Name
June 1, 2021

Honors Thesis Proposal

Working Title: The Role of Latter-day Saint Resentment in Utah's Culture War.

Project Purpose:

Research Question: Can Latter-day Saint Resentment (LDSR) be measured? What predicts LDSR? Likely predictors are Latter-day Saint population density at the neighborhood level and social identities like religious affiliation and political partisanship or ideology. If LDSR can be measured, does it predict attitudes and voting behavior?

Dependent Variable: Latter-day Saint Resentment (LDSR) is a measure meant to capture Utah voters' irritation, frustration, and even anger towards the LDS Church. LDSR is measured using an index created from four agree/disagree questions included in two surveys of Utah voters. The four statements that comprise LDSR are: (1) I am proud that Salt Lake City is the home of the LDS Church, (2) The LDS Church has too much influence in the state of Utah, (3) Overall, the LDS Church has a negative impact on state politics, (4) Mormons and non-Mormons have more in common than they have differences.[1] A list experiment in the first survey will also be used to validate the measure.

Summary of Project's Purpose

Utah is unique as the only U.S. state with a population dominated by a single religious group. The 2.1 million members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) located in Utah form majorities in twenty-four out of twenty-nine counties (Canham 2018; The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints 2021).[2] This single-group dominance has long played a role in the tension between Latter-day Saints and non-Latter-day Saints in Utah which spans nearly two centuries (Brown 2018; Decker 2019). The religious differences

[1] See the methods section for further details.
[2] Latter-day Saints are not a majority in Salt Lake, Summit, Grand, Carbon, and San Juan counties.

in Utah and the cultural and political tension it fosters can lead to antipathetic feelings between members and non-members of the LDS Church. These negative feelings and the distinctive demographic composition of Utah allow for a case study of minority group resentment of the majority group, and, more specifically, which conditions correlate with resentment toward the LDS Church.

Many of Utah's religious conflicts occur in Salt Lake City where according to the data I will use for the project, Latter-day Saints make up only about 29% of the voter population which is considerably lower than the approximately 60% statewide (Y2 Analytics 2019a). This thesis will address several important questions. A foundational question to address is whether LDS Resentment (LDSR) can be measured. Using a validated measure of LDSR, I will then examine whether the majority status of Latter-day Saints in a jurisdiction along with the density of the LDS population predict LDSR. Or perhaps LDSR is better predicted by social identity factors such as religious affiliation and political partisanship or ideology. Finally, LDSR may be an important predictor of political attitudes and behavior.

Project Importance

Though much prior research has reviewed and discussed the religious and cultural conflict in Utah, no research has ever attempted to systematically measure Latter-day Saint resentment. Since LDSR likely shapes voters' attitudes, it is necessary to quantify and measure this variable. This thesis is unique as it contributes a new measure of resentment towards the LDS Church. A richer understanding of LDSR will not only permit deeper understanding of the cultural conflict in Utah, but I also anticipate that the LDSR measure will serve as a model for future research aimed at understanding religious conflict in the United States more broadly.

Resentment of any kind must be understood before it can be combatted. Understanding which factors contribute to LDSR is a necessary first step to decreasing religious conflict in Utah. Additionally, a better understanding of which factors predict LDSR in Utah will also permit further research into the political implications of LDSR, specifically on voting behavior and social issues.

Project Overview

Religious Conflict in Utah

Utah was settled by members of the LDS faith in the mid-19th century and has been home to a constant LDS majority ever since. Long before Utah became the 45th state in 1896, Latter-day Saints clashed with those unaffiliated with their faith. These early conflicts created a foundation for Utah's modern religious and cultural conflict which center around social issues and the majority status of the Church (Brown 2018; Campbell, Green, and Monson 2014; Decker 2019; Malmquist 1971).

The perceived influence of the Church and its members, the ingroup, can alienate non-members of the Church, the outgroup. One way the ingroup dominance is felt is through the fact that the large LDS majority has led to overrepresentation of Latter-day Saints in elected offices. In fact, 89 of the 103 lawmakers in the Utah Legislature are members of the Church (Davidson 2021). This political dominance could lead many non-members of the Church to feel that, regardless of the LDS Church's actual involvement in state politics, the Church's preferred policies will eventually be implemented by the Latter-day Saint dominated legislature.

