home (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0) and whether or not the respondent uses the Internet (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0) to capture the potential moderating effect of the Internet on generational differences in party disaffiliation. Given the growing but somewhat fragmentary literature on the role of science in shaping the worldviews of young cohorts (Hanson 2007; Kowske et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2012), I use several measures capturing values towards science and technology, in particular whether or not science is more harmful than helpful (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the claim that there is too much focus on science rather than “faith” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), views on whether or not science is making the world a “worse place” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the importance of technology and science for giving the next generation more life opportunities (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), views on technological development “moving too fast” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), and whether or not science should be support by the federal government (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0). For the ANES I include questions on household Internet access as well as whether or not the respondent has seen electoral campaign information online (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0). The PVS includes a similar item on household Internet access but also has two questions capturing

evaluations of science and technology, with one measuring whether or not science is “helping” or “hurting” society (“Helping” = 1, “Hurting” = 0) and another asking whether or not technology is “making life too complicated” (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0).

Finally, for each of the time-series cross-sectional datasets I use the geographic identifiers to merge individual-level observations with contextual data from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration on total Internet access and broadband access by U.S. Census region. Additionally I incorporate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to merge each of these datasets with the percent living below the poverty line. In all surveys I use the lowest possible level of geographic region to merge with the contextual data. This contextual data provides additional information that can buttress the claims over the role of technological diffusion and macroscopic economic conditions on party disaffiliation.

Part III: Generational Differences in Party Disaffiliation

I present the analyses on generational differences on party disaffiliation in six sections (A to F): In subsection A, I present basic generational differences as stylized facts; in subsection B I present the latent class tabulations of political disaffiliation by generation; then, in subsection C. I present the main effects of generational political disaffiliation generation, cohort, age, and year using the three nationally-representative trend data; then, in sections D, E, and F, I examine five different types of interaction effects that may account for variability in party disaffiliation: (1) demographic differences, (2) socioeconomic differences, (3) technological differences, (4) sociocultural differences across generations, and, finally, (5) cross-level interaction effects. In the conclusion I summarize the findings in light of their theoretical implications.

A. Unadjusted Differences by Generation

In this section I rely primarily on cross-sectional data, but I focus on presenting the generational differences in political disaffiliation and testing for independence of the levels of each factor. I use these analyses to provide context for the findings in section B, which are the latent class profiles of party disaffiliation among millennials. As the following analyses reveal, compared to other generations (i.e., Greatest, Silent, and Boomer), millennials are most likely to report being politically independent ($\chi^2 = 1309.11$; $p < 0.001$). As a departure from the GSS analyses, additional analyses show that, using across three cross-sectional datasets, compared to other generations (specifically, the Greatest, Silent, and Boomer generations), millennials are more likely to report as political independents. These results are shown in Figure 1.

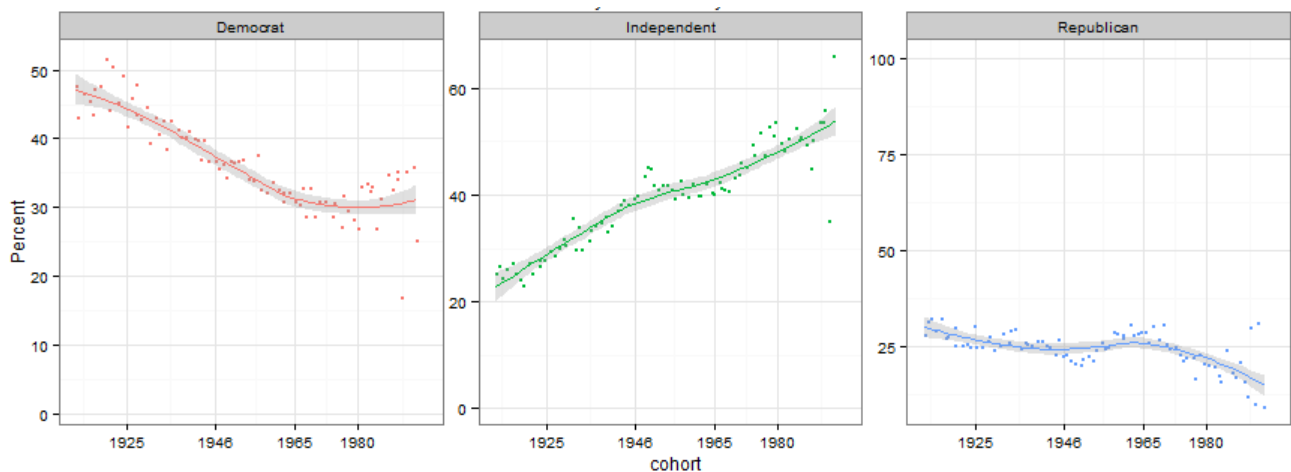


Figure 1: Party Affiliation by Birth Cohort in the GSS

B. Latent Class Models of Millennials

Although I have presented a consistent pattern across several different nationally representative surveys for a relationship between generation and party disaffiliation, it is possible that due to

respondent bias this is an inaccurate assessment. In short, party disaffiliation may be latent variable or category of which expressed party disaffiliation is a manifest indicator. As a further check on the robustness of the observed generational effect I conducted a latent class analysis of party affiliation and political ideology. The analysis here is based on a subset of millennial youth in the GSS.

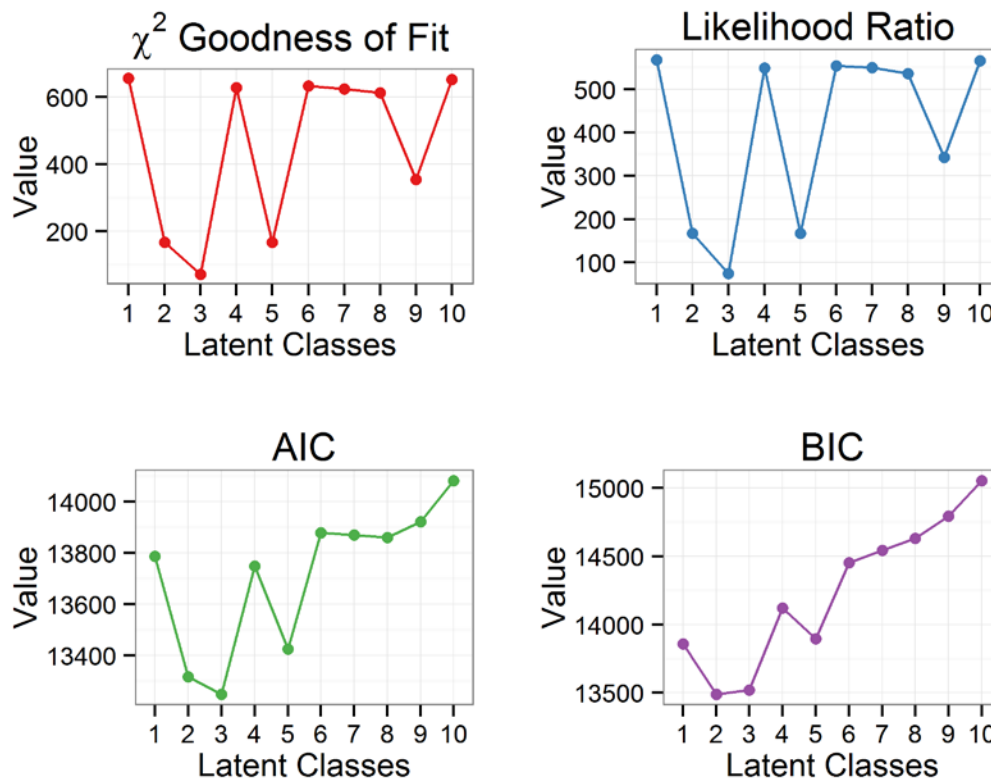


Figure 2: Line Plots of Fit Statistics

Figure 2 shows the scree plots for selected fit statistics, which suggest the number of latent classes to be assumed before fitting the model. The scree plots here indicate that there are three latent classes. Figure 3 shows the latent class membership by modal posterior probability for the analysis based on party affiliation and political ideology, with 95% confidence intervals

indicated by the error bars. This suggests that approximately 46% of millennials are members of latent class 1, 37% are members of latent class 2, and 18% are members of latent class 3.

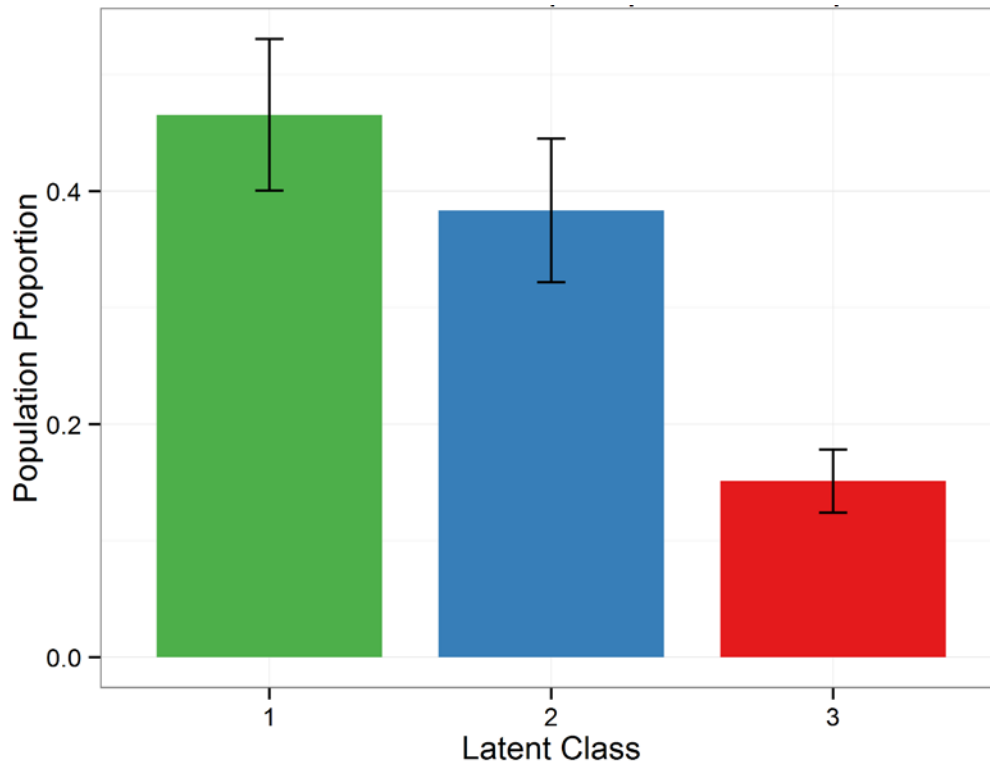


Figure 3: Latent Class Membership Proportions

To interpret the latent classes it is often useful to examine the class-conditional response probabilities. These are shown in Figures 4 and 5. Additional analyses show related profile plots, in which the class-conditional response probabilities are standardized, for party affiliation and political ideology, respectively. These figures indicate that latent class 1 can be interpreted as political independents (as well as political moderates), class 2 for Democrats (and political liberals), and class 3 for Republicans (and political conservatives). The findings here buttress the argument that party disaffiliation is not an artifact of survey design or question wording, but represents an actual construct corresponding to real sociocultural groupings.

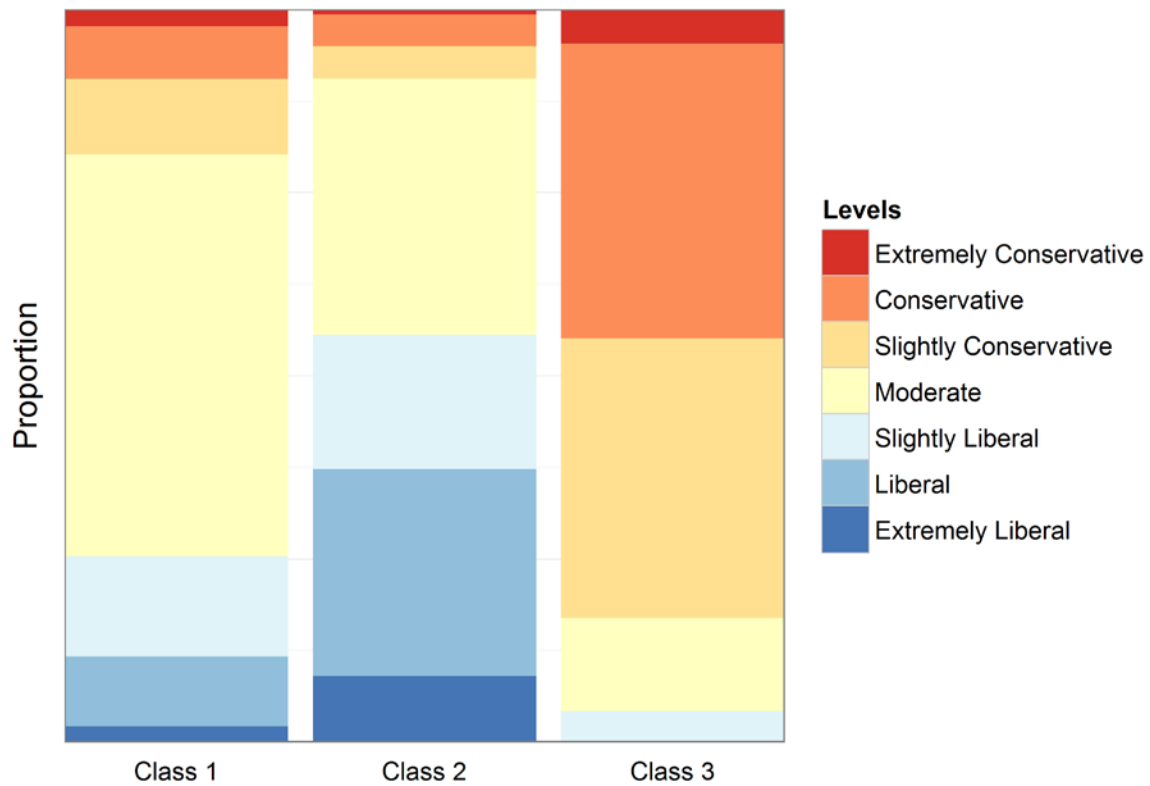


Figure 4: Class-Conditional Response Probabilities for Political Ideology

These results also contradict longstanding claims by some political scientists that political independents are not a meaningful *sui generis* category. For instance, in a prominent article on the subject Keith et al. (1996: 155) contend:

For almost a decade we have taken issue with the prevailing view of independent voters. We showed that Independents, as they were usually defined, had nothing in common, and in fact were more diverse than either Democrats or Republicans. Virtually no generalizations about Independents were correct, except by accident, because they comprise three very different kinds of people. Most Independents acknowledge that they are closer to one or the other party.

The analyses here show otherwise: political independents among millennials are a unique, distinct category separate from Republicans and Democrats. I now turn to estimating year, age, and cohort effects for party disaffiliation using the cross-classified multilevel model outlined previously.

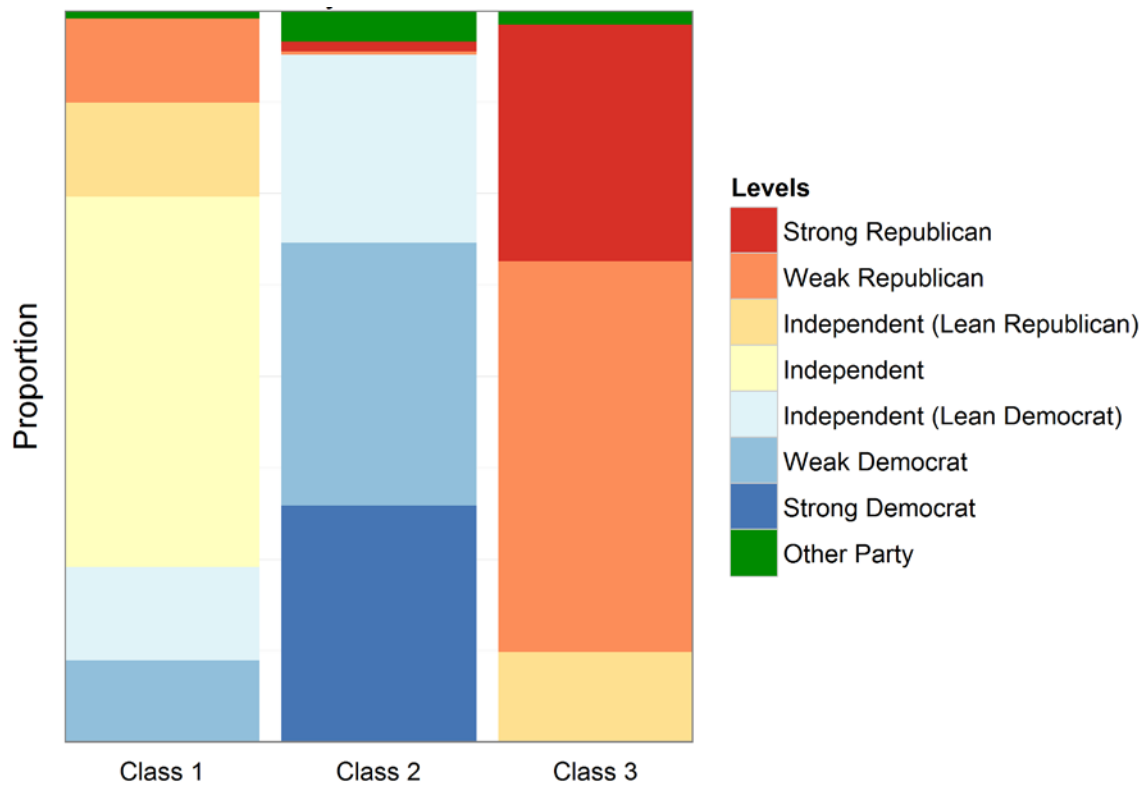


Figure 5: Class-Conditional Response Probabilities for Party Identification

C. Main Effects: Multilevel Regressions

As evinced in the aforementioned findings in cross-tabulations by generation, I have demonstrated that millennials are more likely to identify as political independents than previous generations. The following set of analyses rely on multilevel modeling to partition generational and age effects across trend data, first fitting a model with no controls and then models with

demographic controls. Then I present effect plots that display the patterning of party disaffiliation by generation, cohort, age, and year, with generation calculated from the cohort effects at specified years (Fox 2002). I present these findings across three nationally-representative datasets: the General Social Survey (GSS), the American National Election Survey (ANES), and the Pew Values Survey (PVS).

The findings in this section demonstrates that compared to other generations millennials are considerably more likely to disaffiliate politically. Moreover, this difference in cohorts is not reducible to differences in age or survey year. Table 1 shows the results from multilevel models of generational effects, with Figure 6 showing the predicted probabilities. No controls are included in this model since the aim is to examine the overall separate age, year, and cohort effects. The findings here show a generational effect towards political disaffiliation, with millennials among the most likely to be politically disaffiliated. Specifically, I estimate that compared with either identifying as a Republican or Democrat, about 43% of millennials identify as politically disaffiliated. Furthermore Figure 6 shows an age effect that corresponds intuitively with the claim that party as people age they become partisan but then have a slight tendency to become disaffiliated. Finally, the year effect in Figure 6 shows a decline in party disaffiliation through the 1970s and 1980s followed by a subsequent rise until the most recent survey year. Figures 6 and 8 show corresponding trends for religious disaffiliation compared to Democratic and Republican Party affiliations. A similar pattern emerges for generational effects from these analyses, with a higher proportion of millennials adopting no party affiliation in later years. Additional analyses checked the robustness of these polynomial trends after including a set of controls for sex, marital status, race, and geographic region. These reiterate the core finding that there has been a long-term trend across generations towards political disaffiliation.

Table 1: Generation and Age Effects for Party Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Independent (Base: Any Party)	Independent (Base: Republican Party)	Independent (Base: Democratic Party)
Age	-0.0242 ^{***} (0.0039)	-0.0282 ^{***} (0.0053)	-0.0234 ^{***} (0.0041)
Age ²	0.0002 ^{***} (0.0000)	0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)	0.0002 ^{***} (0.0000)
Cohort	0.5450 ^{***} (0.0960)	0.6966 ^{***} (0.1305)	0.5047 ^{***} (0.0987)
Cohort ²	-0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)	-0.0002 ^{***} (0.0000)	-0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)
AIC	72993.8160	46839.4388	56929.0610
BIC	73056.4153	46898.7713	56989.5850
Deviance	72979.8160	46825.4388	56915.0610
Num. obs.	56543	35457	42036
Variance: Cohort	0.0037	0.0146	0.0007
Variance: Year	0.0152	0.0382	0.0103
Variance: Residual	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

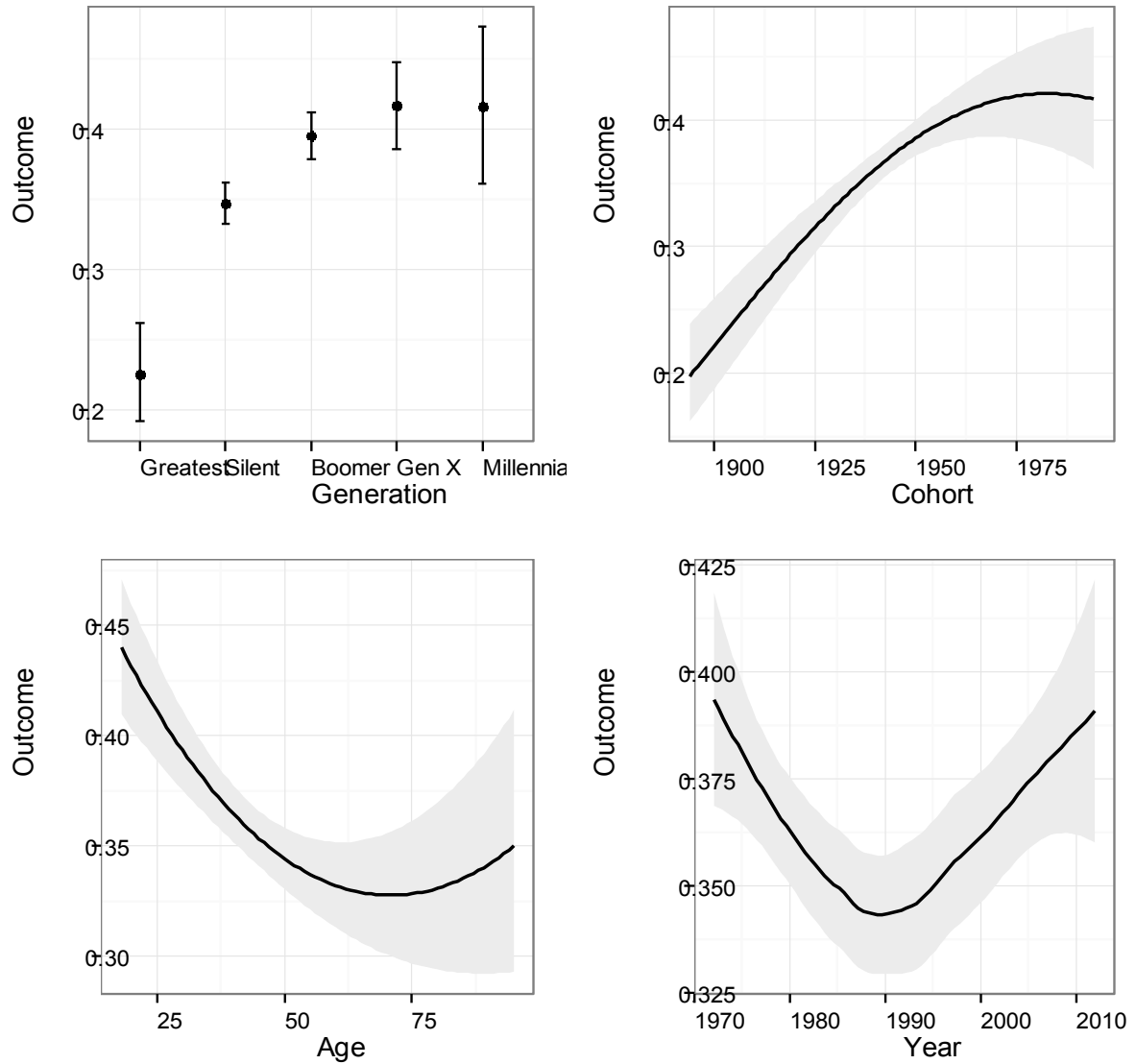


Figure 6: Generation, Age, and Year Effects in the GSS for Political Independents (Base: Any Party)

I now examine trends in party disaffiliation in the ANES. Table 2 shows the generational, age, and year effects for the multilevel models without controls. Main effects in the ANES produce nearly identical findings as those in the GSS, as shown in Figure 7. In fact, the predicted percentage is nearly identical with that from the GSS, with about 45% of millennials reporting no party affiliation versus any party affiliation. Similarly, age shows a U-shaped pattern, consistent

with the interpretation that initial political learning leads to partisan attachments while either cynicism of the party system or additional political knowledge results in an increase in political disaffiliation. Additional analyses show that these patterns are robust to the inclusion of controls as well as explicit modeling of the year effects.

Table 2: Generation and Age Effects for Party Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Independent (Base: Any Party)	Independent (Base: Republican Party)	Independent (Base: Democratic Party)
Age	-0.0297 ^{***} (0.0039)	-0.0344 ^{***} (0.0049)	-0.0255 ^{***} (0.0043)
Age ²	0.0003 ^{***} (0.0000)	0.0003 ^{***} (0.0000)	0.0003 ^{***} (0.0000)
Cohort	0.5925 ^{***} (0.0747)	0.8255 ^{***} (0.0944)	0.4168 ^{***} (0.0840)
Cohort ²	-0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)	-0.0002 ^{***} (0.0000)	-0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)
AIC	64740.1499	40823.5403	51863.9834
BIC	64802.1567	40881.8935	51923.9343
Deviance	64726.1499	40809.5403	51849.9834
Num. obs.	51954	30828	38732
Variance: Cohort	0.0040	0.0098	0.0066
Variance: Year	0.0207	0.0285	0.0247
Variance: Residual	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

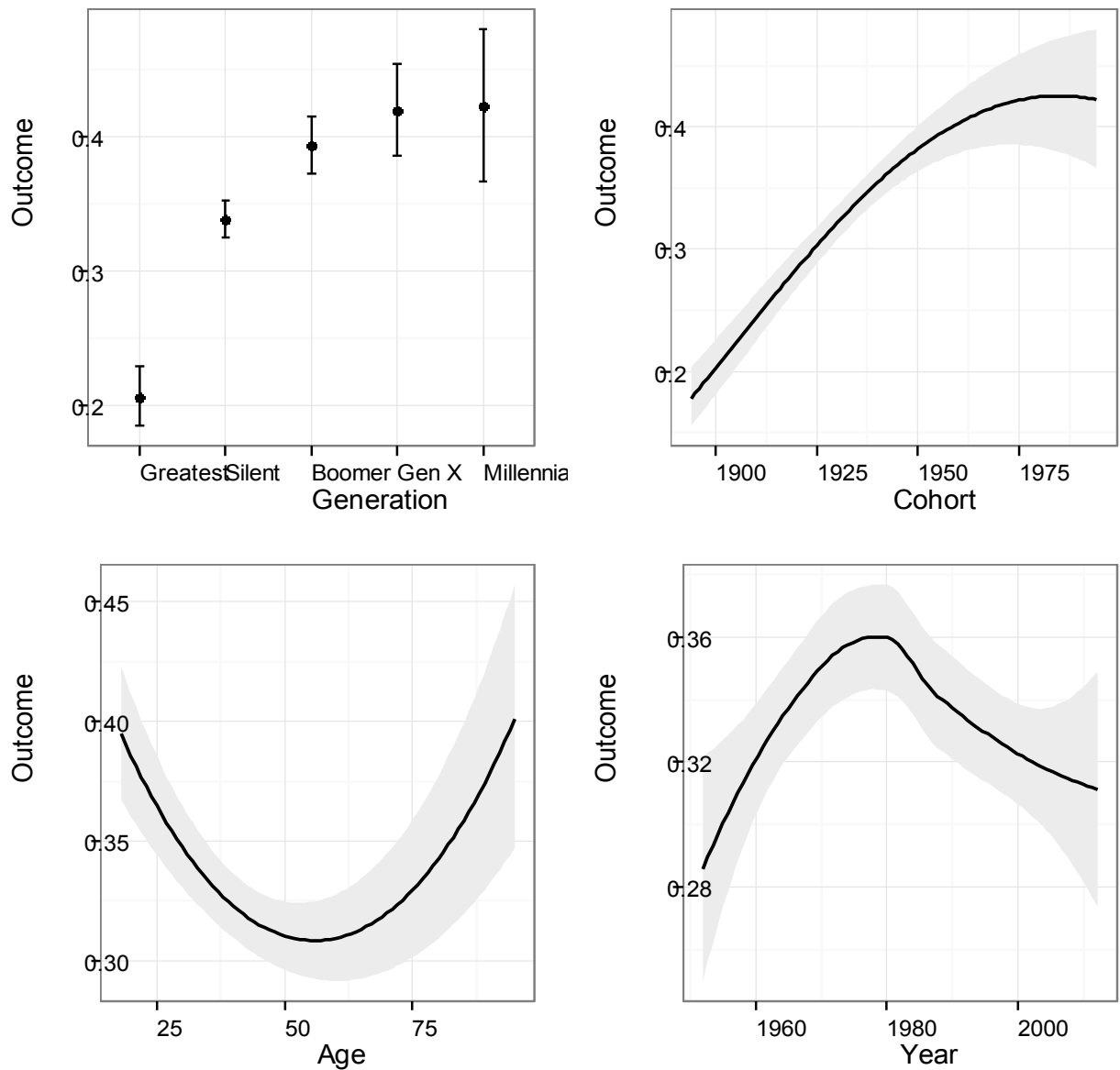


Figure 7: Generation, Age, and Year Effects for Political Independents in the ANES (Base: Any Party)

Main effects in the PVS produce nearly identical findings as for generational changes, but reveal different patterns along age and survey year. The model without controls is shown in Table 3. In contrast to the GSS and ANES, age by itself increases linearly with disaffiliation rather than in a

U-shaped curve while the year effect exhibits trendless fluctuation. Note that initial models including higher-order terms for some of the models, but I omitted these due to statistical insignificance. As can be seen Figure 8, the generational effect is almost monotonic. Moreover the percentage disaffiliated is considerably higher than that from the ANES and GSS, with about 65% of millennials politically disaffiliated versus having any party affiliation. Further analyses show that these generational effects remain robust to the inclusion of controls. The findings are clear across each of these surveys: there is a pronounced generational trend towards greater party disaffiliation. In the next section I examine the moderating effects that may account for these observable cohort effects.

