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ABSTRACT
Despite increasing interest in populism and religion, scholars generally lack a conceptual foundation to distinguish strategies through which populists integrate religion into mobilisation. We use the case of Rodrigo R. Duterte's Philippines to derive a four-part typology of such interactions grounded in distinct dimensions of populism. This typology distinguishes causal mechanisms and clarifies how, even within a single country, populists may opportunistically blend several religious strategies to suit their personalistic political ends. Populists may draw on religious norms and identity to buttress boundaries between in-groups and out-groups, credibly signal their outsider status by challenging religious hierarchies, leverage personalistic linkages to religious elites, and deploy a populist style with religious affinities. We trace how such strategies may cement religious support, and, at times, motivate religious resistance to populist rule. A systematic subnational assessment correlating religious demographics and Duterte's voteshare in his 2016 election across over 40,000 Philippine subdistricts evaluates empirical implications of each pathway using relevant religious communities.

Flagships of democracy's Third Wave are foundering in Brazil, Poland, and the Philippines, where elected president Rodrigo Duterte successfully consolidated his own power while gaoling an opposition leader and rehabilitating the legacy of the late dictator, Ferdinand E. Marcos. In 2019, the Varieties of Democracy project scored the Philippines as at the highest risk of an "Adverse Regime Transition."[1] Democratic backsliding in these prominent cases has been laid at the feet of populist political mobilisation featuring an exclusionary definition of "the people," anti-elite framing, personalistic rule, and a unique populist style.[2]

While scholars have traced the rise of contemporary populism to a range of factors, notably economic decline and inequality, immigration-fuelled cultural-backlash, or "voting against disorder" to channel "frustrations with unstable and ineffective governance," religion "remains a neglected area of research" on populism.[3] When scholars do

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explore the topic, they generally implicate religion rather narrowly in constituting populism's "thin ideology" of majoritarian identity weaponized against minority groups. This is particularly evident in cases of European right-wing populism.[4] While important, this overlooks other ways populists may draw on religion to secure power, and centring cases of religion and populism on advanced industrial democracies risks truncating the pathways through which populists integrate religion into mobilisation. Based on a prominent Southeast Asian case, we argue that populists may draw on substantive religious commitments, even from minority groups, to define horizontal, in-group boundaries. Furthermore, populism features not only horizontal boundaries, but also vertical, anti-elite appeals. This may entice populists to confront religious authorities, risking blowback from devotees but potentially highlighting their outsider status.[5] Political-strategic approaches to populism highlight personalistic and transactional political logics, while stylistic approaches emphasize discursive and performative styles of politics each of which may implicate certain sectors of religious support.[6] Distinguishing horizontal belonging, vertical anti-elite signalling, personalistic political strategy, and performative style points to distinct causal pathways through which religion intersects with populist mobilisation, thus improving understanding of one of the central challenges to contemporary democratic consolidation.

The Philippines is particularly suited for this exercise precisely because Duterte's rise demonstrates an often-overlooked fact: an individual populist may simultaneously adopt distinct postures with different elements of a country's religious landscape. Duterte has made global headlines for attacking clerical elites of the country's predominant Roman Catholic majority. However, such rhetoric aims to establish Duterte's anti-elite bona fides, rather than attack the Catholic faith of average Filipinos. This leaves space for a variety of other strategies to appeal to the archipelago's smaller religious denominations, both Christian and not. This internal variation provides a rich environment for the "early stages of reflection and research on a complex problem" in which scholars of typological methods advocate "inductive development" of types that can then serve as a foundation for generalized data collection and theory testing.[7] This approach highlights equifinality in populist mobilisation, with empirically distinct causal pathways involving religion leading to a shared outcome: cementing support for the populist leader. We do *not* argue that religious, ethno-religious, or civilisational majoritarian identity was Duterte's predominant rhetorical appeal, à la populists in places like Hungary or India, or that religion was the primary cause of his 2016 election. Instead, Duterte's eclectic engagement with religion shows the diverse opportunities available to populists, even when mobilising an aggrieved religious majority is not their primary rhetorical register. It also provides an opportunity to examine the political effects of rhetoric from populists targeting religious elites, even in a high-religiosity environment.

Our analysis also contributes to the study of populism in Philippine politics. Scholars have long noted the fragility of democratic institutions in the country, in particular due to corruption tied to elite political dynasties, documented the central role of Catholic clergy in myth-making about liberal democracy, and the interplay between religious elites and earlier populist leaders like Joseph Estrada.[8] Prior analyses of Duterte's bases of support have tended to stress factors like regionalism and middle-class anxieties about urban crime and disorder.[9] Our analysis is the first to systematically show that analysing the Philippines' complex religious landscape advances our understanding of Duterte's populist appeal.

Linking religion and populist mobilisation

While Duterte's rhetorical combat with Catholic clerical elites highlights a contentious approach to religion, the broader "political ambivalence" of religion suggests that a more complex relationship is likely at work.[10] A contingent religion-populist relationship would also reflect the "shifty" nature of populism itself, with its "pragmatic and opportunistic" strategic choices serving only the interests of the leader.[11]

Four constitutive dimensions of populism in recent scholarship generate distinct pathways of potential religious mobilisation. Many scholars, particularly of right-wing European populism, define the concept primarily as a "thin-centred" political ideology purportedly expressing the "general will," with the populist preserving "a virtuous and homogenous people."[12] Other thin-ideological accounts highlight the anti-elite dimension of populist mobilisation, in which populists inveigh against a "set of elites and dangerous 'others' who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice."[13] A more "political-strategic approach" defines populism as characterized by a "personalistic leader … exercising power based on direct, unmediated uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."[14] And finally, analysts have identified a populist "style" foregrounding discursive and performative acts indicative of populist rule.[15]

Each of these conceptualizations of populism suggests a potential interface with religion. Religious identity often plays a part in constituting thin ideological boundaries around "the people." But religion may also buttress horizontal boundary construction through more substantive normative commitments among religious communities. Furthermore, religion may become linked to populism's anti-elitism. And populism's personalistic logic or stylistic performance may present pathways for religious mobilisation that bypasses institutional constraints.

