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Religious Leadership and Political Affiliation on a Secular Midwestern Campus

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Honors Project

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the connection between religion and political affiliation in campus organizations from the perspective of the leaders of religious organizations on a secular Midwestern university. Interviews with ten leaders of Christian, Jewish, or Muslim organizations were utilized in gathering data. The current literature on campus religion is rarely qualitative, and fails to address specific campus religious organizations and their leaders. The results of the study found that religious affiliation is not a highly contributing factor in political affiliation, as previous quantitative studies have indicated. Ethnic, religious, and racial marginalization emerged as more significant indicators of political affiliation in college students.

Introduction

Considering the influence of politics and religion on American culture, the intersection of these two concepts is an important scope of sociological research. As the manifestation of this intersection differs between generations, age demographics play an important role in exploring connections between political affiliation and religious affiliation. The target demographic of this project is college students, aged 18-24. Generationally, this demographic is known as the Millennial generation[1]. The previous literature regarding religion and politics on college campuses is largely quantitative, although a few qualitative studies appeared. Quantitative studies on campus religiosity have shown that religious affiliation is directly correlated to conservative political views, but the qualitative literature challenges this correlation. In this study, qualitative data was gathered through interviews with leaders in Christian, Jewish, and Muslim religious organizations on a secular Midwestern college campus. The study found that religious affiliation is not a strong indicator of political affiliation, and that factors of social marginalization, such as race, religion, and ethnicity are more accurate in predicting political affiliation in campus religious organizations.

Campus Religious Organizations in the Literature

Although campus religious organizations have existed since the establishment of the first universities, the current literature does little to address or showcase them. The quantitative data regarding religion on college campuses does not address specific organizations and focuses only on campus religion in general. The qualitative literature,

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[1] Individuals in the Millennial generation were born 1980-2000

however, briefly addresses campus religious organizations for their role in maintaining religious culture on college campuses.

The first study to address campus religious organizations was done by John Butler in 1989. As Butler is a scholar in the historical study of religion, the goal of this project was to explore campus religion from a historical perspective. Butler says that one of the earliest manifestations of religion on campuses were voluntary, student lead groups called "societies". These societies were structurally similar to social organizations or fraternities/sororities, but focused on religious and moral institutions as defining aspects of membership and group activities. Religious societies existed on many of the earliest college campuses. According to Butler, "Sixteen of twenty-two schools in the colonies [the first thirteen British colonies in America] had such societies; they were one of the religious forebears of organized religion on campus" (Butler, 1989:4). These societies were not only one of the first expressions of religion on campus, but also the first groups to fit into the category of "campus religious organization".

Butler shows that campus religious organizations are a significant indicator of religious culture on college campuses. Later in Butler's article, religious organizations on modern campuses are discussed. Butler refers to these organizations as "Independent Religious Organizations" because they are independent both from one another and from traditional religious institutions and denominations. In addition, Butler says that these groups can exist as national or university specific (local) organizations. Butler lists InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Young Life, Campus Crusade for Christ (now known as Cru), and Fellowship of Christian Athletes as a few examples of influential and well-known national campus religious organizations. In reference to the listed examples, Butler says, "They are a most recent phenomenon in the

overall history of religion on campus" (Butler, 1989:10). However, Butler does not address or point out the existence and influence of non-Christian campus religious organizations.

The most substantial qualitative study on campus religion is Conrad Cherry, Betty DeBerg, and Amanda Porterfield's *Religion on Campus*, published in 2001. The goal of this study was to explore the religious environment and culture at different universities around the United States. Four universities were included in the study, one in the west (studied by DeBerg), one in the south (studied by Cherry), one in the east (studied by Porterfield), and one in the north (studied by Cherry). In gathering data, the four researchers went to each campus and interviewed students, faculty, and staff about the religious culture of the given campus. In this study, campus religious organizations were referenced only when research participants brought them up in conversation, or when the researcher believed them to be important to the overall religious atmosphere. The only researcher who discusses campus religious organizations in depth is DeBerg, who refers to them as "evangelical para-church groups and mainline Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish campus ministries" (DeBerg, 2001:79). DeBerg's university had 30 registered campus religious organizations, with Campus Crusade (now known as Cru) and the Newman Center (a Catholic organization) having the most participation and membership.

Lastly, John Schmalzbauer's "Campus Religious Life in America: Revitalization and Renewal", (2013), references campus religious organizations in relevance to a changing religious atmosphere on college campuses. Schmalzbauer utilizes the influence and growth of campus religious organizations to argue that college campuses are not abandoning religion, but are expressing religious belief, practice, and affiliation in a new and revitalized way. Schmalzbauer mentions Cru, InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Fellowship of Student Athletes,

Hillel, and Chabad as groups playing a significant part in the revitalization of religion on college campuses. In reference to these organizations, Schmalzbauer states, "Far from secular, the [college] campus may actually intensify religious and spiritual seeking" (Schmalzbauer, 2013:127). This source argues that religion is still relevant on college campuses; evidenced by the growth and popularity of campus religious organizations.

