

The Politics of “Spiritual but not Religious” America

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Thank you, Marie. Can everybody hear me okay? More or less? Okay. Thank you, Marie, and thank you to Lee, and to everybody else at the Center for the Study of Religion and Politics here at Washington University. Everyone has been so gracious and so friendly, and I'm really, truly delighted to be here today. I'm going to talk to you today about a project that I'm working on, which is sort of in its formative stages but I thought would be sort of fun to introduce to you because it's something that most folks haven't thought about a whole lot in political science, and in fact in the sociology of religion either, and that is the politics of “spiritual but not religious” America. So, there are so many people nowadays who are saying, “You know, I'm not religious, I don't like organized religion, I don't want to have anything to do with its trappings, and I don't trust it, and these sorts of things, but I do consider myself spiritual in some other sort of sense.” Perhaps that means being a seeker, and going off and doing one's own thing religiously, marrying together influences from various religious traditions in a sort of new-age, syncretic sort of approach. Maybe it means practicing yoga and bringing spiritual meaning to that, maybe it means communing with nature... it means many different things to many different people. But for me, as an empirical social scientist, the most important fact really is that there are more and more and more Americans who see themselves as spiritual but not religious, and, in fact, even more broadly, as religious “nones”. Not N-U-N-S but N-O-N-E-S, right? So, it looks like in many survey data that we've seen a doubling, just in the 1990s, in the proportion of Americans who said they had no religious preference, and just that, in and of itself, that kind of change in any religious demographic just within a decade is really rather extraordinary. Another very high-profile study, which I tend to trust very much, by the PEW Forum on Religion and Public Life in Washington DC notes 16% of its respondents to its great big survey saying that they have no religious affiliation whatsoever. And to say that really is a rather dramatic statement, really, because most people are able to say, at least nominally, “Yeah, I'm Catholic...” or “Yeah, I'm Lutheran...” or, “Yeah, I'm Methodist, even if I never darken the door of a church.” Right? These are people who go further than that and simply say, “No, I have no religious identification whatsoever.” Most scholars are pretty confident that the secular market share, so to speak, is going to continue to grow – whether that growth will continue unabated over a long period of time, I'm not necessarily convinced of, but it's sizeable, it seems to be growing, and my thought is that it probably is going to continue to grow. So, for me, as an empirical social scientist, the question becomes one of this: “What effects will this change have on American culture, on American society, and, especially for me as a political scientist, on American politics?” Because,

if there's been this kind of change in American religious affiliation, then that has many potential ramifications for politics. If we are absenting ourselves voluntarily from communities of faith, where important political messages tend to flow – that's not really why people go to religious services, but political messages end up flowing from religious services oftentimes. If we're voluntarily absenting ourselves from that kind of community, what are the political ramifications of that? So, what I'm doing here is sort of an introductory effort to get a sense of a particular group of Americans who consider themselves “religious nones” (N-O-N-E-S again), but instead say that I am “spiritual but not religious.”

One of the things that we've got to acknowledge about people who have no religious affiliation is that there really is very little uniformity among that. So if we say 16% of the population are religiously unaffiliated, what is it that they really have in common? Not a whole lot, according to most of the work that's been done, empirically speaking, on people who do not have a religious affiliation. And that makes sense, really, and here's why: People who are not religious, people who are religious nones, whether they're spiritual but not religious, or atheist, or whatever, they are defined by something that is absent, rather than by something that is present. So, if I say I'm religious, that takes a particular kind of form. That means particular things not only about belief system but also about organizational attachments, perhaps friendship networks, and things of that nature. But I say, “I'm nothing, religiously,” then does that mean we have a place on Sunday morning or on Saturday night, or whenever, that we go as people who are not religious, hypothetically speaking, to gather? Well, no. One might argue, what about the grocery store? What about online forums? What about thinking about one's fantasy football league? I don't know, maybe these kinds of things are things that happen, but the bottom line is that one is not in a particular place, hearing a particular set of messages, in a particularly organized kind of way. Nevertheless, as you can see, one way in which I'm going to argue that there is some basis of commonality among at least some people who are religiously unaffiliated is to look at people who say they are spiritual but not religious. So in a way they're somewhere in between people who say, “Yes, I'm religious,” (which is a whole complicated group of people in and of themselves, but we're not going to worry today about that variety)... Spiritual but not religious implies, I think, sort of a gap-filling place between “Yes, I'm religious” and “No, I'm nothing at all.” Right? “No, I have no interest in this whatsoever.” I am, however, if I'm spiritual but not religious, somehow seeking for something transcendent. Somehow interested in that sort of thing. Various studies suggest that it could be the case that as many as one in five Americans – and I know that's greater than 16% -- as many as one in five Americans consider themselves spiritual but not religious. And you might say, “Well, how is that possible?” We'll see that in a moment. Some of these people who say they are spiritual but not religious actually do claim some sort of nominal religious affiliation. So I might say I'm Catholic, but I think I'm spiritual, not religious. So what does that mean? It sort of means straddling two worlds in a way. We also have in American culture some high-profile examples of people who present themselves now as spiritual but not religious. And don't think for a moment that these high-profile kinds of people who consider themselves spiritual but not religious don't send messages about what is and is not