Religion initially remained largely peripheral to comparative studies of populism.[16] This may be because populism's insistence on "a claim of exclusive moral representation" seems "tantamount to idolatry."[17] Recent scholarship has begun to revise this oversight, documenting the role of religion in populist movements.[18] Yabanci and Taleski trace the comparative role of religion in populist discourse, public policy, and coalition alliances, while Nilsson de Hanaas and Shterin highlight the "political style" of populism.[19] Room remains to specify religion's role in the mobilisation strategy of populist rulers, explain sub-national variation in relationships between populists and religion, and test the impact of populist strategies on political behaviour.

It is worth briefly considering what elements of the general concept of religion may make it an attractive tool to populists. Without claiming to define religion, or denying that similar effects could be tied to other dimensions of culture or identity, we draw on recent scholarship to highlight three dimensions likely to prove compelling to populist electoral appeals: transcendent moral claims, community norms, and social organisation.[20] First, religion often provides "a belief system that structures the relationship of the individual to the divine."[21] To the extent that these ideas specify, and even impel or forbid, certain behaviours in relation to ultimate ends, religion may become politically potent. Second, religion often operates via communal norms, which can help transform personal commitments of individuals into mass, coordinated action. Finally, we note the "organisational capacity" often associated with religion, both material and symbolic assets, that can help mobilize blocs of supporters.[22]

These elements of religion may of course operate in non-populist party politics, but we argue that distinct features of populism are especially likely to activate them. First, populism's ideological "thinness" reduces potential barriers to building religious support. Second, the common role of religion in contributing to identity makes it a likely candidate for defining both the in-group and out-group that are central to populist politics. Third, religion's occasional role in defining and reinforcing social hierarchy may make it a likely target for populists looking to build anti-elite bona fides.[23] Finally, the emotive, millenarian dimensions of certain religious interpretations may mesh with the charismatic, crisis-driven populist performative style.

Taken together, our work advances recent research in several ways. First, while some populist movements instrumentalize religion "as an identity, not as a faith or a set of religious values," in other cases populists cement religious support on more substantive grounds tied to religious norms.[24] Second, we provide one framework that makes sense of populist movements interacting with, and even incorporating, minority religious traditions into their conception of "the people." Third, we conceptualize not simply paths through which populists appeal to religion, but also the confrontations that populists at times provoke with religious elites. Fourth, we look beyond Europe to address the "overwhelmingly Western-centric" nature of the extant religion and populism literature.[25] And finally, we deploy data that allows us to systematically test empirical implications of these distinct populist mobilisation pathways.

Theory and evidence from the Philippines

Below, we toggle between theories of populism and qualitative evidence from the Philippines to build inductively a typology of distinct mechanisms linking populist mobilisation and religion. In Elman's terms, this is a "classificatory typology … guiding scholars to answer the question, 'What is this a case of?'" which then sets the stage "to map, and compare, a [broader] population of cases."[26] The typological approach is "particularly suited for discovering equifinality," in this case, empirically distinct causal pathways through which populist leaders reach the overarching goal of securing personal power.[27] Given extensive scholarly debates over populism's multidimensional conceptualisation, a typology that is attentive to distinguishing causal pathways to a shared outcome – populist support – seems an especially appropriate complement to any correlational analysis.

The Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte is a well-suited case from which to generate such a typology.[28] Our typology implies that populist strategies are not exclusive, even within a single country. Multiple pathways may coexist within a single populist's political strategy. The (often underappreciated) diversity of the Philippine religious landscape provides ideal internal variation to evaluate this possibility. While the Philippines lacks the mobilisation of majoritarian religious identity that dominates existing attention to religion in research on populism, religion in the country is linked to populist mobilisation in a multifaceted manner. Duterte has provoked high-profile conflicts with clerical leaders of the Catholic majority, but to establish his anti-elite bona fides rather than attack the faith of average citizens. This important distinction has minimized costs and left open diverse, distinct pathways for mobilizing other portions of the country's religious landscape to support the populist project.

Path 1: religion and in-group boundaries: identity and norms

Particularly in European cases, scholars have tended to emphasize how religious identity delineates "the people." As Marzouki and McDonnell put it, "Populists express strong moral judgements … portraying society in Manichaean terms as divided in a good 'us' and a bad (even 'evil' 'them'). In defining both of these categories, religious identities often play an important role."[29] Such scholarship generally conceives religion as an identity type rather than a set of substantive beliefs or practices. Brubaker calls such populist use of religion "strikingly contradictory … its identitarian Christianity is devoid of religious content."[30]

This formulation, while convincing in many prominent cases, is in fact only one manifestation of religion's interface with populist group boundaries. Normative religious commitments may also draw groups into the populist coalition when they align, even coincidentally, with the populist's in-group definition. For example, so-called "penal populists" define belonging in terms of forms of criminal deviance, while other populists highlight traditional family roles as constitutive of "the people." Either approach may draw support from religious communities with overlapping normative commitments that draw believers into the populist's "heroic mission."[31] Highlighting this possibility brings the added benefit of making sense of populist in-group boundaries that include religious *minorities*, whose normative commitments may align them with a populist leader even if they fall outside of a country's religious majority.[32]

Turning to the Philippines, the defining in-group dimension of Duterte's populist mobilisation has been a violent, exclusionary approach to drug pushers and users, not mobilizing the identity of a religious majority.[33] Duterte's construction of out-group distinctions has, however, meshed with at least some of the country's Protestant clergy. They do not share an obvious religious identity with Duterte, but rather an endorsement, stemming from their own religious norms, of the identity boundaries he has drawn around criminality and drug abuse. For example, Duterte's Presidential Advisor for Religious Affairs is a prominent evangelical leader and author of a book entitled *Remove the Evil from Our Midst,* advocating "a biblical blueprint for comprehensive social action against delinquency and substance abuse."[34] This pastor has praised Duterte for "a no-nonsense *Kontra Droga* campaign for the sake of keeping our nation a wholesome place to live" as a *Philippine News Agency* article noted on May 24, 2019. Cornelio and Marañon argue that this is emblematic of a view among "megachurch pastors in the country, that the war on drugs is a 'righteous intervention' on the part of a God-ordained administration."[35] Protestants in general are a diverse bunch, and some evangelical leaders have expressed criticism of the drug war. However, Cornelio and Medina find significant theological support among many evangelical clergy for Duterte's populist boundaries.[36]

