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RELIGION'S ROLE IN POLITICAL IDENTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Today, the political parties are more polarized than ever. Political ideologies have dominated people's decision-making process and attitudinal development. This divide of the left and right on the political spectrum only adds to the lack of legislation, which we see on issues such as immigration where there is only debate and little action. A person siding with their political party is similar to that of wearing a team jersey. People aren't likely to side against their team. Religion is similar in group structure. For my research, I am asking whether religiosity can affect a person's political stance. My hypothesis is that Catholic Republicans with high religiosity will be more open to amnesty for undocumented immigrants. I conducted an Ordinal Regression analysis using variables from the General Social Survey. As a complement to this, I conducted four interviews of students from Penn State. The goal of both was to see if religiously active Catholic Republicans can be affected by religious teachings when it comes to making policy decisions. My findings are more of a reinforcement for the previous research. People side with their party, which is the dominant form of influence for policy preference.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The growing separation of political ideologies to each extreme is known as polarization in the world of politics. This concept is nothing new. Today we see polarization in politics more than ever before and it is between the conservative and liberal ideologies from the democrats and republicans. The parties are truly separated and compromises are hard to come by. This has been evident in the legislation we have seen Congress produce. There has been barely any. This is just one of the many examples where partisanship has gotten in the way of legislation. The polarization between the two parties affects the way an individual develops attitudes and stances as well. Party stances influence people's perceptions on issues, mainly by dictating the solution to the issue. This solution becomes the only solution for many of the party members in this polarized society. In this clearly polarized society, the parties make it easy for individuals to see what stances are taken by each. Party identification is based on their policy preferences which were determined by the party elites (Abramowitz, 1998).

But, can a factor like religiosity affect a person's political stance in this polarized environment? The bigger picture and goal here is to find if there is any other influence in a person's life that can help them determine a political attitude besides their party's stance. The specific issue at hand will be people's attitudes toward undocumented immigrants residing in the United States. The parties make it clear what side of the immigration issue they are on. Republicans differ mainly on whether to deport the undocumented or not, but there is more of a consensus that granting legal status for these people immediately is a bad idea. The attitudes will be either to exclude them from residing here or include them. I hypothesize that religion can be this outside influence.

Why might religion have this influence? Religion is similar to political stances in the sense that it includes a set of beliefs for that member to follow, but someone's religion itself isn't usually chosen. Unless altered at some point, religion is decided at birth and usually plays a part throughout that person's life. The role it plays can either be a small or large one, it all depends on how religious the person wants to be. This is their religiosity. I see a higher religiosity being just as, if not more, influential than party identification. The higher religiosity the more likely religion will play a part in an individual's everyday life. Religious doctrine may be more respected by someone with a higher religiosity and may be the principal influence for a person's attitude on a social issue. If religious doctrine runs contrary to party affiliation on a social issue, and a person has high religiosity, the religious views may have influence over their partisanship influences to develop an attitude about a policy outcome.

I will use the research on how political identification affects a person's position on stances. My research will find what the political identification says about their attitude toward including undocumented immigrants. The previous research helps to explain this relationship by looking at how elites and the parties shape stances. The research also discussed the notion of how religion is a social identity, which then goes to explain how it affects the decisions people make. My research will look at how Catholics specifically address the issue of excluding undocumented immigrants. I will use the concept of religiosity to find if more religiously involved Catholics have a different perspective when developing those attitudes than those who just simply identify as Catholic. The last bit of research deals with how religion can predict political identification. Political identification has an effect on how people develop attitudes so religion can play a part in someone developing aptitudes/stances based on the effect of joining that political group. My research looks to find if there is a religious influence on political identification and policy stances. This research is to grasp if the Catholic religious doctrine has any effect on the individual's political party stance on excluding undocumented immigrants. Overall my research is looking into how people come to make certain decisions. It is research about the decision making process

for attitudes toward policy. The reviewed analysis is pertaining to the psychological and social processes that help people make decisions.

Research has told me that political stances based off of identification are unlikely to change, but I surmised that in the case of a Catholic being more religious that they are likely to loosen their negative attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. The negative attitudes haven't only been directed towards the undocumented themselves. Older immigration reform has been scrutinized, which has led to many being against the idea of amnesty. In 1986, legal status was granted to the undocumented residing in the country, but it didn't solve the overwhelming immigration issue with people still crossing the border illegally and legally arriving in the U.S. still being extremely difficult (Siegel, 2008). The scrutiny of failed policies and negative stereotypes I think can be overcome by religious activity. This is mainly because I made the prediction that people who are more religiously involved will tend to be more open to helping other people and try to look past any implications from this acceptance. With higher religiosity there seems to be more dedication to religious doctrine, which I thought could have an effect on the party policy stance based on the generous teachings. What helped me come to this prediction has been comments from the Pope. Pope Francis has been an outspoken proponent of humanizing immigration issues. He has stated "In a word, if we want security, let us give security; if we want life, let us give life; if we want opportunities, let us provide opportunities...Building a nation," he said, "calls us to recognize that we must constantly relate to others, rejecting a mindset of hostility in order to adopt one of reciprocal subsidiarity, in a constant effort to do our best" (Elizondo, 2015). I was thinking the religious influence of the Pope would have an influence on the religiously active members of the Church.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

