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SWing voters? Roman Catholics from 1992 to 2004

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**SWING VOTERS?
ROMAN CATHOLICS FROM 1992 TO 2004**

BY

LORI GULA WRIGHT
Bachelor of Arts, Louisiana State University, 1991

THESIS

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire

in Partial Fulfillment of

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in

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DEDICATION

This master's thesis is dedicated to my parents, Stan and Ginny Gula, for always encouraging me to pursue my academic dreams, and to my husband, Allan Wright Jr., for supporting me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF GRAPHS.....	vii
ABSTRACT.....	viii
CHAPTER	PAGE
INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. CATHOLIC VOTERS IN AMERICA.....	5
Cultural Issues Begin to Emerge.....	6
1990s: “Moral Crisis” Creates “Religion Gap”.....	12
A Majority of Catholics Support Clinton’s Re-election.....	20
Born-Again Christian President Elected.....	22
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	27
The Ethnoreligious Model.....	28
The Culture Wars Thesis.....	37
Questioning the Ethnoreligious Model.....	43
Questioning the Culture Wars Thesis.....	45
III. OPERATIONALIZATION, MEASUREMENT AND HYPOTHESES.....	47
IV. ANALYSIS.....	52
Swing Voters.....	52

Evaluating the Ethnoreligious Model.....	53
Evaluating the Culture Wars Thesis.....	62
Single-Issue Voters.....	65
V. CONCLUSION.....	71
Catholics As Swing Voters.....	71
The Ethnoreligious Model.....	72
The Culture Wars Thesis.....	80
Single-Issue Voters.....	85
Final Thoughts.....	92
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	98

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
Table 1: Catholic and Non-Catholic Swing Voters From 1992 To 2004.....	52
Table 2: Catholic and Non-Catholic Education Levels: 1992-2004.....	53
Table 3: Catholic Voting Behavior and Education Levels 1992-2004.....	54
Table 4: Catholic and Non-Catholic Income Levels: 1992-2004.....	55
Table 5: Catholic Voting Behavior and Income Levels 1992-2004.....	57
Table 6: Catholic Voting Behavior and Region 1992-2004.....	59
Table 7: Hispanic Catholic and Non-Catholic Voters: 1992-2004.....	60
Table 8: Catholic Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Vote for Major Party Candidates: 1992-2004.....	61
Table 9: Catholic and Non-Catholic Church Attendance: 1992-2004.....	62
Table 10: Catholic Voting Behavior and Church Attendance: 1992-2004.....	64
Table 11: Catholic and Non-Catholic Views on Abortion: 1992-2004.....	65
Table 12: Catholic Voting Behavior and Abortion: 1992-2004.....	66
Table 13: Catholic and Non-Catholic Views on Whether Gays Should Serve in the Military.....	67
Table 14: Catholic Voting Behavior and Views on Whether Gays Should Serve in the Military.....	68
Table 15: Catholic and Non-Catholic Views on Whether There Should Be Laws Protecting Gays Against Job Discrimination.....	69
Table 16: Catholic Voting Behavior and Views on Whether There Should Be Laws Protecting Gays Against Job Discrimination.....	70

LIST OF GRAPHS

GRAPH	PAGE
Graph 1: Catholic and Non-Catholic Swing Voters: 1992-2004.....	72
Graph 2: Catholic Voting Behavior of High School Students.....	74
Graph 3: Catholic Voting Behavior of College Graduates.....	75
Graph 4: Hispanic Catholic Voting Trends.....	78
Graph 5: Voting Behavior of Catholics Who Attend Mass Every Week.....	83
Graph 6: Voting Behavior of Catholics Who Attend Mass a Few Times a Year.....	84
Graph 7: Catholic Voters Who Never Support Abortion.....	85
Graph 8: Catholic Voters Who Always Support Abortion.....	86
Graph 9: Catholic Voters Who Agree With Gays Serving in the Military.....	89
Graph 10: Catholic Voters Who Favor Laws Protecting Gays Against Job Discrimination.....	90

ABSTRACT

SWING VOTERS? ROMAN CATHOLICS FROM 1992 TO 2004

By

Lori Gula Wright

University of New Hampshire, December, 2006

This thesis evaluates whether Catholics are swing voters, how their voting behavior has changed from 1992 to 2004, and what issues are influencing their voting behavior. National Election Survey datasets from 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 are used. Two models are evaluated, the ethnoreligious model and the culture wars thesis. In addition, this thesis looks at whether Catholics tend to be single-issue voters.

The research and analysis of this thesis support the conclusion that Catholics are not swing voters and that their voting patterns are more similar to the general electorate than ever before. Although religious, class and cultural issues have significantly influenced Catholic voting behavior, they also have significantly influenced non-Catholic voting behavior in similar ways. While the "Catholic Vote" may once have been a significant factor in electoral politics, today Catholics are more likely to vote like the rest of the country than ever before.

INTRODUCTION

In the 2004 presidential election, pollsters and political pundits pointed to the increasingly important role of religion in influencing voting behavior, citing it as a key reason why Republican President George W. Bush was re-elected by a majority of the voters. Pollsters have found that religious commitment is a primary indicator of voting behavior, stronger than education, gender, or income.¹ Roman Catholics played an important part in Bush's victory; overall, Roman Catholics voted 52 to 47 percent for Bush, rejecting Catholic Democrat John Kerry.² Just 12 years before in 1992, however, Catholics opted for Democrat Bill Clinton over Republican George H.W. Bush, providing Clinton a 9-percentage point margin over Bush.³ In the four election cycles since 1992, the majority of Catholics have twice voted for a Democratic presidential candidate and twice for a Republican presidential candidate. These swings in support between Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have prompted media and political pundits to declare Catholics the most significant swing voters in American electoral politics today.⁴ While research on swing voters is limited, scholars studying these voters have found that 25 percent of Americans are swing voters and in close national elections, they decide who is elected

¹ Denton, Robert E. Jr., "Religion and the Presidential Campaign," *American Behavioral Scientist*, September 2005, 49:1, p. 11

² Sabato, Larry J., *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election*, Pearson Longman, 2006, p. 224.

³ Reichley, A. James, *Faith in Politics*, Brookings Institution Press: Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 314.

⁴ Breyfogle, Todd, "Some Paradoxes of Religion in the 2000 Presidential Election," *Stateside*, 2001, p. 545.

president.⁵ And Catholics have constituted a greater portion of swing voters since 1980.⁶

Catholics appear to have moved away from their strong historical ethnoreligious ties to the Democratic Party. According to a study by The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Catholics who considered themselves Democrats dropped from 71 percent to 44 percent between 1960 and 2004.⁷ However, scholars suggest that since 1992 many denominations, including Catholics, have been experiencing a growing divide between traditional and modernist believers based on cultural issues. Known generally as the “religion gap,”⁸ scholars it has been growing substantially since 1992, fueled in large part by the increasingly sophisticated operations of the Religious Right and their messages of moral and family values.

The 2004 election may have been one of most clear examples of the religious divide for Catholics. While John F. Kennedy may have been too Catholic for the nation in 1960, pundits quipped in 2004 that John Kerry may not have been Catholic enough.⁹ Traditionalist Catholics who had previously favored government-run social programs now opted for private sector efforts and the

⁵ Shaw, Daron, “Swing Voting and U.S. Presidential Elections,” 2006, p. 23. Presented June 10, 2006, at the Northeastern University conference, “The Swing Voter in American Politics,” Boston, Mass.

⁶ Mayer, William G., “The Swing Voter In American Presidential Elections: An Initial Inquiry,” 2006, pp. 30-31. Presented June 10, 2006, at the Northeastern University conference, “The Swing Voter in American Politics,” Boston, Mass.

⁷ Morton, Heather, ed., “Religion and Public Life: A Faith-Based Partisan Divide,” The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, Trends 2005, p. 31.

⁸ Layman, Geoffrey C., *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, ed. Robert Y. Shapiro, Columbia University Press: New York, 2001, p. 70.

⁹ Sabato, Larry J., *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election*, Pearson Longman, 2006, p. 224.

social ideas of Republican candidates.¹⁰ Modernist Catholics who held more liberal views on cultural issues such as gay marriage and abortion rights found more to like about Kerry, a supporter of civil unions for gay couples and abortion rights. Kerry's Catholic faith, however, was not enough to convince a substantial portion of conservative and centrist Catholics to vote for him.¹¹

Yet while the majority of Catholics rejected the first President Bush and supported the second President Bush, it would be inaccurate to categorize Catholics now as majority Republican. In fact, their shift in support away from Democratic candidates appears to indicate that they have no political home. Are the pollsters and political pundits correct? Are Catholics swing voters? What are the issues that are impacting their voting behavior?

This study attempts to determine whether Catholics are swing voters in American electoral politics, and if so, how their voting behavior has changed from 1992 to 2004. I will assess the relationship between religion and voting behavior for Catholics by looking at National Election Survey data for the period from 1992 to 2004. Traditionally, the ethnoreligious model – ethnic, denominational and communal ties that strongly define a partisan alignment – has been a strong predictor of voting behavior.¹² This study will assess whether the ethnoreligious model remains a strong predictor of Catholic voting behavior, or whether there a new alignment has developed tied to religiosity fueled by cultural issues. Known

¹⁰ Kapp, Lawrence, "The Political Values and Voting Behavior of American Catholics: Changes and Continuities from 1984 to 1998," Ph.D. Dissertation, Catholic University, 1999.

¹¹ Sabato, Larry J., *Divided States of America: The Slash and Burn Politics of the 2004 Presidential Election*, Pearson Longman, 2006, p. 224.

¹² Guth, James L., Kellstedt, Lyman A., Green, John C., Smidt, Corwin E., "America Fifty/Fifty," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, Issue 116, October 2001, p. 19.

as the culture wars thesis¹³, this new an alignment differs from the ethnoreligious model because it identifies voting patterns according to a person's level of commitment to his religion, regardless of denomination. Finally, this study will look at whether Catholics are becoming single-issue voters on such issues as abortion and gay rights.

I have divided this thesis in to five sections. In the first section, I will discuss recent voting behavior of Catholics in America, looking at the period from 1972 to 2004. I have chosen this period because scholars have said that the first indications of a culture war and a religion gap occurred in 1972 with the election of Republican Richard Nixon.¹⁴ In the second section, I will review what scholars have said about the relationship between religion and voting behavior regarding two primary models, the ethnoreligious model and the culture wars thesis. After explaining the operationalization and measurement used in this study, I will review my hypotheses and then present the results of my analyses to see what factors influenced Catholic voting behavior from 1992 to 2004. Finally, I will discuss my results broadly, providing insight about Catholic voting trends. I will use National Election Study data sets from 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004 in my analyses.

¹³ Layman, Geoffrey C., *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, ed. Robert Y. Shapiro, Columbia University Press: New York, 2001, p. 68.

¹⁴ Denton, Robert E. Jr., "Religion and the Presidential Campaign," *American Behavioral Scientist*, September 2005, 49:1, p. 12.

CHAPTER I

CATHOLIC VOTERS IN AMERICA

Why study the relationship between religion and voting behavior for American Catholics? Simply, religion is a critical element in American culture. It provides guidance regarding how people should relate to each other, defines appropriate norms of behavior, and identifies unacceptable conduct.¹⁵ A majority of Americans see religion as being analogous to morality, the perceived lack of which has been an issue that has been growing in importance for many years. According to Himmelfarb, “for decades Americans ... have been telling pollsters that the country is experiencing a ‘moral crisis,’ or at the very least, a ‘major moral problem,’ reflected ... in a decline of civility, respect, responsibility and family stability. It is this sense of moral crisis or disarray that makes Americans, even nonobservant ones, so solicitous of religion.”¹⁶ And as the largest denomination in the nation representing approximately 25 percent of Americans,¹⁷ Catholics play an important role in American society and even more so in electoral politics if they are, indeed, swing voters. Therefore, they will be the focus of this study.

¹⁵ Leege, David C., “Religion and Politics in Theoretical Perspective,” in *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, p. 8, ed. David C. Leege and Lyman A. Kellstedt, M.E. Sharpe: New York, 1993.

¹⁶ Himmelfarb, Gertrude, “Religion in the 2000 Election,” *Public Interest*, Spring 2001, Issue 143.

¹⁷ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life “Religion and Public Life: A Faith-Based Divide,” *Trends 2005*, January 2005, p. 13.

Cultural Issues Begin To Emerge

Historically Americans voted along denominational, or ethnoreligious lines, with Protestants voting for Republican candidates and Catholics, Jews and other religious minorities supporting Democratic candidates. Scholars note that these ethnoreligious alignments from the mid-20th century were so strong that they held beyond the New Deal's class politics that pitted more affluent Americans against less affluent, industrial working class Americans.¹⁸ Catholic support for Democratic presidential candidates was consistent during the period, except when Catholics overwhelmingly backed Democratic John F. Kennedy in 1960.¹⁹ However after 1960, the Catholics' traditionally strong support for Democratic candidates began to wane.²⁰ As the country moved into the turbulent social and cultural period of 1960s and 1970s, and as Catholics became more educated and affluent, the Catholic-Protestant tensions of the 19th and 20th centuries began to ease. In its place were the beginnings of what many scholars say was a new framework for religion and voting behavior based on "conflict within religious traditions over belief, practice and the role of religion in society."²¹ The culture war, both in society and within the Catholic Church, seemed to have begun.

Within the church, 1968 marked a defining moment for Catholics with the publication of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, in which the Vatican declared the use of artificial birth control a moral sin. Not only did many parishioners feel the

¹⁸ Guth, James L., Kellstedt, Lyman A., Green, John C., Smidt, Corwin E., "America Fifty/Fifty," *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, Issue 116, October 2001, p. 19.

¹⁹ Manza, Jeff, and Brooks, Clem, "The Religious Factor in U.S. Elections, 1960-1992," *The American Journal of Sociology*, July 1997, 103:1, p. 39, p. 72.

²⁰ Guth, et. al., p. 20.

²¹ Manza and Brooks, July 1997, p. 72.