This ingroup dominance in politics is further exacerbated by the fact Latter-day Saints are overwhelmingly conservative Republicans (Campbell, Green, and Monson 2014). The connection between Church members and the Republican party, which dominates Utah

politics, can isolate non-members of the Church who are overwhelmingly not conservative Republicans.

Out-Group Resentment

The original model of out-group resentment levels, created by Gordon Allport (1954), noted the importance of group heterogeneity within a specific geographic space in interactions between racial and ethnic groups. Allport claimed that to form cross-cutting interests and reduce intolerance, contact was necessary. Blalock (1967) and Blau (1977) developed this contact hypothesis further by stressing the importance of resource control and power dynamics in understanding resentment.

More recently, Massey, Hodson, and Sekulic (1999) tested ethnic resentment levels in the former Yugoslavia from 1989-90. They found that "minority group members living in enclaves are more intolerant than when living dispersed among majority populations," and that ethnic separation breeds future conflict. The consensus of these theories is that contact with the other ethnic group is necessary to reduce intolerance. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) substantiated the contact hypothesis further in their meta-analytic test of intergroup contact which "conclusively show[ed] that contact can promote reductions in intergroup prejudice." Most importantly, the meta-analysis demonstrated that the contact hypothesis, originally conceived for racial and ethnic interactions, can be expanded to other groups.

An excellent example of the contact hypothesis's application in a non-racial or ethnic setting is Scacco and Warren's (2018) field experiment in Nigeria. The experiment analyzed the interactions of Christian and Muslim school boys in religious riot-prone Kaduna, Nigeria in 2000. The results demonstrated that subjects in more heterogeneous classes exhibited lower levels of discrimination and resentment against their outgroup peers compared to the subjects in more homogenous classes. Greater heterogeneity in groups or communities,

therefore, provides more opportunity for interaction and thus increases contact between the ingroup and outgroups. Together these researchers would agree that outgroup resentment is lowest when heterogeneity is greatest.

In addition to research on ethnic outgroups, theories of racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Kinder and Sears 1981), long a staple of political science, have explored group relations in terms of race. Much of the racial resentment research focuses on racial threat as a catalyst for increased resentment— fear of a larger and more influential minority race leads the majority race to become more politically active against the minority. In other words, ingroup political behavior is "a function of the size and proximity of the outgroup population" (Enos 2015, 1). For example, in the U.S. South, whites who felt threatened by African Americans were more politically active depending on their proximity to areas densely populated by African Americans. However, the racial resentment measures which have long focused anti-Black attitudes are applicable to other outgroups. Carney and Enos (2015, 1) demonstrate that racial resentment measures can be used to "measure attitudes toward any group rather than African Americans alone."

Enos (2017) has also examined the interactions of racial groups in terms of social geography. He finds that while racial threat can promote geographic separation between majority and minority racial groups, it is geographic separation of these groups that can lead to greater resentment. This resentment is then exacerbated when the once separated groups are brought geographically closer. Enos theorizes that increasing the frequency, and not just the depth, of contact between groups is the solution to resentment fostered by geographic separation. So, more heterogenous communities, where contact is more likely to occur frequently, are more likely to have lower levels of racial resentment than segregated homogenous communities.

Importantly, it is not just racial or ethnic differences that seem to matter. Campbell (2006) posits a theory of religious threat which shows that Evangelical Christians' political activity increased as the number of secularists in their community increased. Social geography can affect religious groups just as it does racial groups. Following these theories, one would expect religious minority groups to have greater resentment towards the LDS Church the nearer they are to active Church members.

Some research analyzes religion through the lens of ethno-religious theory. This model of religion views religious groups as ethnic groups because of the links between the groups' ethnic and religious traditions. The theory supports the idea that deeply unified religious groups often act like quasi-ethnic groups. In other words, religious belonging fosters ethnic-group-like behavior. Campbell, Green, and Monson (2014) argue that "the Mormon subculture has the high-level group solidarity typically associated with ethnicity, nationality, or race." Thus, it is appropriate to relate ethnic minority-group relations to the peculiar religious enclaves in Utah even though Mormonism is not strictly speaking an ethnicity.