Other studies look at the purpose and importance of campus religious organizations. One reason for the existence of campus religious organizations is to provide an opportunity for college students to connect with individuals of the same religion or ethnicity. Campus religious organizations allow students the opportunity to develop friendships and feel comfortable and accepted on campus. Lorraine Brown carried out an ethnographic study of Muslim international students in England. The results of Brown's study showed that the students who participated in religious groups found friendship and belonging through shared religious experience made possible by involvement in the group (Brown, 2009). Thus, especially for individuals who are marginalized or identify with a minority group, a network of other students that share a religious culture and/or ethnic identity is important in establishing friendship and a sense of belonging.

The literature also shows that campus religious organizations have an important function of helping students feel comfortable and at home within the campus community. Anastasia Luadi and Gertina Van Schalkwyk found that first year students who perceived more "university support" (defined as assistance in adjusting to college from university administration or university organizations) were less likely to feel homesick (Luadi, Van Schalkwyk, 2017). University organizations which cater specifically to religion are especially

important in helping religious students feel comfortable on secular campuses. In DeBerg's study, one participant states "I liked Thursday night mass because it was my crowd, a good community, a home away from home" (DeBerg, 2001:47). Students who join university organizations such as campus religious organizations are less likely to feel homesick and more likely to feel comfortable and at home on campus. An important function of campus religious organizations is to provide a second home for religious students on college campuses.

The studies above indicate that campus religious organizations serve important social functions for college students that are not available from other organizations, such as sororities or fraternities. Campus religious organizations fill a specific niche for students, that other social clubs cannot. Campus religious organizations give students the opportunity to participate in religious services or congregations without leaving campus. Betty DeBerg states,

> They [members of campus religious organizations] wanted to know and listen to God, pray, read biblical and other religious texts, sing, worship, serve others, selectively receive the counsel of ministers, and reflect on the meaning and purpose of their lives. (DeBerg, 2001:79).

The ability to participate in all of these activities without leaving campus proves to be an important aspect of campus religious organizations. Saran Donahoo, in her research on off-campus religious participation, stated, "It is possible that these individuals [students who do not attend church] may feel less motivated or find it more difficult to locate area [off-campus] worship services" (Donahoo, 2014:181). Campus religious organizations can provide students with the convenient, student-oriented opportunity to participate in religious services,

congregations, or rituals without having to leave campus to find a suitable congregation in the off-campus community.

Campus religious organizations also give students the opportunity to practice religious faith with their peers, who are similar in age, experience, and position in life. Often, this is a new opportunity for religious college students, if their home church or congregation did not have a large youth group. According to John Butler, being able to participate in religious activities and services with fellow students and peers has been an important function of campus religious organizations since their emergence as religious "societies" in colonial America. Butler states, "Every campus today has the same patterns [as the initial religious "societies"] of free associations of students seeking to express their faith with other students" (Butler, 1989:4). In another study, DeBerg found that at the western university students enjoyed "faith-sharing groups" or small groups of Christian students who met often to discuss relationships, school problems, or family concerns that were unique to their age group. These small groups allowed students to converse with their Christian peers (rather than non-religious friends, parents, or adults) on issues relevant to their lives. These students benefitted from the opportunity to express their concerns with peers who had the same or similar beliefs and were in the same stage of life (DeBerg, 2001:46). The unique opportunity to practice and express religious belief with other students and peers is another reason for the existence of campus religious organizations.

Other studies look at campus religion and how it interacts with political culture. Multiple recent quantitative studies found that religious affiliation is often linked to political conservativism or a preference for traditional values in college students. A 2017 study of over

3,000 college students found that individuals who self-identified as being Republican or politically conservative were more likely to be religiously affiliated (Ozmen, Brelsford, Danieu, 2017). Another recent study by Erica Leach and Jonathan Gore explored time orientation (the attitudes held about past, present, and future), as it correlates with religious affiliation in college students. The results of the study held that students who had past-positive time orientations (positive attitudes regarding the past) were more likely to identify with traditional or conservative religion. Conversely, those who had past-negative time orientations (negative attitudes regarding the past) were more likely to hold secular beliefs. Thus, students who had positive attitudes about the traditional values of the past were more likely to be religious than those who did not (Leach, Gore, 2017). Both of these studies indicate that religious students gravitate toward traditional and conservative values and that there is a correlation between religious affiliation and conservative worldviews in college students. However, no quantitative data is available yet for campus religious organizations specifically, or how they intersect with political parties and worldviews.

Qualitative research exploring the intersection of religious and political affiliation in college students was not as decisive about the correlation between religious affiliation and political conservatism. Conrad Cherry (2001) found that students who preferred literal interpretations of the Bible were more likely to have conservative political beliefs and that religious affiliation alone did not always translate into political conservativism in students. This was illustrated in Cherry's conversation with a liberal student who attended Bible studies with three other students:

"We are [liberal] open to religious diversity and have social justice concerns. The

other person is very traditional and has a literal interpretation of the Bible. You

have to be careful what you say to a person like that. She could think you are a

bad person because you don't hold her conservative views". (Cherry, 2001:239).