Table 3: Generation and Age Effects for Party Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Independent (Base: Any Party)	Independent (Base: Republican Party)	Independent (Base: Democratic Party)
Age	0.0070 [*] (0.0037)	0.0181 ^{***} (0.0067)	0.0073 [*] (0.0038)
Age ²		-0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)	
Cohort	0.3084 ^{***} (0.1184)	0.0167 ^{***} (0.0048)	0.4027 ^{***} (0.1223)
Cohort ²	-0.0001 ^{**} (0.0000)		-0.0001 ^{***} (0.0000)
AIC	45019.8917	30463.5218	33819.4023
BIC	45070.5634	30511.6580	33868.0960
Deviance	45007.8917	30451.5218	33807.4023
Num. obs.	34382	22532	24726
Variance: Cohort	0.0044	0.0145	0.0006
Variance: Year	0.0104	0.0187	0.0109
Variance: Residual	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

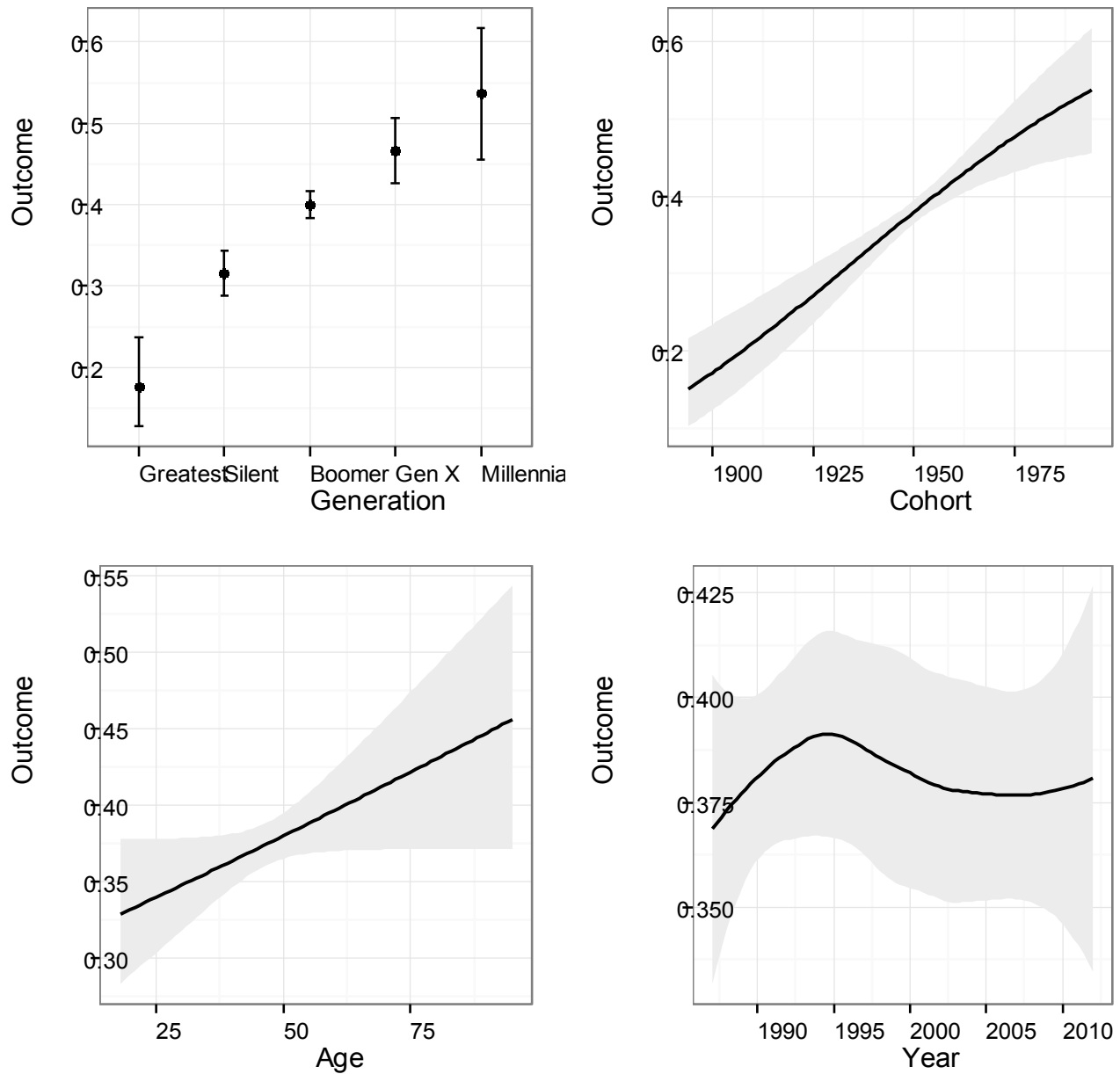


Figure 8: Generation, Age, and Year Effects for Political Independents in the PVS (Base: Any Party)

D. Interaction Effects: General Social Survey

In this section I review each of the hypotheses that have been hypothesized to moderate the relationship between generation and party disaffiliation. I examine interactions with and without

the inclusion of controls, including effect plots whenever possible to convey the direction and magnitude of the interactions for each focal variable. I cover four main set of factors: demographic, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and contextual.

Party disaffiliation has been theorized to be related across generations to demographic conditions. These results are shown in Table 4. To minimize the output, the main effect variables and higher-order terms for cohort and age are omitted. All subsequent output also omits these from display for ease of interpretation. The clearest findings are for multiracial identity and the two measures of living an urban area, metro area (which is a categorical variable) and city size (which a continuous variable on the size of the respondent's city). Multiracial and city size remain statistically significant at conventional levels ($\alpha = 0.05$) even with the inclusion of additional controls. The interpretation of these analyses is straightforward: those who live in less populated areas are more likely to be independent among young cohorts while those who have a multiracial identity are more likely among young cohorts to be politically independent. Similar patterns exist for the other interaction terms, although they do not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

The next set of analyses focus on socioeconomic factors thought to moderate the trend in party disaffiliation across generations. Table 5 shows the interaction effects for socioeconomic factors. Statistically significant effects are found for all hypothesized inputs with the exception of self-employment status. Moreover they remain statistically significant even after controlling for additional inputs. For further analyses I evaluated the results in terms of predicted probabilities from the models with controls. Several intriguing patterns emerged from the data. Regarding work status (labeled structural disconnection in Table 5), younger cohorts who are unemployed or homemakers are considerably more likely to be political independents than other categories.

This is consistent with the narrative that structural disconnection has a greater dislocating effect among younger generations. In accordance with the earlier hypotheses, housing insecurity is more highly related to being a political independent among younger cohorts. Findings also show that lower incomes are related to higher levels of party disaffiliation, especially among younger generations. Finally, buttressing arguments on the mobilizing effects of labor unions, analyses indicate an increased probability of being a political independent among younger cohorts of respondents who are not members of a labor union. In short, the findings here show that various measures of economic insecurity, including lack of union membership, are related to higher levels of party disaffiliation across generations.

Table 4: Demographic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Hispanic	Multiracial	Cohabiting	Metro Area	City Size
Cohort × Hispanic	0.113 (0.734)				
Cohort × Multiracial		-1.255** (0.567)			
Cohort × Cohabiting			0.481 (0.805)		
Cohort × Urban				-0.262 ⁺ (0.198)	
Cohort × (City Population Size)					0.001 ⁺ (0.0001)
AIC	24953.035	64427.464	66164.809	73005.794	73004.026
BIC	25031.416	64515.607	66253.216	73148.881	73093.455
Deviance	24933.035	64407.464	66144.809	72973.794	72984.026
Num. obs.	18735	49724	51057	56554	56554
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004
Variance: Year	0.009	0.015	0.014	0.015	0.015
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, ⁺ p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

The next set of explanatory factors is oriented around changing perceptions of science and technology as well as the use and availability of new technologies. Table 6 shows the results without controls. Home internet access and evaluations of the pace of technology are statistically significant in the model without controls, but these are statistically insignificant after adjusting for basic controls. Further analyses were used to examine the predicted probabilities for these interaction terms, which can give an indication of the effect size and direction even in the absence of statistical significance at conventional levels. These analyses indicated that Internet access at home is related to higher levels of partisanship across cohorts, but this growth has been greater for those without Internet access. These findings suggest an adjustment to claims by analysts such as Cass Sunstein who have argued that the Internet fosters extremism through self-selection of cultural content; however, the findings here imply that rather leading to extremes the Internet is holding back a secular increase across cohorts in party disaffiliation. I note that claims about causality for individual-level Internet access should be met with circumspection, since households who adopt Internet access at home may differ in other ways from those who do not.

Table 5: Socioeconomic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Structural Disconnection	Self- Employed	Housing Insecurity	Educational Attainment	Household Income	Union Membership
Cohort × (Attending School)	-1.074 [*] (0.622)					
Cohort × (Homemaker)	-0.619 ^{***} (0.223)					
Cohort × (Self- employed)		-0.232 (0.243)				
Cohort × (Pays Rent)			0.134 (0.264)			
Cohort × (Other Living Arrangement)			1.749 ^{**} (0.849)			
Cohort × (Some College)				0.629 ⁺ (0.416)		
Cohort × (BA or Higher)				0.475 ^{**} (0.207)		
Cohort × (Household Income)					0.092 ⁺ (0.071)	
Cohort × (Union Member)						0.619 [*] (0.335)
AIC	72958.511	68653.884	32119.499	72595.010	63863.320	50631.817
BIC	73155.252	68742.687	32225.051	72711.237	63951.417	50768.986
Deviance	72914.511	68633.884	32093.499	72569.010	63843.320	50599.817
Num. obs.	56544	53118	24820	56418	49501	39068
Variance: Cohort	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.002
Variance: Year	0.015	0.016	0.005	0.016	0.016	0.017
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

Table 6: Technological Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Home Internet Access	Internet Use	Science is Harmful	Science vs. Faith	Science Worsening	Tech for Next Generation	Technology is Too Fast	Technological Advancement
Cohort × (Internet Access)	-1.291 [*] (0.755)							
Cohort × (Use Internet)		0.586 (1.011)						
Cohort × (Science is Harmful)			-0.685 (0.657) (0.001)					
Cohort × (Science vs. Faith)				-0.218 (0.750)				
Cohort × (Science Worsening)					-0.066 (1.256)			
Cohort × (Tech for Next Generation)						-0.100 (1.228)		
Cohort × (Tech Too Fast)							1.036 ⁺ (0.712)	
Cohort × (Tech Advancement)								0.603 (1.094)
AIC	6708.366	6311.639	7842.994	5269.693	2664.016	6560.945	6518.681	6454.052
BIC	6773.562	6376.302	7909.912	5332.644	2720.282	6625.868	6583.553	6518.817
Deviance	6688.366	6291.639	7822.994	5249.693	2644.016	6540.945	6498.681	6434.052
Num. obs.	5012	4752	5954	4004	2052	4877	4852	4801
Variance: Cohort	0.000	0.001	0.000	0.000	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000
Variance: Year	0.000	0.009	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

For the next battery of items I examine sociocultural moderates of the relationship between generation and the rise of political independents. Table 7 shows statistically significant interaction effects for political ideology and trust in the federal government, which remain statistically significant after adjusting for baseline controls. The findings show that political moderates among younger cohorts are the most likely to identify as political independents. In fact, the findings reveal a slight trend among liberals and conservatives in younger cohorts toward greater partisanship. This is consistent with the claim that political polarization has strengthened party affiliation at the extremes while alienated the middle bulk of political moderates from public discourse. Turning to trust in the federal government, the analyses show a strikingly robust relationship among younger cohorts in regards to distrust and party disaffiliation. This is strong support for the “negativity” argument that younger generations are stripping party affiliations due to aversion to the existing political system. Further analyses revealed a similar relationship for trust in the U.S. Congress across generations, although it fails to reach conventional levels of statistical significance.

Table 7: Sociocultural Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Political Ideology	Post- Materialist Values	Highest Value	Trust in Federal Government	Trust in U.S. Congress
Cohort × Liberal	-0.476 ^{**} (0.192)				
Cohort × Moderate	0.001 ^{**} (0.0001)				
Cohort × (Hybrid Materialist)		0.088 (0.838)			
Cohort × (Hybrid Post- Materialist)		0.001 (0.0001)			
Cohort × (Post-Materialist)		0.463 (0.839)			
Cohort × (Control Prices)			0.149 (0.836)		
Cohort × (Give People More Say)			0.0001 (0.0001)		
Cohort × (Project Free Speech)			0.223 (0.724)		
Cohort × (Only Some Trust in Federal Government)				-0.393 ⁺ (0.247)	
Cohort × (Only Some Trust in Federal Government)				0.001 ⁺ (0.0001) (0.0001)	
Cohort × (Only Some Trust in Federal Government)					0.133 (0.259)
Cohort × (Only Some Trust in U.S. Congress)					0.001 (0.001)
AIC	60919.934	6201.954	6488.872	47868.082	47849.712
BIC	61033.939	6305.294	6592.960	47978.941	47960.566
Deviance	60893.934	6169.954	6456.872	47842.082	47823.712
Num. obs.	47554	4716	4942	37332	37317
Variance: Cohort	0.003	0.001	0.001	0.002	0.002
Variance: Year	0.016	0.001	0.001	0.015	0.015
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

E. Interaction Effects: American National Election Survey

I now turn to findings from the ANES. In this section I examine interaction effects between the cohort trend and various demographic inputs implied by theories of party disaffiliation. As shown in Table 8, the results indicate statistically significant interaction effects for whether or not the respondent is Hispanic and metropolitan area. Additional analyses were based on evaluating the effect plots for each of these interaction effects after adjusting for the baseline controls. Findings show that across cohorts those who identify as Hispanic are more likely to identify as political independents. Turning to metropolitan status, again consistent with the GSS the results show that younger cohorts who live in rural areas are particularly likely to identify as political independents, although enormous generational differences exist regardless of metropolitan status.

Table 8: Demographic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Hispanic	Multiracial	Multilingual	Cohabiting	Metro Area
Cohort × Hispanic	-0.938 ^{***} (0.292)				
Cohort × Multiracial		0.313 (0.571)			
Cohort × Multilingual			-0.524 (0.517)		
Cohort × Cohabiting				-0.313 (1.161)	
Cohort × Urban					-0.299 [*] (0.179)
Cohort × Suburbs					0.076 (0.169)
AIC	51089.493	38955.207	40056.821	65040.985	53061.672
BIC	51175.341	39038.366	40140.574	65129.609	53174.396
Deviance	51069.493	38935.207	40036.821	65020.985	53035.672
Num. obs.	39528	30210	32057	52174	43092
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.001	0.006	0.004	0.003
Variance: Year	0.008	0.007	0.017	0.021	0.023
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Several socioeconomic factors have been theorized to moderate the relationship between the cohort trend and party disaffiliation. Table 9 shows the interaction terms modeled without controls. In the model without controls all variables are statistically significant except for housing insecurity, while additional analyses revealed that in the full model concerns about being laid off and union membership were not statistically significant at the conventional level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Corroborating the findings from the GSS, analyses suggest a striking interaction effect between the cohort trend and structural disconnection (or unemployment without being in school) on party disaffiliation. The findings strongly support the claim that generational differences in political disaffiliation are due in part to the job insecurity of millennials. Turning to education and income, findings indicate that lower levels of income and educational attainment are related to a higher level of party disaffiliation across generations. Moreover, for both the highest incomes and highest educational levels, there is evidence of growing partisanship for Gen X-ers and millennials as compared to Baby Boomers.

The next set of explanatory factors concerns Internet access and use at the individual level. For the ANES I draw on two items, one measuring self-reported household Internet access and another measuring whether or not the respondent has read or watched electoral campaign information online. Table 10 shows the estimate effects without controls; additional analyses were used to evaluate the estimated coefficients after including controls for sex, race, marital status, and geographic region. Neither of the variables are statistically significant at conventional levels in both sets of models. However, effect plots for each input were consistent with the findings from the GSS: Internet access has a moderating effect across generations on the party disaffiliation, even it is not at conventional levels of statistical significance.

Table 9: Socioeconomic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Work Status	Housing Insecurity	Layoff Concerns	Pay Cut Concerns	Educational Attainment	Household Income	Union Membership
Cohort × Disconnected	-0.974 ^{**} (0.432)						
Cohort × Homemaker	-0.379 ⁺ (0.255)						
Cohort × Student	-1.764 [*] (0.939)						
Cohort × (Paying Rent)		-0.149 (0.139)					
Cohort × (Not Employed)			0.143 (0.270)				
Cohort × (Lay Off)			-1.029 ⁺ (0.667)				
Cohort × (Not employed)				0.412 ⁺ (0.269)			
Cohort × (Pay Cut)				0.724 (0.657)			
Cohort × Education					0.510 ^{***} (0.067)		
Cohort × Income						0.153 ^{**} (0.064)	
Cohort × (Union)							-0.301 ⁺ (0.206)
AIC	51150.753	57825.453	34606.734	34598.477	64897.755	56877.222	56337.061
BIC	51339.642	57912.710	34713.191	34704.934	64986.393	56964.574	56424.274
Deviance	51106.753	57805.453	34580.734	34572.477	64877.755	56857.222	56317.061
Num. obs.	39571	45510	26609	26609	52249	45944	45310
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.003	0.004	0.004	0.003	0.005	0.003
Variance: Year	0.008	0.015	0.004	0.004	0.020	0.022	0.021
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Table 10: Technological Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Household Internet Access	Electoral Information Online
Cohort × (Household Internet Access)	-0.123 (0.428)	
Cohort × (Electoral Information Online)		-0.241 (0.531)
AIC	17515.828	14078.957
BIC	17590.871	14151.820
Deviance	17495.828	14058.957
Num. obs.	13418	10789
Variance: Cohort	0.001	0.001
Variance: Year	0.006	0.007
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, + $p < 0.2$

Several items in the ANES capture sociocultural theories on declining party affiliation across cohorts. Table 11 shows the estimates without adjusting for baseline controls. Even after including baseline controls, analyses show that political ideology, feelings towards the Republican Party (but not the Democratic Party), and interest in public affairs are statistically significant. The interaction effects suggest that party disaffiliation has occurred mostly among those who “Don’t Know” their political ideology, supporting the “neutrality” argument for the growth of political independents across generations. Results also show substantial moderating effects for the feeling thermometer items towards both Democrats and Republicans. These findings show strong support for a “negativity” argument, but only against the Republican Party. That is, the trend in party disaffiliation across cohorts is moderated by feelings towards the Republican Party, with those expressing the “coldest” feelings (with a score of 0) increasingly likely to identify as political independents. Noticeably, there is no strong interaction effect between feelings towards the Democratic Party and cohort on party disaffiliation. These results show that to the extent the “negativity” thesis is relevant, it is primarily aversion to the

Republican Party rather than the Democratic Party that is related to declining levels of party affiliation among younger generations. Finally, the results also include an interaction between the cohort trend and interest in public affairs. Supporting the “neutrality” thesis, millennials who have little interest in public affairs or politics are much more likely to identify as political independents (approximately 50% versus 30%). In short, the findings on sociocultural factors show modified support for both the negativity and neutrality theses, with the caveat that the effect of negativity on party disaffiliation is related to negativity towards the Republican rather than Democratic Party.

Table 11: Sociocultural Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Political Ideology	Democratic Thermometer	Republican Thermometer	Interest in Public Affairs
Cohort × Moderate	-0.844 ^{***} (0.230)			
Cohort × Liberal	-0.443 [*] (0.258)			
Cohort × (Unsure or Don't Know)	-0.749 ^{***} (0.228)			
Cohort × (Democratic Thermometer)		-0.009 (0.011)		
Cohort × (Republican Thermometer)			0.018 [*] (0.010)	
Cohort × (Interest in Public Affairs)				0.684 ^{***} (0.185)
AIC	48746.139	16144.477	16574.949	45219.260
BIC	48882.898	16219.695	16650.134	45304.228
Deviance	48714.139	16124.477	16554.949	45199.260
Num. obs.	38081	13654	13609	36198
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.000	0.000	0.002
Variance: Year	0.009	0.021	0.025	0.021
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

F. Interaction Effects: Pew Values Survey

In this section I examine interaction effects between the cohort trend and various demographic inputs suggested by explanations for the rise of political independents. Table 12 presents the coefficients without. Only the variable for immigrant status is statistically in Table 36, but this is rendered statistically insignificant at conventional levels after adjusting for sex, race, marital status, and geographic region. This corresponds to the results from the GSS and the ANES, which revealed relatively weak demographic effects on party disaffiliation (although most effects are in the expected direction).

Table 12: Demographic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Hispanic	Born in the United States	Cohabiting	Metro Area
Cohort × Hispanic	0.041 (0.436)			
Cohort × (Born in the United States)		-0.463** (0.235)		
Cohort × Cohabiting			2.581 (2.042)	
Cohort × Suburbs				0.319 (0.559)
Cohort × Urban				0.039 (0.613)
AIC	47035.217	38903.156	45253.504	16001.525
BIC	47120.093	38986.220	45338.002	16097.626
Deviance	47015.217	38883.156	45233.504	15975.525
Num. obs.	35867	29924	34536	11997
Variance: Cohort	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.002
Variance: Year	0.011	0.013	0.010	0.013
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, + $p < 0.2$

The next set of hypotheses are based on socioeconomic explanations for the intergenerational rise in political independents. Table 13 presents the models without adjustment for baseline controls. For the models in Table 13, only housing insecurity and educational

attainment are statistically significant, while in the full model the only housing insecurity remains statistically significant. Supporting explanations linking structural disconnection with party disaffiliation, housing insecurity is related to higher levels of party disaffiliation among younger cohorts. Similarly expected effects are found for work status, notwithstanding the statistically insignificant estimates. In the aggregate, the effect plots lend further evidence that structural disconnection and economic insecurity are key factors underlying the decline in party affiliation across generations.

Table 13: Socioeconomic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Work Status	Housing Insecurity	Educational Attainment	Household Income
	(1689.464)			
Cohort × Part-time	0.325 (0.438)			
Cohort × Unemployed	-0.025 (0.316)			
Cohort × (Other Work Status)	0.883 (1.737)			
Cohort × (Paying Rent)		-0.690 [*] (0.419)		
Cohort × Education			0.149 ⁺ (0.106)	
Cohort × (Upper Income)				-0.311 (0.336)
AIC	33524.005	23159.784	47090.769	42979.069
BIC	33654.471	23260.866	47175.675	43113.462
Deviance	33492.005	23133.784	47070.769	42947.069
Num. obs.	25698	17598	35979	32845
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.004	0.003	0.002
Variance: Year	0.010	0.013	0.011	0.011
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

The next set of factors are related to explanations rooted in household Internet access as well as changing views towards science and technology. Table 14 presents the findings without baseline controls. Household Internet access is statistically insignificant after adjusting for baseline covariates, but the two measures of views towards science and technology remain statistically significant. Effect plots of the interaction terms suggest that the moderating effect of views toward science is modest while that for aversion to technological change is reasonably large. Among millennials who report that technology is making “life too complicated,” nearly 80% identify as political independents rather than as either a Republican or Democrat.

Table 14: Technological Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Household Internet Access	Science is Helping	Tech Life Too Complicated
Cohort × (Household Internet Access)	-0.123 (0.611)		
Cohort × (Completely Disagree on Science Helping)		-1.972* (1.035)	
Cohort × (Mostly Agree on Tech Life Complicated)			1.989* (1.208)
AIC	14047.921	7747.025	7952.949
BIC	14120.486	7853.727	8060.040
Deviance	14027.921	7715.025	7920.949
Num. obs.	10473	5819	5962
Variance: Cohort	0.000	0.003	0.001
Variance: Year	0.021	0.001	0.001
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

For the next battery of items I examine sociocultural moderators of the relationship between generation and the rise of political independents. Table 15 shows the multilevel models with the interaction terms but no controls. Findings indicate statistically significant interaction effects for items measuring negative and cynical evaluations towards politicians even after

including additional controls. Effect plots, however, document that, although statistically significant at conventional levels, the moderating effect of these items is modest.

Table 15: Sociocultural Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Party Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Political Ideology	Little Influence	Politicians Lose Touch	Politicians Don't Care	Elections are Important	Politics is Boring
Cohort × Moderate	0.340 (0.306)					
Cohort × Liberal	-0.207 (0.355)					
Cohort × (Little Influence)		0.052 (0.107)				
Cohort × (Politicians Lose Touch)			0.261** (0.107)			
Cohort × (Politicians Don't Care)				-0.284*** (0.107)		
Cohort × (Elections are Important)					-0.240** (0.113)	
Cohort × (Politics is Boring)						-0.030 (0.150)
AIC	24940.946	44553.909	44162.567	43982.811	37675.840	30557.485
BIC	25043.062	44638.297	44246.883	44067.094	37758.624	30638.232
Deviance	24914.946	44533.909	44142.567	43962.811	37655.840	30537.485
Num. obs.	19055	34159	33912	33803	29097	23735
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.004	0.004	0.004	0.003	0.005
Variance: Year	0.017	0.012	0.011	0.010	0.012	0.012
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Conclusion: The Political Independent in an Age of Disjuncture

Over the latter half of the 20th century to the present day there has been a decisive generational shift in the American cultural landscape. While less than 10% to 20% identified as political independents in surveys in the early 1960s, today roughly half of millennials identify as political independents. In this chapter I have attempted to unravel part of the puzzle for this decline in

partisan affiliation by documenting the extent of partisan affiliation among millennials in recent time periods, using latent class models to determine the extent to check that these estimates are not artifacts of response bias or sampling design, using an extended multilevel structure to partition out age, year, and cohort effects to gain a clearer understanding of the overall generational effects, and then systematically used the three longest-running time-series cross-sectional surveys to examine likely interaction effects.

These analyses have brought forth several main findings. First, I estimate a dramatic generational shift from political affiliates to political independents. This change is consistent across three nationally-representative surveys based on over 100,000 interviews, the majority of which were conducted face-to-face, and corroborated by recent cross-sectional surveys of millennials. Based on a range of estimates from recent cross-sectional surveys with large oversamples of young adults, I estimate that as of 2012 about half of millennials identify as political independents, representing the largest single political bloc and well over twice the size of millennial Republicans. The latent class models suggest that the cross-tabulations may give a slight over-estimation but even in based on modal posterior probabilities of latent class membership about 43% of millennials are political independents. The numerous data sources as well as robustness to latent modeling techniques underscores that this is a very real and stable part of millennial politics.

Second, findings show that demographic effects have weak or modest moderating effects on intergenerational party disaffiliation. While in the expected direction, relatively few interactions were statistically significant at conventional levels. However the direction and magnitude of the effects (which are consistent across all three time-series cross-sectional datasets), suggests that being born abroad, speaking more than one language, identifying as

multiracial, and cohabiting all moderate the generational trend on party affiliation. Specifically, each of these variables is related to a heightened probability of being a political independent for millennials in contrast to previous generations. The one exception to this expected pattern concerns metropolitan status: younger cohorts living in rural areas are much more likely than older cohorts in rural areas as well as young adults in urban areas or suburbs to identify as political independents. This is an unexpected finding and to date it has not been documented in the literature on party disaffiliation in the United States. One possible explanation in many rural areas in the United States there are political monopolies, with local and regional politics typically dominated almost entirely by the Republican Party. To the extent there is no viable other party in these areas, rural millennials may opt for being a political independent.

Third, I find robust interaction effects between generation and most measures of socioeconomic conditions. Housing insecurity, being laid off, having one's pay cut, and other measures of economic disadvantage have a disproportionate impact on party disaffiliation among younger cohorts. Similarly, I find that structural disconnection is a particularly strong moderator of cohort on party disaffiliation: millennials who are unemployed or out of work are more than four times likely than Baby Boomers to identify as political independent. Similarly, I find that lower levels of income as well as education are more likely to be related to party disaffiliation in younger than older cohorts.

Fourth, regarding sociocultural explanations I find some support for both the "negativity" as well as the "neutrality" theses. Several items show that younger cohorts who express little interest in public affairs or cynical attitudes towards politicians and the political system are considerably more likely than older cohorts with similar responses to identify as political independents. However, I find support for both neutral and negative items, suggesting that they

are not mutually exclusive (indeed, social-psychological theories of cognition have long emphasized the facility with which people can hold seemingly contradictory thought patterns). An important corollary to the “negativity” thesis, however, is that the intergenerational increase in party disaffiliation is remarkably dramatic among those who hold negative views Republicans but not Democrats. This finding underscores that the Republican Party is in severe danger of jettisoning the younger cohort of Americans from partisan politics altogether.

Fifth, regarding technological variables I find only modest effects on intergenerational change in party disaffiliation. Similarly, evaluations of technological change and scientific progress are at most only weak moderators of the generational effect on party affiliation. This finding is at odds with the relatively large literature on “echo chamber” politics online and suggests that concerns that the Internet is altering partisanship are misguided. If anything technological diffusion and values toward technology and science are orthogonal to the generational decline in party affiliation. Nonetheless, further research should be conducted to expand the range of political outcomes beyond party affiliation, since the Internet may be changing other cultural aspects of the political system other than partisanship.

Finally, consistent with the individual-level effects of Internet access and use, I find no direct relationship of contextual-level Internet or broadband access on partisan disaffiliation, let alone an interaction with the generational trend. However, buttressing the strong moderating effects of socioeconomic conditions, I find relatively strong main and moderating effects for contextual-level poverty on party disaffiliation, with older cohorts in poorer neighborhoods considerably more likely to be partisan than their younger counterparts.

Chapter 4:
Generational Change and the Rise of Religious Nones

Introduction: Rise of Religious Nones

Since the late 1980s in the United States there has been a remarkable rise in the percentage of Americans who have no religious affiliation. As of 2008, the four largest religious groups in the United States were Catholics (22%), white evangelical Protestants (20%), and white mainline Protestants (15%). However, if including religious nones, or those who have no expressed religious affiliation, then they are the third largest religious in the United States at nearly 20% of the population. However, generational differences in religious disaffiliation are particularly dramatic, underscoring the changing cultural composition of the United States. Seven-in-ten seniors (age 65 and older) are white Christians, such as white evangelical Protestants (30%), white mainline Protestants (20%), and white Catholics (19%). In contrast, over one-third (34%) of millennials report that they are religiously unaffiliated. Compare this to the fact that about one-third of millennials (age 18 to 29) identify as white Christians, such as white mainline Protestants (12%), white evangelical Protestants (9%), or white Catholics (8%). As one scholar has noted: “The religiously unaffiliated represent the fastest growing group in the American religious landscape, and are more complex than previously understood.”

This striking generational shift in religious disaffiliation is particularly surprising since it upends the conventional wisdom of American culture. Despite early sociological theories of secularization as an unintended consequence of economic development, for most of the 20th century researchers have marveled at the relative religiosity of the United States compared to other western capitalist democracies, characterizing the heightened religiosity as part of an “American exceptionalism.” As well, the outlying case of the United States has been cited as a counter-argument to prominent theories of cultural change, in particular the post-materialist thesis promoted by Inglehart and colleagues (for example, see Barnes et al. 1979; cf. Inglehart

1990). Much vigorous scholarly debate has focused on how, given the relative affluence of the United States, why so many are still “clinging” to religion rather than embracing post-materialist values and a secular approach to morality .

The now upswing in religious disaffiliation, now going on over 25 years, is a strong challenge not only to conventional wisdom on American culture, but also to much of the presumptions of theories of religious and cultural change. To unravel the puzzle of religious disaffiliation across generations, I proceed my analysis in this chapter as follows. First, I review the major theories for the generational shift towards religious nones over time, drawing relevant hypotheses for the analysis in subsequent sections. Second, I describe the data and methods for the chapter, which uses a novel approach to identifying age, year, and cohort effects. Next, based on cross-tabulations from several recent cross-sectional surveys directly targeting millennials, I show that the shift towards religious disaffiliation is neither an artifact of survey design nor sampling procedures. I further demonstrate the robustness of religious disaffiliation by conducting a latent class analysis of millennials, finding that upwards of 40% of millennials in 2012 are categorized as a religious none. Fourth, using cross-classified multilevel models to adjust for age and year effects, I estimate the overall trends for religious disaffiliation using three nationally-representative datasets covering a time period of over 60 years. Fifth, based on the major theories of generational shift in religious disaffiliation outlined in the first section, I expand these multilevel models to include interaction effects for demographics, socioeconomics, technological beliefs and values, sociocultural factors, and contextual effects, specifically the level of Internet access and poverty levels in U.S. census regions. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the findings and a call for further theorizing and research on the dynamics of generational cultural shifts and religious disaffiliation.

For much of the early scholarship on the sociology of religion, most of the attention focused on theories of secularization built from the classical sociological theories of Marx, Weber, and Durkheim or cultural differences across religious groups and denominations. However, in a seminal paper Vernon noted the existence of what he termed “religious nones” or those who lack any express religious affiliation in American society (1968). Although a small percent of the American population at the time, he noted that as a case study they presented unique questions that could further sociological theories of religion.