culturally and socially acceptable. For example, Steve Jobs, who recently passed away, of course. He was a Buddhist, but I think more than anything, he would have described himself as spiritual but not traditionally religious, at least not in the American sense. You have people like Deepak Chopra, who has been made quite famous through Oprah Winfrey's show, and that sort of thing. You can probably think of all sorts of examples, the more you sit. You can do that on your own – you can think of examples of prominent people who might be spiritual but not religious. Not too many politicians will, of course, because that wouldn't be too kosher, politically. People might say, "What? Oh, they're spiritual but not religious? Oh, we mustn't vote for them," because that wouldn't be acceptable. But people in other prominent walks of life, more and more, I think, are identifying themselves as such. So, what I'm doing is I'm setting out to say, what is it that is unique, different, or distinctive about people who say they are spiritual but not religious, if we compare them with people who say they are religious? That's essentially what my point of departure will be.

Before I get started on giving you some hypotheses on what people who are spiritual but not religious might look like – and, if you don't mind, I might start calling them SBNRs, so if I say that, it's fewer words, and maybe I can get more data up on the screen if I say SBNRs instead of spiritual but not religious – one of the really hard things is figuring out what we mean by spiritual. That isn't to say that it isn't hard to figure out what we mean by religious, either, but figuring out what we mean by spiritual is, as Courtney Bender, who is a great scholar at Columbia University, recently put it in the following way: "Defining spirituality is like shoveling fog," which I love! It's such a great metaphor, and it's true. Try it sometime – go out and try shoveling fog. It'd be cool if you could, but it's not within the realm of physics for us to do. So it's fraught with difficulty. What does it mean to say that one is spiritual? And do we even need to figure out what it means to say that one is spiritual, if one claims the identity for oneself the identity "spiritual but not religious"? It's one thing to say, "I'm going to go out in the population now and I'm going to track people down and I'm going to decide for myself if they are spiritual but not religious." It's quite another thing, however, for a polling firm to include an item in a survey (which I was so delighted to find that some polling firm had), asking people to say, "are you religious, are you spiritual but not religious, or are you neither?" so I'm going to assert at least for the purposes of this little project here that what we end up with is, if you identify yourself intentionally as being spiritual but not religious, then so be it. Let's accept that for what it is. You say you're spiritual but not religious? I'm not imposing that definition on you, you're claiming that label for yourself. Now let's find out what kinds of characteristics people who claim that mantle might happen to share in common.

Alright. So, now to think a little bit about some hypotheses about spiritual but not religious Americans. First, just a few quick demographic hypotheses – and these might seem really self-evident, but they need to be said in any case. SBNRs enjoy relatively high socioeconomic status. This probably makes intuitive sense, and this is consistent with previous research. A sociologist named Wade Clarke Roof did a bunch of work and continues to do a bunch of work on "spiritual

seekers.” And he finds in his work that these individuals tend to be relatively well educated and relatively wealthy. It also stands to reason that SBNRs might be especially on the education side of SES, that they might be pretty well educated, because, in my mind, it takes a certain familiarity with a marketplace of ideas, with the diversity of opinions and that sort of thing with critical thinking to say, “No, thank you very much, I’m going to go ahead and step away from something that is very culturally central in the United States, and that is belonging to a religious community.” I’ve lived in SC now for 15 years and I no longer get, “Honey, have you found a church home yet?”, which is a very welcoming, sweet thing that people say in the South, and it is meant to be sweet and to be welcoming, but it is also in a way a reinforcement of a particular cultural norm. “You’re new here, so of course you must need to find a church home.” People who say they’re SBNR are really saying, “No ma’am I haven’t found a church home nor am I looking or one thank you very much.” It’s kind of an assertion of I’m going to be countercultural in a way.