Thus, religious affiliation for Christian students does not seem to affect political affiliation in the

same way that a commitment to a literal interpretation of the Bible does. Amanda Porterfield

noticed a similar divide, "There were clear tensions between progressive Catholic students who

found the core of their faith in social service and acts on behalf of social justice and the

conservatives who discovered that core in devotion to the authoritative teachings and the

sacramental life of the church" (Porterfield, 2001:153). The qualitative literature shows that

religious commitments are compatible with liberal as well as conservative political orientations.

Campus religious organizations in light of secularization and detraditionalization

In the study of religion, narratives of secularization and detraditionalization are often

helpful in understanding the dynamic of religion as it interacts with society. An idea which was

initially coined by Max Weber in the early 1900s, secularization theory is one of the most

popular frameworks of religious studies (Christiano, Swatos, Kivisto, et al. 2008). Larry Shiner

gave more depth to the secularization narrative in his work *The Concept of Secularization in*

Empirical Research. Shiner identifies six types of secularization:

Decline of religion

Conformity with "this world"

Disentanglement of society with religion

Transposition of religious beliefs and institutions

Desacralization of the world

Movement from a "sacred" to a "secular" society

For the purposes of analyzing campus religious organizations, Shiner's first type of secularization, the decline of religion, will be used. The decline of religion is defined by Shiner as, "The previously accepted symbols, doctrines, and institutions lose their prestige and influence" (Shiner, 1967:209). This type of secularization argues that society is becoming gradually less religious over time. If this is true, the number of campus religious organizations will decrease over time.

In addition to secularization, the detraditionalization narrative is also important in the study of religion on campus. Paul Heelas (1996) gives an in-depth explanation of the framework in *De-traditionalization: critical reflections on authority and identity in a time of uncertainty*. According to Heelas, "Detraditionalization involves a shift of authority: from "without" to "within". It entails the decline of the belief in pre-given or natural order of things" (Heelas, Lash, Morris, 1996:2). Detraditionalization in terms of religion involves both a switch from external authority (church, synagogue, holy books) to internal authority (spirituality, personal belief) and a decreasing belief in traditional religion. This narrative is different than secularization because it involves not only the decline of traditional religion, but also the emergence and growth of revitalized forms of spirituality.

The effects of both secularization and detraditionalization on campus religious organizations appear in the literature. John Schmalzbauer (2013) argues that college campuses are not completely secularizing.

While mainline Protestantism no longer dominates student life, new movements have filled the religious vacuum. Nearly invisible at the end of World war II, evangelical parachurch groups [i.e. Cru] are among the largest religious organizations on campus. [Also] Reflecting a renaissance in campus Judaism, Hillel and Chabad are enjoying impressive growth. (Schmalzbauer, 2013:115).

Conrad Cherry found that the students at the southern university were more inclined toward the word "spirituality" than "religion". In the reference to a conversation with the student government president at the university, Cherry states,

When asked in an interview if he thought SU [southern university] students were very religious, he said after some reflection, "No, but most of them are spiritual". The word "religion" connoted for him the institutional churches, above all, the received traditions and customs of the denominations. "Spirituality" meant the students' developing "concepts of God and values that are directly related to their lives, rather than church centered. (Cherry, 2001:110).

Betty DeBerg noticed a similar trend in her study of a western university: "Generally uninterested in "church" or "religion", as they [the students] knew or believed it to be, they nevertheless expressed a keen interest in "spirituality" (DeBerg, 2001:79). The shift from traditional "religion" to "spirituality" is a defining aspect in the detraditionalization of religion.

The co-findings of Cherry and DeBerg regarding the role of spirituality on college campuses are important because they outline a shift in authority. To revisit Heelas, detraditionalization is defined by a transition from external authority to internal authority

(Heelas, et al. 1996). The students who were interviewed by Cherry and DeBerg indicated that the external authority of traditional religion was no longer relevant in the lives of their fellow college students. These students tended to gravitate towards "spirituality" or an internal validation (authority) of religion (Cherry, et al. 2001). Likewise, Schmalzbauer explained the transition of college campuses from traditional religion (on-campus denominational churches) to revitalized forms of religion (informal, evangelical para-church groups that meet in student unions or other secular spheres) (Schmalzbauer, 2013). This shift between campus ministries follows the transition from external authority to internal authority. The detraditionalization of religion on campus combines some traditional practices (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim) in an informal student organization structure. This shows that campuses are transitioning to different forms and practices of spirituality rather than abandoning religion. Altogether, the detraditionalization narrative seems more accurate than the secularization narrative in explaining campus religion because religion (in revitalized forms) is growing rather than declining on college campuses.

Methods

This study utilized qualitative interviews with ten leaders of campus religious organizations as a data collection method. Each leader was asked to speak and make attributions on behalf of their organization. Qualitative interviews allowed each leader to describe their view or attribution in great detail. This method led to a substantial amount of useful data being collected—more so than could have been collected using a quantitative method.