Research on religious nones remained relatively marginal until scholars began noticing an upsurge in the religiously unaffiliated beginning in the late 1980s (Baker and Smith 2009). As discussed previously, this increase challenged many of the conventional views of American culture, which was presumably exceptional in its religiosity. In an important paper, Hout and Fischer (2002) were among the first to systematically document and attempt to explain this shift in religious affiliation in the United States. Drawing from the General Social Survey, they document that: “The proportion of Americans who reported no religious preference doubled from 7 percent to 14 percent in the 1990s.” Furthermore, researchers had noticed this increase in other surveys. For example, the American National Election Survey indicated an increase from 8 to 13 percent from 1992 to 2000 and a 1996 cross-sectional study of religion and politics estimated that 14 percent of American adults had no religious preference (Greeley 1997). More recent research has indicated that the percentage of Americans who claim no particular religious affiliation has more than tripled over the last two decades (Baker and Smith 2009, 2009; Levin, Taylor, and Chatters 1995). In 1990, less than 8% of Americans claimed no formal religious affiliation while as of 2012 over 20% report no religious affiliation (Greeley 1997). Surveys of youth show even higher percentages, with upwards of 35% professing no religious affiliation in

more recent cohorts. These findings underscore that religious nones, strikingly, constitute the fastest-growing major religious category (Baker and Smith 2009).

Typically scholars have divided religious nones into two groups (cf. Hout and Fischer 2002): those who are atheist or agnostics and those who express no religious affiliation but eschew the label of atheist or agnostic (either because they have a belief in a God of some kind or they reject the connotations of such a label). Other scholars have furthered divided religious nones into three categories. For example, one study asserted the existence of three distinct subgroups among the unaffiliated based on cross-tabulations of religious affiliation with religious belief (Kosmin et al. 2009): approximately 39% who describe themselves as secular or not religious, approximately 23% who describe themselves as religious (“Unattached Believers” or “Unbranded Believers”), and about 36% who identify as agnostic or atheist.

In short, an increasing large segment of the American population has no religious affiliation, with an increased proportion among younger generations. Although religious nones can be split into different groups, they share a disaffiliation that has demanded a rethinking of popular theories for religious belief and behavior in the social sciences. In the next section I outline the major theoretical perspectives that scholars have used to explain the rise of the religiously unaffiliated.

Part I: Theories of Cultural Change

There are four set of hypotheses explaining the apparent rise of party disaffiliation in the United States since World War II. Broadly speaking these can be categorized into four main explanatory factors: demographic changes, socioeconomic conditions, sociocultural factors (including

political ideology), and technological change (in particular the rise of the Internet and technocratic alternatives to traditional party allegiances). I review each of these in turn.

First, there are *demographic explanations* for the rise of religious disaffiliation. Scholars have pointed to striking gender differences in the percentage who are religiously unaffiliated (Bruce 1992; Chaves 1989; Wallis and Bruce 1992). Men are generally overrepresented among the religiously unaffiliated, but they are also more highly concentrated among atheists and agnostics, who are roughly two-thirds male by some estimates.⁶ Indeed, regarding religious beliefs female nones exhibit more traditional religiosity with about one-third reporting a belief in a personal God as compared to about a fifth of their male counterparts (Tamney, Powell, and Johnson 1989). Regarding racial and ethnic identity, religious nones appear to be increasingly similar to the overall U.S. population. Historically white Americans have been more likely to be religious unaffiliated this this difference has decreased over time (Smith and Kim 2007). The one exception are Hispanics, who are increasingly likely to have no religious affiliation. According to one study in 1990 they comprised 6% of U.S. adults and 4% of adult nones but by 2008 Hispanics doubled their percentage of the U.S. adult population to 13% and tripled their proportion among adult Nones to 12%. As one group of scholars has noted (Kosmin et al. 2009): “Hispanics are not only the fastest growing racial group in America in general, but are the fastest-growing minority group” among the religious nones. In this same study researchers also find important ethnic differences among white Americans, with individuals of Irish descent composing about one-third of religious nones, which is a much larger percentage than the 12%

⁶ Though fewer than half of Americans are male, 56 percent of nones are according to one survey. The gender divide among nones who are atheists or agnostics is even more pronounced in these analyses, with about 64 percent of this group male.

who claim some Irish ancestry in the general population according to the 2008 American Community Survey.

Geography has also been identified as crucial factor in accounting for the growth of religious nones (Smith and Kim 2007). The rate at which people from different regions join the religious unaffiliated segment of the population is not uniform, but nones are growing in every geographic region in the U.S, unlike most religious groups. As a result nones are increasingly similar to the general population in residential location and substantial pockets of nones now can be found everywhere in the U.S., although they exist in highest proportions in the Pacific states (e.g., California, Oregon, and Washington). Another demographic factor has centered on cohabiting and the “delaying” of traditional markers of adulthood among younger cohorts (Arnett 2004; Regnerus and Smith 2005). As scholars of religion have theorized, religion may follow a family life cycle, in which people disengage from their religious upbringing when they leave the family they grew up in and presumably reattach themselves about the time they start a family of their own (Greeley 1972, 1989; Kosmin et al. 2009). According to this logic delayed (or rather “disappearing”) family formation of recent cohorts may have contributed to increased religious disaffiliation (Arnett 2005, 2007; Schwartz, Côté, and Arnett 2005).

Second, numerous scholars have put forth socioeconomic explanations for the decline in religious affiliation across generations. As mentioned in the previous section, some scholars have noted a growing “normalization” of nones with the rest of the U.S. population, such that there are relatively minor differences in socioeconomic characteristics between them and the general population (Kosmin et al. 2009; Smith and Kim 2007). For example, one study in 2008 has noted that the differences in household income and educational attainment between religious nones and the rest of the population are ‘virtually negligible’ with the greatest difference between the two

groups in any particular category of socioeconomic characteristic at three percentage points (Beit-Hallahmi 2007; cf. Condran and Tamney 1985). However, educational attainment may nonetheless account for the narrowing gap over time of religious nones versus the rest of the population, such that the expansion of education led to many who would have remained religiously affiliated to become unaffiliated. Indeed, since the 1980s, the fraction of people receiving college level education has increased from 17.4 percent to 27.2 percent in the 2000s, according to recent estimates (Greeley 1972; Keysar 2007). As well, within religious nones there are large educational differences even in more recent years. Atheists and agnostics are much more likely to be better educated than Americans overall (Smith and Kim 2007). According to one study nearly half of atheists and agnostics have at least 4-year college degree, and more than a fifth have a post-graduate degree. In contrast, those who are religious nones but do not identify as atheist or agnostic have markedly lower levels of educational attainment: while one-tenth have a 4-year college degree and less than a tenth have a post-graduate degree, a solid majority have a high school education or less as compared to 42% of the general population.

Third, there are *sociocultural explanations* the growth of religious nones among recent cohorts. The fundamental factor for these theories is an emphasis a shift in values or ideologies, with a focus on cultural change. Among the most widely-promoted set of explanations for the growth of religious nones is that it represents a “blowback” from the politicization of religion by conservative political groups in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Putnam and Campbell 2012). As Hout and Fischer (2002) note, although putatively recent in the United States there is a longstanding relationship between religion and politics in European countries, such that “to declare oneself religious is to take a political stance, typically a conservative one, while anticlericalism remains deeply ingrained in leftist politics.” According to the “political backlash” argument for the rise of

religious nones, by promoting what has been called “cultural issues” such as abortion, strict criminal laws for drug use, and laws enforcing heterosexual marriage, conservatives have alienated younger cohorts from the dominant institutions of religion in the United States. Indeed, according to one study religious nones hold more liberal views on social and cultural issues and tend to identify with the Democratic rather than Republican Party. This is especially pronounced among atheists and agnostics. For example, scholars have reported that nearly 9-in-10 atheists and agnostics favor allowing gay and lesbians to marry legally, compared to roughly 50% of the rest of the U.S. population in 2010. Similar differences exist for related social and cultural issues such as drug legalization, criminal sentencing, and abortion access. The implication is that, by embedding themselves in the institutions of American religion and adopting issues at odds with the long-term trends in American culture, political religiously-oriented conservatives have effectively caused a mass exodus from religion itself.

Related to the political blowback thesis, some scholars have also argued that church scandals, such as the Catholic child abuse scandal, has turned erstwhile religious follower into religious nones. This might be termed the “corruption blowback” thesis. Following this logic, at least part of the decline in religious disaffiliation can be attributed to declining confidence in religious institutions due to abuses of power and widespread corruption (Davidson 2005; Dixon 2004; Globe 2003). Although a great deal of circumstantial evidence is in support of this theory, relatively little empirical research has examined it systematically (Gibson 2003).

Also regarding sociocultural explanations, among the most influential has been the claim that there has been a systematic shift in the values on the part of younger cohorts born into relative wealth during the post-World War II period (Inglehart 1981, 1997; Norris and Inglehart 2011). According to Inglehart and colleagues, younger cohorts are increasingly concerned with

post-materialist priorities while rejecting the “materialist” concerns of earlier cohorts born in a less affluent period (Inglehart 1971). Related to this change in post-materialist values has been, as it has been claimed, a gradual shift away from traditional religious institutions which in times of economic scarcity presumably kept in check the existing social order. Related to the post-materialist thesis are more general theories of secularization (rooted as far back in the earlier sociological works by Weber and Durkheim), which were incorporated into theories of “modernization” in the 1950s and 1960s (Bruce 1992; Engerman 2003; Gilman 2003; Tipps 1973). According to this framework, economic development, including the growth of educational attainment but also material wealth, has or will lead to a decrease in religiosity in general and religious affiliation in particular. In support of the “secularization” explanation for religious nones, most of those who are religious unaffiliated have low levels of religious attendance and never pray. However, as scholars of religion have frequently noted and termed “believing without belonging” or “unbranded believers,” a sizable portion of religious nones nonetheless hold some level of religious belief, such as existence of a personal God, despite never attending religious services (Baker and Smith 2009). Moreover, some studies have suggested that religious nones, even atheists and agnostics, are not particularly hostile toward religious institutions (e.g., Kosmin et al. 2009). For example, one analysis shows that more than half of nones say religious institutions “protect and strengthen morality” (Smith and Kim 2007).⁷

An additional set of sociocultural explanations for the increase in religious disaffiliation is based on religious origins or upbringing. Simply put, growing up in a religiously unaffiliated household

⁷ On balance, however, religious nones are substantially less likely to believe in a personal God. Only 27% of Nones believe in a personal God compared to 70% of adults generally as of 2010. The largest single group among the nones is theists, but “hard” and “soft” agnostics, if combined, account for 35% of the Nones, as compared with 10% of the U.S. population. The proportion of people believing in a higher power but not a personal God who can be classified as deists in both populations is significantly higher.

increases the likelihood of being religious unaffiliated (Hout and Fischer 2002; Somerville 1998). As a greater percentage of Americans grow up in familial environments without a traditional religious affiliation, they are more likely themselves to remain religiously unaffiliated. Indeed, various studies have demonstrated that recent cohorts are more likely than those born 60 to 70 years earlier to have been raised without religion (Condran and Tamney 1985; Massengill and MacGregor 2012; Regnerus and Smith 2006). As the religiously unaffiliated recent cohorts replace the more religious former cohorts, the religious attachment of the population will drop. Most research on the topic has shown that growing up in a household without an expressed religious attachment is correlated with religious disaffiliation later in life. Notwithstanding, there are two important caveats to this overall pattern: most religious nones are first-generation nones. That is, although there are many intergenerational nones, raised without a religious affiliation, approximately two-thirds of religious nones are first-generation nones. According to one report on religious nones (Kosmin et al. 2009), the great majority (73%) of religious nones were raised in religious homes of which nearly all were homogeneous religiously (i.e., both parents adhered to same religious affiliation).⁸

Finally, although long neglected in favor of explanations based on political “blowback” or secularization theories, some scholars have suggested that *technological change* may account for the rise of political independents among younger cohorts (Benkler and Nissenbaum 2006; Benkler 2004). Although not subjected to systematic analysis, several scholars have posited that the Internet allows citizens to retrieve more information and learn more about the complexities of religion. By opening the channels of communication and increasing transparency, the Internet

⁸ An important note is that as long as those who are religiously affiliated are a majority of the population, those are religiously unaffiliated can lose a larger percentage of their offspring to religious affiliation yet the overall rate of religious disaffiliation may increase simply because the religiously unaffiliated are a smaller portion of the overall population.

thus presumably has an effect similar to educational attainment in “secularizing” the public (Bimber and Davis 2002). Research on the relationship between the Internet and religious disaffiliation is scant, but Downey (2014) has shown a robust correlational relationship between Internet use and religious disaffiliation using time-series cross-sectional data. However, his analysis uses a very limited set of controls and fails to account for differential time, period, and age effects. Moreover his analysis does not incorporate both contextual and individual-level data, the former which could be used to strengthen the correlational argument since individual-level Internet use is at least partly driven by a self-selected group until relatively recently. Besides the Internet, a related argument has been made for the public’s embrace of science and technology, similar to that implied by theories of post-materialism (Armfield and Holbert 2003; Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005; Kluver and Cheong 2007). In essence this argument is one of cultural displacement, with the public preferring to focus more on fast-moving developments in science and technology rather than putatively time-worn traditions rooted in the dominant religious institutions (Armfield and Holbert 2003: 129-130).

Part II: Hypothesized Mechanisms

In this section I outline four main sets of hypotheses. The first of GSS questions involve demographics, which are expected to partially moderate the expected upward trend in religious disaffiliation by cohorts. Drawing on the literature on identity and politics, I expect in particular that immigrants, unmarried households, and those living in large cities or urban areas less likely to have partisan attachments (Chilton 1988; Crewe 1983; Mainwaring 1998; Meckler 2014). For the GSS, items include whether or not the respondent is Hispanic (Yes = 1, No = 0), lives in a multiracial household (Yes = 1, 0 = No), cohabiting with a partner (Yes = 1, 0 = No), living in a

metropolitan area (“Urban,” “Suburbs,” or “Rural”), and living in a large city (population size in thousands). The ANES includes a similar set of variables as well as an additional input for whether or not the respondent is multilingual (Yes =1, 0 = No). Both the ANES and PVS also include a variable on whether or not the respondent was born abroad (Yes =1, 0 = No).

For the second set of explanatory factors I examine socioeconomic factors hypothesized to moderate the putative interaction between generation and religious disaffiliation. Based on the large (albeit circumstantial) literature “contradictory class locations” on weakened religious affiliation (for example, see Anand and Lea 2011; Barnes et al. 1979; Brooks and Manza 1997; Western 1995), I include several sets of focal variables measuring various aspects of economic and social conditions of the respondents. For the GSS these items include work status (“Working full-time,” “Working religious-time,” “Unemployed,” “In School,” “Retired,” “Disabled,” “Homemaker or Other”), whether or not the respondent is self-employed (Yes =1, 0 = No), educational attainment (“High School or Less,” “Some College,” “Bachelor’s Degree or Higher”), and household income (standardized as a scale ranging from approximately -2 to +2). As well, because some scholars have highlighted a declining level of economic security to general distrust of all institutions including religious organizations (Condran and Tamney 1985; Greeley 1993), I also include a variable on whether or not the respondent and related family members are members of a labor union (“Respondent is a Union Member,” “Respondent’s Partner is a Union Member,” “Both are Union Members,” “Neither are Union Members”). Given the causes and aftermath of the 2007-08 Great Recession on the life outcomes of young Americans (Burd-Sharps and Lewis 2013; MacDonald 2008; Wight et al. 2010), I also include questions, when available, on housing insecurity of the respondent (“Paying Rent,” “Own a Home,” “Other Living Arrangement”). For the ANES I include a similar set of focal variables

but I also include two long-standing questions in the series on recent job loss and payment cuts. Specifically, the item on pay cuts, asked only for those who are working, asks respondents whether or not they have had working hours or pay cut in the last 6 months up to the date of the interview (Yes = 1, 0 = No), while the item on job loss asks if respondents had been laid off in same time period (Yes = 1, 0 = No). Due to the smaller scale of the dataset, the PVS only includes items on work status, housing insecurity, educational attainment (scaled as standardized score from -2 to +2), and income (coded as factor levels for comparability across the series).

The third set of explanatory variables deals with sociocultural factors. To examine the “political backlash” hypothesis for the GSS I include measures of political ideology (measured as a factor with levels for “Very Conservative,” “Conservative,” “Somewhat Conservative,” “Moderate,” “Somewhat Liberal,” “Liberal,” and “Very Liberal”). The backlash argument claims that political ideology in part moderates the cohort trend on religious disaffiliation, with political liberals more likely to report religious disaffiliation. In addition I include measures of trust in the federal government and the U.S. Congress, as well as the Clergy (“Great Deal,” “Only Some,” “Hardly Any”). To the extent the growth of religious nones among younger cohorts is due to “corruption backlash,” the cohort trend should vary systematically based on specified levels of trust in religious organizations.

In addition, to evaluate the “secularization” hypothesis I include various measures of religiosity in the GSS, in particular belief in a God and religious attendance. As well, because of the influential literature on post-materialist value shifts in Western society (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Inglehart 1981, 1990), I include three measures of post-materialism. Respondents in the GSS are asked to give their first and second priorities among four sets of value orientations (“Maintaining the order in the nation,” “Giving people more say in important political

decisions,” “Fighting rising prices,” “Protecting freedom of speech”). In this classic formulation of Inglehart’s post-materialist thesis (for example, see 1977), the first and third value orientations are theorized as materialist while the second and fourth are categorized as post-materialist. From the responses given to these two questions, I calculate three different variables on post-materialism. The first is a categorical variable with four levels depending on the responses to these questions (“Materialist,” “Hybrid Materialist,” “Hybrid Post-Materialist,” “Post-Materialist”), the second is a quantitative index that ranges from approximately -2 to +2 on a score for post-materialism (with higher values indicating a higher level of post-materialist value orientations), and the third is the actual response of the first value orientation (“Maintaining the order in the nation,” “Giving people more say in important political decisions,” “Fighting rising prices,” “Protecting freedom of speech”).

For the ANES I also include an item on political ideology (with a similar coding to that in the GSS). To evaluate the “political backlash” hypothesis I also include items capturing perceived alignment with the Republican and Democratic Parties. These are measured as feeling thermometers scored from 0 to 100, with 0 representing a “cold” response and 100 representing a “warm” response. I also include a variable for the respondent’s level of interest in public affairs and politics (“No interest,” “Some interest,” “Great deal of interest”). I also include measures of religiosity in the ANES to evaluate the possibility that the cohort trend is moderated in part by secular behaviors and beliefs. For the PVS I include a measure of political ideology but also various items for religious attendance, belief in a God, and prayer frequency.

The fourth set of inputs are based on values and beliefs about science and technology. For the GSS I use a basic question about Internet access in the home (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0) and whether or not the respondent uses the Internet (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0) to capture the potential

moderating effect of the Internet on generational differences in religious disaffiliation. Given the literature on the role of science in shaping the cultural beliefs and values of younger generations (Hanson 2007; Kowske et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2012), I use several measures capturing values towards science and technology, in particular whether or not science is more harmful than helpful (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the claim that there is too much focus on science rather than “faith” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), views on whether or not science is making the world a “worse place” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the importance of technology and science for giving the next generation more life opportunities (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), views on technological development “moving too fast” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), and whether or not science should be supported by the federal government (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0). For the ANES I include questions on household Internet access as well as whether or not the respondent has seen electoral campaign information online (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0). The PVS includes a similar item on household Internet access but also has two questions capturing evaluations of science and technology, with one measuring whether or not science is “helping” or “hurting” society (“Helping” = 1, “Hurting” = 0) and another asking whether or not technology is “making life too complicated” (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0).

Finally, for each of the time-series cross-sectional datasets I use the geographic identifiers to merge individual-level observations with contextual data from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration on total Internet access and broadband access by U.S. Census region. Additionally I incorporate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to merge each of these datasets with the percent living below the poverty line. In all surveys I use the lowest possible level of geographic region to merge with the contextual data.

This contextual data provides additional information that can buttress the claims over the role of technological diffusion and macroscopic economic conditions on religious disaffiliation.

Part III: Generational Trends in Religious Identification

Results are presented in sections that summarize the generational findings in religious disaffiliation by generational cohort, focusing primarily on the GSS, ANES and PVS, which is presented in subsection A. Subsections B to D presents interaction effects along: (1) demographic, (2) socioeconomic, (3) technological, (4) sociocultural, and (5) cross-level (that is, contextual) dimensions. Each of these five domains of interaction effects are cross-referenced in the GSS, ANES, and PVS as well.

A. Unadjusted Differences by Generation

As the analyses in Figure 9 reveal, compared to other generations (i.e., Greatest, Silent, and Boomer), millennials are most likely to report being a religious “none” and most likely to report being a religious “other.” The analyses are based on aggregated survey data from the GSS with loess curves for the trends (including 95% confidence intervals).

Table 16 from the cross-sectional 2011 Pew Generations Survey shows that millennials are more likely than any other generation to identify as Other Christian, Muslim, as an atheist or agnostic, as something else, or as “nothing.” This analysis provides context for the focus on religious disaffiliation, suggesting greater cultural diversity in religiosity among millennials. Table 3 from the cross-sectional 2011 Pew Generations Survey also shows that millennials are more

likely than any other generation to identify as an atheist or agnostic, as something else, or as “nothing.”

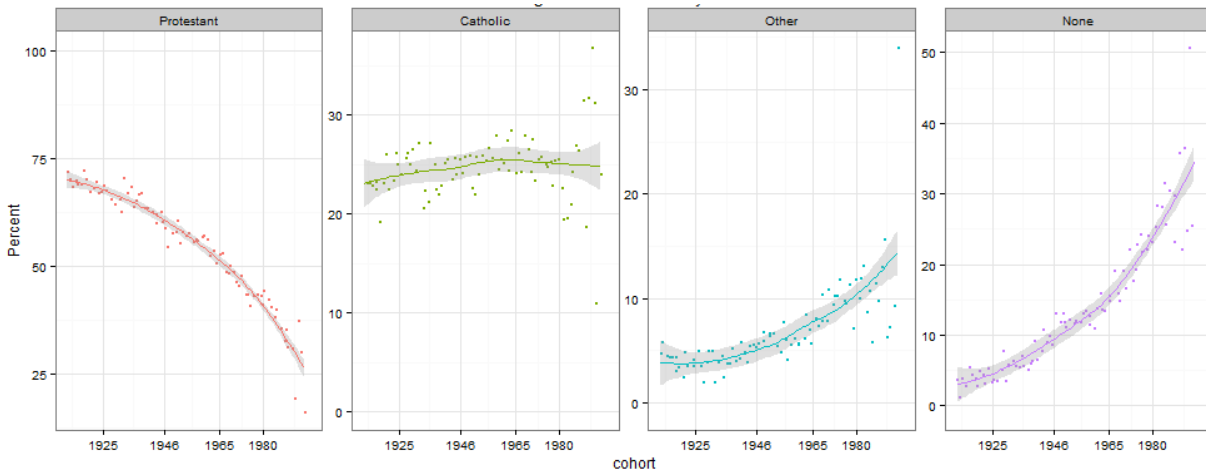


Figure 9: Religious Identification by Cohort in the GSS

Table 16: Religious Disaffiliation by Generation, Pew Generations Survey (2011)

	Greatest	Silent	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
Protestant	77%	60%	46%	35%	23%
Catholic	14%	22%	24%	23%	18%
Mormon	3%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Other Christian	<1%	5%	7%	12%	17%
Jewish	3%	3%	2%	1%	3%
Muslim	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%	1%
Eastern Religion	<1%	1%	<1%	1%	1%
Atheist or Agnostic	3%	3%	5%	6%	9%
Something Else	<1%	1%	2%	1%	2%
Nothing	<1%	4%	11%	14%	22%
Something Else	<1%	1%	2%	2%	1%

Pearson's $\chi^2 = 230.21$ ($p < 0.001$)

B. Latent Class Models of Millennials

Although I have presented a consistent pattern across several different nationally representative surveys for a relationship between generation and religious disaffiliation, it is possible that due to respondent bias this is an inaccurate assessment. In short, religious disaffiliation may be latent variable or category of which expressed party disaffiliation is a manifest indicator. As a further check on the robustness of the observed generational effect I conducted a latent class analysis of party affiliation and political ideology. The analysis here is based on a subset of millennial youth in the GSS.

These results are shown in Figure 3, which gives the latent class membership by modal posterior probability for the analysis based on religious affiliation and religious attendance. The error bars indicated 95% confidence intervals. The findings here indicate that approximately 40% of millennials are members of the first latent class and 60% are members of the second latent class. Figures 3 and 4 show profile plots, in which the class-conditional response probabilities are standardized, for religious affiliation and religious attendance, respectively. These figures can help interpret the latent classes by understanding the relationship with the manifest indicators. These figures show that latent class 1 can be interpreted as religious nones (as well as those who never or rarely attend religious services) and class 2 indicates membership in some religious category (with a higher probability of at least some level of religious attendance).

These results are among the first to use a latent class model of religious affiliation and attendance. The estimated class membership probabilities support the argument that religious disaffiliation is not an artifact of question wording or survey design, but represents an actual construct corresponding to real sociocultural groupings. Moreover, the findings suggest that if

anything single-item self-report measures of religiosity may underestimate the extent of religious disaffiliation in American culture. Indeed, research on response bias implies that, even for those who have abandoned religion altogether, there may be socially desirable to report higher levels of religiosity in surveys and face-to-face interviews.

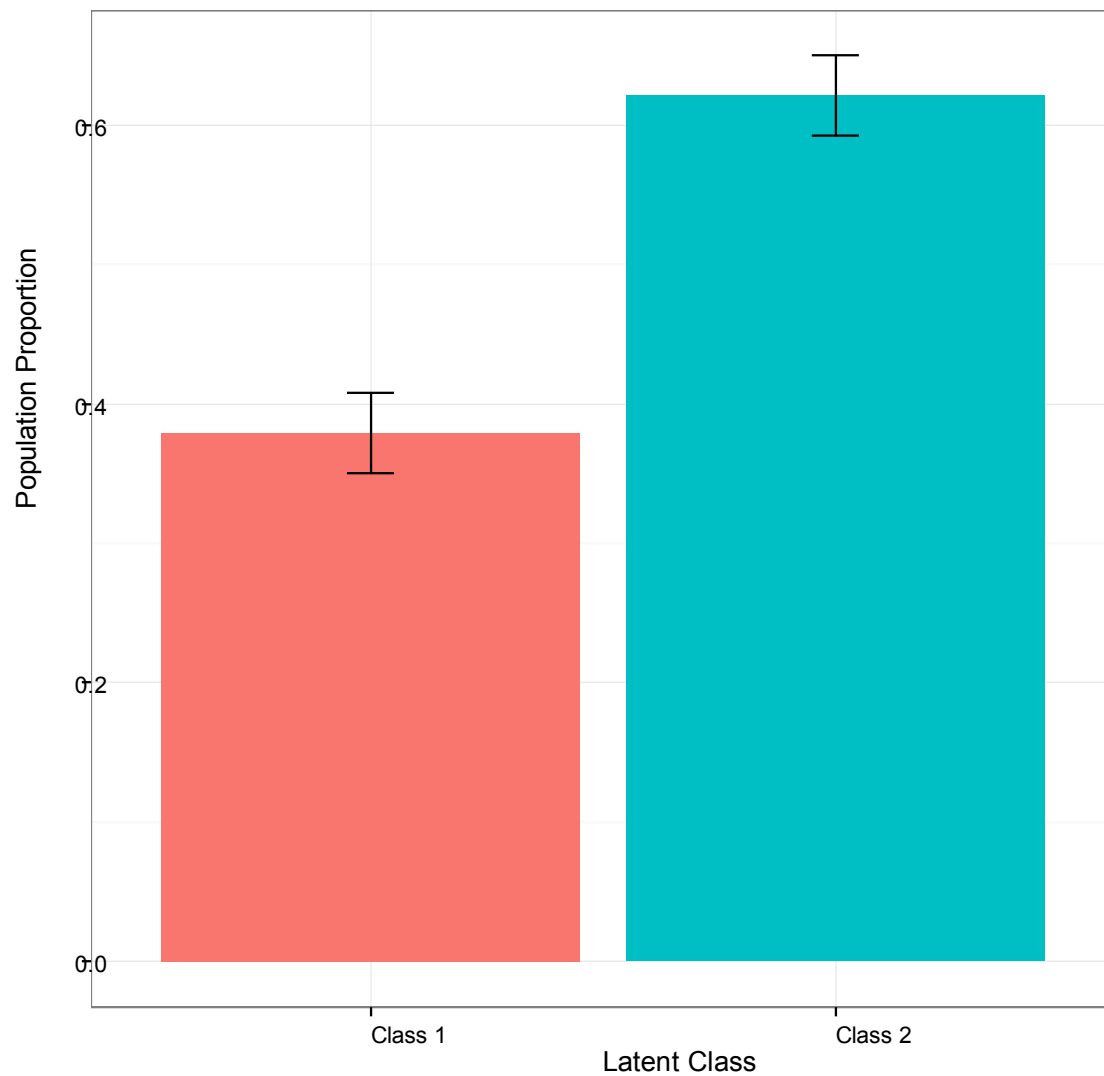


Figure 10: Class Proportions for Religious Identification and Attendance

In addition to the increase in religious disaffiliation, younger millennials report low levels of religious engagement across the board. Only one-quarter (25 percent) of millennials say they attend religious services at least once a week, while 3-in-10 (30 percent) say they attend occasionally. More than 4-in-10 say they seldom (16 percent) or never (27 percent) attend. Similarly, while one-third (33 percent) of millennials say that they pray at least daily, nearly 4-in-10 (37 percent) say they seldom or never pray. Notably, despite the fact that nearly half (48 percent) of younger millennials report that they are living at home with their parents, millennials who live at home are not more likely to attend religious services than millennials overall.

C. Main Effects: Multilevel Regressions

This part examines multilevel models to assess the robustness of religious disaffiliation in the GSS with the inclusion of additional statistical controls. As the findings below reveal, millennials are more likely to disaffiliate from religion than other generations. Table 17 shows the age and cohort effects, with the higher-order terms removed due to statistical insignificance. These trends are predicted in Figure 11. For each contrast there is a striking generational effect in the proportion religiously disaffiliated. Interestingly, the year effect suggests an increase in religious disaffiliation over time (consistent with the idea that a non-trivial portion of adults exit their religious upbringing as they age). For each graph the roughly U-shaped trend for the year effect corresponds to the rise of evangelical Christianity in the 1970s and 1980s. Additional analyses show that these trends are robust to the inclusion of control variables; that is, findings show a monotonic increase in probability of being religiously disaffiliated across successive cohorts.

Table 17: Generation and Age Effects for Religious Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	None (Base: Any Affiliation)	None (Base: Protestant)	None (Base: Catholic)	None Base (Other Religion)
Age	0.0102 ^{***} (0.0027)	0.0088 ^{***} (0.0030)	0.0135 ^{***} (0.0023)	-0.0687 ^{***} (0.0095)
Age ²				0.0006 ^{***} (0.0001)
Cohort	0.0409 ^{***} (0.0027)	0.0430 ^{***} (0.0030)	0.0365 ^{***} (0.0022)	1.2342 ^{***} (0.2344)
Cohort ²				-0.0003 ^{***} (0.0001)
AIC	35526.4324	31307.4453	23366.4019	11960.8403
BIC	35570.8544	31350.3593	23405.9141	12010.8691
Deviance	35516.4324	31297.4453	23356.4019	11946.8403
Num. obs.	53338	39450	19979	9386
Variance: Cohort	0.0110	0.0097	0.0141	0.0081
Variance: Year	0.0200	0.0262	0.0093	0.0235
Variance: Residual	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

^{***} p < 0.01, ^{**} p < 0.05, ^{*} p < 0.1, ⁺ p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

I now examine trends in religious disaffiliation in the ANES. The findings mirror those for the GSS, as shown in Table 18 and Figure 12. For all contrasts there is a large upswing in the generational effect for religious disaffiliation. These results remain statistically significant and large even after controlling for the baseline covariates. In short, the ANES shows large generational effects in the rise of religious nones. Predicted probabilities from cross-classified generalized linear multilevel models with polynomial fits for age and cohort as well as varying intercepts for cohort and year. 95% percent confidence intervals are shown in the shaded regions. The trend for year is calculated from a loess fit of the varying intercepts for year.