Seventh Day Adventism provides one example of a discrete denomination that has shown enthusiasm for Duterte's approach to the Drug War. In 2016, Duterte reportedly remarked that he would become an Adventist if the Catholic Church continued to criticize his approach to fighting drugs (*Update Philippines*, May 20, 2016). An Adventist elder aligned with Duterte's definition of the people, writing, "LET YOUR OWN SIN KILL YOU … We as members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church are praying for President Rodrigo Duterte to make him victorious against the drug syndicate monsters in our country, which had already destroyed the lives of millions of

Filipinos" (*The Freeman*, July 17, 2016). The country's Adventist health system works in partnership with the government's Dangerous Drug Board to express that "the SDA church fully supports President Duterte's campaign against drug abuse" (*Philippine Information Agency*, February 27, 2020). One of the country's most "relentless" and "ruthless" local police chiefs carrying out the drug war is a devout Adventist who delivers sermons to inmates in his station (*Deutsche Welle Online*, September 18, 2018).

Path 2: no higher powers: religion and anti-elite signalling

If religion commonly helps populists define the horizontal bounds of the people, scholars have paid relatively less attention to how religion serves as one source of credible *anti-elite signalling*, particularly where religious elites are closely linked to establishment politics. In such cases, populist leaders can attack religious elites – a public symbol of establishment power – to credibly signal their outsider ideology. Religiously targeted anti-elitism may bring to mind anti-Semitic attacks on Jewish religious, economic and political leaders, but this mechanism operates more broadly, and need not be limited to religious minorities. Indeed, populists at times target clerical leaders of a religious majority, while preserving unmediated appeals to religious believers.

Such attacks can of course provoke resistance, but the strategy retains some appeal. First, anti-elitism may attract support from religious communities traditionally marginalized or excluded by mainstream elites. Second, populists can minimize costs by separating criticisms of allegedly corrupt establishment religious elites from "ordinary" believers. Left-wing populists in Latin America have at times demonstrated this mechanism, for instance Hugo Chávez declaring critics in the Catholic hierarchy "liars," "perverts," and "Neanderthals,"[37] while similar rhetoric emerges among current right-wing populists in Europe. Italian Northern League leaders, for instance, have claimed to speak for "grassroots Catholic values" rather than "what the [clerical] elites want."[38]

This pathway helps explain Duterte's rhetorical targeting of the Catholic Church in the Philippines, particularly the leadership of the Manila-based Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). CBCP leaders are among the pillars of Third Wave democracy in the country, largely via their place in the "People Power" revolution that ended the Marcos dictatorship.[39] Still, elite Catholic clergy have been subject to controversies and scandals, including allegations of fathering children, collusion with the corrupt administration of former-President Arroyo, and contentious opposition to a generally popular piece of reproductive health legislation.[40] We argue that Duterte's anti-Catholic comments are *not* an attempt to define the entire Catholic majority as the populist out-group. Instead, they help signal his status as an outsider vis-à-vis the Manila-based political elite. The strategy is a potentially risky one precisely because it can trigger resistance from those elites under attack.[41] Before the 2016 election, CBCP President Archbishop Socrates Villegas urged voters to reject candidates who "openly declared indifference if not dislike and disregard for the Church specially her moral teachings (*CBCP Online*, May 1, 2016). The populist wager is that many voters distinguish between attacks on religious hierarchies and attacks on their personal faith.

The Philippines illustrates that such anti-elite signalling against one set of religious authorities may also attract support from religious groups traditionally excluded from the elite. This pathway is evident in Duterte's relationship with the country's Muslim

minority. His populist rise was in part framed against economic, political and religious elites in "Imperial Manila," while empowering a diverse set of regional, tribal, economic and religious groups seen as unjustly excluded from national politics.[42] The Muslim minority fits squarely within this coalition. It makes up only 5-10% of the national population, with particular concentration on parts of the island of Mindanao, home to Duterte's political base of Davao City.[43] Duterte's mother is of Mindanaoan-Moro ancestry, providing "an ethnic background to tap with … Muslim voters spread across the country."[44] Even before his national election, then-Mayor Duterte reportedly sponsored Muslims to make the *hajj* (*SunStar*, June 5, 2015). Altez and Caday describe "the unison of voices of the Mindanaoans" rallying to the populist coalition, with Islam one marker of outsider status that would be vindicated by anti-elite populism.[45] When Duterte chanted, "Long live the Moro! *Allahu Akbar* [God is Great]!" in his campaign stops (*CNNPhilippines*, April 9, 2016) he was signalling precisely the religious appeal that anti-elite attacks can bring. Important here is not whether Duterte "is" or "isn't" a Muslim himself; rather, he is signalling to Muslim Filipinos that he will stand up for them against the Manila elite.[46]

Path 3: religion and populism's personalistic political logic

Populism can also be analysed in "political-strategic" terms. In this view, populism is a strategy of rule "through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalised support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers."[47] The key characteristics of this approach are the dual concentration on the personal leadership of the populist, and that individual's direct ties to the people.

While not prominent in existing scholarship on religion and populism, a strategic approach has implications for religion and populist mobilisation. Its emphasis on "the clear predominance of a powerful leader" should empower those with personal ties to the populist leader rather than traditional intermediaries in parties or civil society.[48] This suggests influence should flow through personalistic exchange between the populist and targeted religious elites. They may desire financial support to expand houses of worship, access to rents created by favourable legislation, or to secure political appointments for themselves or co-religionists.[49] Populism's "thin" ideology facilitates these strategies, allowing populists to approximate a "do everything" strategy engaging a diverse array of ideational, materialist, and personalistic linkages to various constituencies.[50] In these cases, we would expect political alliances between religious groups and populists to manifest via material and symbolic benefits accruing to the religion itself (i.e. club goods) such as new houses of worship, grants of property, tax concessions, and political sinecures for key elites.