There have been many studies on party identification. How it is formed, how stable it is, and how influential it becomes are all central to the studies. Bullock (2011) explains how this partisanship influence came to be. Cohen (2003) goes on to explain how group influence affect party members. Since birth, people have been socialized to act and thin a certain way. We use socialization to discover what norms are fitting and those that are not. People then surround themselves in these customs and norms, which means surrounding themselves with other people that have the same interests. Partisanship is part of this (Green, 1994). Party identification is developed at a very young age. Socialization plays a big part in this because it helps determine whom we are and what is important to us. People want to be joined by like-minded individuals, so they choose the party that best suits them (Green, 1994). In a sense, it becomes similar to that of picking a favorite sports team. Once you have your team, you get a team jersey. You represent that team and that team resembles what you believe in. You want your team to win. This is where to faith in your party comes from. People don't want to see their party lose, so they support them by voting or doing something more. They will side with their party, because people are not likely to go against their team. Of course there is always the possibility of party identification to change or for an outside force to affect certain actions, it just happens on a micro level and over very long periods of time (Green 1994). The party people join represents their political ideology. Political ideology was thought to be separate from the general ideology of a person, but political events have increasingly socialized attitudes (Sears, 1997). What is meant by political ideology is that people may base their own belief system off of political stances or be influenced to take a position because of a party's stance. According to Sears (1997), the research suggests that people who are open to political events/messages at young ages will have predispositions throughout their life, meaning these political points have an impact on their attitude formation.

How are the stances of the party determined? Is it by the majority of the party members? Policy stances are driven by the party elites (Bullock, 2011). These are the people that devote more time and energy to the party machine. They possess more information than the general party members and can go on to hold high ranking party seats. Because of their time devotion and knowledge on issues, they drive the direction of the party. The elites have increased the polarization of the two parties, because their agendas are to the ideological extremes. The claims made about this group are that the general membership is completely going to conform to the policy views of the elites, even though their views are extreme (Bullock, 2011). The people are going to follow the authority figure, which are the party elites. Another claim is that the general public in the party will ignore the information they already have on policy and simply side with the party (Bullock, 2011). The research from Bullock (2011) ran experiments to see if these claims held up. After observing voting patterns and working with voters, the research proved that when people possess a small amount of information on policy they are less affected by party elites (Bullock, 2011). This could show support for my hypothesis. The problem here is that the research also shows people possess rarely even a modicum of information. People are able to go out and use information and come up with policy stances aside from their party identification. They are using information to come up with the best answer to policy. People were in an experiment and given information. They did not seek out the information voluntarily. Voters don't take the time to go out and gain information, when siding with the party stance designated by elites is easy enough. Party cues are influential for the voter; they can think the party has already claimed the best policy decision (Bullock, 2011).

Cohen (2003) works at demonstrating the power of group influence. One of the most durable studies in social psychology has been the influence of groupthink. It is one of the most powerful forms of persuasion we see today and most people are blind to the idea. One of the most recognizable group memberships is party identification, especially in the United States with only two major parties. Being a member of those groups plays a large part in someone's life. Cohen (2003) argues a little differently than

Bullock stating that even if people are given information on policy, they will stand with the decision of one's party. People depend on their parties. Individuals can possess the knowledge or have the resources capable to do more research, but will almost constantly back their party. Party identification overwhelmed the impact of ideological beliefs and objective content of the policy (Cohen, 2003). Aside from this, people don't even realize they are doing this. People stated that their political group does not personally affect them, but that they suspect others might be influenced by their identification (Cohen, 2003). The party elites have driven this polarization as well. They have moved the parties both farther left and farther right. The stances on amnesty and immigration reform were formed by a small group within the parties and accepted by the party members. This is an example of the Culture War or Culture Conflict theory that has been developed by James Davidson Hunter in 1991. This is the idea that there is a conflict among society between the conservative and liberal values (Hunter, 1991). The polarization of the parties adopting the ideological movements that are thought to be traditional and progressive or conservative and liberal. This divide affects a person's ideology and influences their decision making process, especially when shaping policy positions. The question I pose later in the research is if this theory of Culture Conflict between conservative and progressive can be interrupted or bridged together by an outside source. Can this source of policy making be something like religion?

One theory that may be able to disrupt the culture conflict is the Contact Hypothesis. The Contact Theory hypothesis has become one of the most enduring contributions to the study of racism among social psychology (Mason, 2013). The simplest way to state this theory is to describe that intergroup contact will create better intergroup relations and this idea has been around for hundreds of years but was made famous by Gordon Allport, who gave the theory a classic formulation (Mason, 2013). Things that take place are the reduction of stereotypes, which in turn breaks down the boundaries of prejudice that separate groups (Mason, 2013). This theory may be able to cross partisan divide on policy stances if a certain member of a party has had contact with the undocumented group member. Party stances developed by the elites have still a great deal of influence and may be too much to overcome.

Evidence suggests that party identification is the end all be all for policy attitude influence. I think this research lacks in studying the effects of other group influences, specifically religion. Religion has and continues to be one of the most instrumental systems in a person's life. The research about religion's role in people's lives leads me to believe that it could be of greater influence for someone and make them think about their party's position. The literature starts with Myers (1996) description of religiosity. Myers (1996) explains that religiosity like class or political identity is primarily inherited, so his research deals with the transmission of religiosity for an individual. After conducting many analyses, the research provided three variables that aid the spread religiosity. They are parental religiosity, quality of the family relationship, and traditional family structure (Myers, 1996). A person's religiosity is determined largely by the religiosity of one's parents. Religiosity itself refers to the many aspects of religious activity and belief in religious doctrine. It is the dedication to these things that can help determine religiosity. An example is studying church attendance and religiosity (Myers, 1996).