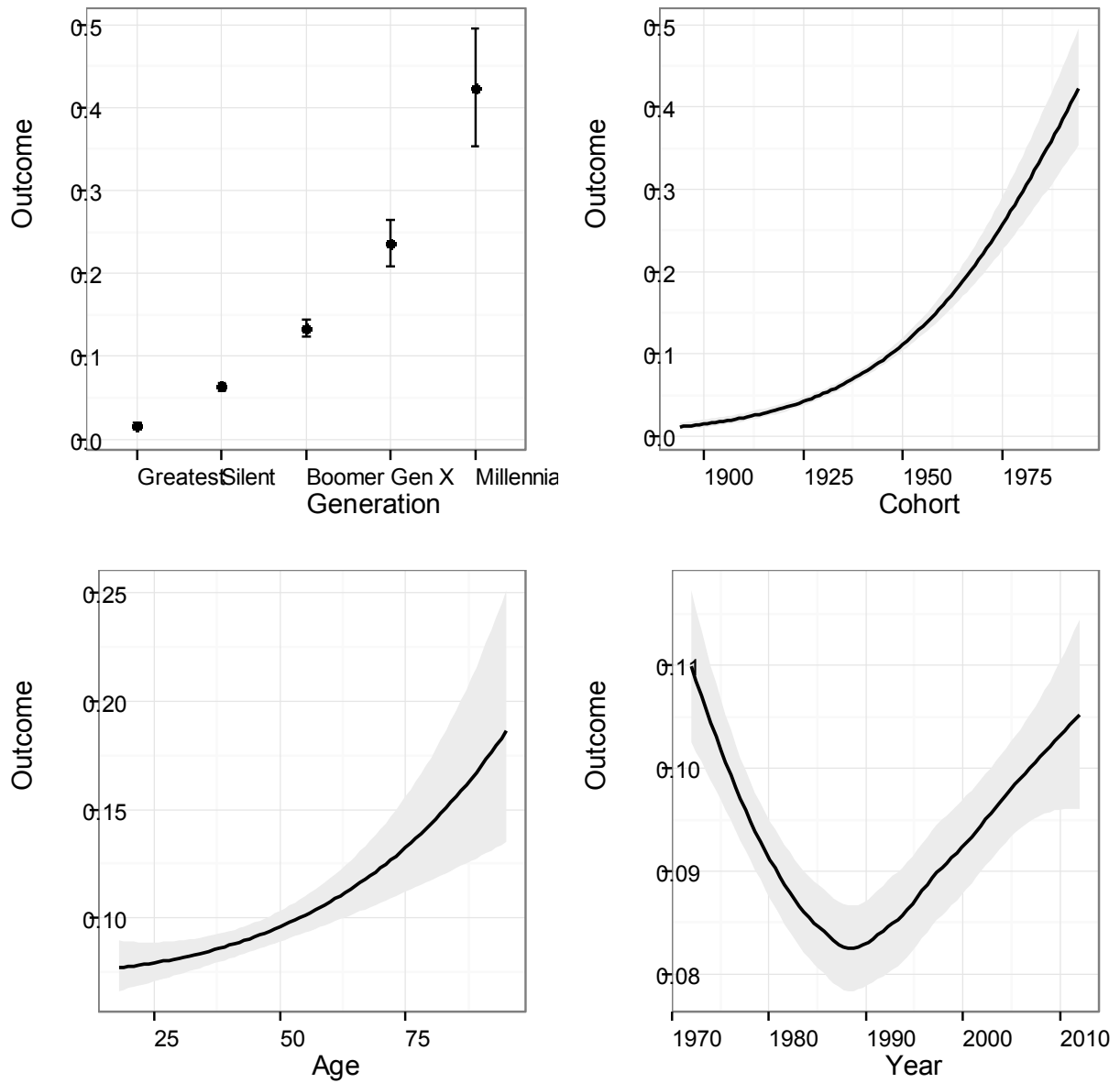


Figure 11: Generation, Age, and Year Effects in the GSS for Religious Nones with No Controls (Base: Any Religious Affiliation)

Table 18: Generation and Age Effects for Religious Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	None (Base: Any Affiliation)	None (Base: Protestant)	None (Base: Catholic)
Age	0.0231 ^{***} (0.0023)	0.0242 ^{***} (0.0024)	0.0216 ^{***} (0.0025)
Cohort	0.0430 ^{***} (0.0022)	0.0456 ^{***} (0.0022)	-0.5672 ^{***} (0.1400)
Cohort ²			0.0002 ^{***} (0.0000)
AIC	33813.8873	30058.2594	21461.6809
BIC	33858.0942	30101.0906	21508.5514
Deviance	33803.8873		30048.2594
Num. obs.	51092		38802
Variance: Cohort	0.0156		0.0130
Variance: Year	0.0246		0.0256
Variance: Residual	1.0000		1.0000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

I now turn to trends in religious disaffiliation in the PVS. Table 19 shows large statistically significant increases in religious nones across generations, similar to the results from the GSS and ANES. Table 20 shows that these trends are robust to the inclusion of a battery of covariates. Figure 13 shows the predicted probabilities after controlling for these covariates for the year, age, and cohort effects, all of which follow a near-identical upsurge. In sum, the PVS follows a same pattern as with the other time-series cross-sectional surveys used in this chapter, revealing a marked generational shift in religious disaffiliation.

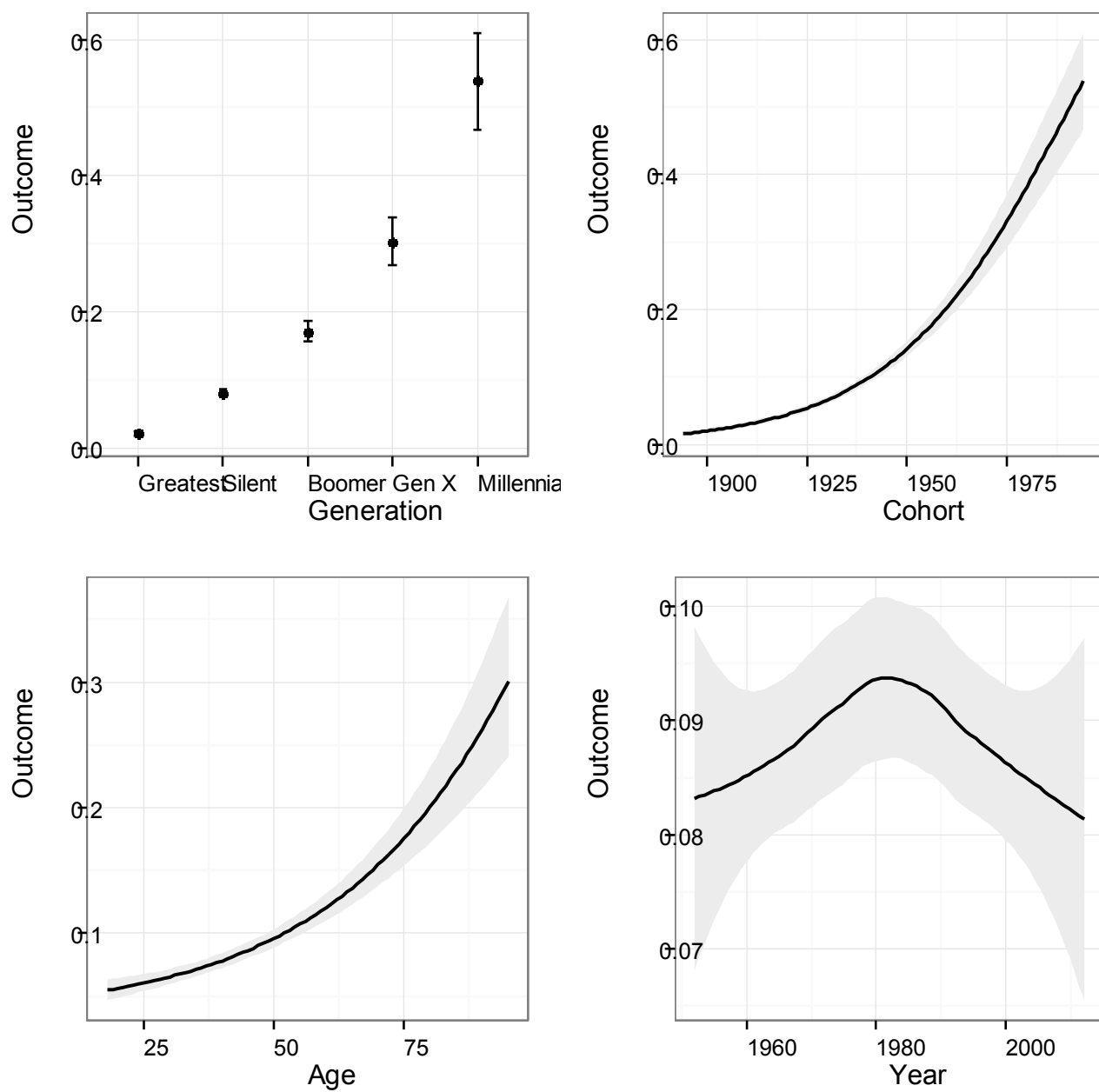


Figure 12: Predicted Effects for Religious Nones in the ANES with No Controls (Base: Any Religious Affiliation)

Table 19: Generation and Age Effects for Religious Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	None (Base: Any Affiliation)	None (Base: Protestant)	None (Base: Catholic)	None Base (Other Religion)
Age	0.0091 (0.0076)	0.0061 (0.0077)	0.0327 ^{***} (0.0114)	0.0061 (0.0194)
Age ²			-0.0002 ^{**} (0.0001)	
Cohort	0.0390 ^{***} (0.0075)	0.0393 ^{***} (0.0077)	-0.4475 ⁺ (0.2849)	0.0156 (0.0194)
Cohort ²			0.0001 [*] (0.0001)	
AIC	20070.1893	17826.9319	13346.9633	5078.0906
BIC	20112.0776	17867.2750	13398.5925	5110.1453
Deviance	20060.1893	17816.9319	13332.9633	5068.0906
Num. obs.	32134	23591	11797	4496
Variance: Cohort	0.0019	0.0035	0.0001	0.0054
Variance: Year	0.0474	0.0493	0.0466	0.3265
Variance: Residual	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

D. Interaction Effects: General Social Survey

I first examine interaction effects between the cohort trend and various demographic inputs implied by theories of religious disaffiliation. Analyses reveal statistically significant interaction effects for all demographic inputs. All of these variables except for the measure of cohabiting remain statistically significant after adjusting for baseline covariates. These interactions suggest that these demographic factors are associated with lower levels of religious disaffiliation among younger than older cohorts. The next set of hypotheses are based on socioeconomic explanations for the intergenerational rise in religious disaffiliation. Table 21 reveals statistically significant interaction effects for all predictors except for housing insecurity. Additional analyses show that these variables remain statistically significant after adjusting for baseline covariates.

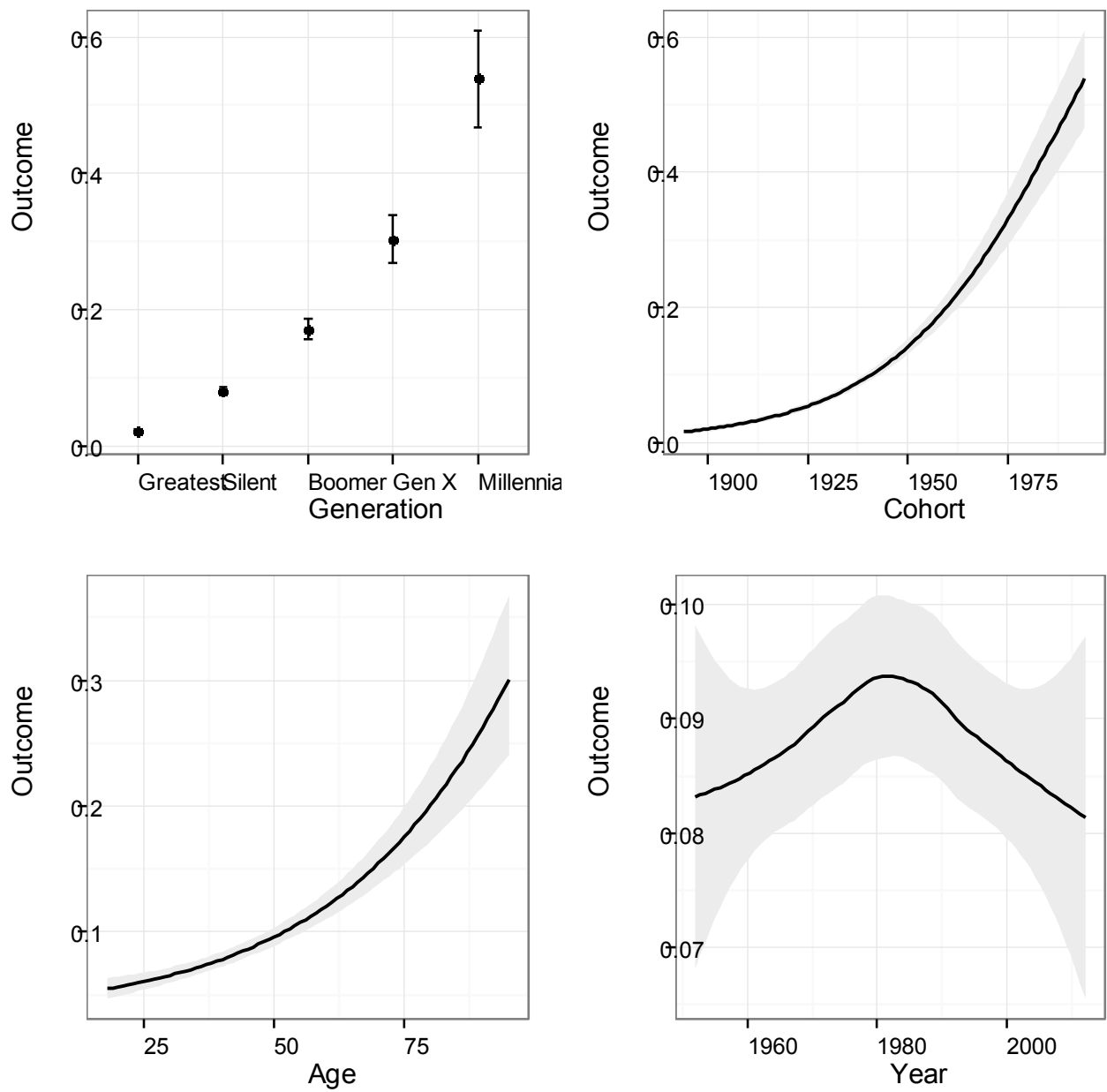


Figure 13: Predicted Effects for Religious Nones in the PVS with Controls (Base: Any Religious Affiliation)

Table 20: Generation and Age Effects for Religious Disaffiliation in the PVS with Controls, 1987-2013

	None (Base: Any Affiliation)	None (Base: Protestant)	None (Base: Catholic)	None Base (Other Religion)
Age	0.0128 [*] (0.0076)	0.0086 (0.0077)	0.0637 ^{***} (0.0123)	0.0094 (0.0199)
Age ²			-0.0005 ^{***} (0.0001)	
Cohort	0.0388 ^{***} (0.0076)	0.0365 ^{***} (0.0077)	-0.7924 ^{***} (0.2972)	0.0214 (0.0199)
Cohort ²			0.0002 ^{***} (0.0001)	
Female	-0.4559 ^{***} (0.0392)	-0.4888 ^{***} (0.0409)	-0.4127 ^{***} (0.0448)	-0.3309 ^{***} (0.0715)
Black	-0.5112 ^{***} (0.0687)	-0.8316 ^{***} (0.0698)	0.7575 ^{***} (0.0938)	-0.4772 ^{***} (0.1178)
Other Race	-0.3474 ^{***} (0.0619)	0.2453 ^{***} (0.0680)	-1.0538 ^{***} (0.0671)	-0.9757 ^{***} (0.0962)
Divorced	0.2708 ^{***} (0.0547)	0.2639 ^{***} (0.0563)	0.3660 ^{***} (0.0631)	0.1166 (0.0989)
Not Married	0.4882 ^{***} (0.0488)	0.5758 ^{***} (0.0513)	0.4422 ^{***} (0.0599)	0.1890 ^{**} (0.0879)
Midwest	-0.1515 ^{***} (0.0576)	-0.5009 ^{***} (0.0610)	0.3358 ^{***} (0.0630)	0.0683 (0.1059)
South	-0.4032 ^{***} (0.0562)	-0.9187 ^{***} (0.0591)	0.6338 ^{***} (0.0633)	-0.0611 (0.1007)
West	0.5645 ^{***} (0.0569)	0.2345 ^{***} (0.0608)	1.1157 ^{***} (0.0642)	0.3233 ^{***} (0.1034)
AIC	19386.2220	16753.9044	12573.6921	4942.1352
BIC	19495.1317	16858.7965	12684.3261	5025.4775
Deviance	19360.2220	16727.9044	12543.6921	4916.1352
Num. obs.	32134	23591	11797	4496
Variance: Cohort	0.0049	0.0058	0.0000	0.0105
Variance: Year	0.0472	0.0481	0.0493	0.3430
Variance: Residual	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2. All estimates are expressed as log-odds.

Table 21: Socioeconomic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Structural Disconnection	Self- Employed	Housing Insecurity	Educational Attainment	Household Income	Union Membership
Cohort × (Employed Part- time)	0.000 (0.003)					
Cohort × (Unemployed)	0.000 (0.004)					
Cohort × (Retired)	-0.002 (0.004)					
Cohort × (Attending School)	-0.013 ^{***} (0.004)					
Cohort × (Homemaker)	0.008 ^{***} (0.003)					
Cohort × (Self- employed)		-0.006 ^{**} (0.002)				
Cohort × (Pays Rent)			0.001 (0.003)			
Cohort × (Other Living Arrangement)			0.003 (0.008)			
Cohort × (BA or Higher)				-0.018 ^{***} (0.002)		
Cohort × (Household Income)					-0.004 ^{***} (0.001)	
Cohort × (Union Member)						-0.010 ^{***} (0.003)
AIC	35330.864	33396.210	16714.610	35231.136	31575.781	24716.019
BIC	35464.130	33457.960	16787.094	35311.076	31637.044	24809.674
Deviance	35300.864	33382.210	16696.610	35213.136	31561.781	24694.019
Num. obs.	53338	50081	23243	53221	46717	36831
Variance: Cohort	0.010	0.012	0.017	0.009	0.008	0.015
Variance: Year	0.022	0.021	0.002	0.022	0.026	0.020
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

The next set of factors are related to explanations rooted in household Internet access as well as changing views towards science and technology. Table 22 presents the findings before adjusting for the baseline controls. Household Internet access, self-reported Internet use, belief that too much emphasis is on science rather than faith, and the perception that technology is moving “too fast” each interact with the cohort trend on religious disaffiliation.

For the next set of items I examine sociocultural moderators of the relationship between generation and the rise of religious nones in the GSS. Table 23 reveals statistically significant interaction effects for political ideology only, which remains statistically significant after including the control variables. The interaction terms suggest that self-identified liberals are most likely to identify as religious nones for all cohorts, but this gap has increased as millennial moderates and liberals have dropped religious affiliations at a greater level than millennial conservatives. These analyses document some support for Inglehart’s post-materialist thesis, with younger cohorts adopting a post-materialist value orientation the most likely to identify as a religious none.

Table 24 further examines sociocultural factors by probing the extent to which the generational increase in religious nones is related to an overall “secularization” effect. There are weak but statistically significant effects of secularization (e.g., not attending church) that moderate the relationship between the cohort trend and religious disaffiliation. Visual inspection of effect plots confirm most of the core hypotheses in terms of the direction and magnitude of the interaction effects, although most do meet traditional standards of statistical significance.

Table 22: Technological Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Home Internet Access	Internet Use	Science is Harmful	Science vs. Faith	Science Worsening	Tech for Next Generation	Technology is Too Fast	Technological Advancement
Cohort × (Internet Access)	-0.009 [*] (0.005)							
Cohort × (Use Internet)		-0.005 (0.007)						
Cohort × (Science is Harmful)			0.002 (0.006)					
Cohort × (Science vs. Faith)				0.008 (0.006)				
Cohort × (Science Worsening)					0.008 (0.011)			
Cohort × (Tech for Next Generation)						0.001 (0.008)		
Cohort × (Tech Too Fast)							0.007 ⁺ (0.005)	
Cohort × (Tech Advancement)								-0.002 (0.008)
AIC	4414.092	3813.123	4483.316	2588.510	1237.234	4259.794	4190.749	4167.257
BIC	4459.096	3857.725	4529.638	2632.086	1276.253	4304.614	4235.530	4211.963
Deviance	4400.092	3799.123	4469.316	2574.510	1223.234	4245.794	4176.749	4153.257
Num. obs.	4579	4323	5527	3734	1947	4460	4435	4388
Variance: Cohort	0.000	0.017	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Variance: Year	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Table 23: Sociocultural Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the GSS with Controls, 1972-2012

	Political Ideology	Post-Materialist Values	Highest Value	Trust in the Clergy
Cohort × Liberal	0.011 ^{***} (0.002)			
Cohort × Moderate	0.006 ^{***} (0.002)			
Cohort × (Hybrid Materialist)		-0.002 (0.009)		
Cohort × (Hybrid Post-Materialist)		-0.002 (0.009)		
Cohort × (Post-Materialist)		0.008 (0.009)		
Cohort × (Give People More Say)			0.001 (0.007)	
Cohort × (Project Free Speech)			-0.001 (0.008)	
Cohort × (Only Some Trust in the Clergy)				0.002 (0.003)
Cohort × (Only Some Trust in the Clergy)				0.004 (0.003)
AIC	29340.495	3159.502	3341.252	20188.735
BIC	29418.897	3229.835	3412.107	20264.934
Deviance	29322.495	3137.502	3319.252	20170.735
Num. obs.	44863	4420	4635	35123
Variance: Cohort	0.007	0.001	0.001	0.007
Variance: Year	0.022	0.001	0.001	0.044
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Table 24: Religiosity Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the GSS with No Controls, 1972-2012

	Religious Attendance	Belief in a God	Believes in an Afterlife	Born Again	Religious Upbringing
Cohort × (Attends Weekly)	0.008 [*] (0.005)				
Cohort × Agnostic		0.005 (0.007)			
Cohort × (Some Higher Power)		0.010 ⁺ (0.007)			
Cohort × (Know a God Exists)		0.014 ^{**} (0.007)			
Cohort × (Believes in an Afterlife)			0.015 ^{***} (0.002)		
Cohort × (Born Again)				0.007 ⁺ (0.004)	
Cohort × (Grew up Catholic)					-0.006 ^{***} (0.002)
Cohort × (Grew up Jewish)					-0.021 ^{**} (0.010)
Cohort × (Grew up Without a Religion)					0.006 ^{**} (0.003)
Cohort × (Grew up with Something Else)					-0.010 [*] (0.005)
AIC	26616.508	9382.806	20145.297	10289.591	30129.359
BIC	26696.401	9497.715	20204.209	10342.045	30244.100
Deviance	26598.508	9352.806	20131.297	10275.591	30103.359
Num. obs.	52945	15687	33391	13271	50324
Variance: Cohort	0.007	0.001	0.013	0.010	0.018
Variance: Year	0.018	0.009	0.022	0.007	0.016
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Additional analyses examined the effect of total Internet access and social media exposure on religious disaffiliation. The findings are striking, with Internet access (both total and broadband) strongly related to the rise of religious nones among younger cohorts, consistent with recent research on the potential “secularizing” effect of new technologies. Further analyses will

need to be conducted to determine the mechanisms underlying an apparent “secularizing” effect of the Internet.

Table 25: Demographic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Hispanic	Multiracial	Multilingual	Cohabiting	Metro Area
Cohort × Hispanic	-0.004 ⁺ (0.003)				
Cohort × Multiracial		0.006 (0.006)			
Cohort × Multilingual			-0.004 (0.004)		
Cohort × Cohabiting				0.003 (0.008)	
Cohort × Urban					-0.003 ⁺ (0.002)
Cohort × Suburbs					-0.003 ⁺ (0.002)
AIC	29879.305	21003.603	22075.175	33939.289	24702.707
BIC	29939.260	21061.681	22133.699	34001.207	24780.604
Deviance	29865.305	20989.603	22061.175	33925.289	24684.707
Num. obs.	38753	29642	31587	51302	42417
Variance: Cohort	0.014	0.020	0.012	0.015	0.016
Variance: Year	0.016	0.015	0.026	0.024	0.024
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

E. Interaction Effects: American National Election Survey

This section focuses on interaction effects between the cohort trend and various demographic variables that have been theorized to influence the generational trend in religious disaffiliation.

Table 25 reveals statistically significant interaction effects for the demographic interaction

effects, of which the Hispanic and metropolitan area remain statistically significant after

adjusting for baseline covariates. The next set of hypotheses are based on socioeconomic

explanations for the intergenerational rise in religious disaffiliation. Table 26 shows the

interaction effects for the hypothesized variables without adjustment for baseline covariates. As a

whole the effects are in the expected direction, supporting the hypothesized interaction effects with the cohort trend.

Table 26: Socioeconomic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Work Status	Housing Insecurity	Layoff Concerns	Pay Cut Concerns	Educational Attainment	Household Income	Union Membership
Cohort × Disconnected	0.001 (0.004)						
Cohort × Retired	-0.004 ⁺ (0.003)						
Cohort × Homemaker	0.008 ^{***} (0.003)						
Cohort × Student	-0.007 ⁺ (0.005)						
Cohort × (Paying Rent)		-0.005 ^{***} (0.001)					
Cohort × (Not Employed)			0.002 (0.002)				
Cohort × (Lay Off)			0.002 (0.004)				
Cohort × (Not employed)				0.001 (0.002)			
Cohort × (Pay Cut)				-0.005 (0.004)			
Cohort × Education					-0.003 ^{***} (0.001)		
Cohort × Income						-0.002 ^{**} (0.001)	
Cohort × (Union)							-0.004 ^{**} (0.002)
AIC	29879.442	32063.382	22606.648	22610.098	33870.856	28720.607	27299.403
BIC	30007.936	32124.343	22680.164	22683.614	33932.791	28781.640	27360.344
Deviance	29849.442	32049.382	22588.648	22592.098	33856.856	28706.607	27285.403
Num. obs.	38802	44740	26068	26068	51424	45212	44617
Variance: Cohort	0.015	0.013	0.012	0.012	0.016	0.017	0.023
Variance: Year	0.016	0.019	0.015	0.014	0.025	0.025	0.025
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

The following battery of factors are related to explanations rooted in household Internet access as well as changing views towards science and technology. Table 27 displays the interaction effects for the hypothesized variables without adjustment for baseline covariates. The effects are not statistically significant in the main effects and the interaction effects have a modest relationship at most with the outcome.

Table 27: Technological Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Household Internet Access	Electoral Information Online
Cohort × (Household Internet Access)	-0.001 (0.003)	
Cohort × (Electoral Information Online)		-0.003 (0.003)
AIC	13034.308	10435.350
BIC	13086.686	10486.169
Deviance	13020.308	10421.350
Num. obs.	13129	10507
Variance: Cohort	0.006	0.000
Variance: Year	0.010	0.000
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

For the next set of items I examine sociocultural moderators of the relationship between generation and the growth of the religiously unaffiliated. Table 28 indicates the interaction effects for the focal variables without adjustment for baseline covariates. Taken together the effects are in the expected direction and give strong support the hypothesized interaction effects with the cohort trend. That is, at least part of the cohort trend in religious disaffiliation is moderated by shifting attitudes towards religious groups and institutions.

Table 28: Sociocultural Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the ANES with No Controls, 1948-2012

	Political Ideology	Democratic Thermometer	Republican Thermometer	Religious Attendance	Importance of Religion	Protestant Thermometer	Catholic Thermometer	Jewish Thermometer
Cohort × (Political Ideology)	0.001 (0.001)							
Cohort × (Democratic Thermometer)		-0.002 (0.002)						
Cohort × (Republican Thermometer)			0.001 ** (0.0001)					
Cohort × (Attend Few Times a Month)				-0.011 ** (0.004)				
Cohort × (Never Attends)				-0.007 ** (0.003)				
Cohort × (Religion is Important)					0.006 *** (0.002)			
Cohort × (Protestant Thermometer)						0.004 ** (0.002)		
Cohort × (Catholic Thermometer)							0.004 ** (0.002)	
Cohort × (Jewish Thermometer)								0.004 ** (0.002)
AIC	21906.519	6205.540	6145.956	22585.976	19447.012	4983.887	4983.887	4983.887
BIC	21964.191	6258.059	6198.453	22683.318	19504.417	5034.659	5034.659	5034.659
Deviance	21892.519	6191.540	6131.956	22563.976	19433.012	4969.887	4969.887	4969.887
Num. obs.	27968	13396	13354	51500	26920	10438	10438	10438
Variance: Cohort	0.016	0.045	0.036	0.011	0.009	0.047	0.047	0.047
Variance: Year	0.019	0.028	0.021	0.018	0.017	0.006	0.006	0.006
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

F. Interaction Effects: Pew Values Survey

In this section I examine interaction effects between the cohort trend and various demographic inputs implied by theories of religious disaffiliation. In Table 29 I present the interaction effects for the hypothesized variables without adjustment for baseline covariates. None of the demographic effects are statistically significant at conventional levels in the models. However, most effects are in the expected direction, lending some circumstantial support for these theorized interaction effects.

Table 29: Demographic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Hispanic	Born in the United States	Cohabiting	Metro Area
Cohort × Hispanic	-0.201 (0.765)			
Cohort × (Born in the United States)		0.692 (1.720)		
Cohort × Cohabiting			1.441 (2.384)	
Suburbs				872.602 (1105.547)
Urban				283.495 (1205.282)
Cohort × Suburbs				-0.898 (1.130)
Cohort × Urban				-0.297 (1.232)
AIC	21595.565	8562.588	20496.696	7012.962
BIC	21680.109	8645.330	20580.909	7108.469
Deviance	21575.565	8542.588	20476.696	6986.962
Num. obs.	34699	28976	33567	11461
Variance: Cohort	0.002	0.000	0.001	0.000
Variance: Year	0.065	1.122	0.042	0.077
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

The next set of tables focus on socioeconomic factors thought to moderate the trend in religious disaffiliation across generations. Table 30 shows the interaction effects for the focal variables without adjustment for the control variables. Together these findings support the claim that socioeconomic factors moderate in part the relationship between cohort and religious disaffiliation.

Table 30: Socioeconomic Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the PVS with Controls, 1987-2013

	Work Status	Housing Insecurity	Educational Attainment	Household Income
Cohort × Part-time	0.595 (0.718)			
Cohort × Unemployed	0.352 (0.511)			
Cohort × (Other Work Status)	2.416 (3.206)			
Cohort × (Paying Rent)		0.312 (0.782)		
Cohort × (Other Work Status)		-2.106 ⁺ (1.324)		
Cohort × Education			0.118 (0.182)	
Cohort × (Lower Middle Income)				-1.211 ^{**} (0.519)
Cohort × (Upper Income)				-1.157 ^{**} (0.571)
Cohort × (Upper Middle Income)				-0.882 ⁺ (0.573)
AIC	15239.442	10066.101	21653.726	19727.258
BIC	15369.400	10166.801	21738.296	19861.083
Deviance	15207.442	10040.101	21633.726	19695.258
Num. obs.	24893	17088	34786	31700
Variance: Cohort	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Variance: Year	0.041	0.026	0.066	0.062
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

The next set of factors are related to explanations rooted in household Internet access as well as changing views towards science and technology. Table 31 presents the findings before

adjusting for the baseline controls. As a whole the effects are in the expected direction, although none are statistically significant at conventional levels.