A significant and defining aspect of the qualitative interviews was the focus on leaders (e.g. president, secretary, treasurer, etc.) in religious organizations. Each participant has or at one point had a leadership position which was recognized within the organization. The focus specifically on leaders of campus religious organizations ensured that each participant was at least moderately religious and at least moderately committed to the religious organization which they led. In addition to the importance of commitment, leaders tend to be more familiar with both the individual members and group dynamics of a given organization. Thus, leaders should be able to answer the interview questions in a way that accurately represents the group and its members as a whole. The focus specifically on leaders of religious organizations lends to the nuance of data within the study in that previous research has failed to recognize the importance of commitment and familiarity (i.e. factors of leadership) in the attempt to create an accurate illustration of campus religion.

The interviews consisted of thirteen open ended questions and four yes or no questions (although the yes or no questions typically had more extensive responses). The questions existed in four categories; each meant to explain one variable of the research. These categories were: campus religious organizations in general (i.e. "There are multiple religious organizations on campus, what is different about yours and why did you choose it over others?"), campus organizations as they intersect with political affiliations and views on political issues (i.e. "What are the three most concerning social issues or problems going on in America right now, according to your organization?"), attributions of secularization and detraditionalization made by the participants (i.e. "Research from the Pew Research center has discovered that your generation is significantly less religiously affiliated than previous generations. Why do you think

this is?"), and the extent to which each participant was committed to their religion (i.e. "Did your religion influence the field you chose to study? If so, in what ways?"). The questions in each category were formulated in order to explain or describe one or more variables of the research. In addition, the use of multiple categories of questions reconciled the differences between politics and religion and made it manageable to discover any possible correlations or intersections.

Each participant was emailed a copy of the question sheet before their interview. During the interview, each participant was given a paper copy of the question sheet for referencing. The researcher used pen and paper to transcribe and summarize each answer. In addition to summarizing, the researcher also took direct quotes when they were short in length and were relevant to the view of the participant. The interviews lasted between 25-45 minutes, depending on how far in-depth each participant went in answering the questions. Nine of the ten interviews took place in the group study floor of the public library on the campus of study, where participants were able to speak openly about their view with few outside distractions. One participant was unable to meet in person and sent answers to the researcher by email.

Possible Limitations and Bias

The most significant limitation to the study is the implications of a campus which was not substantially diverse in terms of religion. The campus that was researched is a public university in the Midwest, which had seventeen documented Christian organizations, one documented Muslim organization, one documented Jewish organization, and no documented organizations for students of other religions, such as Buddhism or Hinduism. Therefore,

because of the saturation of Christians and Christian organizations on this particular campus, the interview participants were mostly Christians (three out of ten participants being non-Christian). Although multiple different protestant and non-denominational Christian organizations were studied, the research may have been further diversified with the opportunity to include more Catholic, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, or Hindu students. In addition, the absence of any documented organizations for religions other than Christianity, Islam, and Judaism made it difficult to include students from varied and diverse religious orientations. Having said this, some "cultural" organizations (such as the Indian Student Organization) recognized aspects of Eastern religions. However, because the main premise of the study was to explore campus religious organizations, cultural organizations which were not built solely around religion were not included.

Another possible limitation to the study was the utilization of a small sample size of participants. Ten leaders in campus religious organizations participated in the study—compared to the previous literature (both qualitative and quantitative) this is a low number. However, the utilization of a small sample size lends to the specificity and contribution of the study. In the few qualitative studies referenced above, researchers studied many individuals but did not ask questions from a standardized list nor have stipulations for who could participate. In *Religion on Campus*, researchers gathered data by conversation with students, faculty, and staff in order to find exploratory trends. Because each conversation was different, the answers are difficult to compare and have a low degree of standardization. Conversely, the small sample size, constraints on participation (i.e. only leaders of campus religious organizations participated), and standardized list of questions in this study gave a high level of specificity to both the data

collected and results. Likewise, the low sample size allowed the researcher to spend more time with each participant, which created a greater understanding of each view and attribution. The utilization of a small sample size was necessary for the contribution of specific and in-depth results.

Of the nineteen documented religious organizations on the campus of study, leaders in seven were interviewed. Although contact was made with all nineteen organizations, many ignored the invitation and declined to participate. Specifically, leaders in both the Catholic and Jewish organizations indicated that they did not feel comfortable answering questions on behalf of their organizations. No leaders from a Catholic organization participated in the study, although one participant who lead a non-denominational organization self-identified as Catholic. A former leader of a Jewish organization who was not currently holding a leadership position agreed to participate in the interviews.

In terms of research bias, there seemed to be a discrepancy between certain interview questions and non-American participants. During their interviews, the Muslim participants (who were also international students) pointed out that certain questions about group attributions were not particularly relevant to their case. At this campus, the majority of Muslim students were international. Because of this, most members of the Muslim organization could not participate in American politics. The Muslim participants were not able to make attributions about the American political views and affiliations of their organization. However, both participants were able to give substantial answers to the majority of questions. Likewise, the Jewish participant pointed out that Hillel includes both religious and cultural Jews. So, some members of this organization were not actually religious (although the participant was).