The Duterte Administration has utilized personalistic appeals to secure the support of certain religious elites. Evidence of this pathway is clearest in relation to the *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (INC) a Christian denomination founded in the Philippines that claims roughly 3 million members. Duterte appointed the head of the INC as Special Envoy for Overseas Filipino Concerns, an important position given the significant portion of the country's workforce employed abroad (*Rappler*, February 14, 2018). The INC formally endorsed Duterte in the run-up to the 2016 election, in keeping with its pattern of mandated bloc voting in elections.[51] In addition to the appointment of the INC's head, Duterte has approved a long-term renewal of the INC's

privately-held telecommunications franchise (*ABS-CBN News*, February 19, 2019).[52] Angling for such religious endorsements in the Philippines is not exclusive to populists, but the exchange between Duterte and these leaders is consistent with the political strategic approach to understanding populist support.

Path 4: the populist style

Others approach populism as a distinctive "style," highlighting either discursive[53] or performative[54] characteristics of populist political leadership. This style ties the populist directly to "the people," filling a potential gap created by populism's intensely anti-institutional strategic logic that bypasses traditional intermediaries. Stylistic analysis tends to emphasize "notions of conspiracy and emergency"[55] and "Manichean discourse."[56] Accounts of populist style also highlight the "tendency for heightened emotions to be focused on a charismatic leader" in populist settings.[57] The "charismatic bond" justifies a populist style characterized by "directness" and "passion."[58] Populism thus becomes a "performative relationship," with new media technology providing a "stage" on which populists enact their relationship with the people.[59]

Such a populist style is at times analysed in nearly religious terms, with populism approximating "the revivalist flavour of a movement"[60] and the charismatic leader imbued with "quasi-divine character and skills."[61] The "dynamic interaction between charismatic leadership [and] a narrative of salvation" contributes to the "sacralization of politics"[62] in which populist rhetoric "offers salvation."[63] This populist style may create an opportunity for mobilizing sectors of the religious landscape sharing a stylistic affinity for charismatic leadership, Manichaean discourse, and new media platforms. Stavrakakis, for instance, demonstrates that a populist style has permeated political rhetoric from leadership of the Greek Orthodox Church,[64] and diverse religious leaders have adeptly incorporated new communication technology to connect with believers. In counterfactual terms, a political leader lacking the populist style, even with similar ideological commitments, would fail to garner enthusiastic support from religious communities whose style approximates that of populism.

In the Philippines, a religious affinity with the populist style can be traced most clearly between Duterte's populism and the Jesus is Lord (JIL) movement. Duterte clearly demonstrates many indicators of the populist style, with "personal charisma" combining with "emotional connections" to create "melodrama [that] is in fact very serious business."[65] JIL is a non-denominational, charismatic Protestant community of several million individuals, originally indigenous to the Philippines.[66] Kessler and Rüland's comprehensive research described the JIL movement as a "populist religion" long before Duterte's rise to national prominence, noting the combination of "reliance on charismatic leadership, demagoguery, and unconventional methods to attract public attention" that constitutes the populist style.[67] In language that could easily be applied to a Duterte campaign stop, they describe religious communities in which "the good and bad, right and wrong, are easily definable … There is no room for ambiguity."[68] Cornelio similarly documents the "eschatological language" from JIL's leader, Brother Eddie Villanueva, while also highlighting JIL's "assertive use of Filipino language" to build appeal among the masses, not English-speaking elites.[69] Bro. Eddie publicly endorsed Duterte in 2016, praying for God to "send your battalion of angels" to help Duterte "hasten the transformation of the Philippines."[70]

To summarise, potential paths connecting populists to religion are more diverse than often assumed in existing scholarship. Populists may instrumentalise religion to define in-group boundaries in ways that draw on both identity and normative commitments. They may utilise religion to signal their anti-elite bona fides, simultaneously attacking clerical elites and appealing to religious outsiders. They may also engage in more political-strategic calculations to cement religious loyalty via personalistic exchange, or mobilise religious communities that share an affinity with the populist style. Table 1 summarizes these paths, as well as portions of the religious landscape in the Philippines likely to represent each.

Ecological evidence from the Philippines

We now turn to a quantitative examination of empirical implications of each mechanism based on the 2016 presidential election. We do not aim in this section to test whether religious demographics explain Duterte's electoral victory. Instead, we systematically evaluate the empirical implications derived from our causal pathways against real-world electoral data. To the extent that the evidence from the statistical analysis is consistent with predictions of the preceding sections regarding the direction and strength of various religious demographics and support for Duterte, we can gain confidence that the mechanisms have some explanatory power in the realm of mass political behaviour.

We use a subnational ecological research design that takes advantage of variation across over 40,000 barangays. Barangays are, according to the Philippines Statistics Authority, "the smallest political unit in the Philippines" and the most disaggregated administrative unit for which census data, including data on religious affiliation, exists.[71] To formally state our expectations, the qualitative evidence suggests that

Table 1. Religion and populism: conceptualizing pathways of mobilization.

Definition	Indicators	Illustration in the Philippines
In-Group Boundaries		
Religious identity or norms share overlapping consensus with populist in-group/out-group distinction.	Populist rhetoric and rallies feature religious words and symbols conflating in-group with a religious identity or norms. Responses from relevant religious elites indicating consensus.	Support of "penal populism" in-group definition from some Protestant clerics.
Anti-Elite Signalling		
Populist attacks religious elites to credibly signal outsider status.	Statements from populists criticizing religious elite corruption along with broader critique of elite politics. Populist appeals to excluded religions.	Duterte's criticism of the Catholic hierarchy in the Philippines and outsider appeals to Moro/Muslim community.
Personalistic Political Strategy		
Populist delivers direct pledges to address personal interests of religious elites.	Populist delivery of material inducements such as: political appointments, infrastructure funds, restrictions on religious competitors.	*Iglesia Ni Cristo* endorsement of Duterte, with subsequent personal benefits for religious leadership.
The Populist Style		
Populism's discursive style and charismatic leadership facilitate ties to religious communities.	Populist partnership with religious communities characterized by Manichaean discourse and charismatic leadership.	*Jesus is Lord* endorsement of Duterte, with rhetoric consistent with populist style.