Table 31: Technological Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Household Internet Access	Science is Helping	Tech Life Too Complicated
Cohort × (Household Internet Access)	-0.041 (1.088)		
Cohort × (Completely Disagree on Science Helping)		-1.511 (2.370)	
Cohort × (Mostly Agree on Tech Life Complicated)			1.295 (2.600)
Cohort × (Completely Disagree on Tech Life Complicated)			-0.704 (2.315)
AIC	6790.992	3600.302	3707.871
BIC	6863.149	3706.330	3814.324
Deviance	6770.992	3568.302	3675.871
Num. obs.	10054	5579	5729
Variance: Cohort	0.001	0.001	0.001
Variance: Year	0.025	0.015	0.016
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$, + $p < 0.2$

For the following battery of items I examine sociocultural moderators of the relationship between generation and the rise of religious nones. Table 32 presents the interaction effects for the hypothesized variables without adjustment for baseline covariates. These interactions show very strong support for sociocultural moderators of the cohort trend in religious disaffiliation, underscoring claims that religious disaffiliation across generations is in part a “secularization” process.

Table 32: Sociocultural Interactions with Generational Effects Predicting Religious Disaffiliation in the PVS with No Controls, 1987-2013

	Political Ideology	Religious Attendance	Belief in a God	Prayer Frequency	Born Again
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Cohort × Moderate	0.006 [*] (0.003)				
Cohort × Liberal	0.006 ⁺ (0.004)				
Cohort × (Attends At Least Monthly)		0.006 ⁺ (0.004)			
Cohort × (Completely Disagree in Existence of a God)			-0.009 ^{**} (0.004)		
Cohort × (Mostly Disagree in Existence of a God)			-0.015 ^{***} (0.004)		
Cohort × (Completely Disagree in Prayer)				-0.013 ^{***} (0.005)	
Cohort × (Born Again)					0.025 ^{***} (0.008)
AIC	12062.418	12501.908	10630.959	10127.288	8561.956
BIC	12132.725	12558.284	10719.202	10215.140	8619.876
Deviance	12044.418	12487.908	10608.959	10105.288	8547.956
Num. obs.	18249	23243	22519	21732	28976
Variance: Cohort	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.005	0.000
Variance: Year	0.077	0.072	0.042	0.054	1.067
Variance: Residual	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000

*** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, * p < 0.1, + p < 0.2

Conclusion: Generational Change and the Rise of Religious Nones

Since at least the 1980s, scholars and the public alike have documented a remarkable rise in the percentage of Americans who identify with no religion. These religiously unaffiliated Americans have been particularly concentrated among younger cohorts, with previous scholars showing that upwards of one-third of millennials identifying as having no religion. In this chapter I have made several contributions to this literature through a novel set of statistical methods and the use of a large set of both cross-sectional and longitudinal data.

There are several key findings from these analyses. First, I have shown that the rise in religious nones has continued to increase across generations, with the recent surveys conducted in 2012 (with youth over-samples) indicating that approximately 35% of millennials identify as

religiously unaffiliated. This represents a decisive increase from older generations, who are considerably more likely to identify with a traditional religious group. I also show that, using latent class models of religious affiliation and attendance, the actual percentage of millennials who are religious unaffiliated is likely closer to 40% due to social desirability bias from single-item survey questions on religious affiliation and behavior. For further research I accordingly aim to use the posterior probabilities of membership derived from latent class models of religious affiliation and related variables to model generational, year, and age effects. To my knowledge no researcher has attempted this kind of analysis despite the importance of dealing with response bias in religiously-based survey items.

Second, regarding demographic effects the findings here show processes working in opposite directions for younger generations. Put simply, millennials are increasingly religiously disaffiliated despite a higher portion being immigrants and Hispanic, both of which are related to higher levels of religiosity. On the other side of the demographic factors, I find that millennials are increasingly religiously unaffiliated if they cohabitate or identify as multilingual, consistent with arguments that cultural hybridity is manifold and that religious identities may be shed through unstable cultural or structural conditions. Additional research should explore how hybrid cultural identities in one area of social life (e.g., racial or ethnic identity) may be related to hybrid identities in other realms (e.g., religious or political affiliation).

Third, the findings here show strong support for the role of the spatial diffusion in the Internet in leading to religious disaffiliation. Importantly, however, the Internet appears to differentially affect older rather than younger cohorts: that is, older cohorts exposed to higher levels of Internet access appear to more strongly shed their religious affiliations than younger cohorts. This correlational finding needs to be replicated with further additional data. In

particular a future project could use plausibly random geographic variation in Internet access to attempt to isolate any apparent causal effect. Moreover additional work should be conducted on how the Internet may possibly shed religious identities or beliefs and why this may disproportionately influence older more than younger cohorts.

Finally, the analyses in this chapter also strongly support sociocultural explanations for intergenerational differences in religious disaffiliation. Among these factors, I find that religious origins are particularly important, with younger generations more likely to be born into religiously unaffiliated households and in turn religiously disaffiliating. Moreover, the results suggest that millennials are in part leaving organized religion because of distrust towards mainstream institutions, including the clergy, lending support to the “corruption backlash” argument. I also find some support for the “political backlash” argument popularized by many analysts, with millennials holding social and cultural views at odds with those of many conservative religious leaders (especially on same-sex marriage and marijuana legalization). As well, the findings here support in part the “secularization” thesis for religious disaffiliation: while not all religious nones are religious, it is clear from the results that at least part of the intergenerational differences are due to lower levels of religious attendance, prayer frequency, and secular beliefs among younger cohorts.

Chapter 5:
The Cultural Contradictions of the Sharing Economy

Introduction: Welcome to the Sharing Economy

Arising from the promise of rapid technological growth and the perils of an economy still recovering from the 2007-2008 Great Recession, analysts and scholars have recently begun asserting that American society is rapidly transforming into a new socio-economic system that has been variously called “the sharing economy,” “collaborative consumption,” the “asset-light lifestyle,” the “collaborative economy,” “peer economy,” “access economy,” or “hybrid economy.”⁹ Although the phrases differ, the common claim is that Western society is shifting culturally and structurally to model based on the sharing of cultural and economic resources with lower levels of mass consumption and material wealth acquisition (Benkler 2004; Friedman 2013; Gansky 2012; Lessig 2009). This transformation, it has been claimed, is particular pronounced across with generations, with millennials ditching homeownership, car culture, office work, and adherence to property rights (presumably the foundation for a stable economic system according to mainstream development economists) for an rental units, bicycles, distance commuting, and peer-to-peer collaborative distribution models based on norms of reciprocity and equivalency (Strauss 2013).

The sharing economy has thought to have both structural and cultural foundations. Structurally, there are at least four factors outlined by theorists. First, several theorists have pointed to rising income inequality and economic insecurity as a

⁹ Among the concepts promoted by enthusiasts of the sharing economy includes: cradle-to-cradle, open source, open data, user generated content, swapping, exchanging, collective purchasing, subscription based models, peer-to-peer, collaborative economy, circular economy, pay-as-you-use economy, “wkinomics,” collaborative consumption, shared ownership, shared value, co-operatives, co-creation, recycling, upcycling, re-distribution, trading used goods, renting, borrowing, crowdfunding, crowdsourcing, lending, peer-to-peer lending, micro financing, micro-entrepreneurship, social media, the Mesh, and social enterprise. For a detailed overview of see Lessig (2009).

result of the Great Recession in the United States and across advanced western capitalist democracies (Friedman 2013; Lessig 2009). The systematic failure of dominant economic and governmental institutions led to a backlash of new social movements on both the left and right (e.g., the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street) over the short term and to a deepening distrust of existing socioeconomic institutions in the long run (Hardt and Negri 2011; Tarrow 2011). Moreover, the drop in incomes and earning potential, especially for younger cohorts, suggests that part of the observed differences in consumption patterns (such as declines in homeownership and car ownership) across generations may be a result of basic economic necessity (Bell and Blanchflower 2011; Blinder and Zandi 2010; Eckstein 1978; Jenkins et al. 2012). Second, some have argued that urbanization has fostered the sharing economy. As more people live in crowded areas with relatively scarce resources, sharing becomes more feasible as well as more necessary (Lessig 2009). As an example, public transportation is arguably a basic structural aspect of the sharing economy (for more recent examples, analysts have pointed to the growth of bicycle-sharing programs and short-term car-rental operations). Finally, and most importantly, there is near-universal consensus among analysts that technological development, particularly the near-exponential growth in information technology, is the bedrock of the sharing economy. Current technologies have allowed an unprecedented level of cooperation, collaboration, and networking, and has led to countless companies and organizations operating on the concept of the sharing economy (Benkler 2004).

Although not the focus of most analysts on the subject (for an exception, see Lessig 2009), the sharing economy is also presumed to rely on a set of cultural values and

beliefs, in particular trust, preference (or at least tolerance) for resource redistribution, and perceptions of economic necessity. I review each of these cultural aspects of the sharing economy since they form the core of this chapter. First, the sharing economy relies on trust in others to share. With many peer-to-peer communities and cooperative sharing programs there is no overt punishment for “free riding,” and there is trust that others will reciprocate, are generally helpful, and are fair. In addition, there is ample trust required since many programs share not only physical items such as cars, bicycles, gardening plots, and so forth, but also cultural items such as one’s personal information or social network contacts (Byers, Proserpio, and Zervas 2013; Cohen and Kietzmann 2014). Another core cultural foundation of the sharing economy is preference or at least non-aversion to some form of wealth redistribution. According to some proponents of the sharing economy, the sharing of resources is the single most important aspect of this presumed new socio-economic system. This sharing of resources entails non-tangible goods, such as one’s cultural products; among academics this is embodied in the concept of open-source journals, open data initiatives, and the growth of collaboratively edited online journals. Finally, and perhaps most controversially, the sharing economy is presumably based on perceived existing insecurity of socio-economic relationships (Strauss 2013). Simply put, a mid-career partner in a law firm with a high level of job security and a house in the suburbs is unlikely to be a bicycle-sharing, couch-surfing, freelance paralegal. To put it another way, several analysts have suggested that the Great Recession provided the impetus for the sharing economy by leading to widespread doubt about current socio-economic conditions at both the societal and individual level (Gansky 2012; Sundararajan 2013; Zervas, Proserpio, and Byers 2014).

To examine the cultural bases of the sharing economy, I proceed along several steps. First, I outline the main set of theories for changing levels of trust, attitudes towards wealth redistribution, and economic perceptions across generations. Second, based on a set of cross-sectional surveys specifically targeting millennial youth, I examine the extent of these cultural values and beliefs through a series of cross-tabulations and a latent class model that can be used to categorize young adults into one or more sociocultural groups. Next I use cross-classified generalized linear models to partition separate age, year, and cohort effects through three nationally-representative surveys. Since I make no assumption that the cultural bases of the sharing economy constitute a single uniform entity (cf. the concept of “social capital”), for each of the outcome items I run two sets of clustering techniques: a novel item-based hierarchical clustering algorithm and a simulation-based factor analysis that uses polychoric/tetrachoric correlation matrices to take into account the qualitative nature of most of the outcome variables. Fourth, I extend the cross-classified models to incorporate spatial variation in the hierarchy (effectively expanding the models to three levels: individuals nested in a cross-classified structure defined by year and cohort as well as U.S. Census region). Finally, I conclude with an overview of the findings and a proposal for additional research on the cultural aspects of the sharing economy, especially as it relates to generational change.

Part I: Theoretical Perspectives

To examine generational differences in the cultural bases of the sharing economy, I focus on three sets of variables: measures of social trust, attitudes towards wealth redistribution (including

government spending), and perceptions of the economy. Together these can be viewed as the cultural factors that would render a sharing economy not on possible, but likely; to put it another way, distrust, selfishness, and cynical views on the functioning of the economy may render stillborn any movement to institutionalize a sharing economy across American society, as some have argued (Pogue 2014; Sundararajan 2013).¹⁰

In general outlines there are four set of hypotheses explaining over-time and generational differences in trust, wealth distribution, and economic perceptions. I turn first to *demographic explanations* for variation in the cultural bases of the sharing economy. The overarching theme of these explanations is that ascribed characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, or linguistic differences account for cross-cutting affiliations that may undermine support for wealth redistribution and trust in others (Chow and Chan 2008; Cook 2001; Glaeser et al. 2000). Since social trust was first measured by sociologists in the General Social Survey, scholars have been focused on demographic explanations of declining trust. Some have posited that the decline of marriage and increasing rates of cohabitation are related to the drop in trust, while others have focused on racial tensions and differences, with black Americans especially distrustful given the existence of perceived racism (Mincy 2006; Robinson and Jackson 2001). As well, researchers have documented urban/rural differences in trust, with more highly populated areas exhibiting higher levels of distrust towards other (Rothstein and Uslaner 2005; Uslaner 2010). Moreover,

¹⁰ Some careful observers might note that these factors as a whole may constitute a measure of “social capital.” However, I avoid this phrase in this chapter because of the conceptual baggage associated with the term, including the misconception that these items are somehow acultural, distinct from “cultural capital.” Moreover the concept of “social capital” presumes a homogeneous quantity that can somehow be calculated additively. Instead I follow recent work by sociologists and complexity theorists that distinguish between the social network as a structure and the cultural content flowing through this structure (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994; Marsden and Friedkin 1993; Wasserman and Faust 1995). Any usage of the phrase of “social capital” unnecessarily risks conflating these distinct processes. Moreover, as I show further in this chapter, item-based clustering algorithms rarely if ever show a uniform clustering of “social capital” items. In most cases even multiple trust items cluster into several latent variables if the number of observed variables is greater than 3 or 4.

immigrant status appears to be plausibly related to distrust, with immigrants as “outsiders” who lack overt cultural commonality with the majority in their community (Cook 2001).

Second, numerous scholars have put forth *socioeconomic explanations* for the differences in trust, distribution attitudes, and economic beliefs across generations. For example, scholars have pointed to housing insecurity as possibly leading to lower levels of trust, since home ownership roots the individual in a particular community for an extended period of time (Uslaner 2010). Similarly, job insecurity may result in higher levels of distrust inasmuch longstanding occupational attachment are replaced with, in extremis, temporary working conditions with weak social affiliations (Peralta 2014). Likewise, income insecurity and poverty have been shown to be related systematically with lower levels of altruistic beliefs and trust in others (Rahn 1995; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Sampson 2003, 2008). These same conditions have furthermore been shown to be highly correlated with more pessimistic economic beliefs and evaluations (Jost, Nosek, and Gosling 2008). However, while possibly leading to greater distrust, these conditions have been shown to be correlated with stronger attitudes towards wealth redistribution; that is, economic adversity has been shown to be related in some circumstances to greater support for wealth redistribution (Jost 2006).

The major exception to this pattern among socioeconomic factors, viz., the finding that lower levels of trust and pessimistic views of the economic system are correlated with support for wealth redistribution, concerns educational attainment (Alford 2001). Numerous scholars have documented that educational attainment is associated with higher levels of trust, greater support for wealth redistribution, and more optimistic views of the economy (for example, see Rothstein and Uslaner 2005; Siegrist, Cvetkovich, and Roth 2000). Notwithstanding, recent research suggests that the relationship is not monotonic. In one study preference for

redistribution has a pronounced U-shaped relationship with the level of education, with the most support at the lower and higher levels and the least support occurring at medium levels of education (Rothstein and Uslaner 2005). According to this analyses, an individual with more than 16 years of education increases the likelihood of being in support of redistribution by 8% with respect to an individual with same characteristics but with an intermediate level of education. Instead, there is no significant difference with respect to a low educated individual. The authors emphasize that this finding, which is counterintuitive from a strict assumption of value-rationality, is robust to alternative specifications of the model. However the authors document this U-shape only in the 2000s, and note that based on data from the 1980s and the 1990s, more educated people are less likely to support redistributive policy than less educated by around 10%.

For the third set I turn to *sociocultural explanations* for differences in the cultural bases of the sharing economy. These explanations have in common an emphasis not on proximate material causes but rather proximate cultural causes (cf. Bernstein 1971). Most prominently, a wide range of research has shown that political ideology is robustly correlated with support for wealth redistribution (Cunningham et al. 2010). It is unclear from extant theoretical perspectives whether or not this relationship is based on political framing by political parties, self-selection into political parties, or some other explanatory basis (Jost 2006; Weakliem 1991). Nonetheless, the core claim is that as a system of interrelated values, political ideology has a robust relationship to support for wealth redistribution (Jost et al. 2008). Research is minimal on ideological differences in perceptions of the economy, although some scholars have claimed that left-leaning respondents tend towards more pessimistic evaluations of economic conditions (Weakliem 1991).

Another debate centers on the role of materialist versus post-materialist values in fostering distrust and attitudes towards wealth redistribution. Scholars have shown that, among a time-series dataset of American youth, materialistic values are correlated with higher levels of distrust, more pessimistic evaluations of the economy, and lower support for wealth redistribution (cf. Inglehart 1981; see Twenge and Kasser 2013). These same researchers find greater support for materialist values among younger cohorts. Intriguingly, these findings are in direct contradiction with the claims of Inglehart and colleagues, who claim that younger cohorts are increasingly concerned with post-materialist priorities while rejecting the “materialist” concerns of earlier cohorts born in a less affluent period (Inglehart 1971). Notwithstanding, as Inglehart has noted, a decline in trust is perfectly compatible with a theory of post-materialist values, since widespread distrust may be a consequence of increased knowledge on the part of the citizenry (Inglehart 1981). Furthermore, the definition of “materialist” values differs considerably from those used by Inglehart, so they may be examining different aspects of cultural values.¹¹

Finally, numerous scholars have proposed that *technological change* may explain varying levels of trust, attitudes towards wealth distribution, and economic perceptions (Benkler and Nissenbaum 2006; Benkler 2004). For example, in explaining the apparent decline in social trust documented by sociologists some scholars have pointed to television as a likely cause, although this has been disputed empirically (Norris 1996). Similarly, in what has been called the “videomalaise” thesis, other scholars have argued that new technologies, including not only television but more recent forms of online media, promote negative and cynical worldviews that

¹¹ In particular Inglehart’s research focuses on a set of ultimate value orientations that are ideal-typical priorities for guiding society. In contrast many survey items capturing an aspect of “materialism” are in fact measuring more particular attitudes and beliefs.

reduce levels of altruism and trust in others. Furthermore, other scholars (Sunstein 2001; Ulen 2001a) have argued that because of free choice over online news consumption, many citizens self-select into news stories that not only confirm pre-existing biases but that also sensationalize facts and stories (Sunstein 2001). Some analysts have attributed the growth of blogs and other online venues that promote negative exaggerations of news events to the decline of journalism, which is now using so-called “clickbait” to lure readers into news sites by emphasizing the sensational (Lock 2013). As a consequence, some scholars have theorized that this is leading to negative, cynical worldviews and widespread distrust of established institutions (Tandoc 2014).

On balance, however, the Internet undoubtedly enables citizens to retrieve more information and has a role in cognitively mobilizing the public, so it is unclear if the observed relationship between distrust and Internet use is related to greater knowledge of corrupt institutions or distorted thinking on the part of online users (for more, see Bimber and Davis 2002). As well there is a small but growing scholarly literature on how online participation promotes cultural values of altruism, norms of reciprocity (Belk 2014; Jetzek, Avital, and Bjørn-Andersen 2014), and greater concern for others in spite of disparate structural and geographic backgrounds (Garrett 2009). For instance, the clearest example of this is the rapid expansion of online communities and peer-to-peer information-sharing platforms, in which citizens contribute content and information for little explicit monetary gain, if any (Beer 2011).

Part II. Hypothesized Mechanisms

To examine the cultural bases of the sharing economy I use both cross-sectional and time-series cross-sectional data to examine empirically hypotheses. Based on prior research I there are four main set of hypotheses. The first of GSS questions involve demographics, which are expected to

partially moderate the expected upward trend in religious disaffiliation by cohorts. Drawing on the literature on identity and politics, I expect in particular that immigrants, unmarried households, and those living in large cities or urban areas less likely to have partisan attachments (Chilton 1988; Crewe 1983; Mainwaring 1998; Meckler 2014). For the GSS, items include whether or not the respondent is Hispanic (Yes = 1, No = 0), lives in a multiracial household (Yes = 1, 0 = No), cohabiting with a partner (Yes = 1, 0 = No), living in a metropolitan area (“Urban,” “Suburbs,” or “Rural”), and living in a large city (population size in thousands). The ANES includes a similar set of variables as well as an additional input for whether or not the respondent is multilingual (Yes = 1, 0 = No). Both the ANES and PVS also include a variable on whether or not the respondent was born abroad (Yes = 1, 0 = No).

For the second set of explanatory factors I examine socioeconomic factors thought to interact between generation and cultural aspects of the sharing economy. I include several sets of focal variables measuring various aspects of economic and social conditions of the respondents, which have been documented to be related to measures of trust, wealth redistribution, and evaluations of the economy. For the GSS these items include work status (“Working full-time,” “Working religious-time,” “Unemployed,” “In School,” “Retired,” “Disabled,” “Homemaker or Other”), whether or not the respondent is self-employed (Yes = 1, 0 = No), educational attainment (“High School or Less,” “Some College,” “Bachelor’s Degree or Higher”), and household income (standardized as a scale ranging from approximately -2 to +2). As well, because of the importance attributed to labor unions in mobilizing the cultural worldviews of the public (Bendix and Lipset 1954; Farber and Western 2002; Korpi 1983; Lipset et al. 1954; Wallerstein and Western 2000; Western 1996), I also include a variable on whether or not the respondent and related family members are members of a labor union (“Respondent is

a Union Member,” “Respondent’s Partner is a Union Member,” “Both are Union Members,” “Neither are Union Members”). Likewise I include items on housing insecurity of the respondent (“Paying Rent,” “Own a Home,” “Other Living Arrangement”). For the ANES I include a similar set of focal variables but I also include two long-standing questions in the series on recent job loss and payment cuts. Specifically, the item on pay cuts, asked only for those who are working, asks respondents whether or not they have had working hours or pay cut in the last 6 months up to the date of the interview (Yes = 1, 0 = No), while the item on job loss asks if respondents had been laid off in same time period (Yes = 1, 0 = No). From the PVS I only use items on work status, housing insecurity, educational attainment (scaled as standardized score from -2 to +2), and income (coded as factor levels for comparability across the series).

The third set of explanatory variables deals with sociocultural factors thought to vary systematically with trust, wealth redistribution, and perceptions of the economic system. Given the extensive literature document ideological differences in the morality of wealth redistribution (Brenkman 1983; Giddens 1983; Jost 2006), for the GSS I include measures of political ideology (measured as a factor with levels for “Very Conservative,” “Conservative,” “Somewhat Conservative,” “Moderate,” “Somewhat Liberal,” “Liberal,” and “Very Liberal”). Also because prior research has demonstrated that global measures of trust are related to the level of trust in particular institutions (Glaeser et al. 2000; Miller and Mitamura 2003; Rahn 1995), I include measures of trust in the federal government and the U.S. Congress (“Great Deal,” “Only Some,” “Hardly Any”).

Theories of a post-materialist change in value orientations in Western society (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Inglehart 1981, 1990) suggest that post-materialist values may underlie shifts in trust, wealth redistribution, and economic views. On four separate cross-sections over two

decades, respondents in the GSS are asked to give their first and second priorities among four sets of value orientations (“Maintaining the order in the nation,” “Giving people more say in important political decisions,” “Fighting rising prices,” “Protecting freedom of speech”). In this classic formulation of Inglehart’s post-materialist thesis (for example, see 1977), the first and third value orientations are theorized as materialist while the second and fourth are categorized as post-materialist. From the responses given to these two questions, I calculate three different variables on post-materialism. The first is a categorical variable with four levels depending on the responses to these questions (“Materialist,” “Hybrid Materialist,” “Hybrid Post-Materialist,” “Post-Materialist”), the second is a quantitative index that ranges from approximately -2 to +2 on a score for post-materialism (with higher values indicating a higher level of post-materialist value orientations), and the third is the actual response of the first value orientation (“Maintaining the order in the nation,” “Giving people more say in important political decisions,” “Fighting rising prices,” “Protecting freedom of speech”).

For the ANES I include an item on political ideology, coded similarly to the item in the GSS. Since cultural worldviews related to the sharing economy may be related to the views on the established political order (e.g., DeSart 1995), I also include items measuring perceived alignment with the Republican and Democratic Parties. These are measured as feeling thermometers scored from 0 to 100, with 0 representing a “cold” response and 100 representing a “warm” response. I also include a variable for the respondent’s level of interest in public affairs and politics (“No interest,” “Some interest,” “Great deal of interest”). For the PVS I include a measure of political ideology but also various items measuring levels of neutrality and negativity towards the political system and political parties, specifically the respondent’s perception of having “no influence” in electoral politics (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), that politicians have

“lost touch” of their constituents (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), that politicians “don’t care” about their constituents (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the importance of elections in today’s society (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), and the assertion that “what goes on in Washington, DC is dull” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0). Together these measures can be viewed as quantifying the level of cynicism and negativity towards the political establishment.

Fourth, I include values and beliefs about science and technology in testing the moderating influence on the generation effects. For the GSS I use a basic question about Internet access in the home (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0) and whether or not the respondent uses the Internet (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0) to capture the potential moderating effect of the Internet on generational differences in religious disaffiliation. Given the growing but somewhat fragmentary literature on the role of science in shaping the worldviews of young cohorts (Hanson 2007; Kowske et al. 2010; Smith et al. 2012), I use several measures capturing values towards science and technology, in particular whether or not science is more harmful than helpful (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the claim that there is too much focus on science rather than “faith” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), views on whether or not science is making the world a “worse place” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), the importance of technology and science for giving the next generation more life opportunities (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), views on technological development “moving too fast” (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0), and whether or not science should be supported by the federal government (“Agree” = 1, “Disagree” = 0). For the ANES I include questions on household Internet access as well as whether or not the respondent has seen electoral campaign information online (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0). The PVS includes a similar item on household Internet access but also has two questions capturing evaluations of science and technology, with one measuring whether or not science is “helping” or “hurting” society

(“Helping” = 1, “Hurting” = 0) and another asking whether or not technology is “making life too complicated” (“Yes” = 1, “No” = 0).

Finally, for each of the time-series cross-sectional datasets I use geographic identifiers to merge individual-level observations with contextual data from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration on total Internet access and broadband access by U.S. Census region. Additionally I incorporate data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics to merge each of these datasets with the percent living below the poverty line. In all surveys I use the lowest possible level of geographic region to merge with the contextual data. I now turn to an examination of the extent of intergenerational differences in views and beliefs related to the sharing economy in recent cross-sectional surveys.

Part III. Generational Shifts in Economic Beliefs and Social Trust

In this section I rely primarily on cross-sectional data, but I focus on presenting the generational differences in views on trust, wealth redistribution, and economic perceptions, testing for independence of the levels of each factor. I use these analyses to provide context for the findings in the following section, which are the latent class profiles of materialist and post-materialist values.

A. Unadjusted Differences by Generation

A cultural value undergirding the sharing economy is wealth redistribution. Table 33 presents a cross-tabulation of wealth redistribution by generation, showing statistical significant effects under the null hypothesis of complete independence of the cells. These findings are also shown in Figure 1, a mosaic plot of the wealth distribution variable. In this table a response of “1”

indicates the government should take government action to reduce income differences while a response of “7” indicates the government should not take action to do so. The overall trends in views towards wealth redistribution are also shown in Figure 14 as a set of loess curves (with 95% confidence bands), showing modest intergenerational differences.

Table 33: Wealth Redistribution Views by Generation, GSS (1972-2012)

	Greatest	Silent	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
1	22%	19%	18%	19%	21%
2	9%	9%	11%	11%	11%
3	14%	14%	18%	20%	22%
4	23%	21%	18%	20%	20%
5	11%	12%	13%	13%	12%
6	6%	8%	8%	7%	7%
7	15%	17%	13%	10%	7%

Pearson's $\chi^2 = 390.67$ ($p < 0.001$)

Table 34 shows another cultural foundation of the sharing economy: social trust. This item from the GSS similarly shows a clear generational patterning in levels of trust across generations, with approximately three-fourths of millennials saying they cannot trust others. The decline in trust is also shown in Figure 15 as a set of loess curves (with 95% confidence bands), clearly showing the large generational shifts in trust towards others.

Table 34: Trust by Generation, GSS (1972-2012)

	Greatest	Silent	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
Cannot trust	54%	51%	58%	68%	75%
Depends	4%	4%	4%	5%	4%
Can trust	42%	44%	38%	26%	21%

Pearson's $\chi^2 = 710.64$ ($p < 0.001$)

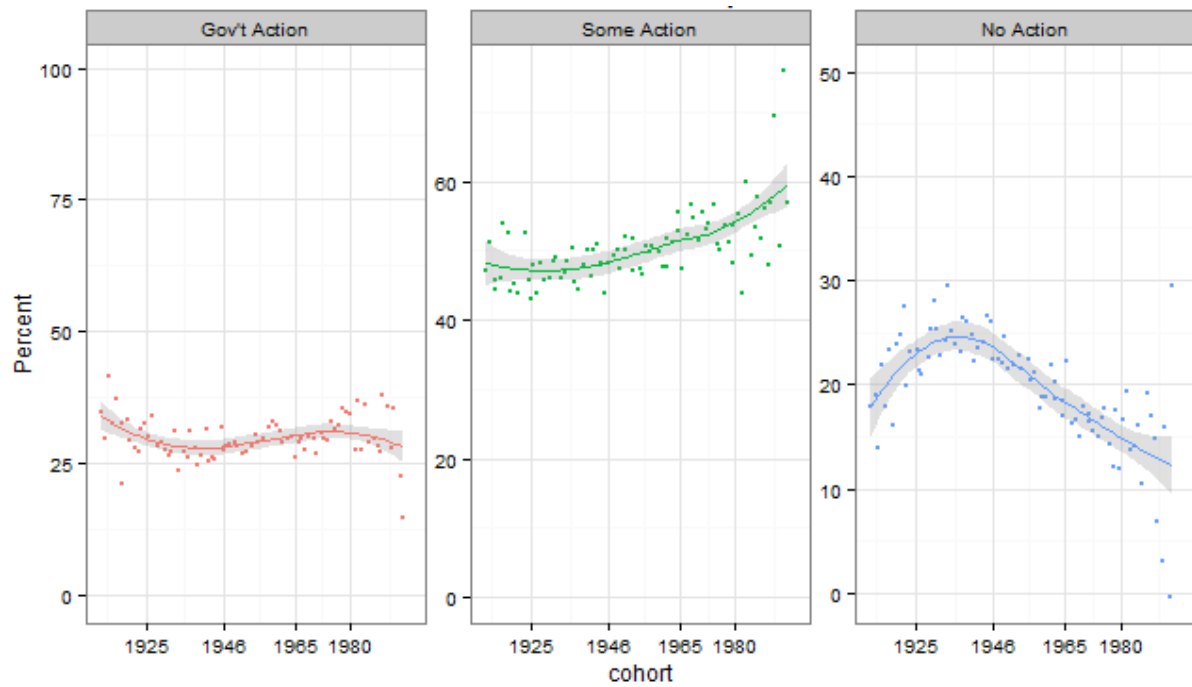


Figure 14: Wealth Redistribution Views by Cohort in the GSS

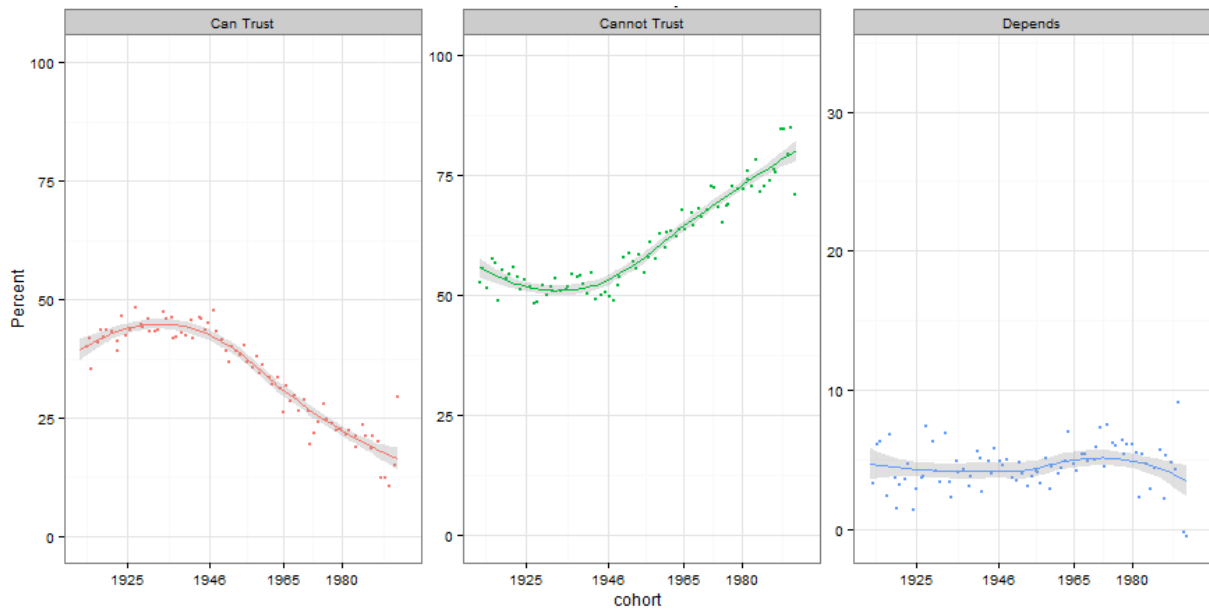


Figure 15: Trust in Others by Birth Cohort in the GSS

The third cultural foundation of the sharing economy concerns economic perceptions and value orientations. Key among these are the post-materialist values studied by Inglehart and colleagues. Based on a tabulation of Inglehart’s four-item, two-part min-survey, I created the classification shown in Table 35. The findings are less clear than for wealth redistribution and trust, but there is slight evidence of a more materialist orientation among millennials, consistent with the claim that part of the cultural bases of the sharing economy is a more materialist value-orientation.

