

Sermon Rhetoric and White Evangelical Support for the Republican Party

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Puzzle

Puzzle: What is the role that local religious leaders play in reinforcing the alignment between White evangelicals and the Republican Party?

Theory

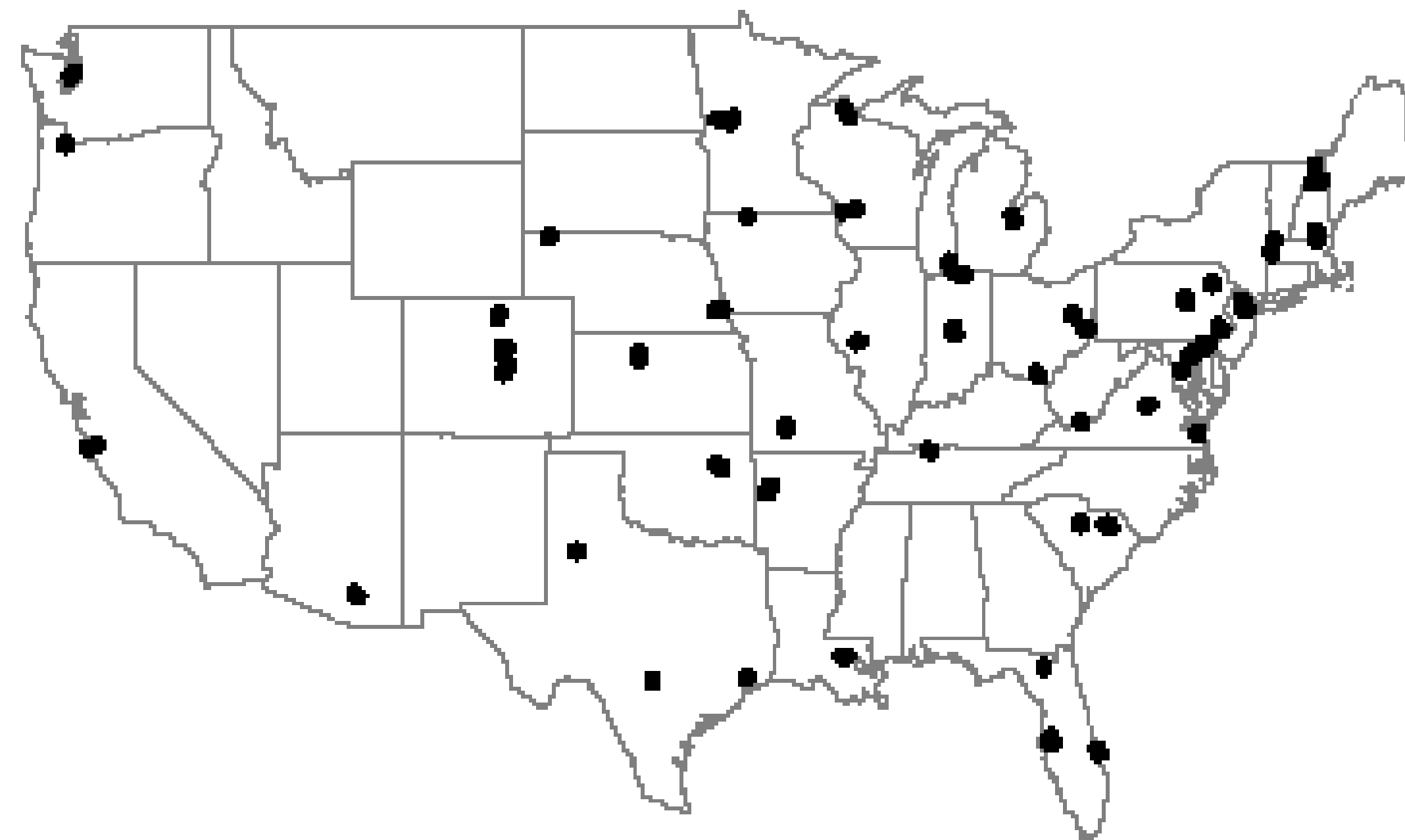
- H1:** Evangelical Protestant sermons will have a higher prevalence of cultural and elite threats.
- H2:** These threats will consist of a greater frequency of sin and politicization on the ideological right.
- H3:** Exposure to these threats will result in more conservative political attitudes and mobilization.