The second hypothesis here is, SBNRs are relatively young. And this makes sense too for all kinds of reasons. It’s more likely you’ll be SBNR if you’ve been brought up from childhood on not being affiliated with any religious organization. It might not be such a big cognitive leap for you to say, “My parents didn’t take me to church and I’m not going to go either.” Not that big of a deal. We also have the sort of cultural legacy of the sixties. It becomes more culturally and socially acceptable, at least in certain geographic regions and cities and that sort of thing to decide that no I don’t think I’m going to go to church. That’s alright. Maybe not so much in the southeast where I live but other areas of our country – big cities and the coasts and that sort of thing. So more and more people in the us tend not (and this is kind of counterintuitive, or it would be to people from outside the us) but more and more Americans are being raised without sort of formal and persistent exposure to religious institutions. So maybe it’s the case that per capita SBNRs are relatively young.

Another hypothesis we might offer, and this is the most self-evident thing I’m going to say for a long time, and that is that SBNRs lack deep roots in traditional religious organizations. “Well, duh,” you might say. IF they’re spiritual but not religious, that must mean that they are purposefully saying, no I don’t want to be part of organized religion. But I have to look at this, I have to ask whether this is true because it would be awfully interesting if people who say they are spiritual but not religious actually do participate in some kind of religious practice. So we need to go on ahead and take a look at that, too.

Next, I’ve got some hypotheses about the politics of SBNRs, which really ends up being the more interesting part of this for me and hopefully for you as well. These two might seem self-evident, but we need to test them and find out if there’s any kind of support for them. First, SBNRs place themselves to the left of center, politically. this might be true, and this is tricky to argue, but I’ll throw it out there. If we find that SBNRs are especially young, if we find perhaps that they are especially better educated, there might be some traction to liberal politics, but that’s really kind of a tough argument, so I’m not going to make too big of a point out of this.

Secondly, it might be the case that we find not only that SBNRs might say that they're liberal but also going in a different kind of direction that they might say that they're moderate or independent. And that would be very consistent with the idea that maybe what's going on is I don't trust traditional institutions at all. So I don't want to go to church, I don't want to listen to some pastor up in pulpit telling me what to do. Moreover I don't trust political parties, is maybe there's this kind of distrust and skepticism that's running through SBNR people. Also from the psychology of religion there's a lot of interesting stuff that one can draw upon from the psychology of religion. Psychologists of religion have noted that people who say they're spiritual but not religious – and they have looked at this – tend to score low on measures of self-righteousness and individual competitiveness. And the second point in particular I think is very instructive because that might suggest, and I know I'm drawing a bright line here and I probably ought not to be, how about a dotted line. Maybe this suggests or could suggest some attraction to political egalitarianism. If you're not especially individually competitive, then maybe you wouldn't be so, I guess, nervous about political egalitarianism. And then there's also the point that the republican party has done a really wonderful job, strategically speaking in the recent decade or two decades of painting itself as the party that is most likely to be sort of friendly to religion. There's all kinds of cool poll data that support that as well, so maybe that means the republican party on its own has alienated people who aren't especially interested in being affiliated with religion.

Relatedly, and I don't need to really elaborate on this much, SBNRs more specifically hold liberal positions on socio-moral issues, which is of special interest to me because that's part of my research program to look at public opinion around various socio-moral issues. If there's any semblance of a culture war on the ground for example one might expect to find sort of a very strong progressive witness on the part of people who identify themselves as SBNR. And then finally, and I'm not going to make too big of a point about this, just in the interest of time, but we could talk about more in the Q&A, SBNRs probably we might hypothesize might prioritize social justice and egalitarian kinds of thinking about what we mean by a political agenda or what we mean by a definition of morality or whatever, over the standard kind of sexuality-body-abortion kinds of issues that arise out of morality politics.