Besides learning from their parents, children come into their own based on who they interact with on a regular basis. Ysseldyk (2010) begins with the social identity theory. This is the theory on a person's self-concept based on the membership of a certain group. A person's self identity is formed through Socialization, which is the long process of developing one's norms and values. This concept is developed by those close in one's early life experiences (Scott, 2014). People will then join a group, such as a political party, that resembles best themselves. Identification with that certain group provides individuals with a greater sense of well-being and allows for more goals to be completed with the group. Most importantly, social identity with this group has guiding beliefs (Ysseldyk, 2010). These guiding beliefs have great influence over an individual. Religion has become a social identity, which is why I think it can influence policy attitudes. Religion with the belief system that comes with it helps people make decisions and develop attitudes. A guiding belief system is anchored in the social identity that is religion (Ysseldyk, 2010). Religious affiliation is a powerful function in shaping the social and psychological processes for an individual. An examination of religiosity when considering religion as this dual function helps explain

why religion is important to so many (Ysseldyk, 2010). Religion can offer a distinct worldview that is sacred with eternal membership; hence religiosity could be measured by how immense cognitive and emotional value is placed on religion by an individual. If a person holds this social identity in high observances, then it could provide a large effect on a person's thought process.

The last piece of literature reviewed was from Layman (1997). In this study, there was an assessment of how religion and politics affect each other. Certain religions have favored certain parties over the years. The analysis demonstrates the differences between religious conservatives and liberals and the effects it has on voting and identification (Layman 1997). For example, Jews have been considerably more likely to vote democrat than Christians. The impact of religious commitment on partisanship has not grown, but has played a role in presidential voting patterns. For Catholics, it is split almost evenly for Republican and Democrat. There are certain issues that Catholics hold most important, such as being pro-life. Many will vote Republican just based off of this issue. They take a strong stand against abortion and will look past other issues so the candidate that takes the pro-life stand (typically Republican) will get their vote. These types of Catholics will go with the party that is on their side of the issue, helping to explain some sort of party identification. Green (1994) does a great job of helping to explain the formation, stability, and influential effect of partisanship. His findings run counter to what my predictions support. People use who they are as a person to join whatever party fits their worldview. It is typically established at a young age and rarely changes. It is the dominant factor when it comes to policy preferences. The policy positions established by party leaders are accepted by the party members because they are part of the team. They don't have another influence affect these positions, but I am looking into if religious activity can shift any sort of position and specifically immigration.

Chapter 3

Data and Methods

Data Analysis

The analysis has two parts. First, I ran an ordinal regression analysis with 5 models to find if there was any significance between party affiliation, religious activity, and attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. The second part of the analysis was 4 interviews that I conducted, which will be addressed later.

The regression analysis relates to the studies I have viewed because I plan on incorporating the concepts of political identification and religiosity to find the effects on a policy stance/attitude, specifically should the United States exclude undocumented immigrants

My three hypotheses are, Catholic republicans are going to agree more with excluding undocumented immigrants than the respondents that identify as Catholic non-republican. The second, high religiosity among respondents would have a large effect on the attitudes toward undocumented immigrants in this country. Third, a factor of high religiosity will weaken a Catholic republican's position on excluding undocumented immigrants. The predictions I made for my hypotheses are somewhat contrary to the previous research.

I used the 2014 GSS data set to get my variables for my hypotheses. The GSS data set was changed to incorporate only respondents that identified as Catholic. My dependent variable was excludimm (America should exclude illegal immigrants). For my independent variables, I used political party, religion, and an interaction of the two. The political party variable I used was simply polparty (Democrat, Independent, Republican). The variables used to try and gauge religiosity were popeinf (Is Pope infallible on moral issues), prayer (How often does the respondent pray), and relpersn (Does the respondent consider oneself a religious person). The control variables used were age, race, and sex. I also included a

variable, *immam*, which controls for respondents' views of immigrants in general (Does respondent think immigrants are good for America). The last model also contained an interaction variable between a measure of high religiosity (the Pope is infallible) and political party.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
<i>polprty</i>	593	1.00	3.00	2.2108	.86275
<i>immam</i>	303	1.00	3.00	1.5314	.73117
<i>popeinf</i>	595	1.00	3.00	1.5782	.67059
<i>prayer</i>	603	1.00	3.00	1.6434	.86875
AMERICA SHOULD EXCLUDE ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS	293	1	5	2.62	1.184
R CONSIDER SELF A RELIGIOUS PERSON	606	1	4	2.31	.773
<i>newage</i>	606	1	5	2.99	.885
RACE OF RESPONDENT	606	1	3	1.42	.783
RESPONDENTS SEX	606	1	2	1.55	.498
Valid N (listwise)	274				

Interview Analysis

As a complement to the quantitative analysis, I conducted four interviews. The interviews were of four Penn State students that identified as both Catholic and Republican. I reached out to two groups on campus, the College Republicans and the Newman Club. The Newman Club is one of the larger Catholic groups on campus. When looking for participants, I made sure to reach out to each club's president and

ask specifically for members who identify as Republican and are active Catholics, meaning they go to Church and practice their faith in some manner. The point of that was to get participants that were more religiously active and have a higher sense of religiosity. Religiosity can be measured by participation in church activities, and Driskell (2008) found that more participation in those activities leads to higher political participation. The higher political participation shows that they at least would have some understanding of public policy and not just be a RINO. My hope was that this would give me people who have a better understanding of what it means to be Catholic and practice what they preach. Another prerequisite for the participants was that they have some understanding of immigrants groups or have had some contact with immigrants in the past. I only was able to get one willing participant from the Newman Club while getting three others from the College Republicans. Each interview was approximately 20 minutes long. The participants are kept anonymous when presenting my findings.