Like theories on ethnic intolerance, there are many studies generally of religious intolerance. For example, Bolce and De Maio (1999a; 1999b; 2006; 2007) argue that living in densely populated Christian counties reduces the likelihood of developing anti-Christian fundamentalist views. Furthermore, those living in counties with lower levels of Christian fundamentalists will likely display greater levels of prejudice due to anti-Christian influences from external media sources. Like ethnic resentment research, research in religious resentment supports the contact theory. Although there are no studies specifically on LDS resentment, there are a number of works that examine attitudes of Americans generally toward Latter-day Saints (Benson, Merolla, and Geer 2011; D. E. Campbell, Green, and Monson 2012; Karpowitz, Monson, and Patterson 2016; Monson and Riding 2008; Penning 2009), none of these attempt to measure the kind of resentment that could be especially

present in the context of Utah where Latter-day Saints predominate. There are also studies of Muslim American resentment and anti-Semitism which serve as models for measuring LDS resentment (Alper and Olson 2011; Kalkan, Layman, and Uslaner 2009; Lajevardi 2020).

Several researchers have studied the effects of social identities, such as religious affiliation, on political behavior; others have focused on the effects of political affiliation on religious identity (Margolis 2018; Seul 1999). Egan (2019) finds that small but significant shares of Americans engage in "identity switching;" making changes in regard to ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and class that are predicted by their partisanship and ideology. The efforts of group members to conform their identities to the group "prototype" identity places them in better standing within the group. As social identities become entangled, so do social groups. As individuals begin to connect facets of their identities, they will also likely connect the social groups to which they belong. Similarly, they will begin to associate the social identity factors they do not have with the groups to which they do not belong. Sorting ingroups and outgroups based on multiple social identity characteristics could lead to much deeper divisions between them.

The previous research and relevant theories reviewed above lead me to the following hypotheses to be tested:

H_1: LDS population density will correlate with LDSR. This may vary by context between areas with an LDS majority versus those with an LDS minority and may lead to additional hypotheses being developed later.

H_2: Social identity factors—such as religious affiliation, party identity, and ideology—will also correlate with LDSR. For example, Latter-day Saints will likely have the lowest levels of LDSR, followed by religious non-Latter-day Saints and non-religious people.

H_3: When used as an independent variable, LDSR will correlate with vote choice and potentially other political attitudes, especially when party affiliation and ideology are less influential, such as a non-partisan local election.

These initial hypotheses with be further refined and developed with more precision in the full thesis.

Data and Methodology

After discussing the relevant literature, I will test my hypotheses through statistical analysis. I will use a proprietary LDS Population Density model and two 2019 Utah surveys—one conducted in Salt Lake City and the other statewide—provided by Y2 Analytics. In the state-wide survey, voters were chosen randomly from Utah's file of registered voters and were invited to participate in an initial survey that recruited them to an ongoing panel. Of the 2,608 respondents who participated in the initial survey in July 2019, 911 completed a follow-up panel survey in December 2019. The participants of the Salt Lake survey were selected as a single cross section survey, but using the same sampling methodology of likely voters, with 751 respondents completing a pre-election survey in October 2019. Both surveys contain the four previously mentioned questions regarding LDS resentment. Using Likert agree/disagree scales, common in studies of racial and religious resentment, respondents were asked to rate each statement on a scale with 1 being "strongly disagree and 5 being "strongly agree." Using these questions, I will create an index of LDS Resentment (LDSR) and assign each respondent an LDSR score. I will conduct a factor analysis and also use the Cronbach's Alpha of the LDSR to evaluate its reliability as a measure.

A list experiment was used in the Salt Lake City survey to further validate the LDSR questions. Measuring resentment of any kind can be difficult because social desirability bias

may affect respondents' answers. List experiments are a method for estimating the size of attitudes and behaviors that are difficult to accurately measure with direct questions (Holbrook and Krosnick 2010; Kuklinski et al. 1997; Kuklinski, Cobb, and Gilens 1997). Rather than directly answer a question about their resentment toward Latter-day Saints, respondents are gives a list of items that may make them "angry or upset" and asked to simply indicate how many of the items and not which ones, make them angry. Because one group of respondents is given a control list of four items while another group was given the control list with an additional item focused on LDS resentment, the responses to the list experiment allow the researcher to compare the average number of items that respondents say make them angry between the control and treatment groups. The difference between the two averages reflects the effect of the additional item in the treatment group about LDS Resentment without having to ask it directly. Preliminary analysis, to be confirmed in this thesis, showed that the level of LDS Resentment in the list experiment closely matched the level of resentment in the direct questions in the Salt Lake City survey. Thus, it was not administered in the statewide survey.