Therefore, questions regarding group attributions of religion as it applies to politics were not uniformly applicable. The interview topic was geared towards organizations in which participation in American political culture is possible.

Demographics

The research encompasses ten individual interviews with leaders in campus religious organizations. Seven participants identified as White, two participants identified as African American (Black), and one participant identified as Asian. Two genders were represented in the study—four participants identified as male and six participants identified as female. In terms of the religion of each participant, seven participants were involved in Christian organizations and identified as Christian, two participants were involved in a Muslim organization and identified as Muslim, and one participant was involved in a Jewish organization and identified as Jewish. Nine participants identified as heterosexual and one participant identified as gay. The socio-economic status of the participants was not significantly diversified, with nine participants identifying as middle class and one participant identifying as lower class.

As stated previously, ten leaders in seven different campus religious organizations participated in the study. All organizations were given pseudonyms that correlated with the real name of the organization to protect the anonymity of the leaders, organizations, and campus of study. Five were nationally recognized organizations, appearing on many campuses around the United states. The national organizations (given pseudonyms) were:

Water (Christian, predominantly white)

Campus Crowd (Christian, predominantly white)

Alpha Nu (Christian, predominantly white)

Islamic Student Alliance (Muslim, predominantly middle eastern)

Shalom (Jewish, predominantly white)

Two organizations were local and specific to the campus of study. The two local organizations

were:

Crown Commission (Christian, predominantly African American)

Scripture Examination (Christian, predominantly white)

Data Analyzation

The information collected from the interviews was analyzed using the deductive

approach to qualitative data analysis, in which research questions are used to group the data

and then correlations are found within each grouping (Mayring, 2000). The interviews were

split apart and the answers to each question were organized into separate headings. Thus, each

question had its own heading and all ten answers to the question were listed below it. After the

data was organized, the researcher studied each heading to find similarities and differences

between the ways each participant answered the same question. Moreover, each participant's

answer to a particular question was studied in relation to the other participants' answers to the

same question. This allowed the researcher to more easily find correlations and intersections

between the views and attributions of the ten participants. The answers were compared using

content phrases rather than keywords, as many participants indicated similar ideas but

expressed them with different words and syntax. As each question only had ten responses, the

content could be easily compared without using key words or an additional data analyzation method.

After comparing the topical answers, the participants were clustered into two separate groupings. As the marginal status of each organization was a factor which contributed highly to the correlations between answers, the participants were organized into groups based on the degree of marginality of the members in their organization. Specifically, the participants were placed in the "marginalized" group (high degree of social marginality based on religious, ethnic, or racial divides) or the "mainstream" group (low degree of social marginality). The charts which appear next illustrate where each participant and organization fell between the two clusters:

Marginalized Group

	Leader 1	Leader 2	Leader 3	Leader 4
	Crown Commission	Shalom	Islamic Student Alliance	Islamic Student Alliance
Personal party affiliation	Democrat	Democrat	N/A	N/A
Organization's affiliation	Democrat	N/A	N/A	N/A
Top 3 Issues	Racial issues, Poverty	White nationalism, social justice	Islamophobia, racial issues, climate change	Islamophobia
Who can best solve issues	Religious organizations	Both	Both	Neither
Political involvement	None	Poverty (social justice)	Islamophobia	Islamophobia
Secularization Attribution	Detraditionalization	Detradtionalization	Progressive culture	Progressive culture

Mainstream Group

	Leader 1	Leader 2	Leader 3	Leader 4	Leader 5	Leader 6
	Water	Water	Alpha Nu	Alpha Nu	Scripture Examination	Campus Crowd
Personal Party Affiliation	Independent	None	Democrat	Democrat	None	Refused
Organization's Affiliation	Republican	N/A	Republican	N/A	N/A	N/A
Top 3 Issues	Racial Issues, abortion, poverty	Abortion, gun control	Poverty	Abortion, climate change, health care	Church and State issues	Racial issues, orphans, mental health
Who can best solve issues	Both	Religious organizations	Both	Political organizations	Both	Both
Political Involvement	Racial issues, poverty	None	Poverty	None	None	Racial issues, mental health
Secularization Attribution	Detradtionalization	Progressive culture	Progressive culture	Detraditionalization	Progressive culture	Progressive culture

The Effects of Racial, Religious, and Ethnic Marginality on Political Affiliation

Data compiled in this study shows that factors such as marginality tend to be more accurate in predicting political affiliation than is religious affiliation alone. Each leader was asked to state a political party affiliation which they attributed to the majority of the group's members ("do you think your organizations members are Democrats, Republicans, Bernie Sanders Socialists, or another party?"). The answers to this question indicated two important results.