Vatican was out of touch with the modern issues of Catholics regarding family planning, the encyclical came just six years after the sweeping changes recommended in the Second Vatican Council.²² Expectations were high among the laity that the church was about to change its policy on birth control, especially after the pope had created a papal commission in 1962 to reexamine the church's policy on the issue.²³ The commission's report, released in 1967, was divided on the issue, with the minority opinion in line with *Humanae Vitae*. The report drew an immediate reaction from liberal theologians and the clergy, and by 1977, 73 percent of Catholics supported the use of artificial birth control.²⁴ "For the first time in American Catholic history, American Catholics publicly resisted an official church teaching."²⁵

Outside of the church, the 1972 presidential election marked a watershed moment in Catholic voting behavior. Republican Richard Nixon won 53 percent of the Catholic vote, and for the first time, Gallup reported that a majority of Catholic voters chose a Republican presidential candidate.²⁶ Nixon had courted Catholic voters, who found comfort in Nixon's message of support for parochial schools, which were facing closure across the nation because of rising costs and a decline in urban enrollments. Prior to the 1972 election, the White House staffer Ron Morey proposed cutting federal aid for parochial schools, fearing that if he did not, he would alienate Protestants and public school teachers. Morey

²² Carey, Patrick, *Catholics in America*, Praeger: Westport, CT, 2004, p. 131.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 132.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Prendergast, William B., *The Catholic Voter in America*, Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., 1999, p. 157.

underestimated the Catholic response, which overwhelmingly supported aid to parochial schools (70 percent of Catholics polled by Gallup in 1972 favored aid.)²⁷ Concern in the White House over the Catholic reactions to Morey's proposal reached the highest level: the Republican Party Platform of 1972 made crystal clear Nixon's support for aid to parochial schools, and Nixon himself told the Knights of Columbus, "In our fight to save your schools, you can count on my support."²⁸

The legalization of abortion in 1973 further impacted the relationship between religion and Catholic voting behavior, as well as the relationship between the laity and church leaders. Of all the religious traditions, Catholics were the most vocal opponents of *Roe v. Wade*, both before and immediately after the decision.²⁹ Conservative lay Catholics supported their bishops who now publicly entered the political ring with more vigor than before with the goal to amend the U.S. Constitution.³⁰ Shaken by the sweeping nature of *Roe*, which authorized abortions up to the first six months of gestation of a fetus, conservative Catholics "agreed with the bishops that the court's ruling violated the fundamental value attached to individual human life not only by Catholicism but by the entire Judeo-Christian tradition, and indeed by most forms of Western humanism."³¹ More liberal members of the clergy and the laity, however, saw the issue as one of women's rights and openly disagreed with the church on the

²⁷ Prendergast, p. 160.

²⁸ Prendergast, pp. 160-161.

²⁹ Martin, William, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group: New York, 1996, p 193.

³⁰ Prendergast, p. 170.

³¹ Reichley, p. 274.

issue.³² No other issue has so divided the Catholic Church as the abortion issue.³³

Though opposed to abortion, evangelical and fundamentalist Protestants remained quiet relative to Catholics.³⁴ However, that low profile would not last for long and would, in fact, become the impetus for the birth of the Religious Right, which would have a significant effect on shaping public discussions about morality and cultural issues important to Catholics. Concerns about the Protestant response to the abortion issue as well as the increasing numbers of abortions resulted in the creation of a five-part film and companion book, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*³⁵ The film and book had a dramatic impact on evangelicals and conservative Christians, and their leaders sensed an opportunity to draw together conservatives of all faiths, including Catholics, on a number of issues such as abortion, pornography, education, traditional biblical moral values, and quotas.

Fundamentalist leaders and secular conservatives ramped up their strategizing in the late 1970s.³⁶ In 1978 when President Jimmy Carter changed the tax-exempt status of church-run schools requiring them to accept a certain percentage of students from racial minorities, the issue brought together powerful national evangelists such as Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and Jim Bakker under

³² Carey, p. 134.

³³ Ibid, p. 133.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Martin, p 193.

³⁶ Reichley, A. James, *Faith in Politics*, Brookings Institution Press: Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 296.

one organization, the Moral Majority.³⁷ The organization sought to align people of all faiths under one body with the goal of “returning the United States to moral sanity.”³⁸ Other conservative religious groups focused on specific issues also formed, and in an effort to build a cohesive voting bloc, the groups formed a network of like-minded leaders who served in leadership roles within each other’s organizations, both religious and secular. The unifying theme was a pro-family, traditional Judeo-Christian values plank.³⁹ The Religious Right was born.

The Religious Rights campaigned hard for Republican Ronald Reagan in 1980, and stood behind him again 1984, more active and effective than ever before.⁴⁰ Reagan’s message went over particularly well with Catholics, who made up a substantial portion of so-called Reagan Democrats — conservative on moral issues and drawn to Reagan’s emphasis on traditional values and patriotism.⁴¹ In 1980, Reagan ran 7 percentage points ahead of his Democratic challenger among Catholic voters; in 1984, he increased that margin to 11 percentage points.⁴² Reagan Democrats typically were blue-collar workers who increasingly felt alienated by the liberal stands and policies – anti-Vietnam, school busing, pro-choice on abortion, higher taxes, anti-school prayer – of the Democratic Party.⁴³ For many traditionally Democratic voting blue-collar Catholics, the Great Communicator was someone who not only spoke to the

³⁷ Ibid, p. 297.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 298.

³⁹ Wald, Kenneth D., *Religion and Politics in the United States*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Oxford, England, 2003, p. 210.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 302.

⁴¹ “Religion and Public Life: A Faith-Based Divide,” *Trends 2005*, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, January 2005, p. 7.

⁴² Reichey, p. 281-282.

⁴³ Page, Susan, “Reagan’s revolution reshaped political landscape,” *USA Today*, 7 June 2004, p. 18a.

language of the every man, but restored their faith in America as a great, God-given nation and supported the social teachings of the church. “Reagan staked out a position on the conservative side of the cultural divide on abortion, pornography, prayer in school, school choice and punishment of criminals.”⁴⁴ Republicans anticipated that a successful effort to draw working-class Catholic voters to Reagan employing morality issues could be the “Achilles’ heel of the liberal Democrats.”⁴⁵

Indeed, in 1984 18 New England bishops said abortion was “the critical issue of the moment,” and Cardinal John O’Connor of New York said he couldn’t understand how any Catholic could vote for a candidate who was pro-choice.⁴⁶ At the same time, more liberal Catholics were increasingly becoming concerned that a large portion of the flock were becoming single-issue voters on abortion, to the detriment of those laity who felt caught in the middle.⁴⁷ Even 20 years later, single-issue Catholic voters on abortion still generated concern. According to John Langan, the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Professor of Catholic Social Thought at Georgetown University, “single-issue voting may well be an admirable expression of conscientious conviction about an important matter, but it should not be imposed on voters as a requirement of conscience. Both voters and politicians have to make up their own minds about what issues are opportune, what fights can be won, what results can be achieved.”⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Prendergast, p. 177.

⁴⁵ Reichley, pp. 280-281.

⁴⁶ Prendergast, p. 189.

⁴⁷ Reichley, p. 275.

⁴⁸ Langan, John, “Observations on Abortion and Politics,” *America*, 191:12, 25 October 2005.

The significance of the traditionalist-modernist disputes of the late 20th century should not be minimized; scholars believe it played an important part in restructuring the larger American religious traditions, modifying their distinct cultures. Voters with more traditional religious beliefs found more in common with other traditionalists of other denominations than they did with less traditional believers of their own faith.⁴⁹ By the late 1980s, evidence of this restructuring began appearing in political polling results, and by the early 1990s, the new framework based on religiosity, not ethnoreligious ties, appeared to be in place.⁵⁰ Like other major denominations, Catholics experienced a realignment during this period, shifting their support away from Democratic candidates. “This election (1980) has been called the election Watergate postponed, and there are grounds for the belief that, along with other elements of the population, many Catholics returned to a track toward Republicanism on which they had been traveling for at least a decade.”⁵¹

1990s: “Moral Crisis” Creates “Religion Gap”

By 1992, scholars declared that a “moral crisis” in the country had created a “religion gap” — Americans had begun incorporating their political beliefs into their religious lives based on their religious commitment and activity.⁵² Social issues were seen as indicators of moral behavior becoming part of a wider cultural debate. The religion gap on issues of morality – prayer in school,

⁴⁹ Guth, et. al., p. 20.

⁵⁰ Green, John, C., and Guth, James L, “From Lambs to Sheep: Denominational Change and Political Behavior,” in *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, pp. 100-117, ed. David C. Legee and Lyman A. Kellstedt, M.E Sharpe: New York, 1993, p. 100.

⁵¹ Prendergasat, p. 185.

⁵² Layman, Geoffrey C., *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, ed. Robert Y. Shapiro, Columbia University Press: New York, 2001, p. 70.

abortion, homosexuality, gay marriage – had forced the more religiously observant into one corner and the more secular into another.⁵³ According to Green, “Once social issues came to the forefront – abortion, gay rights, women’s rights – it generated differences based on religious attendance. The more observant people tend to have more traditional family values, and they moved in a more conservative direction because of those issues.”⁵⁴

The most common measurement of the religion gap is frequency of church attendance. Prior to 1972 there was no religion gap, with church attendance having no bearing on voting behavior — church-going Americans voted in the same patterns as their non-church-going neighbors.⁵⁵ From 1972 to 1992, the gap was small after Republican President Richard Nixon appealed to traditionalists as the “silent majority,” many of whom he considered Catholics.⁵⁶ Since 1992, however, the religion gap has continued widen, particularly in Clinton’s second term, and by 2004, church attendance was one of the strongest predictors of candidate choice.⁵⁷ Also called a secular realignment, this restructuring “reflected the increased ideological polarization of the two major parties and fundamental changes in public perceptions of the parties during this period.”⁵⁸

⁵³ “Religion and Public Life: A Faith-Based Divide,” *Trends 2005*, The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, January 2005, p. 5.

⁵⁴ “Churchgoing closely tied to voting patterns,” *USA Today*, June 3, 2004.

⁵⁵ Denton, Robert E. Jr., “Religion and the Presidential Campaign,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, September 2005, 49:1, p. 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ Abramowitz, Alan I., and Saunders, Kyle L., “Ideological Realignment in the U.S. Electorate,” *The Journal of Politics*, 60:3, August 1998, p. 636.

As the morality battles raged, more and more Americans began identifying themselves as seculars. According to Hout and Fischer, from 1991 to 1998, adults who said in polls that they prefer no religion increased from 7 percent to 14 percent.⁵⁹ Scholars attribute this shift to a number of possible factors, including that polls were reflecting religious attitudes of a new generation of voters who were less likely to be raised in a religious tradition and were more liberal or moderate in their beliefs. In addition, scholars believe that the intensity of religious conservatives taking strong stands on issues of morality during this period generated a sort of religious backlash, pushing moderate and liberals into the secular camp. "Had religion not become so politicized, these people would have gone on identifying as they had been and percentage of Americans preferring no religion would have risen only 3 or 4 percentage points."⁶⁰

The 1992 presidential platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties reflected the growing religious gap, or secularization of America, by taking their most polarizing stands on cultural and social issues, such as abortion, gay rights and women's rights. The Republican platform, in particular, heavily advocated traditional family and Judeo-Christian values. "It devoted considerable attention to cultural matters and was arguably the most morally and religiously conservative platform produced by a political party in this century."⁶¹

According to the 1992 Republican Party Platform⁶²:

⁵⁹ Hout, Michael, and Fischer, Claude S., "Why More Americans Have No Religious Preference: Politics and Generations," *American Sociological Review*, 67, April 2002, p. 165.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Layman, p. 120.

⁶² Republican Party Platform of 1992, "The Vision Shared: The Republican Platform, Uniting Our Family, Our Country, Our World," 17 August 1992. Accessed online 10 March 2006 at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=R1992>

The culture of our Nation has traditionally supported those pillars on which civilized society is built: personal responsibility, morality, and the family. Today, however, these pillars are under assault. Elements within the media, the entertainment industry, academia, and the Democrat Party are waging a guerrilla war against American values. They deny personal responsibility, disparage traditional morality, denigrate religion, and promote hostility toward the family's way of life. Children, the members of our society most vulnerable to cultural influences, are barraged with violence and promiscuity, encouraging reckless and irresponsible behavior. This undermines the authority of parents, the ones most responsible for passing on to their offspring a sense of right and wrong. The lesson our Party draws is important—that all of us, individuals and corporations alike, have a responsibility to reflect the values we expect our fellow citizens to exhibit. And if children grow to adulthood reflecting not the values of their parents but the amorality with which they are bombarded, those who send such messages cannot duck culpability.

We also stand united with those private organizations, such as the Boy Scouts of America, who are defending decency in fulfillment of their own moral responsibilities. We reject the irresponsible position of those corporations that have cut off contributions to such organizations because of their courageous stand for family values. Moreover, we oppose efforts by the Democrat Party to include sexual preference as a protected minority receiving preferential status under civil rights statutes at the federal, State, and local level.

We oppose any legislation or law which legally recognizes same-sex marriages and allows such couples to adopt children or provide foster care.

In contrast, the 1992 Democratic Party Platform⁶³ says:

We don't have an American to waste. Democrats will continue to lead the fight to ensure that no Americans suffer discrimination or deprivation of rights on the basis of race, gender, language, national origin, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or other characteristics irrelevant to ability. We support the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment; affirmative action; stronger protection of voting rights for racial and ethnic minorities, including language access to voting; and continued resistance to discriminatory English-only pressure groups. We will reverse the Bush Administration's assault on civil rights enforcement, and instead work to rebuild and vigorously use machinery for civil rights enforcement; support comparable remedies for women; aggressively prosecute hate crimes;

⁶³ Democratic Party Platform of 1992, "A New Covenant with the American People," Accessed online 10 March 2006 at <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/showplatforms.php?platindex=D1992>

strengthen legal services for the poor; deal with other nations in such a way that Americans of any origin do not become scapegoats or victims of foreign policy disputes; provide civil rights protection for gay men and lesbians and an end to Defense Department discrimination; respect Native American culture and our treaty commitments; require the United States Government to recognize its trustee obligations to the inhabitants of Hawaii generally, and to Native Hawaiians in particular; and fully enforce the Americans with Disability Act to enable people with disabilities to achieve independence and function at their highest possible level.

Democrats stand behind the right of every woman to choose, consistent with Roe v. Wade, regardless of ability to pay, and support a national law to protect that right.