Table 35: Post-Materialist Values by Generation, GSS (1972-2012)

	Greatest Silent Boomers Gen X Millennials				
Materialist	25%	20%	19%	19%	22%
Hybrid (Leans Materialist)	33%	31%	31%	32%	29%
Hybrid (Leans Post-Materialist)	23%	32%	32%	32%	31%
Post-Materialist	19%	18%	17%	16%	18%
Pearson’s $\chi^2 = 19.78$ ($p = 0.07$)					

To buttress this finding that younger generations are more likely to learn materialist on some issues, I turn to additional cross-sectional data from recent surveys specifically targeting millennials. Tables 36 and 37 examine particular economic concerns of millennials by generation. Table 36 shows large generational differences in perceptions of economic comfort, with millennials more than any other generation to express concerns about their material security. Similarly, Table 37 shows generational differences in “high pay” for an occupation, suggesting a more materialist orientation among younger cohorts. Taken together, these cross-

tabulations lend support for the existence of generational differences not only in trust and wealth redistribution, but also materialist values and orientations.

Table 36: Economic Living Conditions by Generation, Gender and Generations Survey (2012)

	Greatest	Silent	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
Live Comfortably	58%	42%	37%	31%	34%
Meet Basic Expenses with a Little Left Over	11%	26%	28%	31%	35%
Just Meet Basic Expenses	17%	21%	23%	22%	24%
Cannot Meet Basic Expenses	8%	6%	9%	14%	7%
Pearson's $\chi^2 = 67.08$ ($p < 0.001$)					

Table 37: Importance of High Pay by Generation, Gender and Generations Survey (2012)

	Silent	Boomers	Gen X	Millennials
Extremely Important	14%	29%	33%	34%
Somewhat Important	58%	51%	53%	53%
Not Too Important	20%	15%	11%	10%
Not at All Important	7%	4%	2%	3%
Pearson's $\chi^2 = 40.40$ ($p < 0.001$)				

B. Latent Class Models of Millennials

As a way of examining the robustness of the findings in this chapter, I conducted several latent class analyses of the trust, wealth redistribution, and economic perception variables. Due to the

number of models fit space limitations do not allow me to show all of the results here, although given the centrality of post-materialist value orientations in the literature I focus on those here. To the extent the sharing economy is based on a culture of both materialist and post-materialist values, since perceived economic insecurity may be driving millennials to participate in the sharing economy, this example is illustrative. Moreover to my knowledge this is the only example in the vast literature on post-materialist values in which a latent class analysis has been conducted.

For the latent class I use the standard first- and second-priority variables used by Inglehart and colleagues and outlined the data methods and section of this chapter. I restrict the analysis here to millennials only (that is, those who were born in 1980 onwards). For this example there are $J = 2$ polytomous categorical variables, each of which contains K_j possible outcomes for individuals $i = 1 \dots N$. As outlined in earlier chapters, since the number of latent classes R is fixed prior to estimation on the basis of model fit, it is necessary to use fit statistics or theory to determine the value of this quantity. Since the analysis here is inductive, I use fit statistics as the guide for fixing the value of R . To determine the number of classes I first fit a complete “independence” model with an $R = 1$, and then iteratively increased the number of latent classes. For each model I calculated four fit statistics: χ^2 Goodness of Fit, Likelihood Ratio, AIC (Akaike Information Criterion), and BIC (Bayesian Information Criterion). As I iteratively fixed R to a higher value I plotted these fit statistics as shown in Figure 16. These can be interpreted similar to the scree plots commonly used in factor analysis: the “break” in the plot suggests the number of latent classes to fit to the data. For each of these statistics the aim is to minimize these values without estimating an excessive number of parameters. As can be seen in Figure 4, the fit statistics suggest a value of $R = 3$, corresponding to a “break” in the scree plot

Given that the number of classes is fixed, the next step is to calculate the probability that each individual belongs to each class and then calculate the modal posterior probabilities. This gives an indication of the overall partitioning of latent class membership in the population. The latent class model gives estimates of the parameters p_r and π_{jrk} (cf. Lazarsfeld and Henry 1968). Given estimates for these parameters, the posterior probability that each individual belongs to each class conditional on the observed values of the manifest variables is simply calculated using Bayes' formula for combining probabilities. The estimated posterior probability of class membership for each individual can then be summarized as an estimate of the population distribution, typically by calculating the modal posterior probability of membership for each latent class. These are calculated as 0.2638 for latent class 1, 0.3914 for latent class 2, and 0.3458 for latent class 3. This suggests that, consistent with the thesis of a "hybrid materialist/post-materialist" value orientation that millennials are split across groups. That is, there is no single dominant cultural group.

To interpret the latent classes it is often useful to examine the class-conditional response probabilities. Recall that according to Inglehart's theory price controls and maintaining order are considered "materialist" values while the other two are considered "post-materialist." The findings suggest that a notable level of cultural hybridity. While each latent class is more-or-less evenly split across materialist and post-materialist values for their highest value orientation, for their second value orientation both the second and third latent classes lean materialist. In short, there are three latent classes: hybrid leaning post-materialist (about 26.4% of millennials), hybrid leaning materialist toward maintaining order (representing 38.1%), and hybrid materialist leaning toward controlling prices (representing 34.6%). In summary, the latent class analysis is consistent with the view that, contra Inglehart and colleagues, millennials have hybrid value-

orientations, although most (around two-thirds) lean materialist. These two are represented by the second and third latent classes.

In short, the cross-tabulations present here as well as the latent class analysis suggests that millennials have much lower levels of generalized trust than previous generations (in particular the Greatest Generation) and more support for government involvement in wealth redistribution (especially compared to Baby Boomers). Furthermore the analyses show support for a hybrid materialist orientation among millennials, reflecting their current economic insecurity as well as their cultural inheritance of post-materialist values from previous generations (most notably the Baby Boomers). I now turn to examining trend effects in the sharing economy.

C. Main Effects: Multilevel Regressions

In this part of the chapter I examine year, cohort, and age trends in the cultural bases of the sharing economy. I focus in particular on materialist values, measures of trust and social spending, and perceptions of economic insecurity. First I turn to the main effects of the trends using the GSS variables. Analyses were conducted to examine the generational trend effects with and without adjustment for baseline covariates. Some higher-order terms were omitted due to statistical insignificance. The results revealed pronounced trend effects for year, age, cohort, and generation (evaluated at specified levels of the cohort trend). Overall these findings show the hybrid cultural orientation of millennials: they are more likely than earlier Baby Boomers to support wealth redistribution, but they are also much less supportive of particular forms of welfare spending and social services spending. Additionally they show much higher levels of concerns about economic security.

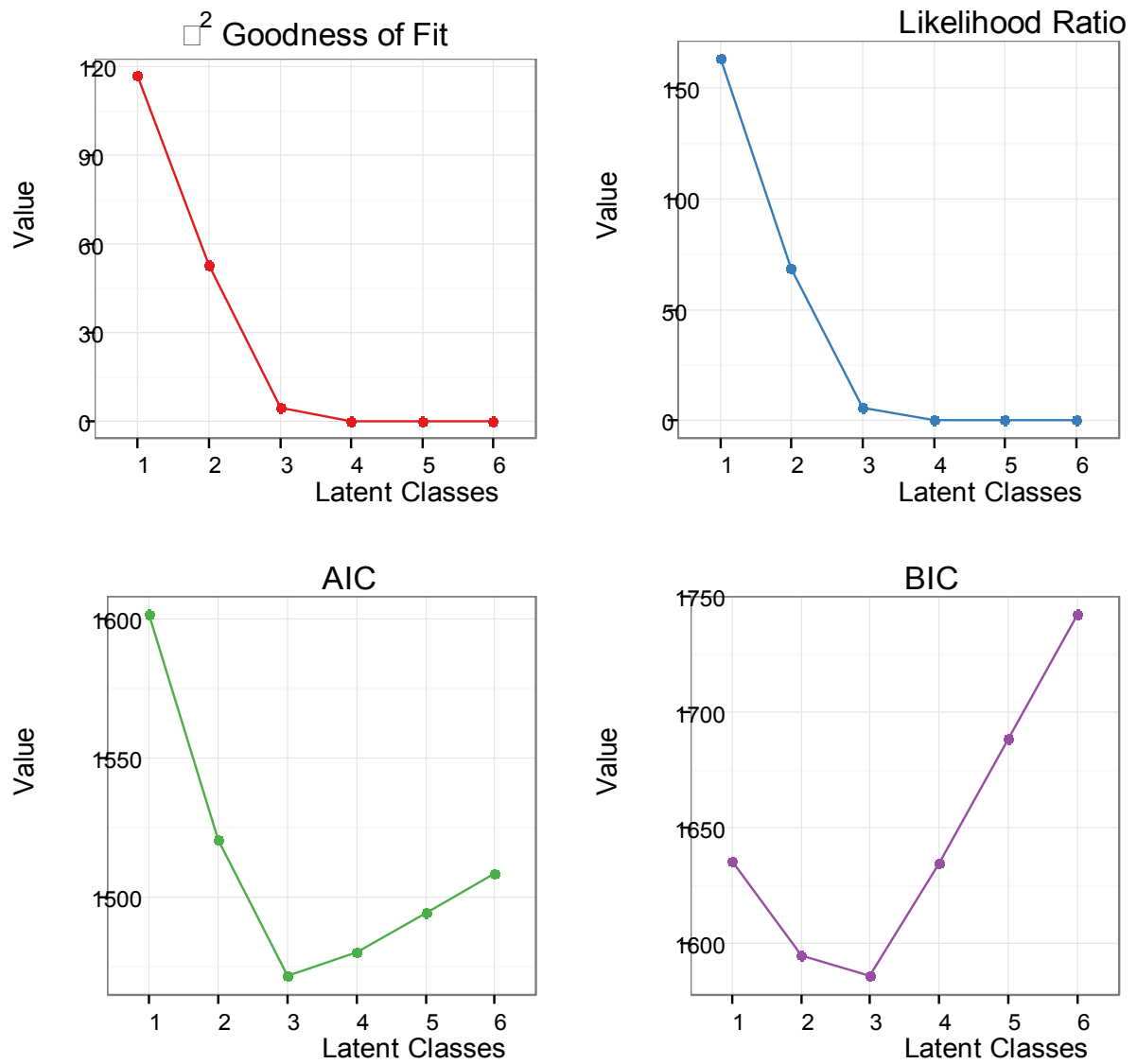


Figure 16: Line Plots of Fit Statistics for Latent Class Analysis of GSS Items on Post-Materialist Values Items

As mentioned in the methods section, I do not assume that the cultural values underlying the sharing economy are a uniform entity. To uncover the cultural underpinnings of the sharing economy, I conducted both ICLUST and factor analysis of the items on trust, wealth redistribution, and materialist values in the GSS. As outlined in the methods chapter, there were various steps in creating the clusters, from creating the correlation matrix to fitting the clustering algorithm and factor analysis to the data. I then used these clusters to estimate year, age, and cohort effects. Again the results corroborate the individual-level items, showing clear trends towards distrust and perceived economic insecurity along with hybridic views on materialist values and beliefs.

I also examined year, cohort, and age trends in the cultural bases of the sharing economy from items in the ANES. The analysis focuses particular on the core variables measuring wealth redistribution, materialist values, and social spending attitudes. Again I examined the trend effects without controls as well as the effects after the inclusion of baseline covariates. Again some higher-order terms have been omitted due to statistical insignificance. Overall these findings mirror those in the GSS, showing a hybrid cultural orientation of both materialist and post-materialist values and beliefs. To uncover the cultural underpinnings of the sharing economy, I conducted both ICLUST and factor analysis of the items on trust, wealth redistribution, and materialist values in the ANES. Based on the derived clusters I then estimated year, age, and cohort effects in the ANES. These trends mirror the individual-level items, showing clear trends towards distrust and perceived economic insecurity along with hybridic views on materialist values and beliefs.

I now turn to year, cohort, and age trends in the cultural bases of the sharing economy from items in the PVS. This analysis focused in particular on the core variables measuring wealth redistribution, materialist values, and overall perceptions of the economic system. Some higher-order terms were again omitted due to statistical insignificance. Consistent with the GSS and ANES trends, millennials exhibit hybridic tendencies, reflecting both materialist and post-materialist value orientations and worldviews. Additionally I conducted both ICLUST and factor analysis of the items on trust, wealth redistribution, and materialist values in the PVS. The trends remained similar as with the previous datasets, with millennials exhibiting some support for wealth redistribution but declining levels of social trust.

D. Interaction Effects: General Social Survey

First I turn to the interaction effects between the cohort trend and various demographic inputs implied by theories of trust, wealth redistribution, and materialist values. I review here findings for only two of the scales created in the previous section: one for trust and another capturing views towards wealth redistribution. Additional analyses were conducted on the other scales but are beyond the scope of the current chapter. The findings show support for large generational declines in trust but also some aversion to redistribution among younger cohorts, moderated by some demographic factors although not all at conventional levels of statistical significance.

Regarding the socioeconomic moderators, as expected findings indicate large, statistically significant interaction effects for the generational trends, with economic insecurity systematically related to generational declines in trust and support for wealth redistribution. I also examined interaction effects between the cohort trend and various technological variables in the GSS. Although in the expected direction, the effects are largely statistically insignificant and

mixed. Analyses were also conducted with respect to interactions with the sociocultural variables discussed in the beginning of this chapter. As expected, the findings show that generational declines in trust and attitudes toward some forms of wealth redistribution are moderated by trust in other institutions, post-materialist values, and political ideology.

I also examined cross-level interactions, in particular the effect of total Internet access, broadband access, and other year-level variables on selected composite scales created using the ICLUST algorithm in the prior sections (similar results are obtained with the factor scores for the items). The findings suggest that poverty level and the Internet are both systematically related to trust and redistributionist views, with the Internet appearing to be related to an increase in interpersonal trust.

E. Interaction Effects: American National Election Survey

In this part of the chapter I focus on interaction effects in the ANES with selected scales derived from the ICLUST algorithm in the previous sections. Additional analyses corroborated the core findings and estimated interaction effects. As expected, the findings indicated that generational differences in support for wealth redistribution are moderated by demographic factors, particularly multiracial identity and metropolitan residence. Furthermore, as expected from previous research, the results show strong support for that claim that generational differences in support for wealth redistribution are moderated by socioeconomic conditions, particularly structural disconnection, housing insecurity, and job loss. Analyses also examined interaction effects with the technology variables in the ANES. Although in the expected direction, these effects are statistically insignificant at conventional levels. Likewise, I examined interaction

effects with the sociocultural variables in the ANES; again the findings were in the expected direction but the effects were statistically insignificant at conventional levels.

F. Interaction Effects: Pew Values Survey

I now turn to the PVS dataset, examining demographic interactions with a materialist scale calculated previously. These findings suggested strong moderating effects for immigrant status and cohabitation on materialist scores. I also examined socioeconomic moderators for the generational effect on the materialist scale. Consistent with findings from the GSS and ANES, higher levels of economic disadvantage are related to higher levels of materialist value orientations. The PVS also includes a core technological condition: household Internet access. Even without the baseline controls the effect is statistically insignificant at conventional levels, suggesting little effect of the Internet alone on trust or redistributive attitudes. Findings also included estimates of sociocultural moderators for the generational effect on the materialist scale. Consistent with findings from the GSS and ANES, as well as previous research on political ideology, sociocultural conditions moderate the intergenerational differences in materialist value orientations.

Conclusion: The Cultural Contradictions of the Sharing Economy

Recent articles in the popular press have celebrated the coming of the sharing economy, portraying it as an ideal-typical near-utopia promoted and fostered by millennials as an alternative to the failures of the commercial economy in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis.

However the findings in this chapter offers a more complex picture and underscores cultural contradictions that may underlie any full realization of the sharing economy.

First, I find clear generational declines in levels of trust across a wide range of surveys, with millennials among the least trusting of any generation in modern history. It is a full-scale collapse in confidence in not only the dominant institutions of American society, such as the U.S. Congress and federal government, but also towards each other. Moreover, I show that these declines are not artifacts of particular survey items: even as factor scores and composite scales measures of trust show the same pattern across generations. Crucially, these generational declines are steep even when adjusting for age and year effects in a cross-classified multilevel modeling framework. Proponents of the sharing economy and scholars studying cultural trends should ponder how distrust rather than trust may be driving millennials into the sharing economy. In this reading of the narrative, younger cohorts are so distrustful of traditional institutions that they are rejecting it altogether, opting for remote commuting instead of office jobs or wealth redistribution via online platforms rather than government programs. This a ripe area for deeper theorizing on the cultural foundations of the sharing economy.

Second, I show that millennials exhibit both materialist and post-materialist tendencies, with a larger proportion than previous generations fitting into hybrid categories. In fact, I estimate from a latent class analysis of Inglehart's post-materialist variables in the GSS that over two-thirds of millennials are hybrid materialists, while one-third are hybrid post-materialists. Intuitively this reflects the growing economic concerns of younger cohorts, becoming adults in a world of heightened job competition and lower levels of economic insecurity. However, it is also a reflection that the younger generation have Baby Boomers and Gen X-ers as parents, who have

fully inculcated the values and norms of the post-materialist wave and identity politics of the 1960s and 1970s.

Third, I find the cultural bases of the sharing economy across generations are most strongly related to changing demographic and socioeconomic conditions. In particular, cohabiting moderates the intergenerational effect in trust, redistributive views, and economic perceptions. Whether or not this is a selection effect should be the focus of further research, since it is unclear if economic conditions lead couples to cohabitation or if cohabiting leads to altered cultural worldviews. As well, I find very strong effects for economic disadvantage on the cultural aspects of the sharing economy across a range of measures. The implication is that being unemployed as a Millennial is related to higher levels of distrust and negative views of the economy than that of earlier generations. Additional research should target exactly what it is that may be resulting in such large intergenerational differences from putatively similar socioeconomic categories.

Lastly, the findings here show that younger cohorts have mixed views on wealth redistribution. Although some individual items on wealth redistribution elicit a high level of support among millennials, similar questions receive relatively low support among millennials.¹² In general, the factor scores and composite scales derived in this chapter suggest that millennials in support wealth redistribution, but express aversion when it targets specific groups, such as black Americans, or when it is couched in terms of traditional government programs (e.g., “welfare”). This might explain why proposals for a basic guaranteed income, most prominent proposed by Daniel Patrick Moynihan in 1973, is gaining currency in public debate: it resonates with the contradictory cultural worldviews of younger cohorts on economic issues.

¹² Although it should be noted that wealth redistribution is still popular by large margins regardless of birth cohort.

Chapter 6:
The Cultural Worldviews of Millennial Youth

Introduction: A Portrait of Millennials

In this concluding chapter I provide an empirical portrait of the political values, religious views, and economic beliefs of millennials, defined as those youth who were born from 1980 to 2001 in the United States. All youth were surveyed in 2012 when they were, on average, 22 years old. All analyses are based on cross-sectional, random-effects generalized linear models, with a random intercept included to account for variation of attitudes across geographic context. Based on these findings, this chapter presents a cultural portrait of contemporary millennials with important implications for the future of American culture, and for the direction of further research on youth culture and generational change.

I divide the first part on millennial politics into three subsections. First, I examine how political identification varies by millennials' demographic (e.g., race/ethnicity, age, etc.), socioeconomic (e.g., household income, debt), and technological (e.g. Facebook use) characteristics. Next, I examine how millennials' views on other social issues (e.g., attitudes toward immigration and inequality) predict party identification. Finally, I examine how party identification is predicted by patterns of news consumption.

The second part of this chapter examines predictors of religious disaffiliation, such as identification as a religious "none" or an "atheist or agnostic." This section is likewise divided into three subsections. The first subsection examines how religious disaffiliation varies by millennial demographic, socioeconomic, and technological characteristics. The second subsection examines how religious disaffiliation varies by millennials' childhood religious

backgrounds and attitudes toward religion. Lastly, religious disaffiliation is examined along patterns of media consumption.

The last part of this chapter examines the attitudes of millennials toward economic opportunity or the “American Dream,” their sense of cultural cohesion or closeness with other social groups, and their assessment of cultural progress. Taken together, I group this ensemble of outcomes as aspects of the sharing economy inasmuch it measures beliefs regarding economic opportunity, cultural cohesion, and belief in cultural progress assess aspects of the sharing economy (namely, trust, belief in wealth redistribution, and economic insecurity or “precarity”). Furthermore, this chapter revisits the results in the light of demographic changes revealed in the prior chapters.

The analyses in this chapter are based on two sets of cross-sectional datasets specifically sampling only millennials aged 18 to 24. The bulk of the findings are based on the Millennial Values Survey conducted in the spring of 2012 by the Public Religion Research Institute under the aegis of Georgetown University (Drake 2014). This study was conducted using online surveys with the Knowledge Networks platform of 2,000 young adults. When relevant I also corroborated the analyses derived from this dataset by cross-checking the findings with those from the Generation Next Survey conducted in 2006. The Generation Next Survey was sponsored by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and The Generation Next Initiative. It is based on telephone interviews with a national adult sample including an oversample of landline and cell phone users aged 18 to 25 years. The sample includes 1,000 adults in the general sample, 251 landline users and 250 cell phone users aged 18 to 25 years. Both surveys include probability weights to enable adjustment for the complex survey design.

The goal of this chapter is to examine the variation within a generation rather than across generations. However, a multilevel model is still appropriate since both datasets include relatively fine-grained spatial data. By incorporating this structure in the dataset I adjust for geographic differences at the lowest geographic level available in the dataset. In the most minimal form the multilevel model consists of two levels, with individuals nested in spatial contexts (Bafumi and Gelman 2007):

$$y_{i(j_1)} = \beta_{0(j_1)} + \beta_1 Age_{i(j_1)} + \beta_2 Age_{i(j_1)}^2 + e_{i(j_1)}$$

$$\beta_{0j_1} = \beta_0 + \mu_{1j_1}$$

$$e_{i(j_1)} \sim N(0, \sigma_e^2), \mu_{1j_1} \sim N(0, \sigma_{\mu_1}^2)$$

In this equation j_1 indicates the geographic context with a residual associated with each geographic unit (μ_{1j_1}), with the variance estimated as $\sigma_{\mu_1}^2$. The age effect is estimated as a polynomial function with parameters β_1 and β_2 , although in most models I drop the higher-order term given the minimal age range of the data (that is, most respondents are within only a few years of each other). Since the data are cross-sectional, the year effect is excluded from the model since it cannot be estimated. In earlier specifications I estimated a three-level model, with smaller geographic regions nested in larger ones. Since the findings are roughly the same and the variance across the highest level clusters are minimal, I fit the simpler model in the findings present here. Finally, the model shown above is extended to a generalized linear model that allows for categorical outcomes. I now examine each of the main outcomes discussed in the previous chapters, with a focus on the cultural worldviews of millennials in particular.

Part I: Party Disaffiliation and Millennial Politics

In this section I examine the demographic, socioeconomic, and technological predictors of political party identification. Each set of inputs is based on the hypotheses outlined in the previous chapters on generational effects and cultural change.

A. Predictors of Party Identification

In this section I address the question: How is the party identification of millennials predicted by their demographic, socioeconomic, and technological attributes? Table 38 examines the links between millennials' attributes and their likelihood of identifying as politically independent. Note that in this chapter all estimates are derived from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All estimates are expressed in terms of log-odds. As Model 8 below shows, millennials are more likely to identify as a political independent rather than a Democrat if they: (a) cohabitate (Model 1 only); (b) did not attend college; and if they (c) use Tumblr. In contrast, they are less likely to identify as a political independent (vs. Democratic Party) if they: (a) live in a college dorm, (b) report 10-30k in debt (vs. no having no debt); and (c) use Twitter.

The findings in Table 38 reveal two important contrasts. First, there is a socioeconomic contrast: students who are living in a college dorm and who have debt at about the average of millennials attending college in the United States are less likely to be political independents, but this the opposite is true for the “forgotten half” who did not attend college immediately after high school. The second important contrast in Table 38 is between Tumblr and Twitter usage and

politically-independent affiliation. Findings suggest that youth who use Tumblr are more politically-independent, while those who use Twitter are less so.

Table 38: Multilevel Model Predicting Party Identification with Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Technological Attributes, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Political Independent (Base: Democratic Party Identification)							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Multilingual	0.05 (0.23)							-0.10 (0.24)
Multiracial	0.31 (0.33)							0.36 (0.34)
Hispanic	-0.06 (0.28)							0.04 (0.29)
Cohabitating	0.32*** (0.14)							0.20 (0.16)
Urban Area	-0.16 (0.17)							-0.09 (0.17)
Disconnected		-0.003 (0.12)						-0.13 (0.13)
Self-Employed		0.06 (0.33)						0.11 (0.35)
With Parents (No Rent)		-0.18 (0.17)						-0.10 (0.18)
Renting		0.14 (0.16)						0.06 (0.17)
College Dorm		-0.53*** (0.24)						-0.48** (0.26)
Didn't Attend College			0.62*** (0.27)					0.63*** (0.28)
< 10k in Debt			-0.28* (0.21)					-0.22 (0.22)
10-30k in Debt			-0.53*** (0.17)					-0.50*** (0.18)
> 30k in Debt			0.06 (0.20)					0.10 (0.21)
Household Internet Access				-0.23 (0.19)				-0.12 (0.20)
Use Facebook					-0.22 (0.18)			-0.06 (0.19)
Use Twitter						-0.18* (0.11)		-0.28*** (0.13)
Use Tumblr							0.28** (0.15)	0.46*** (0.17)

N	1,609	1,574	1,563	1,609	1,570	1,562	1,562	1,512
AIC	2,117.83	2,061.40	2,051.42	2,116.06	2,066.55	2,057.08	2,055.42	1,997.28
BIC	2,300.86	2,152.55	2,222.76	2,277.56	2,227.31	2,217.69	2,216.03	2,247.37

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

B. Social Issues and Party Identification

Table 39 shows the links between millennials' evaluations of certain political issues (such as "how important" they believed each political issue to be) and their political affiliations. As shown in Table 39, participants are more likely to report as a political independent rather than a Republican when they report the importance of (a) national security and (b) social inequality. However, they are less likely to report as a political independent (vs. Republican Party) if they view the following political issues as important: (a) abortion, (b) same-sex rights, (c) education, and (d) joblessness. Moreover, participants are more likely to identify as a political independent (vs. Democratic Party) when they evaluate the importance of (a) abortion and (b) education, while they are less likely to identify as a political independent (vs. Democratic Party) if they value: (a) same-sex rights, (b) national security, (c) social inequality. Finally, participants are more likely to report as a Democrat (vs. Republican) when they value the following political issues: (a) same-sex rights, (b) national security, (c) social inequality; nevertheless, they are less likely to report as a Democrat (vs. Republican) if they value the following political issues: (a) abortion, (b) education, (c) immigration, (d) joblessness.

There are two important findings in Table 39. First, of all three models in Table 39, the distinction between Democratic and Republican affiliations (Model 3) shows better model fit than Models (1) and (2). Put differently, political independence is more difficult to predict from the available list of social/political values in the survey, suggesting that this is a more internally-

diverse group, or at least orthogonal to the standard left/right political continuum. Second, comparing across coefficients in models (1) and (2), the signs of the coefficients suggest that the politically-independent group is in between both the left and the right on these political issues. In other words, while this group is more difficult to model than the traditional American left/right dichotomy. Compared to these party affiliations, political independents on average report more moderately on a number of issues. Nevertheless, this average could mask internal complexity and diversity within the politically-independent group.

Table 39: Multilevel Models Predicting Party from Evaluation of Social and Political Issues, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Political Independent (Base: Republican Party) (1)	Political Independent (Base: Democratic Party) (2)	Democratic Party (Base: Republican Party) (3)
Abortion	-0.73*** (0.16)	0.25** (0.15)	-1.09*** (0.20)
Same-Sex Rights	0.30*** (0.14)	-0.21** (0.13)	0.62*** (0.17)
Education	-0.41*** (0.15)	0.19* (0.13)	-0.74*** (0.18)
Immigration	-0.02 (0.15)	0.06 (0.12)	-0.30** (0.18)
Deficit	-0.06 (0.17)	-0.16 (0.15)	0.19 (0.22)
Joblessness	-0.63*** (0.15)	0.03 (0.13)	-0.82*** (0.18)
National Security	0.63*** (0.15)	-0.26*** (0.12)	1.11*** (0.18)
Social Inequality	0.64*** (0.16)	-0.19* (0.12)	0.98*** (0.19)
N	1,304	1,536	1,020
Log Likelihood	-687.10	-970.67	-487.28
AIC	1,448.20	2,015.35	1,048.56
BIC	1,639.61	2,212.81	1,230.88

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: This table shows predictors of party identification among youth in the Millennial Values Survey, a nationally representative survey of American youth aged 18 to 24 in 2012. All estimates are expressed as log-odds ratios from

multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Reference category for party identification is 'Republican.'

Table 40 also examines the relationships between political values and political party affiliation. As the analyses in Model (4) of Table 3 below reveal, compared to Republican Party identification, millennials are more likely to report being a political independent the more they: (a) endorse birth control for youth at age 14, (b) endorse taxing millionaires, (c) endorse the legalization of LGBT marriage, (d) endorse the restriction of internet pornography. In turn, the analyses in Table 3 reveal that, compared to Republican Party identification, millennials are less likely to report being a political independent if they prioritize: (a) women's rights over the rights of black Americans (women vs. black Americans) and (b) endorse the belief in "American Exceptionalism."

To summarize, compared to Republican millennials, political independents can be defined as a group that is distinguished by its adoption of several values that are historically considered more left-leaning (e.g., taxing millionaires, legalization of LGBT marriage, early birth control). An exception is perhaps their greater endorsement of restriction of internet pornography.

Table 41 contrasts the political values that distinguish political independents from millennial Democrats. As the findings reveal in Model (4) of Table 4 below, respondents are more likely to identify as a political independent (vs. with the Democratic Party) when they: (a) prioritize women's rights over the rights of black Americans and (b) believe that discrimination against whites is an important social/political issue. In contrast, they are less likely to identify as a political independent (vs. with the Democratic Party) if they: (a) endorse birth control at age

14, (b) prioritize environmental regulations, (c) endorse taxing millionaires, or (d) endorse LGBT marriage.