Research Design

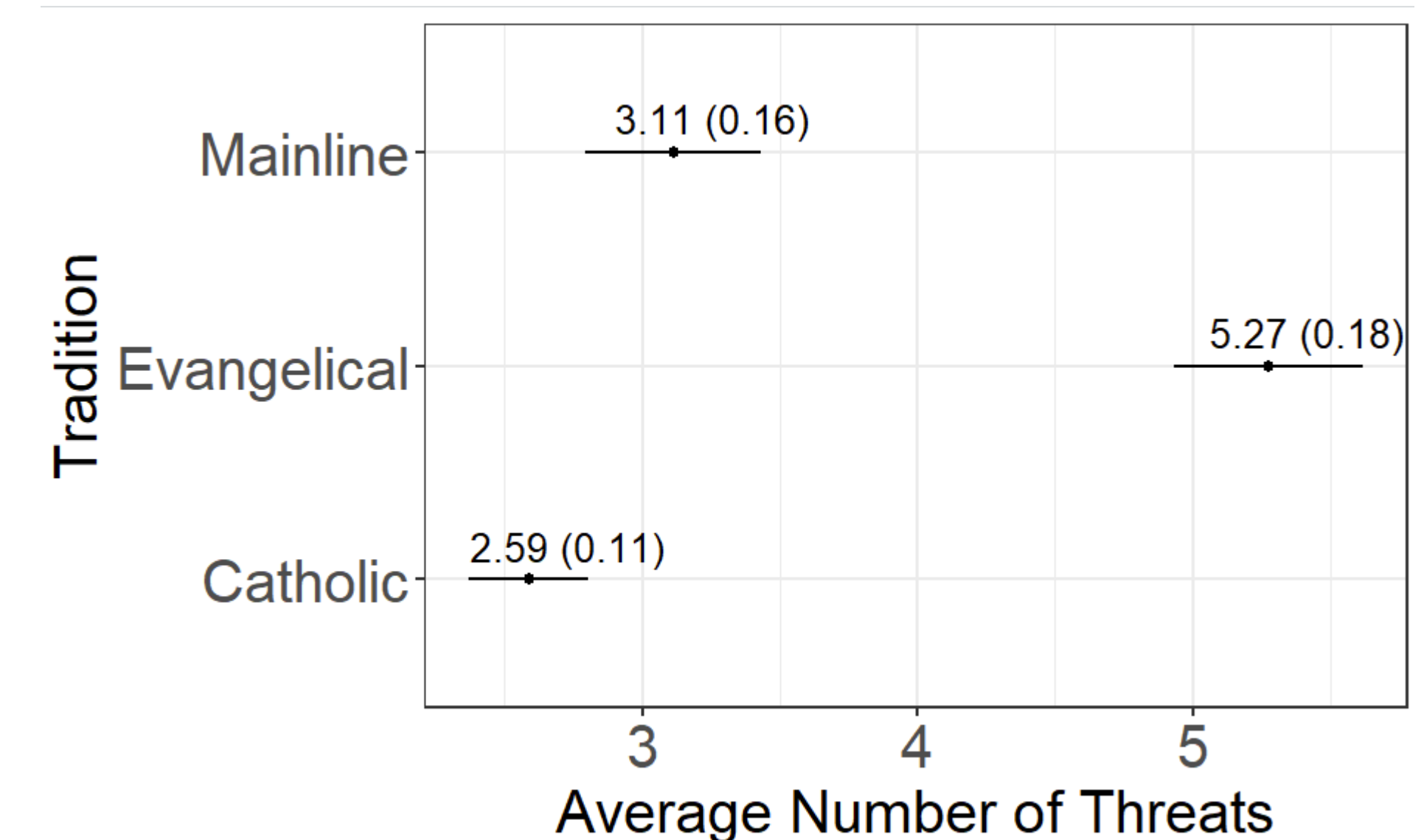
Descriptive Analysis: I assess variation in sermon threat content using a national random sample of 450 sermons from evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, and Catholic traditions.

Experimental Analysis: I run a set of survey experiments to assess the causal effect of sermon exposure on political attitudes and mobilization.

Sermon Random Sample



Average Threats Per Sermon



Experiment One Results

	Pooled Support for Laws That Protect Transgender Rights			
Treatment	-0.23**	-0.17*	-0.16	-0.12
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Evangelical		-0.30**	-0.42**	-0.04
		(0.13)	(0.18)	(0.17)
Treatment X Evangelical			-0.32	-0.45*
			(0.26)	(0.26)
Control	3.69***	4.28***	3.73***	4.24***
	(0.06)	(0.24)	(0.07)	(0.24)
Covariates		✓		✓
R ²	0.01	0.20	0.04	0.21
N	620	590	620	590

***p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.1

Experiment Two Results

	Plan To Vote in Next Presidential Election		Plan To Vote in Local School Board Meeting		Expected Voting (Pooled)	
Treatment	-0.12	-0.08	-0.37**	-0.30**	-0.24**	-0.19**
	(0.08)	(0.07)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.10)	(0.09)
Bible Study	-0.04	-0.06	0.39***	0.32**	0.17*	0.13
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.14)	(0.13)	(0.09)	(0.08)
Treatment X Bible Study	0.19*	0.14	0.52***	0.40**	0.36***	0.27**
	(0.10)	(0.09)	(0.20)	(0.19)	(0.12)	(0.11)
Control	4.79***	2.79***	3.58***	1.14***	4.19***	1.96***
	(0.05)	(0.27)	(0.11)	(0.37)	(0.07)	(0.27)
Covariates		✓		✓		✓
R ²	0.01	0.17	0.06	0.18	0.05	0.21
N	789	789	789	789	789	789

***p < 0.01; **p < 0.05; *p < 0.1

Conclusion

- Relative to Catholic and mainline Protestant sermons, evangelical Protestant sermons contain more cultural and elite threats.
- These threats contain more sin and politicization on the ideological right.
- Exposure to these threats pushes political attitudes in a more conservative direction and increases mobilization among Bible study attendees.