It is a fundamental constitutional liberty that individual Americans—not government—can best take responsibility for making the most difficult and intensely personal decisions regarding reproduction. The goal of our nation must be to make abortion less necessary, not more difficult or more dangerous. We pledge to support contraceptive research, family planning, comprehensive family life education, and policies that support healthy childbearing and enable parents to care most effectively for their children.

For Catholics, the 1992 election “reflects a marked departure from that of previous presidential elections.”⁶⁴ For the first time, Catholics did not vote more heavily for the Democratic candidate than the Republican candidate. Indeed, they split their votes among the top three candidates, with Independent Ross Perot winning 23 percent of the Catholic vote. Clinton received 41 percent of the Catholic vote while Bush attracted 36 percent of the vote.⁶⁵ According to Prendergast, Catholics in 1992 were less Republican than white evangelical Protestants yet less Democratic than Jewish and secular voters. “They also evidenced a stronger propensity to behave as swing voters from one election to

⁶⁴ Prendergast, p. 200.

⁶⁵ Kellstedt, Green, Guth, and Smidt, “Religious Voting Blocs in the 1992 Election: The Year of the Evangelical?”, p. 317.

another. Millions of voters including a substantial bloc of Catholics seemed to be in search of a new political home.”⁶⁶

At the heart of this growing importance of religion in electoral politics was the rise of the Religious Right and up-tick in public debates about morality. The year 1992 was the culmination of more than a decade of work by religious leaders in America, leaders who had become sophisticated at mobilizing religious voters to support their views and candidates.⁶⁷ Key to the rise of the Religious Right during this period was the 1988 failed presidential bid by Pentecostal Republican Pat Robertson that led Robertson to join with Ralph Reed to form the Christian Coalition out of the remnants of his political organization.⁶⁸ By 1994, the Religious Right had refined its candidate-centered politics; it was recruiting candidates, providing them resources and mobilizing voters on their behalf.⁶⁹ According to Green, the Religious Right’s activities with nomination politics and involvement with the Republican Party afforded it an important benefit – “it provided a forum through which to build coalitions.”⁷⁰

The Christian Coalition was adept at producing compelling voter guides that compared candidates on specific issues. In 1996, it distributed 45 million copies of voter guides to 125,000 churches before the elections.⁷¹ Although endorsements were rare, voters had little trouble determining the coalition’s

⁶⁶ Prendergast, p. 201.

⁶⁷ Green, John C., “The Christian Right and the 1994 Elections, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, 28:1, March 1995, p. 5.

⁶⁸ Woodberry, Robert D., and Smith, Christian S., “Fundamentalism Et Al: Conservative Protestants in America,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1998, p. 46.

⁶⁹ Green, John C., March 1995, p. 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 7.

⁷¹ Kohut, Andrew, Green, John C., Keeter, Scott, and Toth, Robert C., *The Diminishing Divide: Religion’s Changing Role in American Politics*, The Brookings Institution: Washington, D.C., 2000.

preferred candidate.⁷² The tactic was particularly useful for the Religious Right, since openly identifying as a member of the Religious Right seemed popular with only the most conservative fundamentalists. However, the messages of the Religious Right had more support with the general public.⁷³

Although the Christian Coalition appealed largely to evangelical Protestants, Catholics were an important constituency for the organization and its ability to appeal to a broad group of religious voters. Catholics were so important, in fact, that the Christian Coalition held national workshops on how to court Catholic voters and spotlighted Catholic speakers at its annual conferences. National, state and local organizations put Catholics in leadership positions, and in 1995, the coalition founded the Catholic Alliance, in the hopes of attracting more Catholics to the organization.⁷⁴ On some key issues, conservative Catholics and the Christian Right find common ground, most notably abortion, gay rights and restrictions on pornography; they split, however, on important areas for Catholics, such as aid to the poor, the death penalty, support for a social welfare system, protection of the environment and the teaching of creationism in schools.⁷⁵ And even those issues on which they found common ground often weren't a perfect fit for Catholics and the Christian Coalition. For example, on the issue of homosexuality, Catholic teachings diverge from evangelical Protestant beliefs. According to the Catholic Bishops, "a homosexual orientation is a deep-seated dimension of the personality that is not in itself

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Woodberry, Robert D., et. al, 1998, p. 47.

⁷⁴ Bendyna, Mary E., Green, John C., Rozell, Mark J., and Wilcox, Clyde, "Uneasy Alliance: Conservative Catholics and the Christian Right," *Sociology of Religion*, 62:1, 2001, p. 52.

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 55-59.

sinful.”⁷⁶ Homosexuals should be treated with “acceptance, love and pastoral care,” the bishops said, reinforcing the church’s views about respecting the dignity of every human being.⁷⁷ In other words, Catholics are told to hate the sin but love the sinner, which is quite different than the evangelical Protestant beliefs regarding homosexuality. And while Catholics may not have been swelling the ranks of the Christian Coalition, conservative Catholics are generally supportive of the organization.⁷⁸

As the morality debates nationwide continued, in 1994 Republicans laid out their Contract with America⁷⁹ that specified certain fiscal and legal reforms. Although social issues were not the focus of the document, religion played a prominent role in the justification of the initiatives. According to the contract, “It can be the beginning of a Congress that respects the values and shares the faith of the American family” and “Like Lincoln, our first Republican president, we intend to act ‘with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right.’” During the mid-term elections that year, Republicans gained 53 seats in the House of Representatives and eight seats in the Senate, taking over Congress for the first time in 40 years, an event that was coined the Republican Revolution. A majority of Catholic voters – 52 percent – supported Republican House candidates, an important factor considering some analysts consider the results of off-year elections a key factor in assessing voting behavior.⁸⁰ Yet while these analysts

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 53.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 57.

⁷⁹ Republican Contract With America. 1994.

<http://www.house.gov/house/Contract/CONTRACT.html>.

⁸⁰ Prendergast, p. 205.

saw the 1994 election as evidence of a Catholic realignment with the Republican Party, others theorized that the results were evidence of the Catholic swing vote that could cast votes for Republicans just as easily as it could cast votes for Democrats.⁸¹

A Majority of Catholics Support Clinton's Re-election

Catholics watched as the Clinton administration was caught up in a web of scandals in its first term – former Assistant Attorney General and friend Webster Hubbell was in prison for defrauding his law practice; former Republican Solicitor General Kenneth Starr was investigating Clinton's history with the Whitewater land development project; and former Arkansas state employee Paula Jones was pursuing charges the president had sexually harassed her.⁸² Clinton's Republican challenger for the presidency in 1996, World War II veteran Bob Dole, tried to capitalize on the Clinton scandals in his election campaign, citing Clinton's "character weaknesses" and the need to "restore traditional values" to the White House.⁸³ However, a booming economy combined with Dole's lackluster appeal and a growing distaste for Republican Party leadership (by 1996, outspoken House Speaker Newt Gingrich was more unpopular than any politician since Nixon the week he left the White House⁸⁴) helped propel Clinton to the White House for a second term in 1996 with one of the lowest voter turnouts in 75 years.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Walker, Martin, "The U.S. Presidential Election, 1996," *International Affairs*, 72:4, October 1996, p. 659.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ "Man of the Year," *Time Magazine*, 25 December 1995.

Clinton won 53 percent of the Catholic vote in 1996, 16 percentage points ahead of Dole.⁸⁵ “The years 1995 and 1996 saw an extraordinary political recovery by Clinton, and an epic display of political skill during the long months of attrition as he withstood and finally defeated the great Republican tidal wave that had threatened to swamp his presidency.”⁸⁶ With Clinton’s strong re-election, it appeared that religious voters had lost their voice in American politics and evangelical Christians had become passive.⁸⁷ Infighting had undermined the Christian Coalition, which dropped in one year from seventh to 35th in a fall 1999 survey of political insiders assessing political clout.⁸⁸ Yet a closer look at the vote indicates the increasing impact of the traditionalist-modernist disputes; a slim majority of traditional Catholics supported Dole (52 percent) while a majority of modernist Catholics backed Clinton (57 percent).⁸⁹

By January 1998, however, debates about morality had taken center stage in American politics as news of Clinton’s affair with 21-year-old White House intern Monica Lewinsky and attempts to cover it up became public. The morality debates continued throughout the year, culminating in impeachment proceedings in Congress. By the November 2000 election, polls indicated that the repercussions of Clinton’s transgressions were having an impact on voters, particularly religious voters – while a majority of voters approved of his performance as president, a larger majority disapproved of him as a person.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Reichley, p. 316.

⁸⁶ Walker, Martin, “The U.S. Presidential Election, 1996,” *International Affairs*, 72:4, October 1996, p. 674.

⁸⁷ Reichley, p. 332.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Reichley, p. 316.

⁹⁰ Reichley, p. 344.

“Disapproval of Clinton as a person sprang mainly from moral disgust, not only with his tawdry affair in the Oval Office with Monica Lewinsky and his subsequent desperate attempts at cover-up, or his perjury, but also with the entire atmosphere of political and ethical corruption that had settled over the White House during Clinton’s second term. ... The main force of this disgust came from anger over his violation of ethical standards rooted in Judeo-Christian moral tradition.”⁹¹ According to Michael Barone in *U.S. News and World Report*, in the 2000 presidential election, Americans were more comfortable with religion than they were in the Eisenhower era, “partly because the historic hatreds between denominations have dissipated. But, partly in the wake of the Clinton scandals, many voters express a vague desire for government policies with a moral component.”⁹²

Born-Again Christian President Elected

Republican George W. Bush capitalized on the religion gap in 2000 by portraying himself as both a born-again Christian and a moderate United Methodist.⁹³ For born-again Christians, he was the answer to restoring family values in the White House following the sexual scandals of the Clinton administration; Gore was simply too closely aligned to a valueless White House.⁹⁴ Bush also was comfortable speaking about his born-again religion during the presidential election; he even declared Jesus Christ as his favorite

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Barone, Michael, “Religion on the Left, Religion on the Right,” *U.S. News and World Report*, 21 August 2000, 129:7, p. 1, C-1.

⁹³ Guth, James L., et. al., “America Fifty/Fifty.” *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life*, October 2001, Issue 116, p. 22.

⁹⁴ Schneider, William, “American Religion and Political Polarities,” *American Sociologist*, 34: 1/2, Spring/Summer 2003, p. 83.

philosopher,⁹⁵ much to the delight of born-again Christians and traditionalists of all faiths, including Catholics, as well as some moderate Christians. Moderates, many middle and upper class, liked Bush's message of entrepreneurialism when he touted the use of faith-based programs — not government programs — to address social needs during the presidential election.⁹⁶

The 2000 election revealed “incontrovertible evidence” that Catholics were polarized by the culture wars.⁹⁷ Bush carried 53 percent of the Roman Catholic vote, but among conservative Catholics, defeated Gore by a 3-to-1 margin. Moderates were slightly more in favor of Bush and liberal Catholics overwhelmingly voted for Gore. Bush's strategy of targeting church-going traditional Catholics – voters who profess orthodox Catholic beliefs and have high levels of private and public religious behavior – paid off. These beliefs include the dignity of all human beings, and the importance of community, which translates into social teachings that emphasize protection of the poor and marginalized; opposition to abortion, the death penalty and euthanasia; and opposition to homosexuality.⁹⁸

The abortion issue was the church's top priority in 2000⁹⁹, and its effects likely went beyond those Catholics who believed in total ban on abortion consistent with the church's teachings. Catholics with liberal views on most other issues continued to vote Democratic. However, more conservative Catholics

⁹⁵ Balmer, Randall, “Bush and God,” *The Nation*, 14 April 2003, p. 7.

⁹⁶ Johnson, Jenny, “The Minister Of ‘Good Success’,” *Christianity Today*, 45:12, 1 October 2001, p. 60.

⁹⁷ Guth, et. al., p. 22.

⁹⁸ Curran, Charles E., “The Pope's Passions,” *Christian Century*, 120:23, 15 November 2003, pp. 29-30.

⁹⁹ Reichley, A. James, *Faith in Politics*, Brookings Institution Press: Washington, D.C., 2002, p. 321.

could not rectify the opposite views of the Democratic Party and the church on the abortion issue, inclining them to vote for Republicans.¹⁰⁰ According to scholars, “these internal divisions among Catholics are the largest ever found by survey research, reaching all the way back to the 1930s.”¹⁰¹

By 2004, religion in presidential campaigns had reached a new intensity with moral values being the most important consideration in the election.¹⁰² As a born-again Christian, Bush was comfortable talking about his faith on a regular basis as well as about how much he prayed. Indeed, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said that what sets Bush apart from past presidents regarding his religion is his absolute certainty in his faith. “Most of our presidents have invoked God in some form or another. What is different about President Bush is that he is so certain about his religion. (He has) none of the doubts or the issues that President Lincoln raised. Anybody who picks a fight with us is picking a fight with God.”¹⁰³ This openness and absolute faith went over well with traditionalist voters, including Catholics. Kerry, on the other hand, seemed to be trying to reconcile his beliefs about abortion and stem cell research with Catholic doctrine that opposed his stands. Kerry’s Catholic faith became such an issue that the church hierarchy spoke about it and one bishop warned him not to take communion when visiting his archdiocese.¹⁰⁴

When the votes were counted, the majority of Catholics again voted for

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Guth, et. al., p. 23.

¹⁰² Denton, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰³ Albright, Madeleine, comments made on “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,” 2 May 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Denton, p. 17.