Table 40: Multilevel Models Predicting Party Identification from Evaluation of Social and Political Issues (Independent vs. Republican), Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Political Independent (Base: Republican Party)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Women vs. Black Americans	-0.21*** (0.08)			-0.13* (0.09)
Birth Control at 14	0.43*** (0.07)			0.16*** (0.08)
Environmental Regulations	0.22*** (0.07)			0.02 (0.08)
Whites Discriminated	-0.18*** (0.08)			-0.05 (0.09)
Allow Mosques		0.25*** (0.07)		0.05 (0.08)
Muslims Anti-American		-0.12* (0.08)		-0.09 (0.09)
American Exceptionalism		-0.49*** (0.08)		-0.34*** (0.09)
Tax Millionaires			0.22*** (0.07)	0.21*** (0.08)
LGBT Marriage			0.78*** (0.08)	0.64*** (0.09)
Restrict Internet Pornography			0.02 (0.08)	0.17*** (0.08)
Immigrant Amnesty			0.02 (0.07)	-0.06 (0.08)
N	1,298	1,296	1,298	1,251
Log Likelihood	-694.14	-687.16	-650.78	-612.55
AIC	1,454.28	1,438.33	1,367.57	1,305.09
BIC	1,624.85	1,603.67	1,538.13	1,510.36

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: This table shows predictors of party identification among youth in the Millennial Values Survey, a nationally representative survey of American youth aged 18 to 24 in 2012. All estimates are expressed as log-odds ratios from

multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Reference category for party identification is 'Republican.'

To summarize the findings in Table 41, the social and political issues evaluated and endorsed by millennials suggest they are more right-leaning than Democrats on a number of important political issues. Most notably, millennial political independents devalue the importance and relevance of discrimination against black Americans. Instead, millennial political independents prioritize women's rights over the importance of rights of black Americans and give greater attention to discrimination against white Americans. These contrasts are consistent with the previous findings, which shows that political independents are more left-leaning than Republicans and more right-leaning than Democrats in other ways.

In Table 42 I show the analyses predicting identification with the Democratic Party (vs. the Republican Party) from millennials' evaluation of social and political issues. Compared to those who identify with the Republican Party, participants are more likely to identify with the Democratic Party when they: (a) endorse the importance of birth control at age 14, (b) prioritize environmental regulations; (c) endorse taxation of millionaires; (d) prioritize the legalization of LGBT marriage. On the other hand, compared to those who identify with the Republican Party, participants are less likely to identify with the Democratic Party when they: (a) prioritize women's rights over the political rights of Black Americans; (b) prioritize discrimination against White Americans; and (c) endorse the belief in "American Exceptionalism."

These contrasts are indicative of standard conceptualizations of the left/right political spectrum. Taken in context with the findings vis-à-vis political independents, this analysis supports the finding that millennial political independents endorse social/political values that are neither left-leaning nor right-leaning, but instead an admixture of both. Consistent with the findings in this table, the model fit statistics are lower than those in the previous tables, suggesting that political independents are more difficult to model based on standard measures of social/political values. In addition, the findings in Table 42 underscore the previous analyses revealing that political independents are more left-leaning as a whole than millennial Republicans and more right-leaning than millennial Democrats.

Table 41: Multilevel Models Results Predicting Party Identification from Evaluation of Social and Political Issues (Independent vs. Democratic), Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Political Independent (Base: Democratic Party)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Women vs. Black Americans	0.21*** (0.07)			0.21*** (0.07)
Birth Control at 14	-0.18*** (0.06)			-0.09* (0.07)
Environmental Regulations	-0.23*** (0.06)			-0.17*** (0.06)
Whites Discriminated	0.12** (0.07)			0.14*** (0.07)
Allow Mosques		-0.16*** (0.06)		0.04 (0.07)
Muslims Anti-American		0.02 (0.06)		-0.06 (0.07)
American Exceptionalism		0.06 (0.06)		-0.03 (0.07)
Tax Millionaires			-0.37*** (0.06)	-0.31*** (0.07)
LGBT Marriage			-0.19*** (0.07)	-0.14** (0.08)
Restrict Internet Pornography			0.02 (0.06)	0.02 (0.07)
Immigrant Amnesty			-0.09* (0.06)	-0.01 (0.07)

N	1,538	1,537	1,537	1,487
Log Likelihood	-953.40	-976.33	-950.12	-903.79
AIC	1,972.81	2,016.66	1,966.24	1,887.59
BIC	2,148.97	2,187.46	2,142.38	2,099.77

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: This table shows predictors of party identification among youth in the Millennial Values Survey, a nationally representative survey of American youth aged 18 to 24 in 2012. All estimates are expressed as log-odds ratios from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Reference category for party identification is 'Republican.'

A line of future research could explore millennial political independents to determine whether this group is internally-heterogeneous enough to classify along several latent subtypes (a “finite mixture” hypothesis), or whether this group is internally culturally homogeneous, and instead could be considered a “moderate” political group between the left- and right-leaning party affiliations (a “no mixture” hypothesis). The lower model fit statistics suggest the former, namely, that millennial political independents are an admixture of both more left-leaning and more right-leaning political orientations, although this is beyond the present scope of analysis. In the final section on political identification among millennials, I turn to the links between political affiliation and media consumption.

C. Media Consumption and Millennial Politics

Table 43 below examines the associations between content of media and type of media. As shown in Model (1) of Table 43 below, millennials are more likely to identify as a political independent (vs. with the Democratic Party) if they: (a) watch alternative TV news, (b) watch Fox News, (c) don’t watch TV news. As shown Model (2) of Table 6 below, millennials are more likely to identify as a political independent (vs. with the Democratic Party) if they: (a) use an internet portal, (b) visit online news sites, or (c) don’t follow politics.

There are several important implications of these analyses. First, the findings in Table 43 support the hypothesis that political independence is associated with greater access to online media as well as greater access to alternative media. Second, within this recent cohort of millennials, other forms of media considered “liberal” (e.g. the “Daily Show with Jon Stewart” and PBS are both positive but lack statistical significance at the conventional level of $\alpha = 0.05$). Third, findings suggest that millennial political independents are a heterogeneous group (supporting the “finite mixture” hypothesis) because the content of access to media is diverse and also because millennial political independents are less likely than millennial Democrats to “follow politics” or “consume media.” Their political views could be more “privatized” or personalized, similar to the findings emerging in the sociology of religion, the subject of the next section.

Table 42: Multilevel Models Predicting Democratic Party Identification from Evaluation of Social and Political Issues (Democratic vs. Republican), Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Democratic Party (Base: Republican Party)			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Women vs. Black Americans	-0.41*** (0.10)			-0.34*** (0.12)
Birth Control at 14	0.72*** (0.09)			0.30*** (0.11)
Environmental Regulations	0.54*** (0.09)			0.22*** (0.11)
Whites Discriminated	-0.36*** (0.10)			-0.29*** (0.12)
Allow Mosques		0.50*** (0.09)		0.01 (0.12)
Muslims Anti-American		-0.16** (0.09)		-0.01 (0.12)
American Exceptionalism		-0.58*** (0.09)		-0.31*** (0.12)
Tax Millionaires			0.73*** (0.10)	0.64*** (0.11)
LGBT Marriage			1.08*** (0.10)	0.84*** (0.12)

Restrict Internet Pornography			-0.04 (0.10)	0.13 (0.11)
Immigrant Amnesty			0.21*** (0.09)	0.04 (0.11)
N	1,016	1,013	1,015	980
Log Likelihood	-463.54	-500.35	-416.92	-375.82
AIC	993.07	1,064.71	899.85	831.65
BIC	1,155.55	1,222.17	1,062.30	1,027.15

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Table 43: Multilevel Models Results Predicting Party Identification from Television and Internet News Consumption, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Political Independent (Base: Democratic Party Identification)	
	(1)	(2)
Daily Show with Jon Stewart	0.14 (0.23)	
Alternative TV News Source	0.92*** (0.29)	
CNN	-0.27* (0.18)	
MSNBC	-0.39 (0.32)	
PBS	0.45* (0.32)	
Fox News	0.85*** (0.21)	
Don't Watch TV News	0.54*** (0.15)	
Internet Portal (e.g., Google, Yahoo)		0.79*** (0.35)
Online News Sites (e.g., Huffington Post, Politico)		2.23*** (0.62)
Newspaper Sites (e.g., NYTimes.com, LATimes.com)		0.43 (0.55)
Social Network Sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)		0.23 (0.51)
No Particular Website		0.77* (0.54)
Don't Follow Politics		1.39***

		(0.46)
N	1,565	360
Log Likelihood	-975.23	-209.50
AIC	2,022.46	488.99
BIC	2,215.26	625.00

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: This table shows predictors of party identification among youth in the Millennial Values Survey, a nationally representative survey of American youth aged 18 to 24 in 2012. All estimates are expressed as log-odds ratios from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Reference category for party identification is 'Democrat.'

Part II: Religious Disaffiliation

In this section I examine three predictors of religious disaffiliation: (1) individual demographic, socioeconomic, and technological attributes of millennial youth; (2) religious upbringing and attitudes toward religion; and (3) media use and consumption. In addition to examining the predictors of religious disaffiliation among millennials, I also examine the associations between types of religious affiliations reported by youth themselves and reported by youth online in their Facebook profiles. I will begin with a summary of the findings examining demographic, socioeconomic, and technological predictors of religious disaffiliation.

A. Predictors of Religious Disaffiliation

Figure 17 shows the distribution of religious affiliation among millennials aged 18 to 24 in 2012, with 95% confidence intervals shown in the error bars. As can be seen from the figure, religious nones are the single largest major religious group among millennials, outpacing the percent who identify as Protestant and those who identify as Catholic.

The subsequent analyses examine the correlational factors related to religious disaffiliation among millennial youth. Model (8) in Table 44 shows that, at levels where $p < 0.05$,

millennials are more likely to identify as a religious “none” rather Protestant or Catholic if they are (a) cohabitating, (b) did not attend college, or (c) if they use Tumblr; in contrast, millennials are less likely to identify as a Religious None (vs. Protestant or Catholic) if they (a) have moderate ($< 10k$) debt. While other aspects of economic and social attainment (Model 2, Table 44) are associated with identifying as a “none” rather than a Protestant or Catholic, these associations were not robust to the inclusion of other variables in the model.

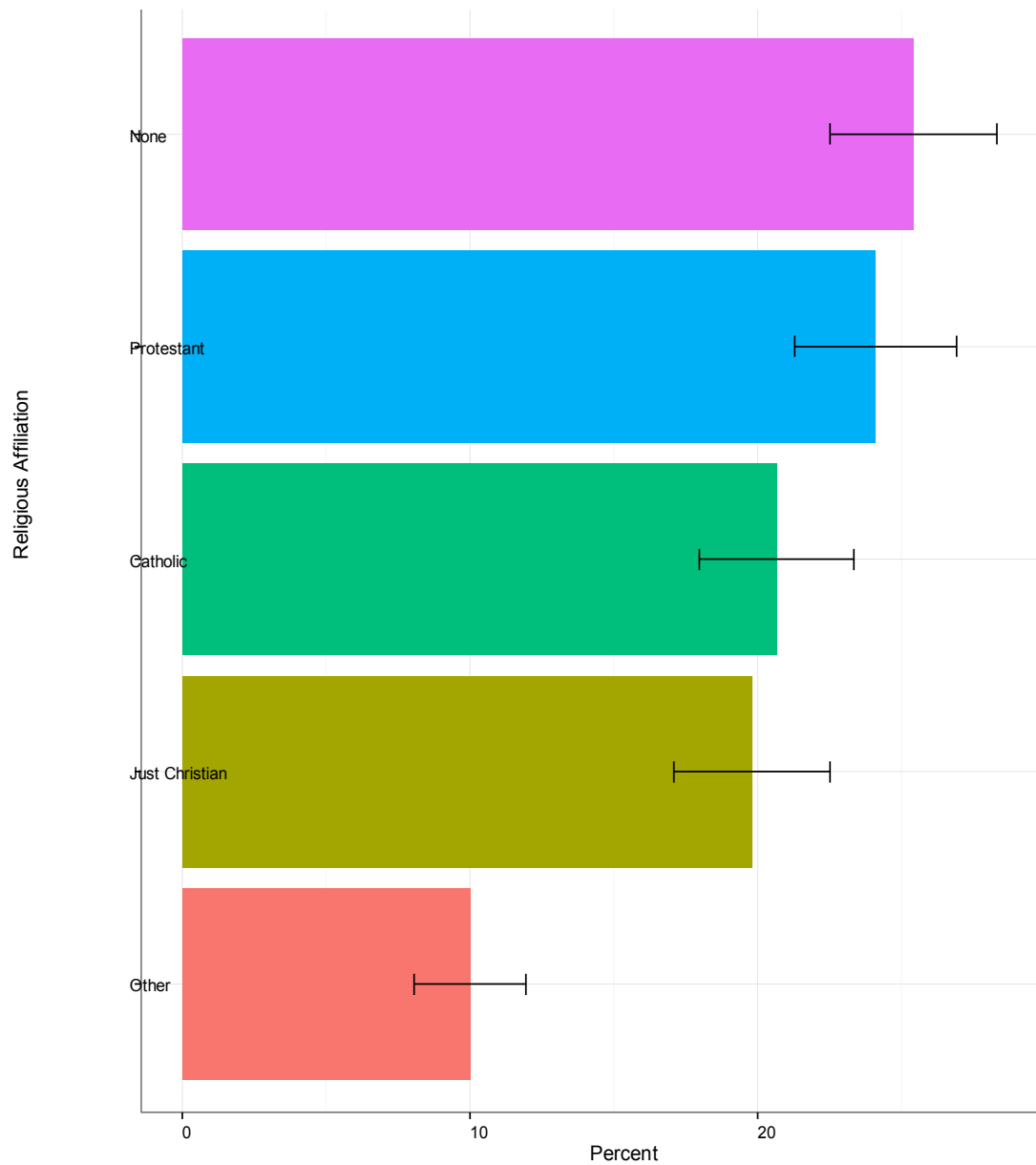


Figure 17: Religious Affiliation among Millennials 18-24 in 2012

There are three important findings from this analysis. First, the findings are consistent with the “technological-access” hypothesis, or the hypothesis that technological access is

associated with greater religious disaffiliation. Second, the findings are consistent with the theory that educational disconnection may lead to disconnection with formal religious participation.

Finally, findings are consistent with the theory that changes in attitudes toward family formation drive differences in religious disaffiliation. That is to say, the positive association between cohabitation and identification as a “none” suggests that youth who choose family formation patterns that incorporate non-marital relationships have difficulty reconciling these patterns with biblical literalism and traditional religious interdictions against pre-marital cohabitation. Nevertheless, patterns of non-marital cohabitation have increased as youth in the transition to adulthood have delayed marriage and childbearing and devoted more time to post-secondary educational attainment. The link between cohabitation and Religious None identification is consistent with the need for young adults to adopt religious positions that permit non-traditional family forms.

While I have presented analyses of demographic, socioeconomic, and technological predictors of identification as a religious none, it is unclear if these patterns are consistent across different forms of religious disaffiliation. To assess this, I also examine if individual-level predictors are similar when predicting identification as an atheist or agnostic (vs. Protestant or Catholic). Table 45 shows that millennials are more likely to report being an Atheist or Agnostic (vs. Protestant or Catholic) if they: (a) are cohabitating; (b) live in an urban area; (c) live independently (renting and living out of college and the home); and, (d) have internet access at home. In contrast, they are less likely to report being an Atheist or Agnostic (vs. Protestant or Catholic) if they: (a) are multilingual and (b) Hispanic.

Table 44: Multilevel Model Predicting Religious “None” Identification from Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Technological Attributes, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Religious None (Base: Protestant or Catholic)							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Multilingual	-0.72*** (0.33)							-0.56* (0.35)
Multiracial	0.20 (0.52)							0.55 (0.54)
Hispanic	-0.55 (0.45)							-0.24 (0.48)
Cohabiting	0.64*** (0.19)							0.51*** (0.22)
Urban Area	0.27 (0.23)							0.24 (0.24)
Disconnected		0.40*** (0.17)						0.23 (0.18)
Self-Employed		-2.17*** (1.02)						-16.03 (620.12)
With Parents (Paying Rent)		-0.22 (0.27)						-0.18 (0.30)
With Parents (No Rent)		-0.26 (0.23)						-0.02 (0.26)
Renting		0.52*** (0.21)						0.28 (0.24)
College Dorm		-0.90*** (0.42)						-0.62* (0.45)
Didn't Attend College			0.74** (0.38)					0.94*** (0.41)
< 10k in Debt			-0.90*** (0.36)					-0.99*** (0.38)
10-30k in Debt			-0.15 (0.24)					-0.11 (0.25)
> 30k in Debt			0.07 (0.30)					-0.01 (0.31)
Household Internet Access				0.23 (0.25)				0.16 (0.28)
Use Facebook					0.06 (0.24)			-0.10 (0.27)
Use Twitter						0.08 (0.16)		0.01 (0.19)
Use Tumblr							0.47***	0.52***

							(0.22)	(0.26)
Table 44 (Continued)								
N	1,096	1,090	1,067	1,096	1,086	1,083	1,085	1,046
Log Likelihood	-540.54	-550.48	-533.26	-553.55	-547.96	-545.83	-546.26	-494.80
AIC	1,149.08	1,134.96	1,130.52	1,167.09	1,155.92	1,151.67	1,152.52	1,083.60
BIC	1,319.06	1,219.85	1,289.64	1,317.08	1,305.63	1,301.29	1,302.20	1,316.38

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: All estimates are derived from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All estimates are expressed in terms of log-odds.

The findings reveal that not all forms of religious disaffiliation are identical. In particular, identification as an atheist or as an agnostic carries greater social stigma in the United States. The only coefficient consistent in size and direction across Tables 44 and 45 is the positive link between cohabitation and both forms of religious disaffiliation. This suggests that the changes in cultural attitudes toward family formation among millennials are at the core of religious disaffiliation since these cultural attitudes are at odds with Christian traditionalism (for a similar point, see Baker and Smith 2009).

The other patterns of disaffiliation suggest, however, that the atheist/agnostic orientation fits a profile of independent, cohabitating, urban youth who have their own access to the internet. In contrast, identification as a religious “none” is associated positively with never attending college, suggesting socioeconomic differences in both status attainment in young adulthood as well as their patterns of religious disaffiliation.

To further explore the hypothesis that religious disaffiliation reflects changes in millennial attitudes and is not merely a product of other factors, such as lack of educational attainment, the following section examines the associations between religious upbringing, attitudes toward religion, and religious disaffiliation.

Table 45: Multilevel Model Predicting “Atheist or Agnostic” Religious Identification from Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Technological Attributes, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Atheist or Agnostic (Base: Protestant or Catholic)							
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Multilingual	-1.33*** (0.43)							-1.07*** (0.44)
Multiracial	0.04 (0.49)							0.22 (0.51)
Hispanic	-0.88*** (0.43)							-0.84** (0.45)
Cohabiting	0.46*** (0.21)							0.43** (0.23)
Urban Area	0.58*** (0.24)							0.43** (0.25)
Disconnected		0.34*** (0.17)						0.29* (0.19)
Self-Employed		-0.48 (0.49)						-0.14 (0.52)
With Parents (Paying Rent)		0.29 (0.26)						0.33 (0.29)
With Parents (No Rent)		-0.20 (0.24)						-0.15 (0.26)
Renting		0.59*** (0.21)						0.46** (0.24)
College Dorm		0.21 (0.31)						0.21 (0.33)
Didn't Attend College			-0.34 (0.40)					0.03 (0.43)
< 10k in Debt			-0.02 (0.28)					-0.004 (0.30)
10-30k in Debt			0.29* (0.22)					0.35* (0.23)
> 30k in Debt			0.09 (0.28)					0.02 (0.29)
Household Internet Access				1.53*** (0.48)				1.65*** (0.54)
Use Facebook					0.45** (0.27)			0.29 (0.30)

Table 45 (Continued)

Use Twitter						0.23*		-0.14
						(0.16)		(0.19)
Use Tumblr							0.96***	0.92***
							(0.20)	(0.24)
N	1,110	1,104	1,084	1,110	1,103	1,099	1,101	1,066
Log Likelihood	-558.48	-574.02	-564.39	-571.56	-575.18	-573.84	-565.21	-515.80
AIC	1,184.96	1,182.03	1,192.79	1,203.13	1,210.36	1,207.69	1,190.42	1,125.61
BIC	1,355.37	1,267.15	1,352.41	1,353.49	1,360.53	1,357.75	1,340.54	1,359.27

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: All estimates are derived from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All estimates are expressed in terms of log-odds.

B. Religious Origins and Generational Shifts

Table 46 examines the links between religious upbringing and patterns of religious disaffiliation.

In particular, Models (1) and (2) in Table 46 show that participants are more likely to report being Atheist or Agnostic (vs. Protestant or Catholic) when they grew up in the following religions (as opposed to growing up Protestant): (a) Mormon, (b) Jewish, (c) with “nothing,” (c) “just Christian, “ (d) with “multiple religions,” and (d) with “something else.” As well, models (3) and (4) in Table 46 show that participants are more likely to report being a Religious None (vs. Protestant or Catholic) when they grew up: (a) Catholic, (b) with “nothing,” (c) “just Christian, “(d) with “multiple religions,” and (d) with “something else.”

Patterns are consistent with social reproduction theories of religious affiliation, so it is expected to see the largest positive associations between reports of disaffiliated religious upbringing and religious disaffiliation in young adulthood. Two differences are relevant for the present analyses. First, transition to the atheist/agnostic orientation is associated with Mormonism and Judaism, while Catholicism has no association with this form of disaffiliation.

In contrast, identification as a religious none is distinct for only youth reporting a Catholic upbringing. This difference is consistent with the findings indicating that Hispanic youth, the largest group of young Catholics in America, are associated with identification was a religious none but not associated with identification as an atheist/agnostic. In short, the key finding is that religious disaffiliation is culturally heterogeneous by social origin. However, a related question is whether disaffiliation also reflects patterns of belief toward Christianity as well.

Table 46: Multilevel Model Results Predicting Religious Disaffiliation from Childhood Religious Affiliation of Millennial Youth 18-24, 2012

	Atheist or Agnostic (versus Protestant or Catholic)		Religious None (versus Protestant or Catholic)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Catholic	-0.01 (0.20)	0.08 (0.24)	0.55*** (0.23)	0.46** (0.26)
Mormon	1.62*** (0.78)	2.57*** (1.13)		
Jewish	3.71*** (1.09)	4.12*** (1.15)		
Nothing	3.18*** (0.27)	3.66*** (0.34)	3.92*** (0.29)	4.07*** (0.34)
Just Christian	2.32*** (0.29)	2.91*** (0.38)	3.08*** (0.30)	3.26*** (0.36)
Multiple Religions	1.93*** (0.65)	1.44** (0.74)	2.80*** (0.61)	2.45*** (0.70)
Something Else	3.10*** (0.59)	3.49*** (0.69)	1.64*** (0.63)	2.05*** (0.73)
Multilingual		-0.66* (0.50)		-0.28 (0.40)
Multiracial		0.90* (0.67)		0.04 (0.75)
Hispanic		0.19 (0.59)		0.40 (0.64)
Cohabiting		0.56*** (0.28)		0.51** (0.27)
Urban Area		0.51** (0.30)		0.17 (0.30)

Table 46 (Continued)

Disconnected		0.44**		0.06
		(0.23)		(0.23)
Self-Employed		-0.07		-17.84
		(0.66)		(1,542.43)
With Parents (Paying Rent)		0.20		-0.27
		(0.37)		(0.38)
With Parents (No Rent)		0.12		0.19
		(0.31)		(0.33)
Renting		0.72***		0.56**
		(0.30)		(0.31)
College Dorm		0.39		-0.80*
		(0.42)		(0.60)
Didn't Attend College		-0.07		0.13
		(0.53)		(0.51)
< 10k in Debt		-0.03		-0.97***
		(0.36)		(0.46)
10-30k in Debt		0.60***		0.23
		(0.28)		(0.31)
> 30k in Debt		0.02		0.19
		(0.36)		(0.37)
Household Internet Access		2.83***		0.76***
		(0.64)		(0.35)
Use Facebook		0.55*		0.29
		(0.38)		(0.35)
Use Twitter		-0.35*		-0.29
		(0.23)		(0.24)
Use Tumblr		1.08***		0.75***
		(0.28)		(0.33)
N	1,105	1,061	1,094	1,044
Log Likelihood	-462.33	-381.11	-408.47	-353.78
AIC	944.66	870.21	832.94	811.57
BIC	994.74	1,138.43	872.92	1,069.01

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: All estimates are derived from multilevel regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All outcomes are expressed as standardized scales with mean of zero or as log-odds.

The next table predicts being Atheist or Agnostic (vs. Protestant/Catholic), being a Religious None (vs. Protestant/Catholic), and being Catholic (vs. Protestant) from evaluations of Christianity among participants. Focusing on the coefficients assessing attitudes toward Christianity, findings from Table 47 reveal that participants are more likely to report as atheist or agnostic (vs. Protestant/Catholic) when they view Christianity as: (a) anti-gay, (b) judgmental, or (c) if they were raised in the same religion. Respondents are less likely to report Atheist or Agnostic (vs. Protestant/Catholic) if they view Christianity as relevant. In addition, participants are more likely to report being a religious none (vs. Protestant/Catholic) when they view Christianity as anti-gay, while they are less likely to report being a Religious None (vs. Protestant/Catholic) if they believe Christianity: (a) reflects good values and (b) is viewed as relevant. Finally, as shown in Models (5) and (6) in Table 10, participants are more likely to identify as Catholic (vs. Protestant) when they believe that Christianity: (a) is too political and (b) they were raised in the same religion; nevertheless, they are less likely to report as Catholic (vs. Protestant) if they believe that Christianity is: (a) anti-gay and (b) relevant.

Taken together, the findings in Table 47 underscore the salience of cultural evaluation of Christianity, with both positive and negative valences, that factor into religious disaffiliation. Consistently, disaffiliated millennials view religion as anti-gay and irrelevant. Being an atheist or agnostic is associated with interfamilial transmission but also with assertions that Christianity is too judgmental. In contrast, religious nones emphasize what they perceive collectively as a lack of “good values” in Christianity. In sum, religious disaffiliation differs by sub-type, and evidence suggests that increasingly millennials view religion as overly critical of homosexuals but also not particularly relevant in understanding the complexities and challenges facing young adults in the 21st century.

Table 47: Multilevel Model Results Predicting Religious Affiliation from Evaluations of Christianity among Millennial Youth 18-24, 2012

	Atheist or Agnostic (Base: Protestant or Catholic)		Religious None (Base: Protestant or Catholic)		Catholic (Base: Protestant)	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Anti-Gay	0.32*** (0.14)	0.40*** (0.17)	0.17* (0.11)	0.25*** (0.12)	-0.17** (0.09)	-0.24*** (0.11)
Judgmental	0.43*** (0.19)	0.54*** (0.22)	0.16 (0.15)	0.16 (0.16)	0.12 (0.12)	0.10 (0.14)
Hypocritical	0.17 (0.17)	0.15 (0.19)	0.19* (0.13)	0.21* (0.15)	-0.14 (0.12)	-0.21* (0.15)
Too Political	0.24** (0.13)	0.08 (0.16)	0.09 (0.11)	0.12 (0.13)	0.23*** (0.10)	0.31*** (0.12)
Same Religion	0.38*** (0.13)	0.37*** (0.16)	0.15* (0.11)	0.16 (0.12)	0.21*** (0.09)	0.31*** (0.11)
Good Values	-0.20* (0.14)	-0.21 (0.17)	-0.33*** (0.12)	-0.28*** (0.14)	0.07 (0.13)	0.09 (0.15)
Loving	-0.08 (0.15)	0.02 (0.18)	0.10 (0.12)	0.14 (0.14)	-0.01 (0.12)	-0.04 (0.14)
Relevant	-2.03*** (0.17)	-2.29*** (0.21)	-1.12*** (0.12)	-1.21*** (0.14)	-0.54*** (0.13)	-0.66*** (0.16)
Multilingual		-1.60*** (0.62)		-0.51 (0.41)		0.79*** (0.40)
Multiracial		-1.71*** (0.79)		-0.51 (0.64)		-1.06* (0.69)
Hispanic		-1.88*** (0.68)		-0.73* (0.55)		1.18*** (0.57)
Cohabiting		0.04 (0.37)		0.47** (0.27)		0.34 (0.30)
Urban Area		0.28 (0.38)		0.26 (0.29)		0.12 (0.27)
Disconnected		-0.10 (0.31)		-0.05 (0.22)		0.21 (0.23)
Self-Employed		-0.10 (0.67)		-18.24 (1,509.07)		-0.11 (0.47)
With Parents (Paying Rent)		-0.07 (0.44)		-0.11 (0.35)		0.56* (0.36)
With Parents (No Rent)		-0.10 (0.40)		0.23 (0.31)		0.48** (0.28)
Renting		0.37 (0.38)		0.36 (0.30)		0.25 (0.31)
College Dorm		0.54 (0.55)		-0.48 (0.54)		-0.43 (0.39)

Table 47 (Continued)

Didn't Attend College	0.56			1.15***		-0.28
	(0.67)			(0.49)		(0.50)
< 10k in Debt	-0.24			-0.90***		0.56*
	(0.47)			(0.44)		(0.37)
10-30k in Debt	0.49*			-0.05		-0.19
	(0.37)			(0.31)		(0.29)
> 30k in Debt	0.10			0.20		0.84***
	(0.46)			(0.37)		(0.35)
Household Internet Access	0.70			-0.11		0.15
	(0.61)			(0.32)		(0.36)
Use Facebook	-0.21			-0.27		0.60**
	(0.48)			(0.32)		(0.32)
Use Twitter	-0.29			-0.06		0.03
	(0.29)			(0.23)		(0.22)
Use Tumblr	0.73***			0.28		-0.22
	(0.37)			(0.32)		(0.32)
N	1,063	1,027	1,046	1,005	808	778
Log Likelihood	-280.88	-237.16	-420.68	-359.87	-493.57	-385.18
AIC	583.76	584.32	863.36	829.75	1,009.14	880.37
BIC	638.42	855.71	917.84	1,099.95	1,060.78	1,136.49

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: All estimates are derived from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All outcomes are expressed as standardized scales with mean of zero or as log-odds.

C. Media Consumption and Religious Identification

Model (1) in Table 48 shows the associations between types of news programs (i.e., the message) and identification as religious none (vs. Catholic/Protestant), while model (2) in Table 48 shows the associations between modality of news acquisition (i.e. the medium) and identification as a religious none (vs. Catholic/Protestant). As shown below, compared to millennial Catholics/Protestants, millennials who: (a) watch Daily Show with Jon Stewart and (b) PBS are more likely to identify as a religious none (where $p < .05$).

Table 48: Multilevel Models Results Predicting Religious “None” Identification from Television and Internet News Consumption, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Religious None (Base: Protestant or Catholic)	
	(1)	(2)
Daily Show with Jon Stewart	0.81*** (0.37)	
Alternative TV News Source	0.53* (0.36)	
CNN	0.43** (0.26)	
MSNBC	-0.30 (0.53)	
PBS	0.93*** (0.42)	
Fox News	-0.30 (0.27)	
Don't Watch TV News	0.33* (0.22)	
Internet Portal (e.g., Google, Yahoo)		0.58 (0.50)
Online News Sites (e.g., Huffington Post, Politico)		-1.16 (1.18)
Newspaper Sites (e.g., NYTimes.com, LATimes.com)		0.90 (0.88)
Social Network Sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)		1.21* (0.82)
No Particular Website		0.92 (0.80)
Don't Follow Politics		0.95** (0.57)
N	1,080	246
Log Likelihood	-537.08	-109.89
AIC	1,146.16	289.78
BIC	1,325.61	412.46

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: This table shows predictors of religious affiliation among youth in the Millennial Values Survey, a nationally representative survey of American youth aged 18 to 24 in 2012. All estimates are expressed as log-odds ratios from multilevel logistic regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Reference category for party identification is 'Republican.'