So let's take a look and see if we can find any kind of support for any of these hypotheses. First just a little bit about my data and method. I like to go and find sources of data when I haven't got the time or maybe the funding in every case to go out and find data on my own, to find interesting sources of data and see what they have to offer. The reason I'm doing this project in part is I was asked to be part of a project that's looking at spirituality and politics, and being that I am an empirical social scientist, I thought the best thing that I can bring to the table is to go out and find some data. If there are any data out there about people who say that they are spiritual. Lucky me, I managed after digging through a bunch of possible data sets, I found this 2005 faith and family in America survey (so it's reasonably recent, which is very useful), conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, which is a polling firm in Washington, for the PBS tv

series “religion and ethics news weekly,” which you all must watch. Of course, it probably comes on at a really bad time for viewing, but you can.... [interaction with audience] It’s a wonderful, wonderful show, so, in any event, you all must watch religion and ethics.... In any case the sample size is 1131, and what I do in this little project is both descriptive bivariate analysis – so, let’s kind of get an idea of what the lay of the land is of these people who say they are SBNR – and then later multivariate analysis in the form of logistic progression.

So, here’s about my variable – the SBNR variable. The Greenberg Quinlan Rosner people asked survey respondents: which of the following comes closest to describing your beliefs? Now those of you who do anything with survey research are going to see this item and cringe, probably for a variety of reasons. It’s not a wonderful sort of item, but for my purposes, it works very, very well. “Are you religious?” A half of the respondents said, “Yes, I’m religious.” And then it went on to ask other questions, but this is an introductory question. “Are you spiritual but not religious?” a little bit more than a third say that. “Are you neither?” Ten percent say neither, and I will mention the neithers a little bit later on. And everybody else, if you do the quick math, there’s a little bit of a remainder there, and they volunteered other responses. They didn’t want to answer, or they said both. They didn’t offer both as an actual part of the response set, but, boy, they should have because that would be interesting, too. But we don’t have that, so we can’t talk about people who say that they are both. So that would be the data.

So, what I decided to do is compare the people who said they are SBNR to the people who said they are religious, meaning that we are taking the neithers out for the most part. And actually, later on when we do the multivariate analysis, that the neithers technically are included with everybody else such that only SBNRs are in a category by themselves. So what that means is that if we see big differences really between SBNRs and everybody else, that’s even more impressive because the neithers are still in there with the people who say that they’re religious. IT’s SBNRs versus everything else when we get to be multivariate analysis.

Okay so what about the social demographics of these folks? Is there any kind of difference between SBNRs and people who say that they’re religious? In short, no, and this is very surprising to me. When you look at their educational attainment, I don’t need to describe that, right? Pretty much the same. No statistical significance there. Income: a little bit of difference around the middle, but if you think about combining those two middle categories, that’s going to roughly even out, and the three lower categories and the two upper categories are very similar, and there’s not statistical significance between the two groups in terms of income. My favorite is age. So, that hypothesis about age is absolutely incorrect. You can’t get any closer than that – 47.5 for people who say they are religious, 47.6 for SBNRs. [“Interruption by audience member.” Yes? “Question from audience member.” Absolutely. “Further explanation by audience member.” Just the term. So it means to them whatever it means to them, which of course is messy and problematic. No definition is offered for them, unfortunately. That would be cool if it were, but no.] Alright. Then we might ask, what about SBNRs’ religious characteristics? Do they ever darken the door of a church or synagogue? What do they think