areas with higher proportions of individuals identifying as Adventists, Muslims, and Iglesia Ni Cristo and Jesus is Lord members would be more supportive of Duterte's campaign. In contrast, without predicting a unified Catholic vote, if any portion of the Philippine religious electorate should have resisted the populist movement, it was Catholics due to the Duterte's criticism of their leaders (*CBCP Online*, May 1, 2016).[72]

While it poses certain costs, which we elaborate on below, our ecological approach also has benefits. Primarily, the size and comprehensiveness of census-based demographic data allows us to broaden the investigation beyond Catholics. Because Catholics predominate in the population, they dominate opinion surveys and effectively "wash out" non-Catholic denominations. For example, in Wave Seven of the World Values Survey (2019) the sample of 1,200 included only 68 Muslims, 27 INC members, and eight Adventists. The relatively few numbers of Muslims and INC members, to say nothing of the smaller denominations for whom we have qualitative evidence suggestive of systematic relationships, means that this polling data is not sufficient to answer the question at hand. Crafting a research design around aggregated units partially addresses concerns that the mechanisms identified in the prior analysis are relevant only at the elite level, for example that populist criticism of religious elites does not filter below prominent individuals to the level of mass behaviour.

In addition to our main variables on religious demography, data from the 2015 census provided directly by the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) provides a variety of additional barangay socioeconomic indicators. A measure of political competition comes from precinct-level electoral returns for the 2016 Philippines General Elections, which we aggregate to the level of the barangay. From these separate datasets we generate the following variables of interest.

- *Duterte Voteshare.* The 2016 presidential elections included six candidates.[73] Using a precinct-level dataset provided by a citizen election monitoring organisation (NAMFREL), we collapse to the barangay to identify the voteshare of Rodrigo Duterte. This is our dependent variable.
- *Social Instability.* Duterte's appeal drew strongly from his promises to protect Filipinos from purportedly rampant drug use and criminality. While measures for drug usage and criminality are not available at barangay level, we produce from 2015 census data a loose proxy measure by calculating the percentage of the population that is composed of unmarried men aged 15-24.
- *Socioeconomic Status.* We measure the socioeconomic status of a given barangay by calculating the percentage of residents who have a high school diploma, as drawn from the census.[74]
- *Population.* We log transform the total number of barangay inhabitants, as drawn from the census.
- *Urban.* The Philippines Statistics Authority classifies a barangay's urbanisation according to a number of infrastructural and commercial indicators. We use these to create a dummy variable for urban barangay.[75]
- *Local Dynastic Influence.* From the concurrent senatorial election we construct a variable that allows us to measure localised political competition. We figure an "Effective Number of Candidates" in each barangay, assuming that more "effective candidates" is a proxy for weaker local dynastic control, while fewer "effective candidates" indicates the reverse.[76] In particular, we use candidacy for

Table 2. Summary statistics.

	Mean	Median	min	max	St. Dev
Duterte Voteshare	30.003	24.735	0	100	21.269
Pct. HS Grad	45.4	44.709	0	100	14.251
Pct. Young Single Men	8.533	8.482	0	39.224	1.547
Population (Log)	7.228	7.185	1.099	12.415	.943
ENP (Senate)	22.239	22.682	1	44.122	3.768
Urban Barangay	.139	0	0	1	.346
Pct. Catholic	77.518	89.45	0	100	28.14
Pct. 7th Day Adventist	.798	0	0	75.934	2.56
Pct. Jesus is Lord	.275	0	0	35.154	.963
Pct. Muslim	7.651	0	0	100	25.217
Pct. INC	2.025	.755	0	99.573	3.895

Senate elections, which occurred simultaneously on the same ballot with the Presidential and Vice-Presidential contests.[77] These senatorial elections featured 50 candidates competing for 12 seats under a plurality at-large system.

We also use census questions on religious adherence to produce population share measures for the five religious groups identified in the qualitative section.

- *Pct. Catholic*
- *Pct. Muslim*
- *Pct. Seventh Day Adventist*
- *Pct. Jesus is Lord*
- *Pct. INC*
  Table 2 presents the summary statistics of all variables.

Results

Table Three presents the results of an OLS model predicting Duterte's barangay-level voteshare as a function of the aforementioned covariates. Fixed effects are entered at the level of the region.

Each of the variables tracking a given barangay's religious demography correlate with Duterte's voteshare (note also how the inclusion of variables related to religion improves model fit). Figure 1 plots the coefficients for the religious demographic variables.

As Figure 1 shows, Catholic demographics indicate a statistically significant negative effect on Duterte support. However, the substantive effect is rather small; moving from a barangay in the 5th percentile of percentage Catholic to the 95th drops Duterte's predicted voteshare from 31.77% to 29.53%, about one tenth of a standard deviation (here and in all below discussion the other variables are held at their means). While not determinative, this significant but substantively small effect is consistent with the instinct that attacking Catholic clerical elites may incur a detectable political cost for the populist among some ordinary Catholics, but that many average citizens distinguish attacks on the hierarchy from generalized attacks on their religion, thus limiting the material effect on Duterte's political ambitions.