A further examination of the percentage of youth who identify as religious nones can be examined through their reported Facebook religious affiliation. Somewhat surprisingly, the great majority have no description of their religious affiliation, suggesting that those who are affiliated with religion have a minimal online religious identity on social networking sites. The religious affiliation of millennials on Facebook in 2012 is displayed in Figure 18, with 95% confidence intervals indicated by the error bars.

Table 49 shows the links between “actual” or self-reported religious affiliation of millennials and their reported religious affiliation on Facebook. First, participants are more likely to report “No Description” when they are: (a) Atheist/Agnostic, (b) Nothing, (c) Other Affiliation. Second, participants are more likely to report “Atheist/Agnostic” when they: are (a) Atheist/Agnostic, (b) Nothing, (c) Just Christian, (d) Other Affiliation. Third, participants are more likely to report “Spiritual or Love” Facebook identification when they are: (a) Atheist/Agnostic, (b) Nothing, (c) Other Affiliation. Fourth, millennials are more likely to report on Facebook that they “Believe in a god or Jesus” when they report affiliation with (a) Nothing and (b) Other Affiliation, while they are less likely to report the same on Facebook when they are in actuality self-identified as Catholic. Finally, millennials report “Other Facebook Status” when they identify religiously as (a) Atheist/Agnostic, (b) Nothing, and (c) Other Affiliation.

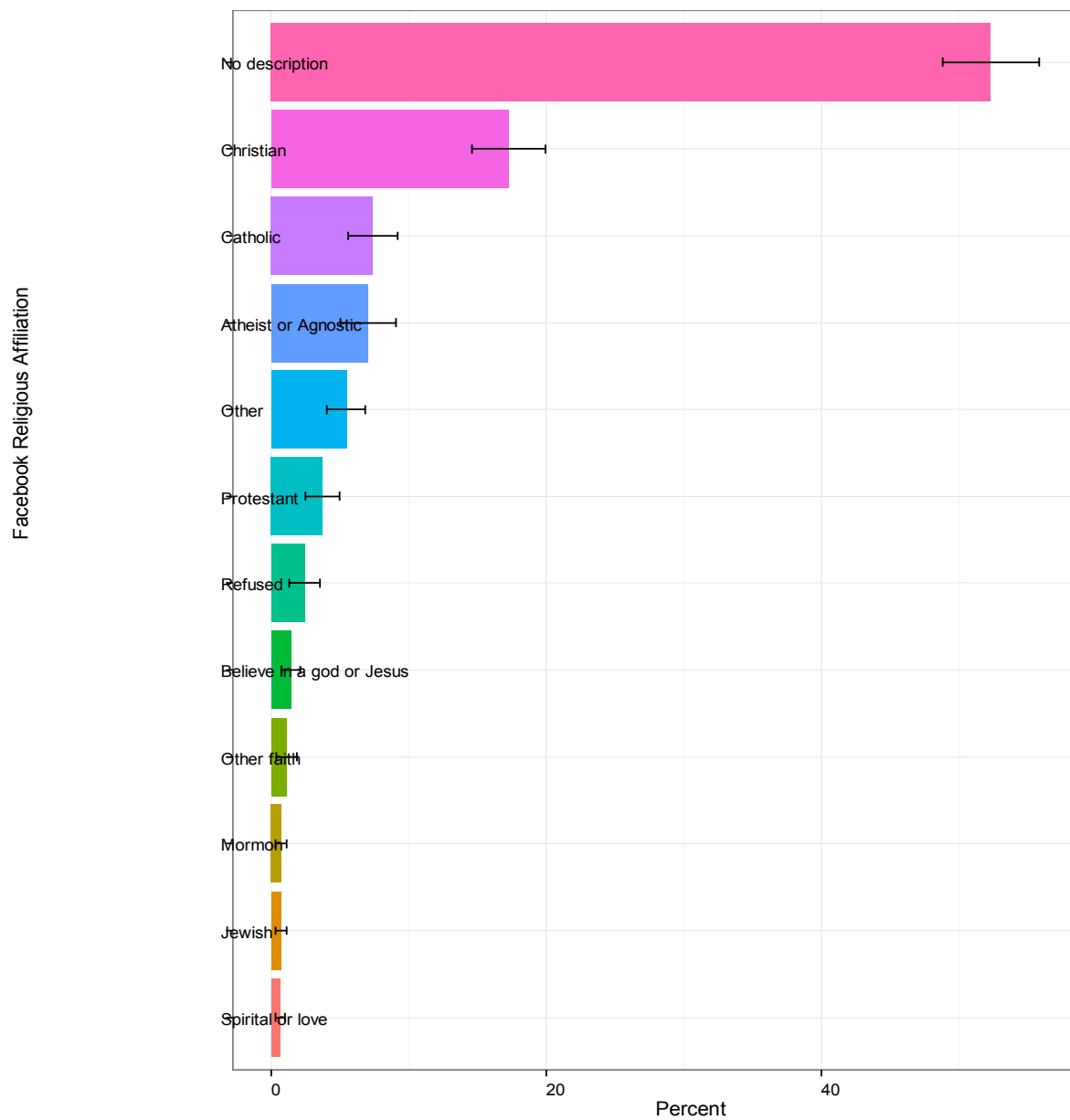


Figure 18: Religious Affiliation on Facebook among Millennials 18-24 in 2012

Table 49: Multilevel Model Results Predicting Facebook Religious Affiliation from Actual Religious Affiliation of Millennial Youth 18-24, 2012

	No Description (1)	Atheist or Agnostic (2)	Spiritual or Love (3)	Believe in a God or Jesus (4)	Other Facebook Status (5)
Catholic	0.28* (0.17)	1.33** (0.75)	-18.56 (9,162.95)	-1.38*** (0.70)	-0.08 (0.37)
Atheist or Agnostic	3.51*** (0.47)	7.20*** (0.82)	5.39** (2.85)	-17.66 (20.00)	3.71*** (0.60)
Nothing	3.67*** (0.47)	6.00*** (0.93)	9.46*** (2.49)	3.19*** (1.08)	3.12*** (0.62)
Just Christian	0.07 (0.16)	0.27 (0.85)	2.48** (1.29)	-0.41 (0.48)	-0.04 (0.33)
Other Affiliation	1.45*** (0.26)	3.61*** (0.80)	4.84*** (1.54)	-0.89 (1.15)	3.08*** (0.38)
N	1,411	633	544	558	674
Log Likelihood	-758.72	-96.74	-33.57	-96.21	-255.58
AIC	1,585.44	261.48	135.14	260.42	579.16
BIC	1,764.01	412.80	281.31	407.45	732.61

* p < .2; ** p < .1; *** p < .05

Note: All estimates are derived from multilevel regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All outcomes are expressed as standardized scales with mean of zero or as log-odds.

Part III: Economic Values and Social Trust

In this section, I present three analyses that tap into aspects of the sharing economy. As stated before, I define the “sharing economy” as a cultural orientation toward the economic sphere, centering on (1) trust, (2) wealth distribution, and (3) economic precarity. While millennials are more likely to espouse these beliefs related to the sharing economy, this section reveals cultural heterogeneity within the millennial cohort regarding belief in economic opportunity or the American Dream, their sense of cultural cohesion with various other social groups, and their sense of cultural progress. I describe below the results from these analyses in greater detail in Tables 50, 51, and 52, respectively. After describing the associations of these outcomes with

demographic, socioeconomic, and technological characteristics of millennials, I summarize the meaning of these findings and their implications for the sharing economy.

Table 50 shows the associations between demographic, socioeconomic, and technological predictors and millennials endorsement of the American Dream (whether it was “Sometimes True,” “No Longer True,” or “Never Held True,” compared to “Always True”). First, participants are more likely to report “Sometimes True” (vs. “Always True”) when they: (a) are multiracial, (b) report < 10k in debt (vs. no debt at all), (c) report > 30k in debt (vs. no debt at all), (d) have household internet access, and (e) use Tumblr. Second, participants are more likely to report “No Longer True” (vs. “Always True”) when they: (a) are multiracial, (b) are Hispanic, (c) live with their parents and pay rent for doing so, (d) never attended college, (e) report >30k in debt (vs. no debt at all). Third, participants are more likely to report the American Dream “Never Held True” (vs. “Always True”) when they use Tumblr, while they are less likely to report the American Dream “Never Held True” (vs. “Always True”) when they use Facebook.

Table 50: Multilevel Model Results Predicting Views on the American Dream from Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Technological Attributes, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Sometimes True (1)	No Longer True (2)	Never Held True (3)
Multilingual	-0.69 (0.78)	-0.28 (0.24)	0.34 (0.37)
Multiracial	2.38*** (0.86)	0.80*** (0.34)	0.40 (0.61)
Hispanic	1.01 (0.88)	0.62*** (0.29)	0.46 (0.49)
Cohabiting	-0.15 (0.42)	0.02 (0.15)	0.21 (0.24)
Urban Area	0.45 (0.44)	-0.10 (0.15)	-0.23 (0.25)
Disconnected	0.12	0.12	-0.03

Table 50 (Continued)

	(0.34)	(0.12)	(0.21)
Self-Employed	0.59	0.04	0.32
	(0.69)	(0.31)	(0.47)
With Parents (Paying Rent)	0.37	0.40***	-0.18
	(0.53)	(0.19)	(0.34)
With Parents (No Rent)	0.52	0.16	-0.02
	(0.42)	(0.17)	(0.29)
Renting	0.06	0.16	0.03
	(0.41)	(0.16)	(0.26)
College Dorm	0.29	-0.30*	0.03
	(0.55)	(0.24)	(0.39)
Didn't Attend College	0.59	1.27***	0.69*
	(0.93)	(0.27)	(0.42)
< 10k in Debt	1.07***	0.19	0.21
	(0.46)	(0.21)	(0.31)
10-30k in Debt	0.12	0.25*	-0.29
	(0.44)	(0.16)	(0.29)
> 30k in Debt	1.01***	0.68***	0.17
	(0.47)	(0.20)	(0.34)
Household Internet Access	2.03**	0.22	-0.27
	(1.06)	(0.19)	(0.28)
Use Facebook	0.58	0.16	-0.51***
	(0.58)	(0.18)	(0.26)
Use Twitter	-0.19	-0.19*	-0.11
	(0.31)	(0.12)	(0.21)
Use Tumblr	0.80***	0.08	0.91***
	(0.39)	(0.17)	(0.26)
N	804	1,638	914
Log Likelihood	-212.78	-1,067.56	-429.64
AIC	519.56	2,229.13	953.29
BIC	739.97	2,482.98	1,179.73

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Note: All estimates are derived from multilevel regression models with varying intercepts for geographic region. Models include additional controls for sex, race, marital status, education, income, and age. All outcomes are expressed as standardized scales with mean of zero or as log-odds.

These findings are underscored by the percentage of millennial youth who no longer believe in the American Dream. Figure 3 shows the results from the survey, which indicate that a relatively minority of millennials today believe in the American Dream. This has enormous

implications for the sharing economy, suggesting that at least in part economic insecurity and pessimism is widespread. Nevertheless, the findings from Table 50 reveal cultural heterogeneity in this attitude toward the American dream, with two important findings. First, the findings show that more demographically- and socioeconomically-disadvantaged millennials (e.g., multiracial, Hispanic, never attended college) report greater pessimism. Second, the findings suggest that divergent patterns of internet use (Facebook vs. Tumblr) have opposite associations with belief in the American Dream.

A second important aspect of the sharing economy is trust in others. One dimension of trust is social and cultural cohesion. To assess cultural cohesion, analyses from Table 51 show the associations between millennials' demographic, socioeconomic, and technological attributes and their cultural cohesion with a diverse assortment of groups. Cultural cohesion was assessed by measuring whether or not participants reported feeling "Close" or "Not Close."

A number of important associations can be inferred from Table 51. First, cohabitation informs millennials' attitudes toward various social groups, with greater closeness reported toward atheists, LGBT, and less closeness toward Mormons, Jewish people, the Christian right, black Americans, and Christians in general. This finding underscores the importance in the link between family formation patterns and cultural cohesion.

Second, Table 51 shows that socioeconomic disadvantage is an important predictor of aspects of cultural cohesion. Notably, millennials who are disconnected economically (not in school and not working) feel closer to atheists and less close to Christians. Those who did not attend college feel more distant from atheists, in contrast, as well as more distant from Jewish people, Muslims, but feel closer toward the Tea Party, the Christian right.

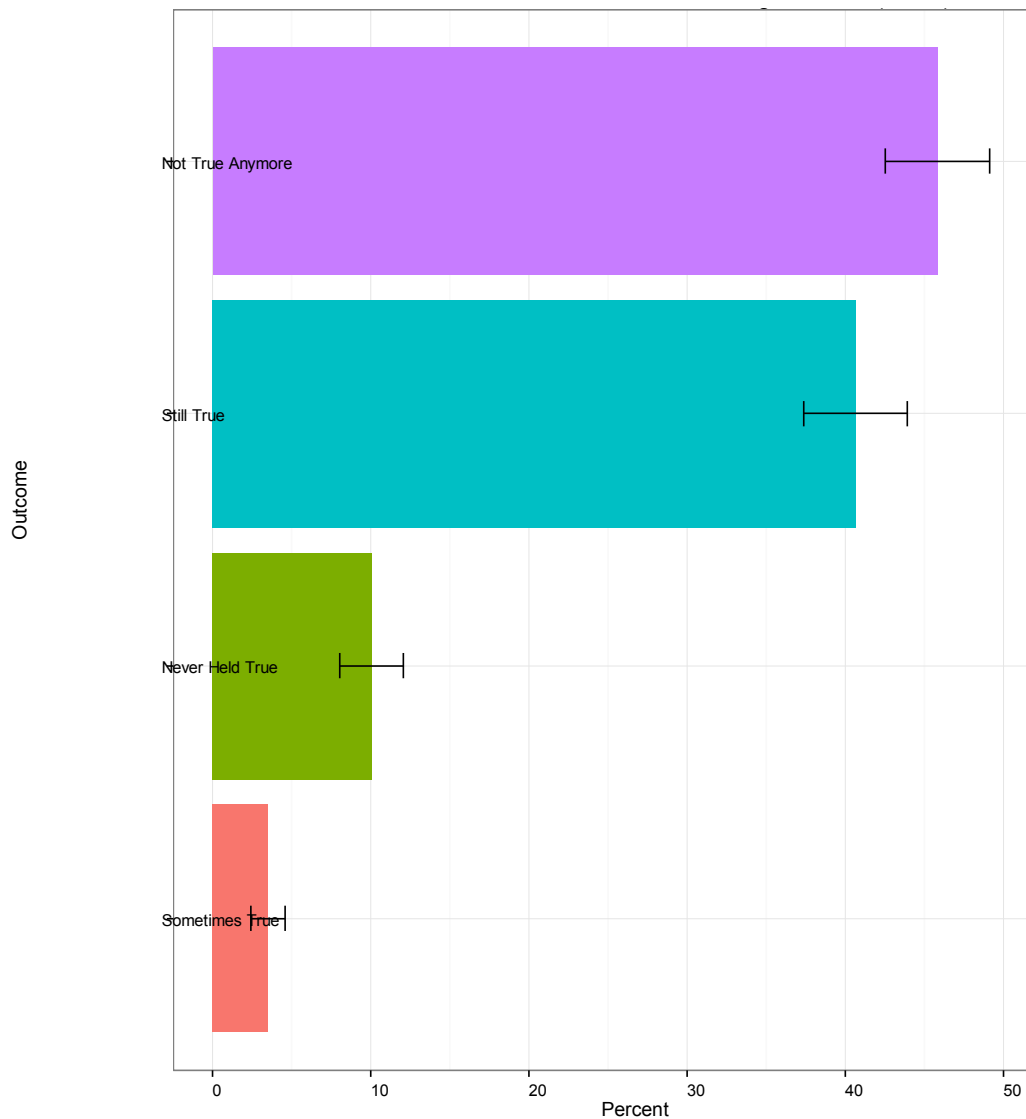


Figure 19: Percentage of Millennials who believe in the American Dream

Finally, having a greater economic burden ($> 30k$ in debt) is negatively associated with closeness toward the federal government but positively associated with labor unions. As mentioned earlier, increases in college matriculation and increases in college tuition likely explain the high rates of college debt. It is also likely that feelings of cultural distance from the federal government, the provider of many loans for college students, may drive millennials'

beliefs. In contrast, students who have a large debt may relate more closely to labor unions, as these are groups intended to protect disadvantaged workers. Regardless, the findings by socioeconomic disadvantage suggest that educational financial and disadvantages (e.g., debt) informs cultural cohesion in different ways.

In the following table I examine whether respondents endorse the belief that “Cultural Change is Positive.” Models (1), (2), and (3) in Table 52 assess the social media predictors separately (Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr use, respectively), while Model (4) in Table 52 assesses all three social media predictors together. As the findings in Model (4) in Table 52 reveal, respondents are more likely to endorse the belief that “Cultural Change is Positive” when they (a) cohabitate, (b) live in an urban area, and (c) have household internet access (all coefficients where the p-value is $< .05$). Comparing models patterns of technology use across models, the findings suggest a generally positive link between the three types of media assessed (Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr, respectively) and belief that cultural change is positive. However, only one coefficient in the full model approaches statistical significance (where $p < .10$), and that is millennials’ use of Twitter. In summary, the findings again underscore the roles of both changes in family formation and technological innovation in shaping how millennials evaluate cultural change.

Table 51: Multilevel Model Results Predicting Cultural Cohesion from Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Technological Attributes, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Atheists	Mormons	LGBT	Muslims	Jewish People	Federal Government	Occupy Wall Street	Christian Right	Hispanics	Tea Party	Labor Unions	Black Americans	Christians
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Multilingual	0.10 (0.11)	-0.16* (0.12)	-0.04 (0.11)	0.11 (0.11)	-0.31*** (0.12)	0.28** (0.16)	0.20 (0.16)	-0.10 (0.17)	0.27** (0.16)	-0.25* (0.16)	0.01 (0.17)	0.20 (0.16)	0.13 (0.16)
Multiracial	-0.004 (0.16)	-0.23* (0.16)	0.14 (0.16)	0.05 (0.16)	0.27** (0.16)	-0.26 (0.22)	-0.13 (0.24)	-0.40** (0.23)	-0.15 (0.22)	0.25 (0.22)	0.16 (0.24)	0.43** (0.23)	0.09 (0.22)
Hispanic	-0.13 (0.13)	-0.10 (0.14)	0.15 (0.14)	0.07 (0.13)	0.15 (0.14)	-0.28* (0.19)	-0.13 (0.20)	0.04 (0.20)	1.04*** (0.18)	-0.19 (0.19)	0.17 (0.20)	0.40*** (0.20)	0.24 (0.19)
Cohabiting	0.17*** (0.07)	-0.13** (0.07)	0.25*** (0.07)	-0.07 (0.07)	-0.13** (0.07)	-0.05 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.27*** (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	0.16* (0.11)	0.03 (0.11)	-0.27*** (0.11)	-0.46*** (0.10)
Urban Area	0.15*** (0.07)	0.10* (0.07)	0.18*** (0.07)	0.09 (0.07)	0.003 (0.07)	0.08 (0.10)	0.02 (0.10)	-0.16* (0.10)	-0.09 (0.10)	0.02 (0.10)	0.07 (0.11)	-0.10 (0.10)	-0.04 (0.10)
Disconnected	0.11** (0.06)	-0.05 (0.06)	0.12*** (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	-0.06 (0.06)	0.001 (0.08)	0.02 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)	0.04 (0.08)	-0.13* (0.08)	0.04 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.08)	-0.24*** (0.08)
Self-Employed	-0.13 (0.14)	0.03 (0.14)	-0.31*** (0.14)	-0.21* (0.14)	0.01 (0.14)	-0.32** (0.18)	-0.27* (0.18)	0.27* (0.19)	-0.11 (0.18)	-0.06 (0.21)	-0.17 (0.23)	-0.23 (0.21)	-0.35** (0.21)
With Parents (Paying Rent)	0.08 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.09)	0.14* (0.09)	0.004 (0.09)	-0.17** (0.09)	-0.04 (0.12)	-0.03 (0.12)	-0.12 (0.12)	-0.14 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.13)	-0.23** (0.13)	-0.29*** (0.13)
With Parents (No Rent)	-0.11* (0.07)	-0.19*** (0.08)	-0.11* (0.07)	-0.14** (0.07)	-0.10* (0.08)	-0.01 (0.10)	-0.07 (0.11)	0.01 (0.11)	-0.05 (0.10)	0.07 (0.11)	0.003 (0.11)	-0.25*** (0.11)	-0.04 (0.11)
Renting	0.20*** (0.07)	-0.10* (0.07)	0.10* (0.07)	0.11* (0.07)	-0.03 (0.07)	0.21*** (0.10)	0.18** (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)	-0.08 (0.10)	-0.09 (0.11)	-0.12 (0.11)	-0.08 (0.11)	-0.24*** (0.11)
College Dorm	0.07 (0.10)	0.03 (0.11)	0.06 (0.11)	0.08 (0.11)	0.02 (0.11)	0.20* (0.15)	-0.08 (0.15)	-0.05 (0.16)	0.28** (0.15)	-0.01 (0.15)	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.06 (0.15)	-0.08 (0.14)
Didn't Attend College	-0.33*** (0.12)	-0.20* (0.12)	-0.15 (0.12)	-0.40*** (0.12)	-0.36*** (0.12)	0.02 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.17)	0.40*** (0.17)	-0.23* (0.16)	0.60*** (0.18)	0.14 (0.19)	-0.01 (0.18)	0.09 (0.18)
< 10k in Debt	-0.10 (0.09)	0.21*** (0.09)	0.01 (0.09)	0.07 (0.09)	0.12 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.13)	0.07 (0.13)	0.19* (0.13)	0.12 (0.12)	0.08 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.14)	-0.09 (0.14)	0.10 (0.13)
10-30k in Debt	-0.07 (0.08)	0.04 (0.08)	0.13** (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)	0.03 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.10)	0.05 (0.11)	-0.04 (0.11)	0.03 (0.10)	-0.01 (0.11)	0.15* (0.12)	0.04 (0.11)	0.11 (0.11)
> 30k in Debt	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.10 (0.09)	0.18** (0.09)	0.05 (0.09)	-0.01 (0.09)	-0.27*** (0.12)	0.14 (0.13)	0.004 (0.13)	-0.05 (0.12)	0.14 (0.14)	0.34*** (0.14)	0.03 (0.14)	0.10 (0.14)
Household Internet Access	0.26*** (0.09)	0.02 (0.09)	0.11 (0.09)	0.19*** (0.09)	0.29*** (0.09)	-0.19* (0.12)	0.18* (0.13)	-0.20* (0.13)	0.09 (0.12)	-0.35*** (0.13)	-0.27** (0.14)	0.06 (0.13)	-0.09 (0.13)
Use Facebook	0.04 (0.08)	0.08 (0.08)	0.18*** (0.08)	0.01 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.08)	0.12 (0.11)	0.24*** (0.11)	0.09 (0.11)	0.09 (0.10)	-0.02 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.13)	0.10 (0.13)	-0.01 (0.13)
Use Twitter	0.01 (0.06)	0.01 (0.06)	0.09* (0.06)	0.08* (0.06)	0.02 (0.06)	0.09 (0.08)	0.08 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)	0.09 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.08)	-0.003 (0.08)	0.08 (0.08)	-0.02 (0.08)
Use Tumblr	0.31*** (0.08)	-0.02 (0.08)	0.26*** (0.08)	0.24*** (0.08)	0.002 (0.08)	-0.10 (0.10)	0.15* (0.11)	-0.33*** (0.11)	0.21*** (0.10)	-0.19** (0.11)	0.18* (0.12)	0.07 (0.11)	-0.14* (0.11)
N	1,673	1,636	1,662	1,654	1,635	849	854	844	837	806	799	805	809
Log Likelihood	-2,360.99	-2,343.86	-2,340.26	-2,336.32	-2,323.45	-1,187.27	-1,223.92	-1,211.00	-1,151.24	-1,153.37	-1,164.39	-1,148.69	-1,140.59
AIC	4,817.97	4,783.72	4,776.53	4,768.64	4,742.91	2,470.53	2,543.83	2,518.00	2,398.47	2,402.73	2,424.79	2,393.39	2,377.18
BIC	5,078.25	5,042.92	5,036.48	5,028.36	5,002.08	2,698.25	2,771.83	2,745.44	2,625.50	2,627.95	2,649.59	2,618.55	2,602.58

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Table 52: Multilevel Model Results Predicting a Positive Attitude toward Cultural Change from Demographic, Socioeconomic, and Technological Attributes, Millennial Youth 18-24 in 2012

	Cultural Change is Positive			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Multilingual	-0.16 (0.25)	-0.15 (0.25)	-0.15 (0.25)	-0.14 (0.25)
Multiracial	0.02 (0.39)	-0.02 (0.39)	0.03 (0.39)	-0.06 (0.40)
Hispanic	-0.06 (0.33)	-0.12 (0.34)	-0.07 (0.34)	-0.15 (0.35)
Cohabiting	0.26* (0.17)	0.28** (0.17)	0.27* (0.17)	0.28** (0.17)
Urban Area	0.38*** (0.15)	0.37*** (0.15)	0.36*** (0.15)	0.37*** (0.15)
Disconnected	0.10 (0.30)	0.11 (0.30)	0.10 (0.30)	0.10 (0.31)
Renting	0.22* (0.17)	0.19 (0.17)	0.22* (0.16)	0.19 (0.17)
College Dorm	-0.30 (0.24)	-0.30 (0.24)	-0.25 (0.24)	-0.32* (0.24)
Didn't Attend College	-0.22 (0.27)	-0.26 (0.28)	-0.25 (0.28)	-0.24 (0.28)
< 10k in Debt	0.01 (0.21)	-0.004 (0.21)	-0.01 (0.21)	0.002 (0.21)
10-30k in Debt	0.36*** (0.18)	0.34** (0.18)	0.35** (0.18)	0.35** (0.18)
> 30k in Debt	0.24 (0.22)	0.28 (0.22)	0.24 (0.22)	0.27 (0.22)
Household Internet Access	0.38*** (0.18)	0.45*** (0.19)	0.44*** (0.19)	0.41*** (0.19)
Use Facebook	0.31** (0.17)			0.21 (0.18)
Use Twitter		0.31*** (0.12)		0.24** (0.13)
Use Tumblr			0.30** (0.17)	0.19 (0.19)
N	1,778	1,772	1,774	1,764
Log Likelihood	-1,017.74	-1,010.71	-1,016.69	-1,003.59
AIC	2,125.49	2,111.41	2,123.38	2,101.19
BIC	2,372.24	2,358.00	2,370.03	2,358.53

*p < .2; **p < .1; ***p < .05

Conclusion: The Cultural Worldviews of Millennial Youth

This analysis provides a contemporary portrait of millennials in the political, religious, and socioeconomic spheres of social life and holds important implications for the future of American culture. Overall the analyses in this chapter underscore the principal findings of the prior chapters. In particular two possible explanatory factors stand out in the findings in this chapter, both of which reflect the major life events of millennials in the past decade: the impact of growing up in an online-oriented society and the aftermath of the Great Recession in 2007-08. There is a great deal of research that can be conducted on these two factors alone (see Belfield, Levin, and Rosen 2012; Bloom, Thompson, and Ivry 2010; Bloom et al. 2010; Bridgeland and Mason-Elder 2012). For instance, further research should use panel data (such as the panel data in the GSS, NLSY97, or Add Health) to examine the trajectories of youth as they have come of age during the Great Recession (Besharov and Gardiner 1998). As discussed previously, many youth are delaying or avoiding altogether the traditional markers of adulthood, such as marriage, home ownership, and car ownership (Arnett 2000, 2004, 2005; Drake 2014; Lenhart et al. 2010b). The economic and cultural effects of such patterns are potentially enormous. Furthermore, as shown in the findings in this chapter, many youth have been burdened by student loan debt, such that a large majority believe the American dream never existed or no longer exists. These are sobering facts for anyone interested in the future of millennial youth and American society.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

A Portrait into the Future

The findings in this thesis offer several avenues for further research. First, the analysis in this chapter is an initial step towards a more detailed understanding of the cultural worldviews of millennials. More research should be conducted using clustering algorithms (such as the item-based clustering algorithm used in previous chapters) and factor analyses (which can be based on tetrachoric or polychoric correlations for categorical data). Examining particular outcomes is useful for understanding the cultural beliefs and values of millennial youth, but there is scant research examining how these particular units of culture (to the extent any survey item can capture a cultural unit) are connected (cf. Fox 2002). The terrain is wide open for more detailed analyses examining the latent structures and variables underlying the beliefs and attitudes of millennials. To date much of the research on young Americans is dominated by journalists and survey research firms, neither of which have explored their data in great detail beyond basic cross-tabulations (e.g., Zemke 2001).

Second, additional analyses should not only cluster survey items (that is, treating survey items as cultural units), but use latent class analyses on survey data of the beliefs and values of millennials. The dearth of research is partly due to the lack of widely-available software for estimating finite mixture models (of which latent class analysis is a subtype), while it may also be due in part to a neglect of how (theoretically) individuals themselves cluster in social and cultural groups. Additional research on millennials should examine how millennials themselves cluster based on their responses to survey items capturing their cultural beliefs and values. In particular, as I have shown in the earlier chapter on religious nones, there is some evidence of social desirability bias, with millennials over-reporting religiosity when responding to particular individual items.

Third, the analyses here show that a great deal more research is needed examine the role of new technology, including not only the Internet but online programs and mobile phone use, as both being shaped by and shaping the cultural environments of millennial youth. The drastic shift in technological development, especially with the so-called “semantic” web, has meant that more cultural content is being produced and consumed than ever before in human history. The consequence of this for youth themselves is still unclear and many questions are left unanswered. For example, given the findings on the apparent effect of internet use on political and social views shown here, additional research should uncover the extent to which this correlational relationship is plausibly causal. As well social theories of cultural consumption and production need to be revised to adjust for constant exposure to an immense wealth of information on the internet.

Fourth, this chapter buttresses the call for not only for examining the impact of new technologies on the culture of millennial youth, but also how these new technologies to better understand youth (Kreuter, Presser, and Tourangeau 2008). The Millennial Values Survey is based entirely on online surveys, which allow a higher response rate and more directed targeting of young Americans. Simply put, conventional methods of survey gathering must continue to be mixed with cell phone and Internet protocols. However, this is especially important for understanding millennial youth, since they grew up with the Internet as so-called “digital natives” (Thompson 2014)

Fifth, while allowing for a snapshot overview of the lives of millennials as it relates to their cultural beliefs and values, in-depth interviews with a subset of millennials should be included to help interpret the quantitative findings as well as check the robustness of the results from the statistical models, which entail requisite assumptions about the underlying data

generation process (Lieberman 2010). Moreover, this subset should be based on exhausting the variation among millennials and not on creating a randomized sample with a small number of respondents (Kendall 1968). Incorporating a large-scale randomized survey design with a small-*N* subset of respondents will yield a more complete and clearer portrait of the culture of millennial youth.

However, while the economic conditions of millennials suggest a dark story, the technological side suggests room for optimism towards the future. Although millennials are leaving religious affiliations and party affiliations, it appears that these are driven at least in part by “cognitive mobilization” from the expansion of higher education and Internet access (Benkler 2004; Dalton 1984b). Moreover, even the finding that millennials are highly distrustful of dominant institutions is not necessarily problematic, since distrust can be a rational response to what is perceived to be a corrupt or unjust social order. As well, the millennial generation is the most culturally hybridic generation in modern American history, with an increasing percentage coming from diverse cultural and social backgrounds (Bump 2014). This cultural intermixing, combined with the free flow of cultural content from new technologies, has the potential to render neutral social and geographic divisions that have threatened to undermine the immense social progress of earlier generations. The findings in this chapter are merely the chiaroscuro of the rich cultural worldviews of millennials, but they highlight the need for further research on millennial beliefs and values in particular and generational change in general.

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