about scripture? Are they distinctive, religiously, apart from not being distinctive, frankly, in terms of their demographics? Here we see unsurprising evidence as well; the SBNR people are in the light blue and the religious people are in red. Of course people who say they are religious attend worship services much more frequently than people who are SBNR, but notice that it is not the case that everybody who says that he or she is SBNR never attends, and you have a small but visible proportion there in the weekly plus category. So what does that suggest? It suggests that there are people out there – let’s take a hypothetical Catholic or a hypothetical southern Baptist who says, “You know, I think I’m more spiritual than I am religious,” suggesting that defining spirituality is like defining fog. But we’re interested here only in the idea that I’m saying I’m spiritual but not religious. We’re leaving aside at least for the moment all that messiness inherent in that. How about biblical interpretation? You might think, well, SBNRs probably think for the most part that the bible is a collection of stories, moral tales and that sort of thing. Very few of them, though, as you can see, said that in one way or another the Bible is not the word of God. Religious people were much more likely, as you can imagine, to say that it was the literal word of God, but when you take a look at the percentage of SBNRs in the other category, which was anything other than the word of God, very few of them are there. So again that suggests a straddling of two worlds – a straddling of the world of religion on the one hand and complete secularism on the other. You might be interested to know what kind of religious tradition did these folks say that they affiliated themselves with. Well, what we see here is that SBNRs, more than 25% of them say that they are evangelical, which is very, very interesting in and of itself. There’s a fair number that are in the none category, as you would expect, but what you see is that, honestly, when you look at many of these traditions – mainline Protestant, Jewish, Catholic – there’s not a whole lot of difference in terms of the percentage of each group who are religious and who are SBNR. What this suggests to me is that the SBNR label isn’t something that necessarily attaches just to people who are secular. It attaches to an extent of people who are secular, but it has appeal beyond that in a way that was rather surprising to me, quite frankly. [audience question. Oh, absolutely, yes. Absolutely. If you still have some kind of nominal affiliation, like you’re brought up Catholic but you don’t take that out of your head (“Yeah, I’m Catholic”) but if you get deeper into it, you’re not as sort of strongly affiliated with the Catholic Church, let’s say, for example, then you might otherwise be.]

Now we might think a little bit about the politics of these people. Now notice, up to this point, that there’s a lot less difference than one might expect, especially in terms of demographics, and to an extent in terms of religious beliefs and behaviors, and that sort of thing, than we might expect. Will there be, though, any kind of political difference or politically relevant difference between these two groups? And the short answer to that is yes, very interestingly. First of all, party ID: what you see here on the bottom as you can tell is the standard seven-point party ID scale, all the way from strong democrat to strong republican. Notice how very prominent being strong republican is among people who say they are religious, and by the way that includes people across the board we are not worried about differences among religious traditions here, we are not worried at all about differences among people who attend mass every day versus people

who only go on Christmas and Easter. All we're worried about here is people who say, "I'm religious." So look at that very powerful percentage, or very large percent who are republican. Notice, too, you have to be a little more subtle in looking at these other things, but notice how there's clearly some greater preference among spiritual but not religious folks for the democratic party, and there is as we thought a little bit more preference among SBNRs for being independent. See about the same thing with ideology. Unfortunately, the survey only gave the respondents the choice among liberal, moderate or conservative, so you don't have any shades of gray in there, but this shows you about the same sort of thing. So, what we're seeing is that, at least in a bivariate way, SBNR folks are more left of center, like we might have expected.

How about abortion, as one of these social moral issues that we might be likely to be interested in? SBNRs clearly, clearly more pro-choice than people who say they are religious, and vice versa. How about same-sex marriage? Same sort of thing. It's interesting to see here the civil union item, where, I don't really know about civil unions, it's really sort of in between, it's either you're for it or your against it in this interesting sort of way. SBNR people far more accepting of the idea of same-sex marriage, as opposed of people who are religious being a lot more interested in defining marriage as between one man and one woman. Same sort of thing if we look at attitudes about adoption of children by gay couples. SBNRs lots more likely to favor adoption of children by gay couples, and religious people a lot more likely to oppose it. And for the attitudes to be rather polarized If you look at what the two tallest bars are here, suggests polarization, it doesn't suggest everybody's somewhere in the mushy middle.