First, leaders of organizations which fell into the mainstream group were more likely to attribute a Republican political affiliation to the majority of their organization's members. This data is consistent with statistics from the Pew Research Center. A 2003 Pew Research survey found that white American respondents view the Republican party as being significantly more friendly towards religion than the democratic party. Further, 58% of white American respondents said that Republicans are friendly toward religion (with 26% saying the party was neutral toward religion, and 7% saying the party was unfriendly toward religion). Conversely, in the same Pew statistical analysis, 41% of white respondents viewed the Democratic party as being friendly towards religion and 13% viewed the democratic party as being unfriendly toward religion (Pew Research Center, 2003). The data collected during the qualitative interviews follows this trend. All of the leaders whose organizations fell into the mainstream group either believed that their organization's members were mostly Republican, or could not make a definite attribution to the party affiliation of their organization's members. Two leaders in mainstream group said that their organizations members were mostly Republicans because they believed there to be a connection between Christianity and the Republican party. According to one of these leaders, "Since we are Christian, most people [members] are probably Republican". However, none of the leaders in mainstream organizations personally identified with the Republican party, even when they believed this was their organization's majority.

Second, leaders of organizations which fell into the marginalized group were more likely to attribute a Democratic political affiliation to the majority of their organization's members. This data also follows statistics published by the Pew Research Center. Moreover, the Pew

Research Center found that 53% of African American Respondents believed the Democratic

party was friendly toward religion, while only 27% believed that the Republican party was

friendly towards religion (Pew Research Center, 2003). In terms of the qualitative interviews, all

leaders whose organizations were in the marginalized group either believed their organization's

members were mostly Democrats or could not make a definite attribution to the party

affiliation of their organization's members. In addition, the four leaders of the marginalized

group personally affiliated with the Democratic party or had no party affiliation. In a racial

breakdown of the marginalized group, one African American participant personally identified

with and attributed their organization's affiliation with the Democratic party. One Jewish

participant could not give a definite answer to the general affiliation of their organization, but

did state that Jewish individuals in general tend to affiliate with the Democratic party and that

they personally affiliated with the Democratic party. Two Muslim participants were unable to

make an attribution on behalf of their organization, as most members are international and

unable to participate in American political culture.

However, both the leaders of the mainstream and marginalized student organizations

expressed similar views for their organization's membership in terms of social and political

issues. This finding is comparable to the Pew Research Center results that showed African

American Christians and White Christians having almost identical views on key issues, including

the role of religion in government and social problems. According to the Pew Research Center,

> Both groups [African American Christians and White Christians] think the country
>
> would be better off if religion were more influential, both defend the role of
>
> religious leaders as political spokesmen, and both share similar views on

important social issues, such as assisted suicide and gay marriage (Pew Research

Center, 2003).

Likewise, when participants were asked to list three of the most important social issues

according to their organizations during the qualitative interviews ("What are the three most

concerning social issues or problems going on in America right now according to your

organization (i.e. white supremacism, abortion, climate change, etc.)?"), leaders of both

marginalized and mainstream organizations listed many of the same issues. The two issues

which were listed most often were racial issues and poverty, with seven leaders in both

marginalized and mainstream organizations listing one or both. The members of marginalized

organizations and mainstream organizations are interested in resolving the same issues, but

they identify with opposite parties.

One interview question was aimed at determining whether the leaders used their

religious views to inform their political views ("Does your religion influence your choice of

political party?"). Six leaders, in both marginalized and mainstream organizations, stated that

their religious affiliation does affect their party affiliation. Two leaders of mainstream

organizations stated that their religious affiliation does not affect their party affiliation and the

question was not applicable to the two leaders in a Muslim organization. The interviews show

that a large majority of leaders in marginalized and mainstream organizations use their religious

affiliation to inform their party affiliation. Therefore, the differences in party affiliation between

the marginalized and mainstream groups is still due to their religious beliefs.

The leaders of marginalized organizations and the leaders of mainstream organizations

have very similar views on the moral and social issues that have been credited with dictating

party affiliation. However, they still affiliate with opposite parties. One factor that may lead to this discrepancy is the degree of marginality in the organizations. Socially marginal characteristics, such as race, religion, or ethnicity have been shown to have a strong connection to political affiliation. In a 2013 study, Maruice Mangum found that Americans rely heavily on racial variables (such as categorization and identification) when deciding to affiliate with a political party (Mangum, 2013). Likewise, in a 2012 study, Rosie Campbell found that gender (when other marginal characteristics such as race, religion, or ethnicity did not apply) is often indicative of certain political affiliations (Campbell, 2012). Therefore, marginal characteristics may be equally significant factors in deciding political party affiliation as religious belief.

Campus Religious Organizations, Marginalization, and Political Involvement

The leaders who particicpated were asked to list three social issues or problems that their organization would identify as being at the forefront ("What are the three most concerning social issues or problems going on in America right now according to your organization (i.e. White supremacism, abortion, climate change, etc.)?"). In addition, the participants were asked if the listed issues are better solved (theoretically) by religious organizations (such as the campus religious organizations being studied) or by political organizations, and if their organization does any work to help resolve the listed issues ("Does your organization work to address/solve/resolve these particular social issues? If so, which ones?"). These questions determined the extent to which members of campus religious organizations were involved in working to help solve social issues that they viewed as being at the forefront.