The purpose of the interviews was to see how students here at Penn State matched up with the quantitative analysis results. My hypothesis about younger people who are more religiously involved was that they would be more open to granting amnesty for the undocumented immigrants. I thought as a younger generation people may tend to feel differently in a more progressive tone even for members of the party that is described as conservative. Along with the increased religious activity among the respondents, I thought that the factor of age would affect the established party position. The younger generation has held a more progressive front on issues. Things such as gay marriage and the legalization of marijuana have been non-issues for the majority of young people, unlike the older generations. Young republicans overwhelmingly support the legalization of both according to pew research data (Kiley, 2014). This more progressive stance taken against the older party officials I thought would possibly carry over to supporting undocumented immigrants.

I wanted to get the participants to think about this issue as something that has moral backing and I thought the religiously active Catholics would be more inclined to reason this way. I thought that prompting participants to talk about immigration, which has a clear Catholic stance, would overcome the

dynamic. Also, I was hoping with the past immigrant contact, the participants would think a little more about policies regarding these people. I thought familiarity would be important to prevent immigration from being merely abstract.

I expected the higher religiosity of the participants to affect their perception of authority. I knew they had a high regard for the teachings of the church, but I wanted to see if they also had a higher regard for religious authority over that of political authority. One of the key components of the questioning process was a review of what Pope Francis has stated regarding immigration policy. When speaking about Refugees and Immigrants, the Pope has made clear to point out that these groups are not our enemies. The Pope said, “We see, for example, how quickly those among us with the status of a stranger, an immigrant, or a refugee, become a threat, take on the status of an enemy” (Reese, 2017). The Pope went on to say other things regarding immigration policy as well. “It’s hypocrisy to call yourself a Christian and chase away a refugee or someone seeking help, someone who is hungry or thirsty, toss out someone who is in need of my help,” he said. (Reese, 2017). “If I say I am Christian, but do these things, I’m a hypocrite.” The pope is getting at the problem of people refusing to look at immigrants, whether legal or undocumented, and refugees as actual people. People want to act Christian but then do the exact opposite of something that the church teaches. The Pope isn’t just coming up with statements off the top of his head. He uses the scholarly resources of his office. The Pope understands the need for national protection and border control, but he always sees the morality behind the issue. In more recent events, President Trump posed an executive order halting refugee admissions into the United States. The Catholic Church, including the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, has condemned this order and has called for representatives being more open to accepting those in need. This component of the interview process, bringing up the Pope and the Catholic Church, is to see if there is an effect from religious authority on the respondents. The question I am getting at here is, are these people with high religiosity doing what their religious leader and tradition would expect them to do? I expect that the respondents will duck the authority aspect, but think more about their religious activity and everyday beliefs.

I broke the questioning up into three main sections. The first was to establish the participant's own self reflection on their religious behavior. This involved getting them to think about their actions, if they go with church teachings and traditions. The next section was about immigration stances. The question's focus was to find if they respondents saw immigration as a moral issue or just tossed that aspect aside when deciding policy. The last section is regarding religious authority. This differs from religious activity because it is focused specifically on papal influence. It is a distinction between their own personal understanding of religious teachings and what the pope has said and its effect on that understanding.

Chapter 4

Results

Regression Results

After testing the relationship between the variables, the first thing to take into account is if the model even works at all. The F-Test will help us determine this by taking a look at the level of significance. It will be a useful model if the p-value is less than .05. The F-Test p-value for each model proved to lack significance and the R-squared didn't produce a high percentage to support a very fit model, but the R-squared did show some promise as it got higher with more variables being added.

As I added variables, the p-values for republican political identity changed, but the effect on attitudes toward excluding undocumented remained significant. Across models, religiosity continued to have no significance.

Table 2

Column1	Column2	Column3	Column4	Column5	Column6	Column7	Column8	Column9	Column10	Column11
Regression Analysis 1	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	b	p	b	p	b	p	b	p	b	p
Party Identification										
Republican	-1.179	0.000			-1.226	0.000	-1.227	0.000	-1.226	0.000
Independent	0.533	0.055			0.648	0.024	0.49	0.000	0.490	0.102
(Democrat omitted as reference)										
Pope is Infallible										
True			-0.508	0.189	-0.527	0.177	-0.714	0.079	-0.709	0.252
Unsure			-0.805	0.037	-1.038	0.008	-1.353	0.001	-1.355	0.026
(False = omitted)										
How Much Prayer										
Often			0.596	0.031	0.499	0.078	0.742	0.015	0.742	0.015
Occasionally			0.273	0.451	0.285	0.437	0.303	0.435	0.302	0.439
(Rarely = omitted)										
Considered a Religious Person										
Very Religious			-1.018	0.044	-0.895	0.084	-1.035	0.052	-1.026	0.063
Moderate Religious			-0.523	0.216	-0.357	0.403	-0.44	0.317	-0.437	0.322
Slightly Religious			-0.260	0.532	-0.207	0.622	-0.244	0.571	-0.243	0.573