Bush.¹⁰⁵ Langer and Cohen hypothesize that Bush's gains among Catholics in 2004 were more important than his gains with evangelical Protestants; he won white Catholics by a 13-point margin in 2004 compared to a seven-point margin in 2000. And in 2004, Catholics represented 27 percent of the voters versus evangelical Protestants who represented 23 percent.¹⁰⁶ In Massachusetts, a staunchly Democratic state and Kerry's home state, Bush improved his support from Catholics by 17 percentage points over 2000, the state with the largest increase.¹⁰⁷ The stunning result was in large part due to an impressive Republican strategy to mobilize Catholic voters and the overwhelming support Republicans received from former Catholic Boston Mayor Ray Flynn, the former ambassador to the Vatican. "The Republican National Committee set up a website (KerryWrongforCatholics.com), hired 30 full-time field coordinators, and mobilized 55,000 volunteers to help build Catholic support for Bush. Seventy-six million voter guides were distributed to active Catholics in 12 battleground states, and ads ran in prime electoral targets like Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Hampshire."¹⁰⁸

Flynn's effort was considered the lynchpin to Bush's swell of Catholic support. Working in concert with Archbishop Sean O'Malley, Flynn found private funding to support a massive outreach effort to Catholics at the parish level in Massachusetts, as well as New Hampshire and Ohio. Parishioners shared coffee and donuts after Mass with Flynn, who explained why they should support Bush,

¹⁰⁵ Green, Smidt, Guth and Kellstedt, p. 1

¹⁰⁶ Langer, Gary, and Cohen, Jon, "Voters and Values in the 2004 Election," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 69:5, Special Issue 2005, p. 753

¹⁰⁷ O'Beirne, Kate, "Catholics For Bush," *National Review*, 29 November 2004, p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, p. 26.

whose positions on gay marriage and abortion were consistent with Catholic teachings.¹⁰⁹ After the election, Flynn told the *National Review*, “This was the perfect example of how lay Catholics should respond to the challenge of defending our values. It’s not the intention to make the Church or the Bishops more political, but to make lay Catholics more involved.”¹¹⁰

By August 2005, surveys indicated Americans saw Republicans as the protectors of religious values. Only 29 percent of those surveyed by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press saw the Democrats as friendly toward religion while 55 percent viewed the Republicans as friendly toward religion.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ O’Beirne, p. 26.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, “Religion a Strength and Weakness for Both Parties,” 30 August 2005, p. 1

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much has been said about changes in the relationship between politics and voting behavior for Catholics in the last 30 years. Once a staunchly loyal Democratic voting bloc, Catholics today appear to be shifting in voting behavior. Some say Catholics, whose immigrant ties have weakened as they have become more affluent and educated, are becoming more conservative. Others point to a culture war based on morality and values issues that is as appealing to traditional Catholics as it is unappealing to liberal Catholics, but which is aligning Catholics with those of other denominations who hold similar views. These changes in Catholic voting behavior have lead scholars to deem Catholics as the new swing voters – a denomination that, as a whole, is without a political homeland.

Scholars generally have relied on two primary models for assessing changes in the relationship between religion and voting behavior: the ethnoreligious model and the culture wars thesis. The ethnoreligious model looks at shifts in voting behavior based on traditional denominational-political alignments. Developed in the late 20th century, the culture wars thesis assesses the relationship by evaluating religious commitment. In this section, I will discuss these models, and assess their strengths and weaknesses relative to Catholic voting behavior.

The Ethnoreligious Model

For centuries, American voting has been shaped by ethnoreligious loyalties. These loyalties tie religious denominations to specific class, ethnic, cultural and community identities that are critical in determining partisan ties for its members.¹¹² Developed by historians and used by political scientists, the ethnoreligious model relies primarily on religious belonging – the effects of religious tradition and not the effects of religious beliefs or behaviors – to “produce distinctive group identification and distinctive cultural and political values.”¹¹³ What matters in the ethnoreligious model are the differences between, not within, religious traditions.¹¹⁴

Kellstedt and Green acknowledge that other factors, such as religious commitment (which is the cornerstone of the culture wars thesis) and the social environment of the voter, influence voting behavior and may provide insight in assessing religion and voting behavior. However, they maintain that the core influencer on voting behavior is denominational choice – other factors simply enhance it.¹¹⁵ “Denominational preference matters in politics because denominations are important: they are central to religious life, objects of deeply held commitments, and together with their component institutions, the most common form of voluntary association in the United States. Denominations are characterized by all of the processes that create and maintain group

¹¹² Guth, et. al., p. 19.

¹¹³ Layman, Geoffrey C., *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, ed. Robert Y. Shapiro, Columbia University Press: New York, 2001, p. 64.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Kellstedt, Lyman A., and Green, John C., “Knowing God’s Many People: Denominational Preference and Political Behavior,” in *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, pp. 54-55, ed. David C. Legee and Lyman A. Kellstedt, M.E Sharpe: New York, 1993.

identification, and the core of such identification is attachment to broader culture traditions.”¹¹⁶

In the United States scholars generally recognize six major denominational families: white mainline Protestants, white evangelical Protestants, black Protestants, Roman Catholics, Jews, and nonreligious/secular¹¹⁷. A denominational affiliation is so significant important that “more than four-fifths of American adults routinely express a denominational preference of one kind or another – more, in fact, than identity with a political party.”¹¹⁸ The ethnoreligious-political alignments have historically been quite stable: Mainline Protestants voted for the Whig and then Republican candidates, and evangelical Protestants, Catholics, secularists, Jews and black Protestants supported Democratic candidates.¹¹⁹

The traditional ethnoreligious loyalties of Catholics have been aligned solidly with Democratic candidates since the mid-1800s when the pro-temperance Whig Party, and then the Republican Party, had a collation with the major Protestant churches.¹²⁰ “The Democrats aggressively courted the new immigrants and made a generous immigration policy a cornerstone of their party platforms.”¹²¹ Considered a decisive factor in presidential elections, the “Catholic Vote” was so important to politicians that Democrats often attributed their wins to Catholics. Indeed, New Hampshire’s only native son to hold the presidency,

¹¹⁶ Ibid, p. 65.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, p. 54.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 56.

¹²⁰ Kellstedt, Lyman A., Green, John C., Guth, James L., and Smidt, Corwin, E., “It’s the Culture Stupid! 1992 and Our Political Future,” *First Things*, 42, April 1994, p. 29.

¹²¹ Kapp, p. 18

Democratic President Franklin Pierce, won the election because of the “foreign vote and the Catholic influence” in 1852.¹²² The anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant rhetoric of the Republican Party at the time helped unite groups of ethnically diverse populations of new Americans: poor and uneducated Irish, Germans, Italians, Poles, and other ethnic groups from eastern and southern Europe. “No other religious group in the United States holds within its ranks so varied a mixture of ethnic strains as the Catholic Church.”¹²³

By the turn of the century, the population of Catholics had increased 85 percent from 9 to 16 million from 1890 to 1910. In comparison, the population of the United States increased 50 percent.¹²⁴ The first wave of immigrants from the 1840s and 1850s were having children and grandchildren who were being educated in the rapidly growing network of parochial schools, further unifying Catholics as a community.¹²⁵ Catholic involvement in national politics escalated as the country moved into the 1920s, and for many Catholics, the bitter 1928 presidential election in which anti-Catholic venom by Republicans and their supporters reached new heights would have a lasting effect benefiting Democratic candidates. New Catholic voters turned out in overwhelming numbers in support of Catholic Democrat and anti-Prohibition candidate Al Smith, and their newfound heavy involvement in national politics that year would have a lasting effect in following years: Franklin D. Roosevelt would be elected to the

¹²² Prendergast, p. 85.

¹²³ Prendergast, p. 5.

¹²⁴ Prendergast, p. 71.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p. 72.

first of four terms in 1932 with unwavering Catholic support.¹²⁶ “The most significant result of the 1928 election...was not the Republican gains in the South, which proved to be ephemeral, but the mobilization of Catholic voters in northern cities, which would help produce a new Democratic majority in the 1930s.”¹²⁷

The election of Roosevelt brought the New Deal years, for the first time, Catholics found themselves in powerful positions at the national level. Twenty-five percent of federal judge positions were filled by Catholics during the Roosevelt years, compared to just 4 percent in the previous three Republican administrations.¹²⁸ Roosevelt courted clergy at the highest levels of the Catholic Church, so much so that many of the ideas of the New Deal seemed to come straight from the social and economic teachings of the church. “A document issued in 1919 entitled the ‘Bishops’ Program for Social Reconstruction’ foreshadowed certain elements of the program of the Roosevelt administration, including legislation establishing a minimum wage, insurance protected the aged and the unemployed, and recognition of labor’s right to organize.”¹²⁹

The 1950s saw the return of Republicans in the White House. Although the overwhelming majority of Catholics still identified as Democrats in the 1950s, the Korean War, communist fears and corruption in the previous Democratic administration began to erode the strong ethnoreligious ties of the Catholics to

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹²⁷ Reichley, pp. 210-211.

¹²⁸ Prendergast, p. 113.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

the Democratic Party.¹³⁰ The anti-Communist stance of Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower had particular resonance with Catholics. Efforts by eastern European countries to suppress the Catholic Church did not set well with immigrants who shared ethnic ties with their oppressed brethren. In addition, for decades the Pope and church hierarchy had regularly warned about the threat of Communism.¹³¹

However, any erosion of the ethnoreligious ties to the Democrats was turned on its face in 1960 with the election of the first Catholic president, John F. Kennedy. Like Democrat Al Smith of 1928, Kennedy was faced with the same questions about dual allegiances – allegiance to the pope and Catholic Church, or allegiance to the American democracy. However unlike Smith, Kennedy was able to effectively answer “the Catholic question.” To those trying to make hay out of his loyalties, his famous response made before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association was this: “I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me.”¹³² Still, religion was the strongest single factor in the election, with 78 percent of Catholics voting for Kennedy, compared to 38 percent of Protestants.¹³³

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, p. 123.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p. 125.

¹³² “On Church and State: Remarks of John F. Kennedy Addressed to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association,” 363-76, in *The Kennedy Reader*, ed. Jay David, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana, 1967, p. 366.

¹³³ Prendergast, p. 143.

It appeared in 1960 that JFK had halted the erosion of the Catholic-Democratic Party alliance. However, Vietnam and cultural issues about abortion, women's rights and civil rights soon would surface in the 1960s and 1970s, redefining how Americans thought about religion. New organizations such as the conservative Moral Majority would surface to exploit these cultural rifts, and by 1980, it would become apparent that many Catholics were finding their traditional ties to Democratic candidates had become increasingly uncomfortable. Born out of this late 20th century cultural upheaval would be a new way of looking at the relationship between politics and voting behavior – the culture wars thesis. Also called the secularization of America, the culture wars thesis holds that those who are more religious tend to vote for more conservative candidates (Republicans) and those who are less religious tend to support candidates with more liberal views (Democrats). I will discuss the culture wars thesis in more depth in the next section.

However, before I conclude the discussion of the ethnoreligious model, it's important to note that for Catholics, ethnoreligious factors are strongly tied to economic and job-related issues common in class politics: minimum wage, health care, unionization. The ethnoreligious model holds that any political realignments of the major denominational families reflect demographic, political and religious change – that religious traditions are not static. Not only do old traditions vary and evolve, but new ones are born.¹³⁴ According to Layman, the ethnoreligious model works well explaining the historical and political differences between these

¹³⁴ Kellstedt and Green, p. 56.

traditions, and even works well with explaining more recent trends in voting behavior among members of denominational families.¹³⁵

However, some scholars hypothesize that the recent denominational shifts in voting behavior are due less to denominational realignments than to religiosity (also called saliency) – the importance of religion to someone or the strength of their religious commitment.¹³⁶ And according to Layman, these shifts based on religiosity – not religious traditions – have led some scholars to consider the ethnoreligious model outdated.¹³⁷

A critical look at the ethnoreligious model reveals that it may have become a less effective assessment of the relationship between religion and voting behavior for Catholics. It focuses only on denominational shifts, not inter-denominational shifts, which are becoming increasingly relevant to understanding politics in the context of religion. For example, scholars point out that Catholics have increasingly shifted from voting Democrat to Republican, but by looking at Catholics as a whole using the ethnoreligious model, shifts in voting behavior among Catholics with differing levels of religious orthodoxy are not evident. Woodbury and Smith note that most surveys used the limited and broad categories to assess denominational affiliation: Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, or other. Even surveys that provide for a more detailed affiliation description, such as breaking Protestant down by Lutheran, Baptist,

¹³⁵ Layman, Geoffrey C., *The Great Divide: Religious and Cultural Conflict in American Party Politics*, ed. Robert Y. Shapiro, Columbia University Press: New York, 2001, p. 65

¹³⁶ Guth, James L., and Green, John, C., "Saliency: The Core Concept?," in *Rediscovering the Religious Factor in American Politics*, pp. 157-158, ed. David C. Leege and Lyman A. Kellstedt, M.E Sharpe: New York, 1993.

¹³⁷ Layman, 2001, p. 66.

Presbyterian, are problematic because they do not address distinctions of the conservative, centrist and modern elements of these religious denominations.

“When respondents say they are ‘Lutheran’ or ‘Presbyterian,’ researchers need to ask, ‘Which kind?’”¹³⁸ An increasing body of scholarly research indicates that inter-denominational shifts based on religious orthodoxy are creating new alignments of voters.

In addition, the ethnoreligious model may not effectively reflect changes in the class and communal bonds that have occurred in the last 20 to 30 years. Communities of largely poor, uneducated immigrants and ethnic groups, such as Catholics, have been disappearing as newcomers of different backgrounds move to these areas. Today’s more mobile society has resulted in a decrease in communal involvement, as evidenced by declines in church attendance and community organization memberships. Churches once were the center of a community binding like-minded people together.

According to scholars, since the 1960s, the nation has been losing “social capital – the everyday social and organizational connections that nurture citizens’ values, define their interests, and connect them to public affairs.”¹³⁹ According to Putnam, weekly church attendance has dropped from 48 percent in the 1950s to 41 percent in the 1970s, with it stagnating or dropping even further after the 1970s.¹⁴⁰ Union membership has been in steep decline for four decades, and involvement in Parent Teacher Associations has plummeted from 12 million in

¹³⁸ Woodberry, Robert D., and Smith, Christian S., “Fundamentalism Et Al: Conservative Protestants in America,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 1998, p. 34.

¹³⁹ Guth, et. al., October 2001, p. 20.

¹⁴⁰ Putnam, Robert, “Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy*, 6:1, January 1995, p. 69.

1964 to 7 million in the mid-1990s.¹⁴¹ Dramatic declines also have been seen in membership with civic organizations such as the Boy Scouts (down 26 percent since 1970), and the League of Women Voters (down 42 percent since 1969).¹⁴² Fraternal organizations also have not been immune to the declines in membership. “Membership is down significantly in such groups as the Lions (off 12 percent since 1983), the Elks (off 18 percent since 1979), the Shriners (off 27 percent since 1979), the Jaycees (off 44 percent since 1979), and the Masons (down 39 percent since 1959). In sum, after expanding steadily throughout most of this century, many major civic organizations have experienced a sudden, substantial, and nearly simultaneous decline in membership over the last decade or two.”¹⁴³

Furthermore, some scholars have noted that in the last few decades, the United States has seen a decline in the strength of class as an influencer of voting.¹⁴⁴ This decline in class voting may be due to the growing influence of cultural issues on voting behavior.