Leaders in both the marginalized and mainstream groups believed that religious organizations and political organizations have a part in working towards a resolution for the social issues at hand ("Are these issues [the three social issues each participant listed to be most important to their organization] better solved by religious or political organizations?"). Two leaders in the marginalized group and four leaders in the mainstream group believed that the issues could be solved best if religious organizations and political organizations worked together. A leader in a mainstream organization explained that religious organizations can resolve social issues in ways that political organizations cannot; this participant states, "faith groups contribute in different ways", but did not give a specific way in which these groups contribute. Another leader in the mainstream group stated that the responsibility of resolving social issues falls on both religious organizations and political organizations.

One leader in the marginalized group and one leader in the mainstream group believed that religious organizations alone could best solve the issues. The leader in the marginalized group who believed only religious organizations should have a part in solving the issues explained that the Black community is generally distrustful of political organizations attempting to solve racial issues, which they believed to be the most significant of the issues they listed. The leader in a mainstream organization who answered in the same way explained that they believed the root of all three issues they listed is "sin" and that only Jesus can solve these issues. This participant stated, "introducing Jesus fixes a broken world". Thus, because political organizations cannot introduce Jesus, this participant believed religious organizations could better solved the issues.

The answers of one leader in the marginalized group and one leader in the mainstream group did not fit uniformly with the other answers and did not maintain that religious organizations have a part in attempting to resolve social issues. The leader in a marginalized organization explained that neither religious organizations nor political organizations prioritize the social issues they listed and are therefore, unequipped to help resolve them. The leader in a mainstream organization believed that only political organizations could best resolve the issues. This participant stated that religious organizations do not have enough power to be influential in resolving the social issues they listed. According to the participant in the mainstream group, "In this day and age, religious groups do not have the power they used to".

Although the majority of participants believed that religious organizations should have a part in helping to resolve social issues, many of the campus religious organizations which were studied did little to address the issues or work toward a resolution (according to the leaders who were interviewed). The data gathered from the qualitative interviews suggests that campus religious organizations, for the most part, are not actively involved in helping resolve the social problems of political culture. When asked if their organization was involved in working to resolve any of the issues they were asked to list, three leaders in the mainstream group and one leader in the marginalized group stated that their organization was not involved in helping to resolve any of the listed issues

Three leaders in the marginalized group and one leader in the mainstream group answered that their organizations participate in resolving just one of the issues which they listed. These four leaders said their organizations were involved in helping to resolve poverty or racial issues by donating money, volunteering at food pantries/charitable organizations, and

hosting community events in attempts to alleviate the fear of Muslims. Two Muslim leaders in the marginalized group stated that a main goal of their organization was to issue information and answer questions in order to eliminate fear, created by a lack of knowledge, about Islam. Holding these events was one way for the Muslim organization to participate in resolving Islamophobia, which was one issue both Muslim leaders listed. According to one leader in the Muslim organization, "We want to help people see the other side of the coin [regarding Muslim individuals] because most media outlets only show the bad side [i.e. religious extremism and/or terrorism]".

Two leaders in the mainstream group answered that their organizations were active in helping to resolve two of the issues which they listed. These two leaders said their organizations were involved in helping to resolve racial issues, poverty, and issues relating to mental health. One leader in a mainstream organization stated that their organization is active in solving racial issues by including events with campus organizations that focus on diversity (i.e. Black Student Union) and is active in resolving mental health issues by making counseling information available to its members and having staff that is trained in counseling techniques. The other leader who answered this way believed their organization participated in solving both racial issues and poverty, but was not sure how.

Most leaders, regardless of their organization's degree of marginality, believed that either religious organizations alone or both religious and political organizations could best solve the issues which they listed. However, only two leaders (which were both in mainstream organizations) stated that their organizations were active in helping to solve more than one of the listed issues. Further, none of the leaders in either group indicated that their organization

participated in resolving all three issues. One leader, whose organization addressed the issues but was not involved in helping to resolve them, stated, "We could definitely be doing more to be involved".

Each organization was significantly more likely to participate in resolving the issue if the issue at hand directly affected the marginal status of the organization's members. In other words, if the issue had an impact on the racial, ethnic, or religious identities of its members, groups were more likely to help resolve the issue. For example, both leaders in the Muslim organization stated that their organization participated often in events (such as community forums) that focused on the inclusion of Muslim students and ending Islamophobia in the campus community. However, the organization did not participate in solving the other issues its members listed, among these were climate change and immigration issues. Likewise, a mainstream organization worked to resolve racial issues by being more inclusive, but did nothing to participate in helping orphans, which was also an issue the organization viewed as being at the forefront, according to the leader who was interviewed.

When an issue listed by the participant did not directly affect the organization's members or marginal status, the organization was significantly less likely to participate in solving the issue, even when the issue raised moral concerns within the organization's religion. Abortion was an issue that was frequently addressed, with three leaders in mainstream organizations saying that it was at the forefront for their organization. However, none of these three leaders indicated that their organization participated in resolving this issue, even though two leaders later identified abortion as a moral issue within their religion. According to one

leader in a mainstream organization, "We are not to believe in abortion under any circumstances" and to another leader, "Abortion does not fit into a biblical relationship".