I also asked, just because I thought it would be interesting, and because there was a nice item in the survey that got at this, what does moral values mean to you? And the survey offered when they asked the respondents this question, what does moral values mean to you? They offered five options: compassion, concern for the sick or needy; social justice, such as preventing human rights abuses or discrimination; personal values, such as honesty and responsibility; social issues, such as abortion or gay marriage; and family values such as trying to protect children from sex and violence on TV and the internet. Now, here's another moment where, if you write surveys, you cringe because they're giving them such incredibly detailed definitions here. What is it that we mean here? That is partly why I don't want to make a big deal of this aspect of my analysis, but I did take a look, and what I did was I combined compassion and justice as sort of left-leaning egalitarian kinds of approaches to morality and I combined family values with social issues as being a more kind of right-wing sort of interpretation, and what we see is that yes, religious people are more likely than SBNRs to say that they are sort of enmeshed in definitions of values that revolve around the sort of moral conservatism, but we do not see any kind of greater affinity among SBNRs for compassion and justice, which is interesting because it suggests to me that the left isn't doing a very good job of pushing that message to people who might be responsive to it. It's also highly important to notice just how many SBNRs chose personal values. I'll remind you that that's personal values such as honesty and responsibility. This also suggests a divorcing of oneself from organized entities in society. Personal

responsibility, individualism, making ones own way, that sort of thing. So that might also, in and of itself, suggest something about the broader politics of SBNRs, but we'll have to see how that plays out.

And so next, what we're going to do is we're going to move to multivariate analysis. And so in essence what I'm asking is, it's all well and good to have bar charts here and see in a bivariate way what the differences are between these two groups, but is there any way that we can conclude that being SBNR on its own, in comparison with other variables, has any kind of meaningful impact on political outcomes. Does the distinctiveness of SBNRs, *vis a vis* religious Americans, carry any broad political significance, or does SBNR identity on its own shape political attitudes? Is it the case that being SBNR on its own is going to stand out as a significant predictor in regression models? To answer these, questions, here's what I did. I took five possible political outcome variables. One: democratic identity. And I coded everybody as either democratic or not. One is yes, democratic, and zero is everybody else, whether you're independent or anywhere over on the republican spectrum. Two: ideology. Are you liberal? Or separately, are you moderate or are you conservative? Three: abortion. Are you pro-choice? Meaning, abortion should be legal most or all of the time. Four: gay marriage. Are you, for the most part, in favor of the idea of same-sex marriage, and I included civil unions in there. And then finally, fifth: gay adoption. Are you for the most part in favor of same-sex couples adopting children? So those are my five dependent variables. The independent variables, that is the things that I think are going to shape in some meaningful way the outcome variable, the dependent variable, include an SBNR dummy, which is equal to 1 if you say you're SBNR and 0 if you say you're anything else, which again I think might strengthen in an interesting way – at least because this analysis is sort of preliminary – the substantive significance of any of the findings that we might see. And then five controls: education, income, age, race and gender, which are typically used in models of things like party ID and ideology and attitudes on issues. So now we get a chance to take a quick look at this.

First, what we see is a logistic regression of democratic party ID. And the most important things to look at here are first of all the odds ratio. This odds ratio of 1.64 indicates that spiritual but not religious people are 1.64 times more likely than other people in the sample, anybody who says they're not SBNR, to be a democrat. We also see that this is a statistically significant predictor in the model, and the standardized coefficient shows us that because its value at .06 is greater than or equal to any other measure among the standardized coefficient that being SBNR is in this case equal to the impact of being female, in terms of predicting being a democrat. Another way of thinking about this, which I think might be even clearer, is to look at the predicted probabilities. And what this ends up doing is it ends up taking the logistic regression analysis and showing us exactly how likely are you to be a democrat if you are spiritual but not religious, and separately if you are not. There's a 68% chance that you're a democrat if you are spiritual but not religious. Only a 57% chance if you are not spiritual but not religious (that sounds awfully redundant). Secondly, liberal ideology. Same sort of procedure: what we look at first is the odds ratio, or we

can look at it first, I'm choosing to look at it first. You are 2.59x more likely than everybody else in the sample to be liberal if you're spiritual but not religious. The variable is statistically significant, and the standardized coefficient shows us that is the most powerful of all these predictors in the model. More powerful than age, more powerful than race, more powerful than anything else. And we see the predicted probabilities. If you're SBNR, you have a 53% chance of being liberal, which might not seem all that impressive (it's almost like a coin flip); however, if you're not SBNR, you have only a 31% chance of being liberal. And liberal is almost this dirty word, so maybe these are folks who are willing to overlook that and say, "Yeah, you know what, I'm liberal."