Using denominational affiliation as a predictor of voting behavior was logical when Americans were more communal and denominations were more clearly defined by social stratification. However, as more people have become detached from communities and as issues of class have eased, the use of denomination affiliation – upon which the ethnoreligious model relies – as a predictor of voting behavior appears to have weakened. The strength of the

¹⁴¹ Putnam, p. 69.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Weakliem, David L., “Race versus Class? Racial Composition and Class Voting, 1936-1992,” *Social Forces*, 75:3, March 1997, p. 939.

ethnoreligious model lies in its long-term stability reinforced by community and cultural bonds. However, the mobility of Americans today coupled with their diminished ties to their communities and traditional culture, as well as their growing affluence and educational levels, may be weakening the impact of the ethnoreligious model as a predictor of voting behavior. Americans have adapted their relationship between religion and politics to a more mobile system, one that relies little on where they live and where they came from.

The Culture Wars Thesis

Beginning in the 1990s, scholars note the emergence of a new relationship between religion and voting behavior based on levels of religious orthodoxy within denominations. Known as the culture war thesis, this new realignment differs from the ethnoreligious model because it is based on the idea that there is a growing divide between people who are more religious and people who are less religious, regardless of denomination. Fueling the divide between traditionalists (people with more orthodox beliefs who are highly engaged in religious worship) and those with more centrist and modern religious views are cultural and social issues. According to Layman, “cultural issues such as abortion and homosexual rights are central to the culture war thesis.”¹⁴⁵ Instead of voting based on religious belonging and religious tradition, voters were aligning according to their level of religiosity, most often measured by how often they attend church.

According to Bolce and De Maio, 1992 was a “critical demarcation point” for the relationship between religion and voting behavior because concerns about

¹⁴⁵ Layman, 2001, p. 68.

cultural and social issues aligned previously antagonistic denominational factions into this new framework, which included an acceptance of Christian fundamentalism.¹⁴⁶ Voters who were more religious – regardless of denomination or denominational family – now found themselves with more in common than with believers within their denomination who were more centrist and modernist. By 2004, traditionalists and centrists had switched from Democrat to Republican, and modernists had reversed course, voting Democrat in 2004 after voting Republican in 2000.¹⁴⁷

In the culture wars thesis, traditionalists tend to vote Republican.¹⁴⁸ “Traditionalists of all sorts tend to regard religion as more central to their lives than other groups, and perhaps not surprisingly, they report greater relevance to their political thinking.”¹⁴⁹ Moderate believers, characterized by heterodox beliefs and lower religious engagement, are more likely to vote Democrat, regardless of denomination. Centrists are neither traditionalists nor modernists, and practice a mix of orthodox and heterodox beliefs with moderate levels of religious engagement. “Most centrists were willing to adapt their traditions in a changing world.”¹⁵⁰

Layman’s research about presidential vote and partisan identification from 1980 to 1994 indicates that even in 1980 there was evidence of a growing

¹⁴⁶ Bolce, Louis, and De Maio, Gerald, “Religious Outlook, Culture War Politics, and Antipathy Toward Christian Fundamentalists,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 63, 1999, p. 52.

¹⁴⁷ Green, John, C., et. al., “The American Religious Landscape and the 2004 Presidential Vote: Increased Polarization,” *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, 3 February 2005, p. 14.

¹⁴⁸ Green, John C., “The American Religious Landscape and Political Attitudes: A Baseline for 2004,” *The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life*, based on the Fourth National Survey of Religion and Politics, Bliss Institute, University of Akron, March-May 2004, p. 16

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

relationship between religious orthodoxy and voting behavior.¹⁵¹ He concludes that the growing effect of religious orthodoxy on voting behavior was the “most noticeable change in the impact of religion on American political behavior” over the period. Supporting Layman’s theory, Kellstedt and his colleagues determined that religious orthodoxy was the second strongest predictor of votes for Bush in 1992.¹⁵² However, they remark that 1992 could easily have been considered the Year of the Evangelical or the Year of the Secular since “the new role of evangelicals and seculars as the cultural cores of the Republican and Democratic parties, respectively, puts them in key positions to shape the ideological contours of those parties.”¹⁵³ And as evangelicals and seculars had moved squarely to their corners of the ring, Catholics had moved into the center as swing voters.¹⁵⁴ By 1994, the differences in voting behavior based on religious orthodoxy rivaled past ethnoreligious differences between Jews, Catholics, and mainline Protestants.¹⁵⁵

As America moved through the mid-1990s, Layman and Carmines note that not only was religious traditionalism becoming more relevant in society, it was playing “a larger role in shaping the cultural conflict in the nation’s

¹⁵¹ Layman, 1997, p. 298.

¹⁵² Layman, Geoffrey C., and Carmines, Edward G., “Cultural Conflict in American Politics: Religious Traditionalism, Postmaterialism, and U.S. Political Behavior,” *The Journal of Politics*, 59:3, August 1997, p. 767.

¹⁵³ Kellstedt, Lyman A., Green, John C., Guth, James L., and Smidt, Corwin E., “Religious Voting Blocs in the 1992 Election: the year of the Evangelical?,” *Sociology of Religion*, 55:3, 1994, p. 323.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 324.

¹⁵⁵ Layman, Geoffrey C., “Religion and Political Behavior in the United States: The Impact of Beliefs, Affiliations, and Commitment From 1980 to 1994,” *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61, 1997, p. 306.

politics.”¹⁵⁶ By 2000, the culture war thesis seemed even more relevant as the morality issues from the Clinton Administration and culture clashes cast shadows over the election. “The outcome revealed the consolidation of a new religious order in American politics, an altered relationship between faith and public affairs.”¹⁵⁷

One of the most recent public examples of the culture wars thesis occurred in the summer of 2004, when the nation was transfixed by the climax of the year-long battle in Massachusetts to become the first state in the nation to legalize same-sex marriage. Combined with similar efforts in San Francisco and New York, the gay rights and same-sex marriage debate was one of the most prominent cultural discussions in the period before the November 2004 presidential election. That election year, 11 states considered ballot initiatives regarding a ban on same-sex marriage and in every state, the ban prevailed, sometimes with large majorities of voter support.¹⁵⁸ “Oregon represented gay-rights groups’ best hope for victory, but an amendment banning same-sex marriage prevailed there with 57 percent of the votes, leaving some activists in tears. Similar bans won by larger margins in Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Ohio and Utah. More than 20 million Americans voted on the measures, which triumphed overall by a 2-to-1 ratio. In the four Southern states, the amendments received at least three-

¹⁵⁶ Layman and Carmines, p. 767.

¹⁵⁷ Guth, et, al., October 2001, p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ 2004 Election Results, <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/pages/results/ballot.measures/>, accessed 12 January 2006.

quarters of the votes, including 86 percent in Mississippi; the closest outcome besides Oregon was in Michigan, where the ban got 59 percent.”¹⁵⁹

Some analysts said prior to the election that support for gay marriage or civil unions could be a “wedge” issue that separates moderate voters, including moderate Catholics, from Democratic candidates the way school busing and welfare reform once did.¹⁶⁰ In fact, in November 2003 Pew found that not only were the number of Americans who oppose gay marriage on the rise, a majority of Americans opposed civil unions and similar legal agreements.¹⁶¹ “Moreover, despite the overall rise in tolerance toward gays since the 1980s, many Americans remain highly critical of homosexuals and religious belief is a major factor in these attitudes. Religiosity is clearly a factor in the recent rise in opposition to gay marriage¹⁶². Overall, nearly six-in-ten Americans (59 percent) oppose gay marriage, up from 53 percent in July. But those with a high level of religious commitment now oppose gay marriage by more than six-to-one (80 percent-12 percent), a significant shift since July (71 percent-21 percent). The public is somewhat more supportive of legal agreements for gays that provide many of the same benefits of marriage; still, a 51 percent majority also opposes this step.”¹⁶³

In addition, according to Guth and his colleagues, those actively and aggressively involved in the culture wars have taken advantage of the decline in

¹⁵⁹ “Voters pass all 11 bans on gay marriage,” The Associated Press, 3 November 2004. Accessed online at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6383353/>.

¹⁶⁰ Stone, Andrea, “Gay marriage looms large for ‘04,” *USA Today*, 19 November 2003.

¹⁶¹ “Religious Beliefs Underpin Opposition To Homosexuality,” the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 18 November 2003, p. 1.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

memberships in social organizations previously discussed. “On one side, traditionalists lamented the erosion of family life, religious institutions, and traditional values caused not only by impersonal social developments but also by the conscious assaults of modernists. For their part, modernists attacked traditional institutions in the hope of building broader and more inclusive communities. Indeed, modernists – and their secular allies – were often as disturbed by decaying civic life as the traditionalists, but preferred to envision new institutions, not resuscitate old ones.”¹⁶⁴

The new realignment according to religious orthodoxy has been so significant that, as previously discussed, groups of conservative Christians such as the Christians Coalition have tried to capitalize on it regarding conservative Catholics. Seculars, too, have tried to capitalize on the new alignment with efforts to “reform” religious traditions to make them more relevant to a secular society. “The flags of denominational or religious affiliation, it would appear, are increasingly less distracting in American national politics. In the absence of this distraction, candidates, voters and elected officials alike are in a better position to focus on more fundamental, underlying issues.”¹⁶⁵

While there is strong evidence to support the culture wars thesis as the new realignment in how Americans tie religion to politics, I believe its fundamental weakness may lie in the reliance on fluid cultural issues. In years that morality issues are at the forefront, it may be a strong predictor of voting behavior based on religiosity. But in years when fiscal, security and other nonmorality issues that

¹⁶⁴ Guth, James L., et. al., October 2001, p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ Breyfogle, pp. 546-547.

are on the minds of Americans, it may weaken as a predictor of voting behavior. In addition, cultural issues are not static. The concerns of Americans in the 1950s are different than the concerns of Americans in 2006. As Americans modify their views on cultural matters, old alignments that clearly pit traditionalists vs. modernists may shift, and the culture wars thesis may become less useful as a predictor of voting behavior.

For analyzing Catholic voting behavior, the culture wars thesis may be a weak indicator of the nonmorality issues that are so critical to the faith, particularly those about social and economic justice. Aid to the poor is a long-standing aspect of Catholic social teachings, and concern for the environment is increasingly becoming a central part of it. By looking at just morality issues, the culture wars thesis misses highly significant aspects of what it means to be Catholic and why Catholics may support certain candidates.

Questioning the Ethnoreligious Model

While denominational affiliations historically have been shown to be strong predictors of voting behavior, scholars note other factors that must be taken into consideration in order for the model to be reliable. Specifically, changes in voter turnout must be accounted for when measuring the impact of the ethnoreligious model on voting behavior. In addition, while voters may experience shifts in attitudes about specific issues, the denominations to which they subscribe have remained relatively stable from an ideological standpoint for decades.

The ethnoreligious model can be problematic from a measurement standpoint, particularly when research lacks an assessment of the impact of

changes in the level of voter turnout.¹⁶⁶ Pollster Andrew Kohut believes the role of religion regarding voting behavior in the 2004 election was overstated. Overall, voter participation increased, and the participation rate among evangelical Protestants was on par with those of other denominations. It was turnout and a “leadership gap,” not religion, which was the deciding factor for Bush.¹⁶⁷ According to Kohut, voters became increasingly less comfortable with Kerry’s leadership abilities as election day neared. After the Bush campaign saw that moderate and liberal Republicans were less comfortable with their choices for president in 2004 than in 2000, the Republicans “turned the election into a referendum — from a referendum on Bush to a referendum on Kerry, starting with the Swift Boat controversy and culminating in the convention, and it remained that throughout the election. The debates almost turned it around for Kerry but in the end, people could not get comfortable with him on the leadership dimension.”¹⁶⁸

In their study spanning three decades, Brooks and Manza noted that from 1972 to 2000, Catholics experienced little change, representing about 26 percent of voters.¹⁶⁹ When considering changes in the size of religious groups, partisan identification and voting behavior, Brooks and Manza conclude that Catholics have not experienced a conservative group-specific shift in voting behavior, but

¹⁶⁶ Brooks and Manza, p. 427.

¹⁶⁷ Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, “How the Faithful Voted: Political Alignments & the Religious Divide in Election 2004,” 17 November 2004. Accessed 28 January 2006, <http://pewforum.org/events/index.php?EventID=64>.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ Brooks and Manza, p. 440.

have shifted in partisan identification from a liberal, strong identification with the Democratic Party to an independent orientation.¹⁷⁰

Bolzendahl and Brooks assessed denominational shifts by looking at attitudes about gender, abortion and sexuality since the 1970s. They found that denominational groups have experienced shifts related to their attitudes about these subjects, but that the ideological position of these religious denominations in relation to each other on these issues has been stable since the 1970s.¹⁷¹ In fact, instead of finding that religious groups are becoming more polarized on issues, which supports the theory of a growing religion gap, Bolzendahl and Brooks find that instances of a perceived religion gap on specific issues occur during a period of relative stability of denominational shifts.¹⁷² “While there is little reason to believe religious group memberships are tied to a decline or sweeping polarization in attitudes, our results do attest to the historical persistence of denominational influence and the strength of that influence. An examination of group-based differences suggests the nontrivial (and in some cases quite large) magnitude of religious group differences in attitudes toward gender, abortion and sexuality.”¹⁷³

Questioning the Culture Wars Thesis

Scholars also have questioned the validity of research that pits traditionalists of all faiths in opposition with centrists and modernists. “There are

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 442.