Ultimately, the participation of campus religious organizations in resolving issues they viewed as being at the forefront seemed to be at least somewhat limited. This may be due to a lack of concern for politics, which was indicated my multiple leaders in regards to their organizations. One leader in a mainstream organization stated, "Faith operates under a different authority than politics". Another leader who was also in a mainstream organization explained that their organization is not particularly concerned with politics or political issues as members are supposed to believe that God will take care of them regardless of what is going on in the political world. However, this lack of concern for politics seems to contradict the belief of 80% of the leaders that religious organizations can best solve social and political issues, with or without the help of political organizations.

Attributions of Secularization from Leaders of Campus Religious Organizations

As this project focuses on secularization and detraditionalization to help frame the context of religious organizations on college campuses, the leaders who participated were given a statistic from the Pew Research Center which stated that 26% of Millennials (born 1980-2000) are religiously unaffiliated while only 13% of baby boomers (born 1940-1960) were religiously unaffiliated when they were the same age (young and emerging adults). The participants were asked to reflect on this statistic.

Research from the Pew Research center has discovered that your generation is

significantly less religiously affiliated than previous generations. Why do you

think this is?

The answers to this question fell into two categories: denying secularization

(detraditionalization) and secularization due to an increasing ideologically "progressive"

culture. The answers did not imply a connection between social marginality (as the previous

results have) and the attribution of secularization. In other words, the degree of marginality in

each campus religious organization had no effect on how the leaders answered the question.

Leaders in both the marginalized and mainstream groups gave unique and interesting

explanations.

One type of answer that was given by four participants suggested that some leaders

don't believe their generation is secularizing, but that both religion and religious affiliation are

changing or revitalizing. The leaders who answered this way held that although fewer

individuals are affiliating with traditional religion, many still believe in God or spirituality. A

leader in the marginalized group explained that religious affiliation is not so important as is a

belief and relationship with God. Likewise, another leader in the marginalized group explained

that traditional religion has been "tainted" by religious leaders and churches who misused their

power or influence (e.g. sexual assaults in Catholic churches and prejudicial doctrines of certain

churches); because of this, individuals in the millennial generation (1980-2000) are distrustful of

traditional religious institutions and are more oriented towards individualistic or spiritual types

of religion (revitalized religion). In the words of this leader, "religion is not secularizing, it's

deinstitutionalizing". Discussing the same issue, John Schmalzbauer makes a remarkably similar

comment, "In the wider story of American religion, the result is not decline but revitalization" (Schmalzbauer, 2013:116).

Many leaders answered this question by alluding to an increasingly "progressive" culture or society. These leaders defined the idea of progressive culture by values such as individualism, logic, and critical thinking. This idea of a progressive culture focused on the increase of personal independence and intellectualism, and did not correlate to political progressivism. Multiple leaders believed that later generations have become more individualistic, which has caused them to leave religion. One leader in a mainstream organization stated, "religion is based on dependence" and explained that members of the generation at hand are not willing to surrender their life to and become dependent on God. Some leaders also held that an increasing focus on critical and logical thinking has caused a lack of religious faith, as religious faith is sometimes seen as being unfounded by logic. A leader in a marginalized organization stated that traditional religions are often seen as "fairy tales ideas". Likewise, another leader the marginalized group explained that both classical liberalism (that of Rawls, Locke, etc.) in philosophy and politics, and Darwinism in Science have proved that religion is not necessary to form a governmental system or explain complex phenomena, as it was in much earlier years.

Although multiple leaders identified progressive culture as a highly contributing factor to secularization, few indicated hostility or disdain towards this culture. Rather, the leaders were either impartial towards progressive culture (as it didn't necessarily affect them or their religious beliefs directly) or viewed it as positive. A leader in the mainstream group explained that their generation (millennial, born 1980-2000) is "looking for proof" more than past

generations have, but indicated that having "proof" or evidence for one's religion can ultimately strengthen religious belief. Another participant who was a Muslim went into detail about a religious struggle in their past, in which they researched and experimented with atheism as well as other religious beliefs. Ultimately, this leader came to the conclusion that Islam is true and returned to religion. Having researched and thought critically about Islam, atheism, and other religions, this leader felt more founded in their religious belief and felt a stronger connection to Islam. In addition, this leader explained that critical thought about one's religion is an important part of being founded in any religious belief.

Conclusion

In campus religious organizations, the connection between religious and political affiliations is complex, with multiple factors effecting how students choose to affiliate with politics. As most of the previous literature examining campus religion and politics is quantitative, the addition of more qualitative studies is necessary to establish a thorough understanding of the intersection between religious affiliation and political affiliation in college students. In this study, data from qualitative interviews shows that religious beliefs are not the only, or even most reliable, predictor of political affiliation in college students, as earlier quantitative studies have indicated. Ultimately, this study found that racial/ethnic, and religious marginalization is one of the most significant predictors of political affiliation in college students.

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