The variables tracking the four other denominations/traditions display the expected positive relationship: At the 5th percentile of Adventists, Duterte's predicted voteshare
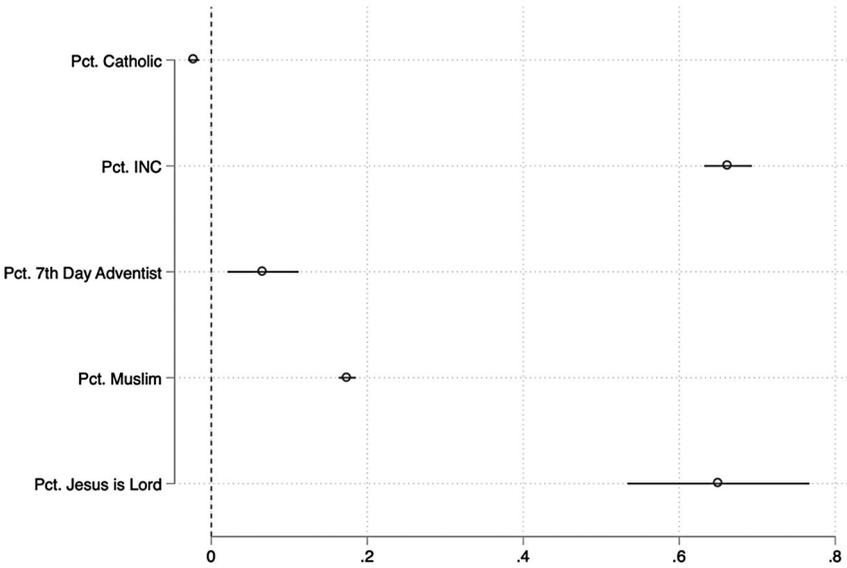
Figure 1. Coefficient plot, religious demographics.

was 29.95%, while at the 95th percentile it was slightly higher, at 30.21%. For Filipino Muslims, the relationship is striking in substantive terms: at the 5th percentile, Duterte's predicted voteshare is approximately 29%, while at the 95th is over 46%.[78] At the 5th percentile of INC adherents, Duterte's predicted share was 28.65%, while at the 95th percentile it rose to 33.9%. Finally, at the 5th percentile of Jesus is Lord adherents, Duterte was predicted to pull slightly under 30%, while at the 95th percentile that value rose to almost 31%.

Before proceeding we note important limitations. First, while the results may hold some explanatory power to answer why Duterte was able to win the 2016 presidential contest, this is not our research question. Instead, we seek to explain what seems to be divergent patterns of aggregate support for Duterte's candidacy across differing religious traditions. On that note, it is also worth re-emphasising that our analysis is ecological, so it can only speak to the aggregate population characteristics that correlate with a barangay's electoral support for Duterte. In the appendix we reproduce the ecological trends for Catholics, Muslims, and members of the INC from Table 3 in *individual-level* World Values Survey data from 2019, where trust in Duterte demonstrates an equivalent statistical pattern even with common demographic controls. That analysis again yields a negative coefficient on Catholic identification. Duterte remains fairly popular among Catholics, with a mean trust score of 7.2 on a 10 point scale, but this lags behind other religions. As described above we simply lack the statistical power in this individual-level data to analyse smaller Christian denominations. On that note, our treatment of Protestant Christians should be taken with caution; not only are they relatively small portions of the population, but by their nature contain considerable internal variation. The Adventist community is one fairly coherent option for analysis in our data sources, but probing further, with distinct data sources and research designs, could improve our understanding of dynamics among non-Catholic Christians.

Table 3. Religious traditions and Duterte voteshare.

	(1) DV: Duterte Voteshare	(2) DV: Duterte Voteshare
Pct. HS Grad	0.491*** (0.00535)	0.511*** (0.00522)
Pct. Young Single Men	−0.389*** (0.0386)	−0.292*** (0.0370)
ENP (Senate)	0.297*** (0.0165)	0.351*** (0.0159)
Population (Log)	1.265*** (0.0730)	0.976*** (0.0701)
Urban Barangay	2.616*** (0.229)	2.449*** (0.219)
Pct. Catholic		−0.0215*** (0.00365)
Pct. INC		0.698*** (0.0156)
Pct. 7th Day Adventist		0.0663** (0.0231)
Pct. Muslim		0.170*** (0.00557)
Pct. Jesus is Lord		0.689*** (0.0592)
Constant	−5.247*** (0.716)	−7.174*** (0.744)
Observations	40750	40750
Adjusted R^2	0.226	0.291

Ordinary Least Squares regression, with regional fixed effects. Standard errors in parentheses.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Conclusion: generalisability and future research

Analysis of populism remains incomplete without "taking religion seriously."[79] In this article we have outlined and evaluated an typology to make sense of the varied pathways through which populists may use religion to mobilise support. We now offer suggestive evidence that these mechanisms operate outside of the Philippines. We do so for two reasons. First, as George and Bennett put it, "[Cases of the same type] offer the most basic test of the validity of the specification of the type."[80] Second, cases outside of the Philippines illuminate aspects of each mechanism that the Philippine case does not put in such sharp relief. While not a systematic test of generalisability, plausibility probes in additional cases illustrate these mechanisms operating in populist contexts that vary in important ways from the Philippines, including cases drawn from more advanced industrial economies. Further research could continue this process by, for instance, focusing on additional cases where populism is more tied to institutionalised parties rather than personalistic leaders, or cases with high levels of social secularisation.[81]

Path 1: religion and in-group boundaries: norms and cross-cutting appeals

Populists may integrate religion into their construction of boundaries around the people, either through identity appeals or areas of substantive normative consensus. Probing this mechanism in Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) highlights why this mechanism can appeal to populists: it cuts through cleavages in society that might obstruct forming a unified "people." While in contrast to the Philippines Modi's appeals are majoritarian in nature, they serve a similar need to construct a people that cross-cuts considerable internal diversity, particularly along class lines. The BJP's roots lie in Hindutva, an ideology aligning Indian nationality with Hindu religion and culture, although in practice this Hindu nationalism has been an upper-class project resistant to the integration of lower classes. The BJP and its social movement affiliate the RSS have attempted to change this via outreach to lower classes (*The Hindu*, January 25, 2016; *The Hindu*, February 9, 2016).[82] While not an unmitigated success, Modi repeatedly and publicly praised foundational Dalit figure Ambedkar – an opponent of Hindutva's reification of caste – to highlight the importance of a broader Hindu identity (*India Today*, April 14, 2016; *India Today*, April 14 2017). He established a series of statues and "pilgrimage sites" related to important Dalit figures, often laying foundation stones at inauguration ceremonies (*Times of India*, March 1, 2017; *New Indian Express*, October 11, 2015). The strategy of re-orienting class cleavages to religious ones seems to have paid political dividends, as the BJP has steadily increased its share of Dalit votes (*The Hindu*, June 6, 2014).