¹⁷¹ Bolzendahl, Catherine, and Brooks, Clem, “Polarization, Secularization or Differences as Usual? The Denominational Cleavages in U.S. Social Attitudes since the 1970s,” *The Sociological Quarterly*, 46, 2005, p. 72.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁷³ Ibid, p. 72.

conflicts between the more and less religious members of religious traditions on contentious issues such as abortion. But...religious groups do not line up predictably across each and every political issue."¹⁷⁴ Brooks and Manza conclude that evidence of a religion gap or culture war in American politics tied to religion is weak. "Our estimates of the overall religious cleavage in vote choice show no increase (and a modest decrease) over time. To date...the ideas of a 'culture war' (or more simply, growing religious-based electoral differences) offers limited analytical leverage to understand the political effects of religious group memberships."¹⁷⁵

Other scholars say that the most common measurement tool used to evaluate levels of religiosity in the culture war thesis – church attendance – is insufficient. Many researchers use only one measure of religiosity – church attendance. However, Woodberry and Smith conclude that looking at church attendance alone does not reflect the multiple dimensions of religious orthodoxy. "This assumes that religiosity is generic, that it does not matter what people believe or what the social context of their worship is. However, sometimes denomination strongly influences the impact of church attendance. Why people attend is also important."¹⁷⁶ According to Gorsuch, people attend church for a number of reasons, including personal, religious and social reasons, and their values and societal beliefs differ depending on why they attend church.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ Wald, p. 174.

¹⁷⁵ Brooks and Manza, p. 442

¹⁷⁶ Woodberry and Smith, p. 38.

¹⁷⁷ Gorsuch, Richard L., "Psychology of Religion," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 38, 1988, p. 212.

CHAPTER III

OPERATIONALIZATION, MEASUREMENT AND HYPOTHESES

Before I discuss whether Catholics are the new swing voter and what factors are influencing them, the first question that must be answer is, who are swing voters? Despite claims by pollsters and reporters about who is a swing voter, they rarely explain who these voters are and scholars largely have ignored the concept of defining and measuring swing voters. However, Mayer attempts to not only define who a swing voter is – someone who is not committed either way and who holds no allegiances to any candidate – but also provide a method to measure swing voter behavior.¹⁷⁸

I will employ the method developed by Mayer that uses survey responses to NES pre-election survey feeling thermometers to devise a swing voter scale. Respondents are asked to indicate how favorably or unfavorably they view each presidential candidates by rating them on a feeling thermometer that runs from 0 to 100 degrees. The scale used is constructed by subtracting the rating for the Democratic presidential candidate from the Republican candidate; higher scale scores indicate greater Republicanism. According to Mayer, “one advantage of using a scale of this sort is that it provides a nuanced, graduated measure of a

¹⁷⁸ Mayer, p. 3.

voter's convertability or 'swingness.'"¹⁷⁹ Voters with a score between -15 and +15 are considered swing voters, and everyone else is considered a non-swing voter (either a core Democrat with a score between -100 and -16, or a core Republican with a score between 16 and 100). After defining swing voters, I will look at whether Catholics are more likely to be classified as swing voters than non-Catholics. Following this analysis, I will evaluate Catholics using the two models previously discussed: ethnoreligious model and the culture wars thesis.

For the ethnoreligious model, I will look at the similarities and differences between Catholic and non-Catholic voting trends. If Catholic voting behavior is trending similar to non-Catholic voting behavior, one could argue that the ethnoreligious model is a weak predictor of denominational voting behavior. In addition, as previously noted, some scholars say that as Catholics have become more educated and affluent, which are both indicators of class, their voting behavior has shifted toward the Republican Party. One could argue that changes in the educational levels and economic status of Catholics are a refinement of the ethnoreligious model, which has a strong economic component. To account for these two possible influences of voting behavior, I will also include independent variables that measure education level and income level, and evaluate whether Catholics are trending in similar ways to non-Catholics regarding voting behavior, and changes in education and income. Also, much has been said about the blue state-red state divide in America, with Northeastern and Western states voting for

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

Democratic candidates (blue) and Southern and North Central states backing Republican candidates (red). My analysis will include an assessment of Catholic voting behavior by region to see if these regional characteristics are impacting Catholic voting behavior. Finally, Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the United States, and the vast majority are Catholics. My analysis of the ethnoreligious model will include an assessment of Hispanic Catholics and whether their voting behavior differs from that of white Catholics.

For the culture wars thesis, I will measure whether there is a strong relationship between church attendance and voting behavior. I will also compare Catholic and non-Catholic voting behavior by looking at church attendance. Denton's research shows that church attendance – the most common measure of religiosity – and not religious affiliation, was a more accurate predictor of voting tendencies in 2004. He cites National Exit Poll results showing that those who attend religious services from few times a month to more than once a week tended to vote for Bush. Kerry tended to garner votes from those who attend services a few times a year or not at all.¹⁸⁰ Like Green, Denton targets traditionalists as those voting Republican, and modernists – in particular, secularists – voting Democrat.¹⁸¹ Djupe also emphasizes the importance of church attendance, arguing that religious orthodoxy as measured by church

¹⁸⁰ Denton, p. 24.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 27.

attendance generates religious brand loyalty, which is a significant predictor of voting behavior.¹⁸²

Finally, I will look at two issues that have played important roles in recent elections: abortion and gay rights. As has been discussed, scholars have noted the tendency of the hot-button abortion debate to create single-issue voters. Likewise, scholars noted the gay rights issue as a possible wedge issue in the 2004 election. I will look at whether either of these issues has had a significant impact on Catholic voting behavior from 1992 to 2004, and whether Catholics appear to be single-issue voters.

To measure the impact of the abortion issue, I will use the following question:

By Law, When Should Abortion Be Allowed?

There has been some discussion about abortion during recent years. Which one of the opinions on this page best agrees with your view?

1. By law, abortion should never be permitted.
2. The law should permit abortion only in case of rape, incest, or when the woman's life is in danger.
3. The law should permit abortion for reasons other than rape, incest, or danger to the woman's life, but only after the need for the abortion has been clearly established.
4. By law, a woman should always be able to obtain an abortion as a matter of personal choice.

To measure the impact of the gay rights issue, I will use the following questions:

¹⁸² Djupe, Paul A., "Religious Brand Loyalty and Political Loyalties," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 2000, p. 86.

Do you think homosexuals should be allowed to serve in the United States Armed Forces or don't you think so?

1. Yes, think so
2. Don't think so

Do you favor or oppose laws to protect homosexuals against job discrimination?

1. Favor
2. Oppose

Hypotheses

This report contains several hypotheses:

- Catholics are more likely to be swing voters in America than non-Catholics (H_1). The null hypothesis (H_0) states that Catholics are not more likely to be swing voters than non-Catholics.
- Catholics have experienced a decline in the influence of ethnoreligious factors regarding voting behavior (H_2). The null hypothesis (H_0) states that Catholics have not experience a decline in the influence of ethnoreligious factors regarding voting behavior.
- Cultural issues are influencing Catholic voters (H_3). The null hypothesis (H_0) states that cultural issues are not influencing Catholic voters.
- Single issues, such as abortion and gay rights, are significantly influencing Catholic voters (H_4). The null hypothesis (H_0) states that single issues, such as abortion and gay rights, are not influencing Catholic voters.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Swing Voters

From 1992 to 2004, Catholics overall were slightly more likely to be swing voters than non-Catholics, particularly in 2000, which was the only year the results were significant.

Table 1
Catholic and Non-Catholic Swing Voters From 1992 To 2004

	Swing Voter	Not Swing Voter	(N=)
1992			
Catholic	32%	68%	(582)
Non-Catholic	30%	70%	(1903)
1996			
Catholic	23%	77%	(425)
Non-Catholic	25%	75%	(1289)
2000			
Catholic	34%	66%	(460)
Non-Catholic	30%	70%	(1347)
2004			
Catholic	21%	79%	(292)
Non-Catholic	20%	80%	(920)

1992: $\chi^2=1.161$, $df=1$, not significant
1996: $\chi^2=.452$, $df=1$, not significant
2000: $\chi^2=3.035$, $df=1$, $p<.05$
2004: $\chi^2=.173$, $df=1$, not significant
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Evaluating the Ethnoreligious Model

Educational Levels

Catholic voters have been obtaining higher levels of education than voters of other denominations throughout the study period.

Table 2
Catholic and Non-Catholic Education Levels: 1992-2004

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholic				
Grade School	7%	4%	2%	3%
High School	42%	37%	34%	37%
Some College (No Degree)	26%	27%	31%	26%
College Degree	25%	32%	33%	34%
(N=)	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(568)	(423)	(459)	(292)
Non-Catholic				
Grade School	8%	5%	4%	3%
High School	46%	43%	36%	35%
Some College (No Degree)	23%	27%	30%	33%
College Degree	23%	26%	30%	29%
(N=)	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(1852)	(1288)	(1341)	(920)

1992: $\chi^2=4.444$, $df=3$, not significant

1996: $\chi^2=7.033$, $df=3$, $p<.05$

2000: $\chi^2=4.566$, $df=3$, not significant

2004: $\chi^2=5.461$, $df=3$, $p<.05$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

The majority of the most educated Catholics – those with a college degree – are the fastest growing group of Catholics, and in 2004, the majority of voters in this group voted for the Republican presidential candidate. In addition, the majority of the least educated Catholics – those with a high school diploma or less – still fall in line with traditional ethnoreligious trends of voting for Democratic presidential candidates. However, these numbers have been declining since the percentage of Catholics with lower levels of education has been decreasing. The

relationship between vote choice and education for Catholics was significant only in 1992 and 1996.

Table 3
Catholic Voting Behavior and Education Levels 1992-2004

	Democrat	Republican	(N=)
1992			
Grade School	72%	28%	(18)
High School	69%	31%	(123)
Some College (No Degree)	64%	36%	(77)
College Degree	49%	51%	(101)
1996			
Grade School	70%	30%	(10)
High School	76%	24%	(86)
Some College (No Degree)	57%	43%	(72)
College Degree	47%	53%	(106)
2000			
Grade School	75%	25%	(4)
High School	57%	43%	(97)
Some College (No Degree)	49%	51%	(95)
College Degree	45%	55%	(123)
2004			
Grade School	100%	0	(2)
High School	51%	49%	(63)
Some College (No Degree)	56%	44%	(50)
College Degree	46%	54%	(82)

Note: The results for those with a grade school education are misleading because of the low number of respondents in the category. The results for 2000 reflect 4 respondents and the results for 2004 reflect just 2 respondents, both of whom voted for the Democratic candidate.

1992: $\chi^2=10.182$, $df=3$, $p<.01$
 1996: $\chi^2=16.568$, $df=3$, $p<.001$
 2000: $\chi^2=3.709$, $df=3$, not significant
 2004: $\chi^2=3.130$, $df=3$, not significant
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Changes in Income Levels

Catholics and non-Catholics are exhibiting similar trends regarding income levels as they do regarding educational levels. While the percentages differ

slightly, Catholics and non-Catholics moved in concert regarding income levels over the four election cycles, with both groups seeing corresponding increases and decreases.

Table 4
Catholic and Non-Catholic Income Levels: 1992-2004

	Income Level	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholic	1-16 percentile	17%	20%	16%	11%
	17-33 percentile	17%	18%	21%	23%
	34-67 percentile	23%	28%	32%	32%
	68-95 percentile	37%	28%	24%	31%
	96-100 percentile	7%	7%	7%	4%
		100%	100%	100%	100%
	(N=)	(534)	(387)	(378)	(262)
Non-Catholic	1-16 percentile	17%	20%	16%	18%
	17-33 percentile	16%	16%	22%	20%
	34-67 percentile	25%	32%	30%	25%
	68-95 percentile	35%	26%	25%	33%
	96-100 percentile	6%	6%	7%	3%
		100%	100%	100%	100%
	(N=)	(1747)	(1177)	(1137)	(808)

*Percentile correspond to the following annual incomes:

1992: 1-16: none-\$9,999; 17-33: \$10,000-\$19,999; 34-67: \$20,000-\$39,999; 68-95: \$40,000-\$89,999; 96-100: \$90,000+

1996: 1-16: none-\$11,999; 17-33: \$12,000-\$21,999; 34-67: \$22,000-\$49,999; 68-95: \$50,000-\$104,999; 96-100: \$105,000+

2000: 1-16: none-\$14,999; 17-33: \$15,000-\$34,999; 34-67: \$35,000-\$64,999; 68-95: \$65,000-\$124,999; 96-100: \$125,000+

2004: 1-16: none-\$14,999; 17-33: \$15,000-\$34,999; 34-67: \$35,000-\$69,999; 68-95: \$65,000-\$119,000; 96-100: \$120,000+

1992: $\chi^2=22.061$, $df=4$, $p<.001$

1996: $\chi^2=16.989$, $df=4$, $p<.001$

2000: $\chi^2=18.040$, $df=4$, $p<.001$

2004: $\chi^2=12.402$, $df=4$, $p<.01$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

In looking at voting behavior and income, the results reveal multiple instances of gains and losses for Democrats and Republican candidates over the study period. Overall, candidates from both parties experienced a net gain in

votes from the least wealthy Catholics. The most wealthy Catholics shifted their support over the study period from Democrat to Republican candidates. The relationship between voting behavior and income for Catholics was significant every year.

Table 5
Catholic Voting Behavior and Income Levels 1992-2004

	Democrat	Republican	(N=)
1992			
1-16 percentile	64%	36%	(28)
17-33 percentile	71%	30%	(44)
34-67 percentile	72%	28%	(106)
68-95 percentile	50%	50%	(104)
96-100 percentile	55%	45%	(20)
1996			
1-16 percentile	78%	22%	(23)
17-33 percentile	67%	33%	(33)
34-67 percentile	63%	39%	(95)
68-95 percentile	51%	49%	(82)
96-100 percentile	48%	52%	(21)
2000			
1-16 percentile	69%	31%	(29)
17-33 percentile	57%	43%	(56)
34-67 percentile	50%	50%	(70)
68-95 percentile	51%	49%	(93)
96-100 percentile	26%	74%	(19)
2004			
1-16 percentile	55%	45%	(20)
17-33 percentile	71%	29%	(24)
34-67 percentile	60%	40%	(55)
68-95 percentile	43%	57%	(58)
96-100 percentile	33%	67%	(21)

1992: $\chi^2=12.425$, $df=4$, $p<.005$

1996: $\chi^2=8.164$, $df=4$, $p<.05$

2000: $\chi^2=9.152$, $df=4$, $p<.05$

2004: $\chi^2=9.663$, $df=4$, $p<.01$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Region

The relationship between Catholic voting behavior and region was significant only in 1992 and 2000. Catholics in the Northeast and the South were more likely to vote for a Republican candidate in 2004 than they were in 1992. Since 1992, support from Northeast Catholics has shifted from the Democratic to Republican candidates, which is important considering the Northeast is considered the high number of Catholics residing in the region. Support for Democratic candidates also has weakened in the West. In 1992, 74 percent of Catholics in the West voted for Clinton; in 2004, just 51 percent supported Kerry. The only region that has not experienced substantial change regarding Catholic voting behavior is the North Central United States.