(Not Religious = ommitted)					
Sex					
Male			-0.077	0.744	-0.077 0.745
(Female = ommitted)					
Race					
White			-0.604	0.044	-0.604 0.044
Black			-0.701	0.238	-0.704 0.237
(Other = ommitted)					
Age					
0-19			0.188	0.866	0.185 0.869
20-39			0.119	0.852	0.116 0.856
40-59			-0.384	0.534	-0.388 0.534
60-79			-0.492	0.44	-0.496 0.439
(80 and over = ommitted)					
Immigrants Good for Country					
Agree			1.742	0.000	1.742 0.000
No Definite Stance			1.021	0.010	1.018 0.011
(Disagree = ommitted)					
Interaction Pope and Party					
pope1 and party1					-0.021 0.952
(pope1 and party2 = ommitted)					
(pope1 and party3 = ommitted)					
(pope2 and party1 = ommitted)					
pope2 and party2					-0.003 0.997
(pope2 and party3 = ommitted)					
(pope3 and party1,2,3 = ommitted)					
Model Statistics					
N	287	288	282	274	274
Psuedo R-Square	0.11	0.042	0.155	0.279	0.279
Sig	0.000	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.000

The only significant relationship throughout all of the models was the political party identifier. It remained significant even after adding the control variables and the interaction variable. The interaction variable provided information that again shows how a religious factor didn't move the stance of those identifying as Catholic Republicans. Again, my three hypotheses are, Catholic republicans are going to agree more with excluding undocumented immigrants than the respondents that identify as Catholic non-

republican. The second, high religiosity among respondents would have a large effect on the attitudes toward undocumented immigrants in this country. Third, a factor of high religiosity will weaken a Catholic republican's position on excluding undocumented immigrants. The only hypothesis that I had which had evidence in favor for it was the first. Catholic Republicans were more likely than non to support excluding undocumented immigrants. The other hypotheses in my regression model had no significance.

The fifth model contained the interaction variable, but there wasn't any change in the Pseudo R-Square, so the fourth model would be the final for interpretation. In the fourth model, the only significant non control variables with the dependent variable were regarding party identification. The p-value was 0.000 and even with the other non-significant variables the whole fourth model remained significant. A Republican compared to a Democrat is only 29% (about one-third) as likely to agree with support for undocumented immigrants."

Interview Results

Being Republican and Religious

When discussing the religious behavior theme, I started by asking questions about the participant's religious background. I would ask about church attendance, prayer, and scripture readings, mainly how often the participant would conduct each of these things. Everyone went to church on a regular basis, but there were variances in how much scripture/prayer each performed and what they would pray for. It ranged from praying while having a bad day to praying for family members. To get a little deeper understanding of their religious beliefs I asked about if they think about their religion on a daily basis. They answered yes and that it came up in their own decision making process.

I began to think maybe that their religion drove them to the Republican Party, but that can't be the case. The respondents believe that most Catholics are Republican, but voting registration shows that it

is more of an even divide. Catholics again are split evenly when it comes to party identification. I also asked a question about this. Why do Republicans tend to be religious? One respondent said "Yeah definitely I think a lot of Catholics begrudgingly vote republican because they are prolife that's not because conservatism doesn't match them its more because they don't understand and aren't all that politically informed, I think there is a general view to be more socially liberal is to be more Christ like, which I don't think is true but yes to answer your question" This respondent thinks that many people are Republican because of the pro-life issue. This led me back to the conclusion that religion may not determine the political party, like the previous literature has observed, but that some religious preferences do line up with certain issues.

Continuing with this theme of religious behavior, I asked a question about religion and morality, if religious people are inherently moral people. The answers differed from "not necessarily" to wholehearted agreement. One answer was striking and would turn out to be somewhat ironic from my perspective. I say ironic because this quote states that religion is the moral route, but when it comes down to policy for this person, the party line is toed and the religious-based moral stance is tossed aside. "Definitely, morality is basically your decision making and religion enforces a good morality. Like with the ten commandments, not just that it provides a basic infrastructure for you to make better decision obviously like don't steal. It definitely helps you to figure out. I learned my good morality from religion so I think it definitely helps with that." The respondent admits that religious actions are inherently moral. People that are religious, who actively participate in church and carry out their church's teachings, are moral people.

I found this very interesting because they use their religious beliefs to make decisions, but when it comes to policy decisions, party is the ultimate factor. What happened to religion being a large influence in their life? It seems as though party ideology is the decision making factor when it comes to policy oriented dilemmas and religion is used for the more daily and circumstantial matters.

Immigration

After having the respondents establish an understanding of their own morality and religious activity, I turned to the questions regarding immigration. I had a question to sum the entire background and thought regarding immigration and morality. I asked if they see the issue of undocumented immigration residing in the country as a moral issue. There were mixed responses and difficult answers. I could tell after talking about what religion and morality mean to them that this question made them think more. The respondents took more time to gather their thoughts and produce a coherent answer regarding the questions of undocumented immigrants and morality.

They all did see immigration as being a moral issue, but it didn't stop there. Firstly, the respondents understood that the more compassionate thing to do is help all the undocumented immigrants. But, because they didn't just see it as a moral issue, their positions were different on how to handle undocumented immigrants. One student struggled, saying, "Yea um, I think that the people who don't have a strong stance on stopping illegal immigration, and are Catholic they think it is the compassionate thing to do... I like to say that my stance is the most moral, cause that's why I think it, but people have definitely have good reasons for the other side I just don't agree." The respondent sees her stance of border protection and national security as the most moral. Helping those in the country is more of a moral issue than helping those trying to get into the United States.

