Religion & War Attitudes

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Introduction

• “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s and to God the things that are God’s”
  – Religious Leaders conflicted with obligation to universalistic ethos to Human Kind vs.
  – Particularistic ethos to the State

• Mainline, Catholic, Jewish, and Islamic laity and clergy were among the strongest critics of the war
  – Anti-war religious leaders argued that the war failed to meet criterion of Just War theory

• Faith-based war protesters were largely out of step with the regular members of their faith
  – Nearly 2/3rd of Mainline and Catholic laity supported invading Iraq in 2003
Introduction

- Not all faith groups have taken the same position on the Iraq war.
  - White Evangelical Protestants were much more likely than others to support the Iraq war
  - Black Protestants opposed the war, but they & other race/ethnic minority groups were under-represented in the anti-war movement

- Questions remain about…
  - The extent to which religious institutions are able to inform war attitudes.
  - And, how political dialogue in houses of worship informs attitudes on military policy

- The present study investigates the relative importance of lay and clergy political discourse on war attitudes
Religious based Social Capital and War Attitudes

- Clergy and lay activists often infuse religious language and symbolism into their political discussions.
- Congregation-based social capital likely forms the framework by which political attitudes may be formed or influenced.
- The limited time that clergy have to spend one-on-one with their laity may place constraints on their political influence.
Denominational Affiliation and Foreign Policy Attitudes

- Strong Evangelical support for the Iraq War a function of identification with President Bush

- Catholic, Mainline Protestant, and Black Protestant leaders felt that Bush misappropriated Biblical stories and language

- Non-Evangelicals are more likely to be led by clergy whose politics are informed by social justice concerns
  - Evangelicals are more likely to hear pro-war messages than are non-Evangelicals
War Attitudes and Worship-based Political Discourse

• However, effects of clergy messages on lay opinion is up for debate

• Previous studies show that discussions among laity are more important in inspiring activism than are clergy

• Domestic issues tend to be more salient than foreign policy issues among racial minorities, which may explain their absence from war demonstrations
Research Question

• Is there a difference between the influence of lay vs. clergy political discourse on how Americans of diverse religious faiths and racial/ethnic backgrounds think about foreign policy?
Survey: 2004 National Politics Study

- Geographic Coverage:
  - United States

- Time Period:
  - September 3, 2004 - February 25, 2005

- Mode of Data Collection:
  - Random Digit Dialing Telephone Survey

- Sample Size: N=3,309
  - 756 African Americans,
  - 919 non-Hispanic Whites,
  - 404 Caribbean Blacks,
  - 757 Hispanic Americans,
  - 503 Asian Americans.

- Overall Response Rate = 30.63%
The impact of political discourse & religious faith on White war attitudes: Logit / Ordinal

Logit Regression: Also controls for worship attendance, age, gender, region, education, and income *<.05, **<.01

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Probability of Pacifist Attitude by Discussing Politics in House of Worship by Religious Faith, Adjusted for Age, Education, Gender, Worship Attendance, Region, and Income among Whites: **<.01

![Graph showing the probability of pacifist attitude by discussing politics in house of worship by religious faith.](image_url)
The impact of political discourse & religious faith on the war attitudes of Racial/Ethnic Minorities:

- Religious Faith and Discourse is unrelated to the war attitudes of Racial/Ethnic Minorities
Main Findings

- Among Whites, Non-Evangelicals largely maintain more oppositional war attitudes than do Evangelical Protestants.

- Among Whites, lay involvement in political discussions is associated with greater war opposition
  - Being encouraged to take political action by clergy &
  - Hearing sermons/lectures on the Iraq War are not

- Lay political discourse in houses of worship *more strongly* informs the oppositional war attitudes of White Mainline Protestants than it does for Evangelical Protestants & White Catholics.

- Religion is largely unrelated to non-White war attitudes
Discussion

• The present study builds on past work which suggests that religious faith informs foreign policy attitudes.

• The negligible impact of clergy on the foreign policy attitudes of white congregations may reflect an ideological divide between white clergy and laity.

• Social capital networks may explain why lay discussion is more conducive to forming strong foreign policy positions.
Discussion

• The fact that congregation-based political discourse in unrelated to Catholic war attitudes may reflect the difficulty in formulating discussion given the hierarchical nature of the Catholic church

• More research is needed on the effects of church polity on lay social networks and their ability to shape foreign policy attitudes

• The fact that lay political discussion has little effect on the war attitudes of racial minorities may suggest that foreign policy concerns may be a class-based luxury
Discussion

• In sum, the results of the present study indicate that the ability of houses of worship to shape political attitudes is likely informed by...
  – Opportunities for political discourse
  – Theology/Ideology
  – Issue salience
  – Church structure