Table 6
Catholic Voting Behavior and Region 1992-2004

	Democrat	Republican	(N=)
1992			
Northeast	69%	32%	(114)
North Central	52%	48%	(104)
South	60%	40%	(60)
West	74%	26%	(49)
1996			
Northeast	65%	35%	(74)
North Central	54%	46%	(93)
South	58%	42%	(62)
West	64%	36%	(47)
2000			
Northeast	51%	49%	(91)
North Central	53%	47%	(106)
South	33%	67%	(66)
West	65%	35%	(57)
2004			
Northeast	54%	46%	(56)
North Central	53%	47%	(70)
South	41%	59%	(32)
West	51%	49%	(39)

1992: $\chi^2=9.332$, $df=3$, $p<.05$
1996: $\chi^2=2.570$, $df=3$, not significant
2000: $\chi^2=12.742$, $df=3$, $p<.01$
2004: $\chi^2=1.620$, $df=3$, not significant
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Hispanic Voters

Hispanic voters are much more likely to be Catholics than non-Catholics. These results were significant every year. The percentage of Catholics who are Hispanic has been relatively stable over the four election cycles, averaging 18 percent. In comparison, the percentage of non-Catholic Hispanics has averaged about 5 percent over the same period. In addition, about half of the Hispanics surveyed identified themselves as Catholic.

Table 7
Hispanic Catholic and Non-Catholic Voters: 1992-2004

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholics				
Hispanic	21%	18%	16%	18%
Non-Hispanic (N=)	79% (577)	82% (425)	84% (458)	82% (291)
Non-Catholics				
Hispanic	5%	5%	4%	7%
Non-Hispanic (N=)	94% (1884)	95% (1285)	96% (1333)	93% (905)

1992: $\chi^2=125.456$, $df=1$, $p<.001$

1996: $\chi^2=66.068$, $df=1$, $p<.001$

2000: $\chi^2=69.596$, $df=1$, $p<.001$

2004: $\chi^2=32.774$, $df=1$, $p<.001$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

However, these results were significant only in 1992 and 1996 when Hispanics and non-Hispanic Catholics exhibited different voting behavior, with Hispanic Catholics overwhelmingly supporting Democratic candidates. The relationship between Hispanic identification and voting behavior for Catholics declined in significance over the study period, with it being significant in 1992 and 1996 and not significant in 2000 and 2004.

Table 8
Catholic Hispanic and Non-Hispanic Vote for Major Party Candidates: 1992-2004

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Hispanic				
Democrat	75%	86%	63%	55%
Republican	25%	14%	37%	45%
(N=)	(52)	(43)	(32)	(22)
Non-Hispanic				
Democrat	60%	55%	49%	51%
Republican	40%	45%	51%	49%
(N=)	(274)	(233)	(286)	(174)

1992: $\chi^2=4.077$, $df=1$, $p<.05$
1996: $\chi^2=14.976$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2000: $\chi^2=2.113$, $df=1$, *not significant*
2004: $\chi^2=.123$, $df=1$, *not significant*
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Evaluating the Culture Wars Thesis

Church Attendance

Since 1992, Catholics church attendance has declined significantly. Despite the drop in attendance, Catholics still go to church more often than non-Catholics. However, by 2000, those percentages were moving close to each other, indicating that Catholics were becoming more similar to other religions regarding how often they practiced their faith. And while the relationship between religion and church attendance was significant every year, it declined in significance in 2004.

Table 9
Catholic and Non-Catholic Church Attendance: 1992-2004

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholics				
Every Week	34%	32%	28%	27%
Almost Every Week	12%	15%	15%	12%
Once or Twice a Month	14%	16%	17%	19%
Few Times a Year	18%	18%	18%	16%
Never	22%	19%	22%	27%
(N=)	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(580)	(425)	(460)	(291)
Non-Catholics				
Every Week	25%	24%	26%	23%
Almost Every Week	10%	11%	10%	12%
Once or Twice a Month	14%	14%	14%	14%
Few Times a Year	14%	18%	15%	15%
Never	37%	33%	34%	36%
(N=)	100%	100%	100%	100%
	(1892)	(1280)	(1329)	(913)

1992: $\chi^2=52.590$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 1996: $\chi^2=35.272$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 2000: $\chi^2=28.113$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 2004: $\chi^2=10.443$, $df=4$, $p<.05$
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

More church-going Catholics have shifted their voting behavior from 1992 to 2004 to voting for more conservative candidates. At the same time, however, even less religious Catholics appear to be moving toward Republican candidates, including in 2000 when half of “secular” Catholics voted for Bush. The relationship between church attendance and voting behavior was significant every year except 2000.

Table 10
Catholic Voting Behavior and Church Attendance: 1992-2004

	Democrat	Republican
1992		
Every Week	56%	44%
Almost Every Week	49%	51%
Once or Twice a Month	65%	35%
Few Times a Year	59%	41%
Never	84%	16%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(204)	(123)
1996		
Every Week	50%	50%
Almost Every Week	59%	41%
Once or Twice a Month	72%	28%
Few Times a Year	63%	37%
Never	68%	32%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(164)	(112)
2000		
Every Week	48%	53%
Almost Every Week	47%	53%
Once or Twice a Month	54%	46%
Few Times a Year	57%	43%
Never	50%	50%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(161)	(159)
2004		
Every Week	43%	57%
Almost Every Week	54%	46%
Once or Twice a Month	25%	75%
Few Times a Year	70%	30%
Never	64%	36%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(100)	(97)

1992: $\chi^2=19.027$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
1996: $\chi^2=7.891$, $df=4$, $p<.05$
2000: $\chi^2=1.768$, $df=4$, not significant
2004: $\chi^2=17.408$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Single-Issue Voters

Abortion

Catholics have become more conservative in their views on abortion since 1992, and are slightly more conservative on the issue than non-Catholics, who also have become more conservative on the issue since 1992. However, the relationship between abortion and voters in general was significant only in 2000.

Table 11
Catholic and Non-Catholic Views on Abortion: 1992-2004

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholics				
Never Permitted By Law	12%	13%	9%	14%
By Law, Only in Case of Rape	30%	32%	34%	34%
By Law, Only in Case of Rape and Woman's Life in Danger	25%	18%	16%	18%
By Law, Always	43%	38%	41%	34%
(N=)	(316)	(272)	(309)	(192)
Non-Catholics				
Never Permitted By Law	10%	12%	13%	13%
By Law, Only in Case of Rape	28%	29%	28%	31%
By Law, Only in Case of Rape and Woman's Life in Danger	14%	16%	15%	18%
By Law, Always	48%	44%	44%	38%
(N=)	(1006)	(742)	(783)	(604)

1992: $\chi^2=4.546$, $df=3$, not significant
 1996: $\chi^2=4.991$, $df=3$, not significant
 2000: $\chi^2=8.069$, $df=3$, $p<05$.
 2004: $\chi^2=1.355$, $df=3$, not significant
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Conservative and liberal Catholics had become polarized on the issue by 2004, with those favoring the strongest abortion restrictions supporting the Republican candidate and those favoring little or no abortion restrictions supporting the Democratic candidate. For Catholics, the relationship between abortion and voting behavior was significant for every year.

Table 12
Catholic Voting Behavior and Abortion: 1992-2004

	Democrat	Republican	(N=)
1992			
Never Permitted By Law	58%	42%	(33)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape	49%	51%	(93)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape and Woman's Life in Danger	58%	42%	(48)
By Law, Always	76%	24%	(142)
1996			
Never Permitted By Law	51%	49%	(37)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape	50%	50%	(92)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape and Woman's Life in Danger	59%	41%	(49)
By Law, Always	71%	29%	(94)
2000			
Never Permitted By Law	39%	61%	(28)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape	45%	55%	(109)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape and Woman's Life in Danger	38%	69%	(55)
By Law, Always	62%	38%	(117)
2004			
Never Permitted By Law	31%	69%	(26)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape	37%	63%	(62)
By Law, Only in Case of Rape and Woman's Life in Danger	61%	39%	(38)
By Law, Always	65%	35%	(66)

1992: $\chi^2=18.641$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

1996: $\chi^2=9.843$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

2000: $\chi^2=12.653$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

2004: $\chi^2=15.701$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Gay Rights

Catholics are more likely to support gays serving in the military than non-Catholics. The results were significant for every year except 2004.

Table 13
Catholic and Non-Catholic Views on Whether
Gays Should Serve in the Military

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholics				
Agree	64%	76%	81%	84%
Disagree	36%	24%	19%	16%
_____	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N=)	(486)	(375)	(434)	(256)
Non-Catholics				
Agree	57%	66%	74%	80%
Disagree	43%	34%	26%	20%
_____	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N=)	(1646)	(1108)	(1265)	(770)

1992: $\chi^2=7.022$, $df=1$, $p<.05$
1996: $\chi^2=12.324$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2000: $\chi^2=7.946$, $df=1$, $p<.01$
2004: $\chi^2=1.292$, $df=1$, *not significant*
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

In addition, Catholics have become less polarized on the issue and by 2004, a substantial majority of those who voted for the Democratic and Republican candidates supported gays serving in the military. The relationship between voting behavior and gays serving in the military was significant every year, although it declined slightly in 2004.

Table 14
Catholic Voting Behavior and Views on Whether
Gays Should Serve in the Military

	Democrat	Republican
1992		
Agree	77%	47%
Disagree	23%	53%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(197)	(113)
1996		
Agree	86%	64%
Disagree	14%	36%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(161)	(108)
2000		
Agree	89%	74%
Disagree	11%	26%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(153)	(149)
2004		
Agree	89%	81%
Disagree	11%	19%
_____	100%	100%
(N=)	(97)	(96)

1992: $\chi^2=29.346$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
1996: $\chi^2=18.574$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2000: $\chi^2=11.340$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2004: $\chi^2=2.075$, $df=1$, not significant
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Likewise, Catholics are more likely to support laws that protect gays from job discrimination than non-Catholics. The results were significant for every year.

Table 15
Catholic and Non-Catholic Views on Whether There Should Be Laws Protecting Gays Against Job Discrimination

	1992	1996	2000	2004
Catholics				
Favor Laws	68%	72%	74%	82%
Oppose Laws	32%	28%	26%	18%
<hr/>	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N=)	(490)	(358)	(380)	(254)
Non-Catholics				
Favor Laws	58%	61%	65%	73%
Oppose Laws	42%	39%	35%	27%
<hr/>	100%	100%	100%	100%
(N=)	(1649)	(1080)	(1093)	(771)

1992: $\chi^2=17.144$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
1996: $\chi^2=13.047$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2000: $\chi^2=10.770$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2004: $\chi^2=8.593$, $df=1$, $p<.05$
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

And like the results regarding Catholic voting behavior and gays serving in the military, by 2004, Catholics were the least polarized on the issue of protecting gays against job discrimination, regardless of party. A substantial majority of Catholics who voted for the Democratic and Republican candidates supported such laws. The relationship between Catholic voting behavior and views on protection of gays against job discriminations was significant for every year except 2004.

Table 16
Catholic Voting Behavior and Views on Whether There Should Be Laws
Protecting Gays Against Job Discrimination

	Democrat	Republican
1992		
Favor Laws	77%	59%
Oppose Laws	23%	41%
	100%	100%
(N=)	(196)	(116)
1996		
Favor Laws	79%	59%
Oppose Laws	21%	41%
	100%	100%
(N=)	(160)	(103)
2000		
Favor Laws	84%	64%
Oppose Laws	16%	36%
	100%	100%
(N=)	(154)	(150)
2004		
Favor Laws	86%	83%
Oppose Laws	14%	17%
	100%	100%
(N=)	(97)	(94)

1992: $\chi^2=11.093$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
1996: $\chi^2=12.483$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2000: $\chi^2=16.604$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
2004: $\chi^2=.242$, $df=1$, *not significant*
(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

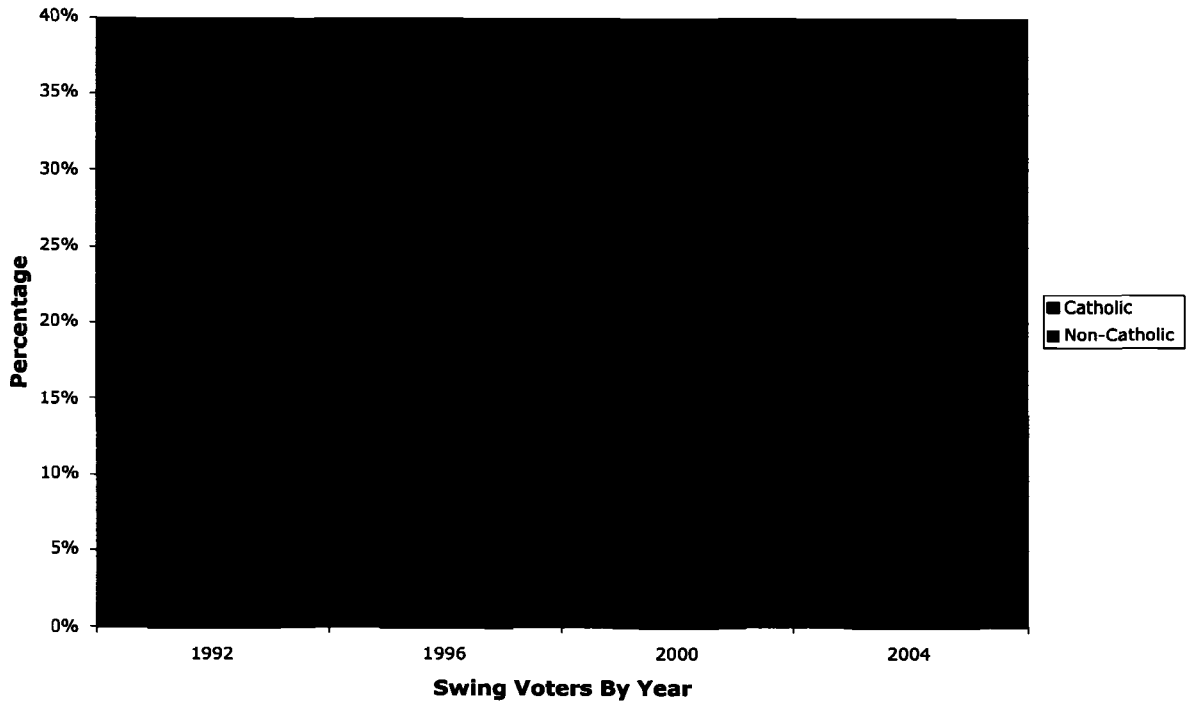
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Catholics As Swing Voters

Catholics are more likely to vote like non-Catholics than stand apart as swing voters. In three of the four elections cycles, the swing voter variable for Catholics was not significant. More importantly, Catholics appear to have more in common with non-Catholics as a whole regarding how they vote than ever before. Like the rest of the electorate, Catholics today are split 50-50 on who they support for president and appear to shift their support for candidates from election year to election year depending on the current political, cultural and economic issues. The results of this analysis support this conclusion and allow for a rejection of the hypothesis that Catholics are swing voters.