Another respondent went on to say "if people are suffering on the other side of the world something should be done, don't leave them there to die." Then continuing on the questioning of morality and helping those in the U.S., that same respondent stated "taxes should be a part of it, if you are active in community, if you volunteer are a member of the church and pay taxes, then that is amnesty," when talking about who would be granted legal status. There is no support for outright amnesty. The respondent needed there to be some sort of way that the undocumented immigrants can make up for their breaking of the law. These two quotes show that the respondent says to help those in need, but then only help certain individuals. That quote shows the struggle with the morality issue. The would help those that are suffering elsewhere, but what about all the people that are undocumented who escaped suffering by

getting into the U.S.? Only the undocumented immigrants that have done some sort of good will be helped, according to the second quote there.

There was an exception to be made to any openness towards undocumented persons: the people allowed to stay had to be paying their fair share in the first place. The respondents expressed their concern about the legality of the process. The undocumented people broke a law, so in their eyes there had to be repercussions. There was no magic wand that could make that fact disappear for them; all interviews thought a reparation or punitive measure was needed. It was just the severity differed among the respondents. It came down to deportation or penalties before obtaining legal status.

Beyond the focus on legal consequence as a precursor to membership in the U.S., the interviewees suggested that immigration could not just solely be a moral issue. There were other considerations. The respondents went on to discuss how the immigration issue extends to economics and national security. They were more concerned about the other possible criminal activity of people that were crossing the border. With the concern of criminals coming, that meant they grouped the whole undocumented class together.

As a result, nobody agreed that amnesty for all should be granted. Three of the respondents still believed that people should be deported. One of the three was more open to limited deportation with some obtaining a legal path to citizenship after paying their fair share. So they saw immigration as a moral issue in a sense, but deportations still had to be made since they were breaking the law in the first place. It came down to the morality of helping people. There was picking and choosing in the minds of the respondents for who gets the priority assistance. Would the needs of legal residents outweigh helping those looking for a better life? The moral sense was to help the families that were trying to start a life here while making sure criminals can't come into the country. It was protecting the legal families here, which was the most important matter. One respondent summed this up well: "You still have to make reparations for your crimes, if you can compare that to something in the church that's like going to confession and confessing your sins and priest saying your good and there is no penance, possibly they could like have some

enormous fine perhaps that's an option I'm more open to suggestions on that but number one concern is deporting violent criminals." It wasn't enough for the undocumented to make up for their crimes by becoming legal residents and paying taxes like other citizens, they had to make up for their crimes, which meant exiting the country.

What if there was a connection between the undocumented immigrants and legal residents? I started asking hypotheticals such as what if the person was an active member of their community and church, but had been here illegally. I wanted to create a sense of whether the social identity of shared religious membership in a church mattered. It made the supporters of deportation think about it more, but it did not change their position. They still believed in reparations. "If they came here illegally then yes, they broke the law, there are other people waiting in line to come here legally, comes to that you are being unfair to all the people who are trying to come here legally, and you are rewarding illegal behavior which isn't right, its unfortunate and sad." I found this quote interesting because it makes the people who came here looking for a better life look like they are being unjust to others. It completely neglects that our legal immigration policies might need reform or that the undocumented might not have had the means or time to try and come legally. It groups them altogether as the ones not doing what is morally right. The respondents were certain that their side was the moral side. They might feel bad for those that had to go, but it still would not change their position.

Another part of the questioning was about breaking up families. I think everyone could agree that separating parents and children is a wretched thing to do and something the Catholic Church does condemn. "We find such targeting of immigrant women and children – most of whom fled violence and persecution in their home countries – to be inhumane and a grave misuse of limited enforcement resources" (USCCB, 2016). A big problem with deportation is that the parents may have had children in the United States, so the kids are full citizens by birth. The parents would have to leave but the kids do not, but few parents would want to take their kids back to the life they were trying to leave behind. When questioned on the breakup of families the supporters of deportation simply said that the parents should

take them along. "I think it could, just because you have your emotions playing at the same time as logic in that stance though obviously the parents are illegal they should make a better decision and take the child back with them and not leave child alone and abandoned" They put it on the parents. It is the parent's moral responsibility to take the children with them. Again I think the respondents neglect the fact that the parents may know they taking their children into a harsh atmosphere and leaving one of promise behind. One may see it as the right thing to do, while the other perspective clearly disagrees.

Papal Authority

The final bit of questioning pertained to the Pope himself. Pope Francis has spoken openly about many issues in a hope to guide the church. I used one of his more recent quotes that doesn't name Donald Trump, but clearly is directed toward his polices that the majority of republicans do support. "A person who thinks only about building walls, wherever they may be, and not building bridges, is not Christian. This is not in the Gospel. As far as what you said about whether I would advise to vote or not to vote, I am not going to get involved in that. I say only that this man is not Christian if he has said things like that. We must see if he said things in that way, and in this I give the benefit of the doubt" (Burke, 2016). I asked if this quote had any effect on their stances or opinions regarding handling immigration policy and undocumented immigrants. The respondents all agreed that the Pope has a right to his opinion, but his opinion doesn't necessarily affect their positions. They did believe that many people do listen to the Pope. The respondents just didn't fall into that category.