The LDS population density data is derived from a model on the entire voter file of Utah. The model estimates the LDS population density based on two separate measures of density, one using the geographic location of LDS stake buildings and another at the legislative district level. These two density measures are used in combination with two sets of consumer variable: some traditionally associated with the LDS Church—such as larger household size, minivan ownership, etc.—and some not traditionally associated with members of the LDS Church—such as interest in cigars and wine. I will conduct descriptive statistical tests to demonstrate the facial validity of the proprietary LDS Population Density model.

To determine which factor is the better predictor of resentment, I will use regression models to isolate the effect of LDS population density and identity factors on LDS resentment levels in Salt Lake County and Utah as a whole. I intend to test my hypotheses using four religious subgroups since I predict that the resentment levels will vary depending on the religious affiliation of the subgroup. The four subgroups include active LDS, other LDS, non-LDS religious people, and unaffiliated people. I expect that LDSR levels will be highest among those with no religious affiliation as they likely feel resentment towards religious groups in general.

To test whether resentment can be used as an independent variable, I will use a regression model to determine if LDS resentment can predict vote choice in the 2019 Salt Lake City Mayoral election. This specific election presents an ideal case to test the relationship between vote choice and LDS resentment. The election was non-partisan, both candidates were Democrats with similar policy stances, and both were women with previous political leadership experience. The major difference between the two candidates was their religious affiliation: one candidate was an active member of the LDS Church, and the other was not. I will conclude with a discussion of the results and their implications.

Thesis Committee

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Quin Monson. PhD in Political Science, Ohio State University

I participated as a student in Dr. Monson's Poli 410 Capstone in American Politics. While in Poli 410, Dr. Monson advised me on and graded my capstone project. Dr. Monson has also written extensively on topics relevant to my thesis, including as a co-author of the book *Seeking the Promised Land: Mormons and American Politics.* Dr. Monson also provided access to the data I will use in my statistical analyses. I intend to use his expertise of religion in American Politics to direct my focus towards the best sources for my literature

review. Dr. Monson's knowledge of survey research and abilities in statistical analysis will also be extremely beneficial to my research.

Faculty Reader: Dr. Chris Karpowitz. PhD in Politics, Princeton University

I participated as a student in Dr. Karpowitz's Poli 210 Principles of American Politics. Dr. Karpowitz is an expert in political psychology and political identity and has authored numerous works on these subjects. His expertise in these areas will be useful in my theoretical development on political identity. Aside from his works in political psychology and identity, Dr. Karpowitz has also written on religion and politics, focusing several studies on Latter-day Saints in politics specifically.

Faculty Reader: Dr. Kelly Patterson. PhD in Political Science, Columbia University

Unfortunately, I have not worked with Dr. Patterson before now. However, I am familiar with his work on religion and politics as well as his work on public opinion research. Dr. Patterson has conducted surveys among the LDS population for more than twenty years. Dr. Patterson also has experience drafting resentment questions and measures. He wrote the initial drafts of the LDS resentment questions that I will use to create a measure of LDS resentment. Along with Dr. Monson, Dr. Patterson provided access to the data I will be using in the thesis.

Proposed Project Timeline:

June 1- Submit Thesis Proposal

June 7- Outline of the Thesis

July 1- Finishing/Near Completion of the First Draft

July 31-Finished Final Draft

August 10- Thesis Defense

August 17- Turn in Thesis Submission Form

Funding: I do not anticipate needing any funding to complete my thesis, but I will apply for travel funding to present this work at a conference in 2022.

Culminating Experience

I intend to present a paper version of this thesis at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science Association in January 2022 in San Antonio, Texas and subsequently pursue publication in a political science journal recommended by Dr. Monson or the other thesis advisors.

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