Path 2: no higher powers: anti-elite signalling and religious-secular divides

In cases where religious and political elites intertwine, populists can signal their outsider status by attacking those elites. However, because religion's relationship to social hierarchy is contingent, in alternative settings populists may instead blend *anti-secular* rhetoric into their anti-elite signalling. As one Indian political scientist argues, Modi "has been able to basically say that India's power structure was constituted by Anglicised élites, and that secularism has become a cultural symbol for a contempt of Hinduism rather than a constitutional philosophy of toleration" (*New Yorker*, May 24, 2019). Similar anti-secular themes emerge in rhetoric from a range of contemporary right-wing populists, from Hungary's Viktor Orban bemoaning "anti-Christian sentiment" among European Union elites, (*Hungary Today*, November 26, 2019) to Jair Bolsonaro calling for confrontation with "Christophobia" in an address to the United Nations General Assembly.[83] Leaders in Poland's populist Law and Justice Party (PiS) have responded to EU critics of democratic backsliding in their country by criticising the "elitist, secular vision" being imposed by EU leaders (*New York Times*, February 20, 2018). Due to populism's extreme ideological flexibility, such criticism of secular elites may actually coexist with attacks on religious elites. A co-founder of Hungary's Fidesz party, for instance, called Pope Francis "either a senile old fool or a scoundrel" for expressing views supportive of Syrian refugees (*Guardian*, July 14, 2019). These examples serve as a reminder of the opportunistic aspect of populism's relationship with religion, one that can be potent when religious (or secular) elites and political authorities overlap.

Paths 3 & 4: populism's personalism, style, and religious legitimacy

Populism's personalist style and anti-institutional political logic present opportunities to cement religious support via stylistic affinities with religious groups and personalistic payoffs. Probing these mechanisms in the United States highlights two aspects of these pathways: style and anti-institutional political strategy may be deeply intertwined, and religious endorsers may provide a populist with normative justification for anti-institutional behaviour that compensates for costs imposed by political parties, court decisions or embedded bureaucrats. The Trump presidency provides ample evidence that populist style shared an affinity with the desire for a "spiritual badass" from Trump's white evangelical supporters.[84] Trump regularly drew on moral support from white Christian allies to give a logic of appropriateness to his personalism.[85] At the 2020 National Prayer Breakfast, immediately after his first impeachment acquittal, Trump exemplified this point, remarking, "When they impeach you for nothing, then you're supposed to like them. It's not easy, folks. I do my best. But I'll tell you what we are doing. We're restoring hope and spreading faith."[86] In late 2018, as the Mueller investigation gathered momentum, Christian supporters gathered at the DC Trump hotel to insist, "In Jesus' name, we declare the Deep State will not prevail" (*Religion News Service,* December 10, 2018). Although counterfactual in nature, it is plausible that without this mechanism, resistance to Trump's anti-institutionalism may have had more effect on his white Christian support.

As a classificatory typology, our pathways are necessarily ideal types and not intended to categorise cases exclusive of other mechanisms. For example, encountered in practice we may expect that identity boundaries and personalistic co-optation may co-occur. A worthwhile extension to our general research question could utilise experiments to identify the individual-level conditions under which personalistic and in-group appeals provoke different responses to populist movements. In-depth data collection within religious congregations could examine the meso-level at which elite qualitative evidence in this article translates into individual-level voting behaviour. Within-denomination variation could provide leverage in future research as well. Why, for example, do prominent elements of Catholic Church leadership oppose populism in the Philippines and Brazil, yet support it in Poland? Subnationally, in the Philippines, certain Catholic bishops have been especially outspoken in their critique, while in the United States, some white evangelical leaders resisted populist co-optation.

The results of our analysis raise a final puzzle that merits further research, both in the Philippines and beyond: What effect does populist incorporation of religion into political strategy have on religion's role in public life? As noted above, populists may attack religious elites with allegations of hypocrisy or corruption. Do such attacks actually undermine the moral authority of those religious elites? Alternatively, populist mobilisation of religion could cement aspects of populism within religious communities or authority structures. In other words, our framework largely conceives of religion as an independent variable shaping political outcomes, but the causal arrow may flip once a populist comes into power. Future research could test the effects of our mechanisms on the moral authority of religious elites, or probe the emergence of populist discourse or style within religious settings. Such research could identify effects of populist religious mobilisaiton that would linger even after the individual populist has departed the political scene.