One respondent explained this reasoning well. "The pope is still human he's not Jesus. Papal infallibility is only in very specific instances and that is not one of them, so I understand where he's coming from, I don't think he's thinking of the economic implications I think he is thinking in very you need to welcome your neighbor, and legal immigration does that, were not saying that no one can come in were just saying you have to respect our laws." They believe that the Pope is only thinking compassionately and that he doesn't understand the bigger picture with other implications. This is interesting because again the Pope does use the scholarly resources his office contains when making

statements. They also implicitly suggest that the only time to accept fully a pope's authority is under the conditions of infallibility, which are rare and not directed at social issues like immigration. This suggests they are finding a way to let their political party affiliation lead their opinions. They must not believe the Pope is capable of understanding the other issues at stake. I see these answers regarding the Pope's opinions as showing concern only for those within the borders legally. When it comes to respecting a Catholic moral stance about undocumented immigrants, many Republican Catholics just aren't willing to listen. They shape their worldview to think what they believe is right.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Discussion of Statistical Results

I find the regression results, that political identity trumps strong religious identity, to be a little surprising. But, it's not at all hard to believe because the previous literature supporting my first hypothesis is more established. A person's party has become a defining factor in their development of a stance on policy and/or attitudes this is mainly due to the party elites shaping of policy. Green (1994) explained how party identification has come to shape people's values and attitudes and went on further to add that this is due to their stable party identification.

What has come to shape these party stances and influence the party members has been the work of party elites. Cohen (2003) showed how the party is more important indicator on how someone will think than the influence of policy information. He tied this idea of party over everything else using the concept of groupthink. Cohen (2003) used four different studies to demonstrate the power of group influence and the party. The example from the study that I pick out is that one of the studies showed how 66% of students wrote an editorial about a policy stance that was in favor of it (Cohen, 2003). Those students were then told that their party took up a stance that was opposite theirs. Due to this nearly all of those students switched their stance to fit their party's choice (Cohen, 2003). The people determining these party stances are the party elites. They are the root causes for this groupthink idea. One of the other articles that I have reviewed is contrary to the thought that party elites dominate the party member's policy stances. Bullock (2011) explains that party elites do have an influence over the general party members, but not an outright control like previous research has adopted. Partisans are affected just as much by actual policy information when compared to party elites influence (Bullock, 2011). When partisans are exposed to descriptions of policy, they are more likely to arrive to policy stances

independent of their party (Bullock, 2011). The problem with this is that the general public, members of those political parties, are heavily uniformed. Bullock (2011) tested the effects of providing information to the partisans and then seeing how they came to a policy decision. He was able to recognize that public is not accustomed to in-depth descriptions of policy.

I think the support for my first hypothesis and as to why my second hypothesis was found to be rejected were proven from those literature review descriptions. The literature review discussed how people didn't tend to shift party stance. After conducting my regression analysis and interviews, the literature was shown to be correct even with the stances of the church made clear to the respondents. It showed that the respondents in the GSS data set fall in line with the indication that people tend to side with their party over anything else. This hypothesis builds off previous work as well as critiques it. My research critiques in the sense that people will seek out more descriptive explanations of policy than just listening to party elites or following the party platform, which Bullock (2011) seems to imply people could do. My interviews show the people do agree with what the party line holds. They weren't sure about how the church stood on certain issues other than abortion. They didn't know about the Pope's or Bishop's stance on immigration and the refugees. They knew party leaderships stance on the issue. This shows that people still don't seek out different explanations of policy stances. People side with their already held views and don't look to find alternative information. It builds off the idea that people will continue to be polarized by party identification. It builds on the idea party stances and the effect of party elite group influence have become the most prevalent way a person takes a policy stance.

This all supports as to why my second hypothesis fell flat. Recall, my second hypothesis was high religiosity among respondents would have a large effect on the attitudes toward undocumented immigrants in this country. There has been significant evidence that political identification is the dominant influence on policy attitudes, so why are religious practices thought to change this? It is because religion can and does play one of the most important roles in someone's life and could bypass the shortcut that is party identification. Ysseldyk (2010) explains how religion becomes a form of social identity for

people. This gives people a sense of who they are in a group similar to that of a political party. Religion even goes a step further and provides a sacred worldview with eternal group membership (Ysseldyk, 2010). A political identifier cannot match this, or so I thought. The fact that this unique worldview did not have a significant effect with excluding undocumented immigrants could mean that the political identification is manipulating religious practices and ideas to fit with and reinforce the already established policy stances.

Is it unwise to think that the basic teachings of the Catholic Church should convince someone to call on something more than just excluding the undocumented immigrants that are in the United States? This question is why I continued with the analysis into the third hypothesis, which was that a possible determinant of high religiosity would move a Catholic republican's position on excluding undocumented immigrants. I made religiosity, in this case belief in the Pope's infallibility, into an interaction variable to find its effect on the political identification. After recoding the variables and running the regression for the third and final model, the results showed that there was no significance from the newly created interaction variable. I was able to conclude that the variable chosen to represent religiosity did not have an effect on a Catholic republican's position for excluding undocumented immigrants. This was disappointing considering I thought maybe someone with higher religiosity that identified as a Catholic republican would shift their stance to be a little more flexible for including undocumented immigrants in the country and not simply follow the party stance. I thought maybe this higher religious activity would be the factor to change to the status quo.

My research was trying to again critique here the previous work of party identification and its influence. Layman (1997) provided a study that looked at the relationship between political identification and religion. After looking at voting patterns among religious groups, Layman (1997) was able to conclude that the culture wars between the committed religious traditionalists and secularists and religious liberals was playing a large part in the United States political system. It is adding to the already partisan politics and the people who tend to be more committed religious traditionalists, typically higher

religiosity, and the ones voting more republican (Layman, 1997). The republican stance they are voting is one against supporting undocumented immigrants. I find this to be contradictory and that is why I set out to try and find an effect of religiosity on that stance. A person with a high religiosity and that follows the teachings much more strictly I would think would be more open to helping other individuals instead of supporting this idea of excluding and getting rid of them. I don't think it was wrong to predict this either, because church doctrine does frame itself with the idea of ultimately helping others and people with high religiosity are more in line with church doctrine.