And then we move, in the next analysis, to pro-choice attitudes. Here we see the same pattern. Odds ratio even larger: 3.26x more likely to be pro-choice if you're SBNR. Statistically significant, and a very large standardized coefficient. If we look at the predicted probabilities, 56% chance of being pro-choice if you're SBNR, versus only 28% chance if you're not. And I remind you that the "not", the red category is not SBNR, meaning that the neithers are in there, too. And so maybe what I need to do next is to pull out the neithers and do ordered logistic regression and see what that ends up doing for me. And then we've got favor gay marriage, same sort of pattern, same idea, large odds ratio. SBNR is statistically significant, showing us that yes, being SBNR makes you more likely to favor gay marriage. Predictive probabilities 59% chance of favoring gay marriage if you're SBNR, versus only 36% if you are not SBNR, and finally favoring gay adoption. This is sort of interesting, I think the odds ratio shows us of course that SBNRs, yes, you're 2.17 times more likely to favor gay adoption if you're SBNR than if you are not, and it is statistically significant, but it hangs in there with some very, very powerful other predictors here. If we look at the standardized coefficients, age and gender. So we might think, well yes, younger people are more tolerant around issues of sexuality, and women might be more interested in letting anyone who wants to raise a child well adopt a child, regardless of their sexuality, but being SBNR on its own hangs in there alongside again these powerful controls. Yes, sir. [question from the audience]. And then, for the final predicted probabilities here, 57% chance of favoring gay adoption if you're SBNR, versus only 38% if you're not.

So what we end up seeing, and I know it's a lot of tables and everything, but what we end up seeing I think is pretty interesting. First, that being SBNR on its own renders you very clearly to be more likely to be distinctive politically, to be interested in a liberal kind of manifestation of socio-moral issues, even though – and this is interesting – even though there's no specific kind of social network like congregations in place from which SBNR people can benefit. And two, other research on this sort of topic suggests that it isn't the case that people who find themselves wanting to be spiritual aren't somehow interested in networking with one another. They do, but those networks are not a priority of deciding that one is spiritual. "Oh, I'm decided I'm spiritual in this individual kind of quest. Now I'll go out and find people who are like me." But somehow, even absent that kind of meaningful social network, being in existence ahead of time, SBNR people are clearly politically distinctive anyway, which I think is rather quite interesting. You

might wonder, what about their political participation? So do I. they didn't ask about that in the survey, which is very disappointing, which suggests of course that more research – and this is kind of a standard old song in academia – more research is needed to, you know, clarify these questions more. And of course that's true in this case, as it is in most other cases, but we particularly need to know, do they actually do anything? I mean, they look politically distinctive, but do they do anything about it? Do they get mobilized around it can anybody go out and try and rally them around a cause? You'd think maybe they could, but I think as we think forward about people who are religious nones or spiritual or spiritual but not religious or however one wants to define people who are opting out of religious life, when we think about whether or not they can be politically mobilized, I think we have to really be very clear about the many obstacles that any campaign or interest group or party or candidate or whatever would have in trying to find these folks because one the social networks within which they exist might not be as self-evident as say churches, where you can go on Sunday morning and find a bunch of people who might agree about X, Y, and Z, and also the fact that there isn't much of a recent history of campaigns being successful in mobilizing people around anti-religion. The democratic party has a real tough time. The republican party has been able to say, "we're the party that's more friendly to religion," but what do the democrats do? They can't not do religion, because then that's going to irritate a bunch of potential democratic voters, but they can't go too far on religion because then that's going to irritate people who are not religious, and so it isn't the case that it's such a straightforward matter for the democrats. Don't think for a moment, though, in closing, that SBNR people can't be politically mobilized in some way, because one thing that I'm not reporting here: they asked these survey respondents whether they were happy with their lives in general, and just because I was curious, I thought, oh, let me run that, too, and see what that ends up looking like. SBNR people are significantly less likely, statistically significantly less likely to say that they're happy with their lives, which is very interesting. Maybe they think about their lives more than most people, or maybe, Robert Putnam might say, "You gotta have church friends," so maybe these folks don't have church friends, and so maybe they're sad, I don't know. But dissatisfaction, on a much more serious note – dissatisfaction often breeds political mobilization. So if these folks are dissatisfied about something that is systematic and harness-able, then watch out.

So, thank you for your attention. It was my pleasure to speak today.