Notes

1. Morgan, Beger, and Glynn, "Varieties of Forecasts."
2. Grzymala-Busse et al., "Global Populisms."
3. Pepinsky, "Voting Against Disorder"; Zúquete, "Populism and Religion," 1.
4. Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism*; Haynes, "Right-Wing Populism and Religion."
5. Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism."
6. Weyland, "A Political-Strategic Approach."
7. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory*, 241.
8. Anderson, "Cacique Democracy"; Hedman, "The Spectre"; Claudio, "Postcolonial Fissures"; Cruz, Labonne, and Querubin, "Politician Family Networks."
9. Teehankee and Thompson, "The Vote"
10. Stepan, "Tunisia's Transition."
11. Weyland, "A Political-Strategic Approach."
12. Mudde and Kaltwasser, *Populism*.
13. Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Populists in Power*, 3.
14. Weyland, "Clarifying a Contested Concept."
15. Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism*.
16. Zúquete, "Populism and Religion."
17. Müller, *What Is Populism?*, 38; Arato and Cohen, "Civil Society, Populism" 290.
18. Marzouki and McDonnell, "Introduction: Populism and Religion"; Haynes, "Right-Wing Populism"; Zúquete, "Populism and Religion."
19. Yabanci and Taleski, "Co-Opting Religion"; Dehanas and Shterin, "Religion and the Rise."
20. Grzymala-Busse, "Why Comparative Politics"; Wald, Silverman, and Fridy, "Making Sense of Religion."
21. *Ibid*, 422.
22. Wald et al., 15.
23. Religious movements are multivocal; hierarchical and egalitarian aspects coexist within many religious traditions. We would expect populism's anti-elite dimension to become most tied to religion in contexts where clergy and religious institutions are closely tied to political and economic power structures.
24. Roy, "The French National Front" 186.
25. Zúquete, "Populism and Religion," 460.
26. Elman, "Explanatory Typologies."
27. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory*.
28. While beyond the scope of this article, the turbulent presidency of Joseph Estrada also featured contentious relationship with some Catholic leaders, as well as more collaborative relations with other religious elites. For some discussion, see Landé, "The Return of."
29. Marzouki and McDonnell, "Introduction: Populism and Religion."
30. Brubaker, "Between Nationalism and Civilizationism," 1201.
31. Weyland, "A Political-Strategic Approach."
32. Populists may also instrumentalise solidarity with religious minorities not primarily to gain support from that minority, but rather to defend the populist movement from charges of discrimination, as in the case of some Western populists and local Jewish communities. While generally consistent with this mechanism, in which religion contributes to horizontal, in-group construction, the particular logic of such appeals is distinct from what we observe in the Philippines, where some religious minorities are substantively supportive of the populist's in-group definition.
33. Curato, "Politics of Anxiety;" Johnson and Fernquest, "Governing through Killing;" Lasco, "Drugs and Drug Wars;" Thompson, "Duterte's Violent Populism."
34. Belgica, *Remove the evil!*
35. Cornelio and Marañon, "A 'Righteous Intervention'," 219.
36. Cornelio and Medina, "Christianity and Duterte's War."
37. John Otis, "Hugo Chavez and the Vatican," *PRI: The World*, March 14, 2013.
38. John Allen, "Benedict's headache with populist Catholicism," *National Catholic Reporter*, Dec. 4, 2009.
39. Youngblood, *Marcos Against the Church*.

40. For more detail on these allegations and controversies, see Rufo, *Altar of Secrets;* Dionisio, "Catholic Partisanship;" Dañguilan, *The RH Bill Story.*
41. Brooke et al., "Religious Protection."
42. Curato, "Flirting with Authoritarian Fantasies?"
43. Across the country as a whole, the Philippines is composed of a wide spectrum of ethnolinguistic groups and ethnicity is not perfectly coterminous with religious identification. With that said, the collection of ethnic groups commonly referred to as Moros is predominantly Muslim, and Duterte's appeals to these groups have blended the Islam-inflected signals documented below with appeals to particular ethnic groups and general Mindanaoan regional identity.
44. Heydarian, *The Rise of Duterte*, 36.
45. Altez and Caday, "The Mindanaoan President."
46. Chandra, "Gandhiji, Secularism and Communalism."
47. Weyland, "A Political-Strategic Approach."
48. Ibid., 56
49. Koesel, *Religion and Authoritarianism*; Ádám and Bozóki, "The God of Hungarians," 143; Stanley, "Defenders of the Cross," 121; Kaunda, "The Altars Are Holding"; Yabanci and Taleski, "Co-Opting Religion," 145.
50. Singer and Kitschelt, "Do Everything (DoE) Parties"; Thachil, *Elite Parties, Poor Voters*; Brooke, *Winning Hearts and Votes.*
51. Cornelio, "Religion and Civic Engagement."
52. Grzymala-Busse and Slater, "Making Godly Nations."
53. Hawkins, "Is Chavez populist?"
54. Moffitt and Tormey, "Rethinking populism."
55. Gidron and Bonikowski, "Varieties of populism."
56. Hawkins, "Populism in Venezuela," 1137.
57. Canovan, "Trust the People!" 6. Pappas, "Populists in power."
58. Madsen and Snow, *The Charismatic Bond*, 5.
59. Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism,* 7-9.
60. Canovan, "Trust the People!" 6.
61. Hawkins, "Populism in Venezuela," 1138.
62. Zúquete, "Populism and Religion," 11.
63. Albertazzi and McDonnell, *Twenty-First Century Populism*, 5.
64. Stavrakakis, "Antinomies of Formalism."
65. Pertierra, "Celebrity Politics," 227.
66. Cornelio, "Jesus is Lord."
67. Kessler and Rüland, *Give Jesus a Hand,* 15.
68. Kessler and Rüland, *Give Jesus a Hand,* 164.
69. Cornelio, "Jesus is Lord," 139.
70. Video of Bro. Eddie praying over candidate Duterte in 2016 is available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9kAHrGG-rnk
71. Barangays are also relatively stable administrative units. For example, the prior census (2010) charted 42,025 barangays. The 2015 census added 11 total barangays (42,036), mostly from subdividing larger existing barangay.
72. Dionisio, "Catholic Partisanship."
73. In addition to Rodrigo Duterte, these included Mar Roxas, Grace Poe, Jejomar Binay, Mariam Defensor Santiago, and Roy Señeres.
74. Economic indicators for income, or the Philippines-specific class indicators (ABCDE) are not available in census data.
75. See Supplementary Material for details on urban barangay categorisation.
76. Laakso and Taagepera, "'Effective' Number of Parties."
77. Elections in the Philippines are characterized by weak parties but strong dynasties centred around family: Cruz Manacsa and Tan, "Manufacturing Parties"; Davidson, Hicken, and Ravanilla, "Familial Networks"; Cruz, Labonne, and Querubin, "Politician Family Networks."
78. The inclusion of regional fixed-effects in statistical models increases confidence that these results for Muslim demography are not simply an artefact of Duterte's background on the island of Mindanao.

79. Grzymala-Busse, "Why Comparative Politics."
80. George and Bennett, *Case Studies and Theory*, 252.
81. As an initial probe, the Polish case indicates that some mechanisms are consistent with a more party-centred populist case, while religious identity's role in both constructing in-group boundaries and anti-elite signalling in Hungary illustrates operation in a more thoroughly secularised social context.
82. Thachil, *Elite Parties, Poor Voters*.
83. Bolsonaro, "Remarks at United Nations."
84. Kobes du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*.
85. Haynes, *From Huntington to Trump*.
86. Trump, "Speech Transcript 2020."

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Data availability statement

Those interested in data and materials required to verify the computational reproducibility of the results, procedures and analyses in this article may correspond with the authors directly by email.

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