There are many weaknesses to my research, which include the assumptions I made about the religious effect on partisans. Like Ysseldyk (2010) had said, the people in a religious group want to protect their worldview. The relationship between the two belief systems in my research is looking for a more direct effect and doesn't take into account indirect attitudinal effects. Another weakness to my research is the generalizability. The GSS data set could ask some more questions about religion, which would help my analysis. For example, it could make the concept of religious practices clearer for the individuals. I could even use a data set that is more religiously geared. Another weakness of the research is the concept of religiosity itself. I could have chosen a different variable to represent religiosity and I could have chosen better variables from the data set that pertain more to religiosity. This could have given me the opportunity to observe more variables and possibly find one of statistical significance. One of the problems is there is still no agreed-upon measure of religiosity. If I used more of his research to determine which variables to choose or questions to ask, I may have had a better analysis.

Interview Discussion

My hypothesis about younger people who are more religiously involved was that they would be more open to granting amnesty for the undocumented immigrants. I was surprised to find out that my fellow students followed suit with the previous research. I thought as a younger generation people may tend to feel differently in a more progressive tone even for members of the party that is described as

conservative. Among the interviews, there was some leniency when it came to handling the undocumented immigrants. There was only one respondent that proposed for all undocumented immigrants to be deported. Most believed that they could stay, but there still would have to be reparations for their breaking the law.

What I wanted to convey in my questioning was this theme of morality. I wanted to get the participants to think about this issue as something that has moral backing. The interviewees all had a Catholic religious background and were active members of the church. They understood what the church teachings are and how these beliefs warrant just and virtuous activity. In being a moral person, one needs to undertake good behavior and human character. A moral person is an ethical person. I tried to frame the questioning to have them understand that the undocumented immigrants are people not just that 11 million number that everyone talks about. People believe they act morally but then look past the fact that these immigrants are people. They just see them as a problem and ignore the fact that they are people. I think it's a misguided sense of compassion. They want to help the people in their own country but then forget about others.

I find this really quite ironic because Republicans are supposed to be the party of free markets and a small federal government. This denial of immigrants and strong statism is something that they have adopted in an effort to protect the border. It is ironic in the sense that free markets actually advocate for of a more globalist perspective, but they warped this view with a new wave nationalism. In this theme I think people lose sight of morality, thinking that religious practices (attending church, praying) makes them morally sound. They were quick to call out other people for not having to be a good person while still practicing in the church, but avoided looking at themselves to see if their actions match that of a moral route. I was hoping in the interviews that participants would take part in some self-reflection. A quote reflected an objective perspective on dealing with immigration policy, "Yea um, I think that the people who don't have a strong stance on stopping illegal immigration, and are Catholic they think it is the compassionate thing to do." Here the respondent thinks that uniformed people see helping the

undocumented immigrants as the compassionate thing to do. I see this as a rejection of understanding the immigration from another point of view. This particular passage goes on, "I like to say that my stance is the most moral, cause that's why I think it, but people have definitely have good reasons for the other side I just don't agree." I see this a moral compromise. People have their own understanding of morality and what it takes to be a moral person. It is possible for a person to make himself or herself believe they are doing what is morally sound when handling an issue. I think bias can sink in here, because you could prioritize what is important, which could end up being doing the moral or ethical thing for one group over another, but ignoring the fact that it does adversely affect the other.

What the participants had a hard time deciding was if immigration is a moral issue. They said it could be, but then again there are still other considerations. Why do those other considerations such as national defense take precedence over the other? What is more important to these people, doing what may be right according to their religion or protecting one's own politically-based interests? My research says it's the latter, their party's platform.

The idea of Contact Theory affecting the stance on amnesty seemed to fall flat in the interviews. The hypothetical and even somewhat real relationships the respondents had with undocumented immigrants would not change how they felt. Those supporting deportation said they would feel bad, but would still deport them. The conservative ideology held strong for the participants. This differed from a previous study as well. Ellison (2011) provided on how minority groups fair here in the United States by observing different types of contact among the groups. Results include more favorable attitudes when people are exposed to these types of contact, as well as less restrictive immigration policy (Ellison, 2011). It is possible the participants didn't have the right form of contact to maintain a less restrictive immigration policy stance. The explanation could be that people who have not had contact and seek out information that already backs their own personal preferences are likely to depend on their party identification for attitudes (Pearson-Merkowitz, 2015). Meaning these individuals that didn't have the proper contact sought out information from their party that provided critical information of the

undocumented immigrants. Instead of getting to learn about the other groups and working toward helping, people will find information that protects their own already established self interests.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

My ultimate goal and research question was to understand what leads to someone's development of attitudes toward undocumented immigrants. I chose many different variables and constructed three different hypotheses to try and answer this question. I found that partisanship had the most significance in that development, which I hoped would end up not to be the case. The reason being is because people identify party identification at such a young age and once it is developed, it is very unlikely to change. What comes with this identification is now a set of beliefs that tend to be influenced by the party leaders.

Maybe people only side with partisanship for the issue of immigration. There is the possibility that religion can play a role for another issue. A take away for readers would be that most people are not informed, and thus are influenced by partisan leadership without even realizing it is happening. People may think they are making informed decisions when it comes to policy, but they are usually towing the party line. People are becoming more inclined to using party identification as a tool to develop attitudes and once people take party stances they are unlikely to change (Green, 1994). The Culture Conflict theory still holds true to this day. It may never change and the parties could become more polarized as time passes.

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