Graph 1
Catholic and Non-Catholic Swing Voters: 1992-2004



Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=1.161$, $df=1$, not significant
 1996: $\chi^2=.452$, $df=1$, not significant
 2000: $\chi^2=3.035$, $df=1$, $p<.05$
 2004: $\chi^2=.173$, $df=1$, not significant
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

The Ethnoreligious Model

Education

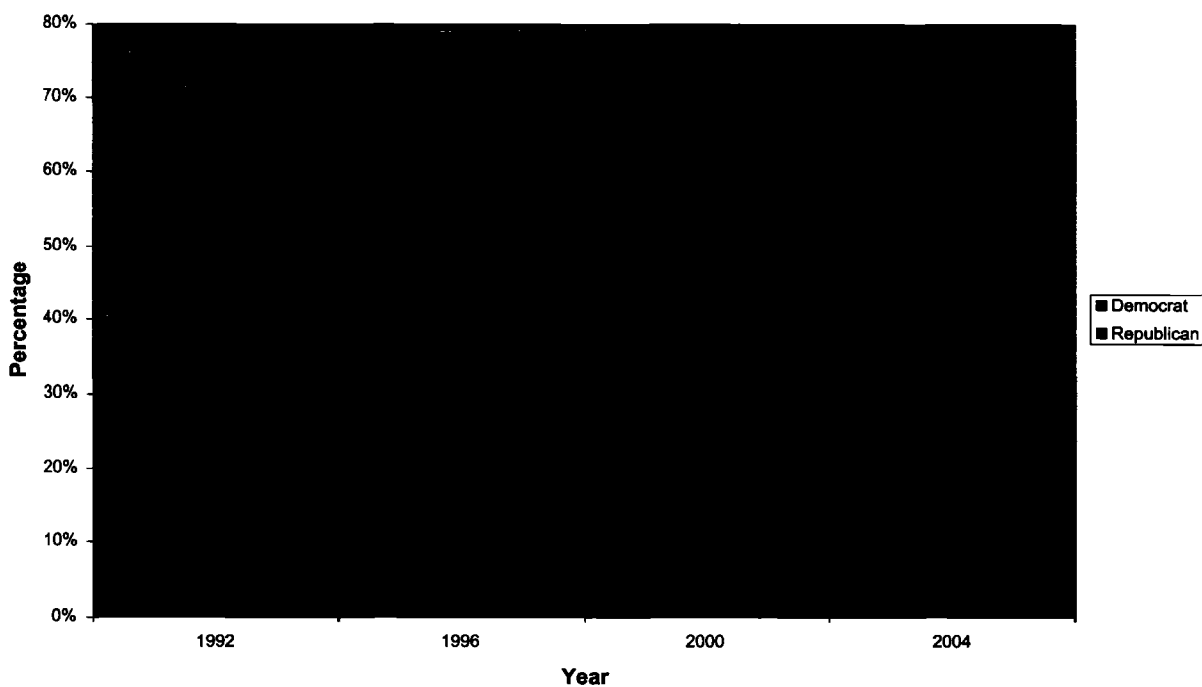
In looking at ethnoreligious factors, traditional ethnoreligious ties to the Democratic Party appear to have weakened since 1992. Catholics and non-Catholics are experiencing similar trends regarding voting behavior and higher levels of education. In 1992, 51 percent of Catholics had attended college, with half earning a degree. In comparison, 46 percent of non-Catholics had attended college or obtained a degree. By 2004, Catholics who had attended college or

earned a degree increased to 60 percent, with 62 percent of non-Catholics doing the same.

The majority of the least educated Catholics – those with a high school diploma or less – still fall in line with traditional ethnoreligious trends of voting for Democratic presidential candidates. However, these numbers have been declining since the percentage of Catholics with lower levels of education has been decreasing. While it appears Democratic candidates have been making huge gains in attracting the least educated Catholics (those with just a grade school education), in real numbers, the percentage of voters in that group has dropped substantially. For example, in 1992, those with only a grade school education represented 6 percent of Catholic voters; by 2004, they represented just 1 percent. The 2004 statistic of 100 percent represents the two Catholic voters with a grade school education, who voted for John Kerry.

At the same time, the percentage of most educated Catholics (those with a college degree) has been increasing. In 1992, 32 percent of Catholic voters had a college degree; by 2004, 42 percent of Catholic voters had a college degree. This appears to be a boon for Republicans, who have been slightly more successful in gaining support from this growing group of Catholic voters. Those who have attended college but didn't complete a degree have been swinging their majority votes between the two parties, and with the majority voting for the Democratic candidate in 2004. This group of voters as a percentage of all Catholic voters has been stable over the four election cycles, not changing more

Graph 2
Catholic Voting Behavior of High School Graduates



Independent Sample

1992: $\chi^2=10.182$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

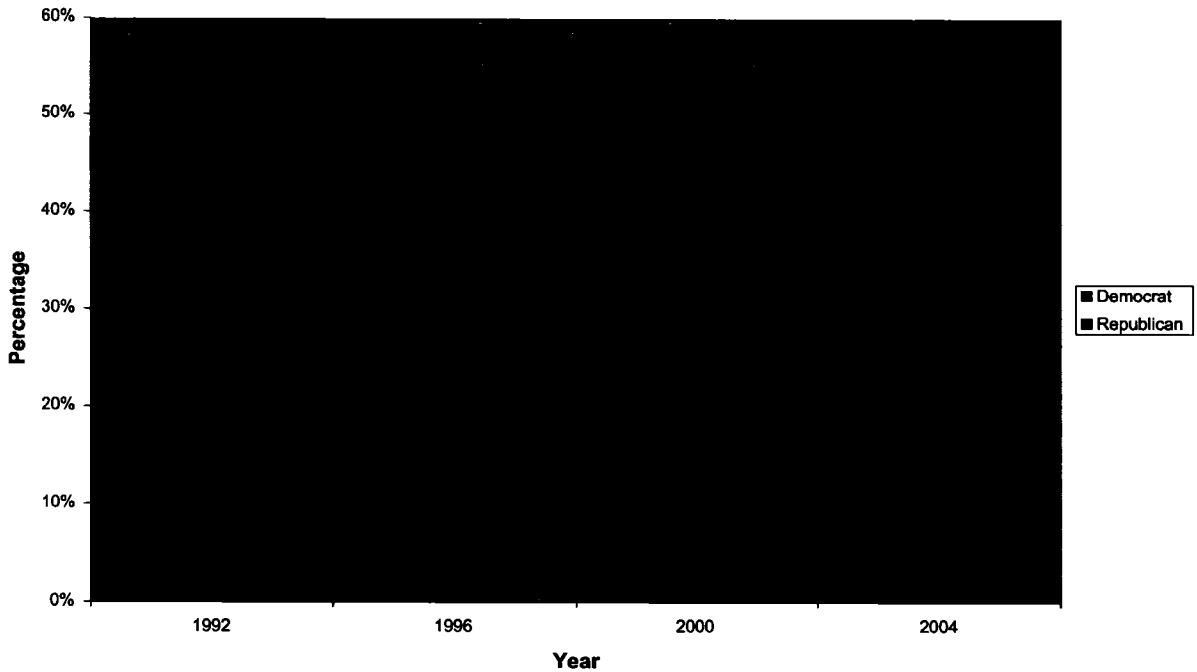
1996: $\chi^2=16.568$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

2000: $\chi^2=3.709$, $df=3$, not significant

2004: $\chi^2=3.130$, $df=3$, not significant

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Graph 3
Catholic Voting Behavior of College Graduates



Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=10.182$, $df=3$, $p<.01$
 1996: $\chi^2=16.568$, $df=3$, $p<.001$
 2000: $\chi^2=3.709$, $df=3$, *not significant*
 2004: $\chi^2=3.130$, $df=3$, *not significant*
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

than a one to two percentage points each year. They now account for 25 percent of Catholic voters, the smallest percentage for the group of the four election years. In addition, by 2004 high school graduates had essentially split their votes between Democratic and Republican candidates. High school graduates represent the second largest group of Catholic voters (32 percent in 2004) so attracting the votes of this group is critical for candidates.

In general, Catholic voters at all educational levels (except for those who had completed just grade school) were essentially split 50-50 by 2004 on their choice for president. These results indicate that Catholics appear to have moved

away from their traditional ethnoreligious ties to the Democratic Party and are more likely to vote in patterns similar to the electorate at large, which in 2000 and 2004 had split its votes between the candidates of the two major parties. The relationship between education and voting behavior was significant only in 1992 and 1996.

Income

Catholics and non-Catholics are exhibiting similar trends regarding income levels, trending together over the four election periods. In 1992, 43 percent of Catholics and 42 percent of non-Catholics had an income level at the 68 percentile or greater. By 2004, that had dropped to 35 percent for Catholics and 37 percent for non-Catholics.

Although candidates from both parties gained votes from the least wealthy Catholics over the study period, by 2004 there was an apparent split based income, with wealthier Catholics voting for the Republican candidate and less wealthier Catholics supporting the Democratic candidate. Only in 1992 did the Democratic candidate attract a majority of the most wealthy Catholics (incomes above \$120,000). By 2000 74 percent of the wealthiest Catholics voted for Republican George W. Bush. Democrat Bob Kerry regained some support from the most wealthy Catholics in 2004, but Bush still appeared to be the pick of top earners with 67 percent voting for him. Even among the 31 percent of middle and upper income Catholics who earned between \$65,000 and \$119,000, Bush was the favored candidate. The majority of Catholics with incomes less than \$65,000 preferred the Democratic candidate. The results of the multivariate analyses

further support the conclusion that the most wealthy Catholics prefer the Republican candidate; in both 2000 and 2004 years, the relationship was significant.

Other Ethnoreligious Factors

In addition to looking at education and income, this study evaluated the relationship between Hispanic Catholics and voting behavior, as well as regional distinctions and voting behavior.

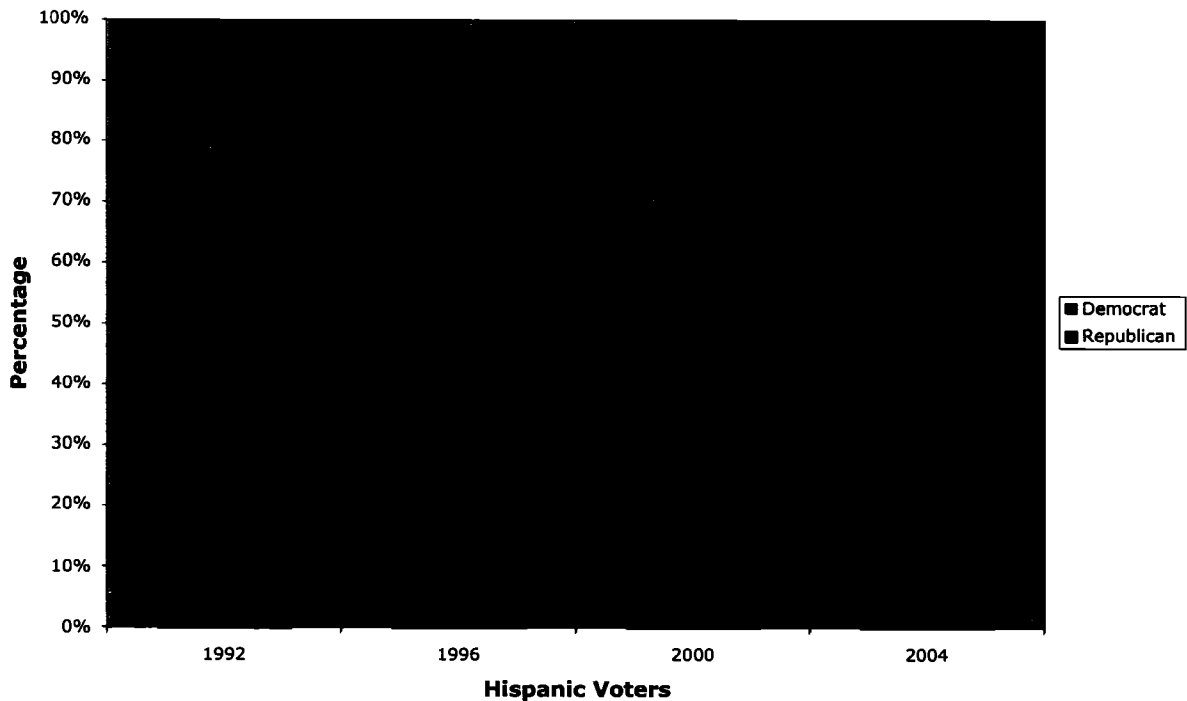
Hispanic voters are much more likely to be Catholics than non-Catholics. These results were significant every year. The percentage of Catholics who are Hispanic has been relatively stable over the four election cycles, averaging 18 percent. In comparison, the percentage of non-Catholic Hispanics has averaged about 5 percent over the same period. In addition, about half of the Hispanics surveyed identified themselves as Catholic.

While Hispanic Catholics are more likely to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate than non-Hispanic Catholics, they have been gradually withdrawing their support for Democratic candidates since 1992. The high water mark of the period for Catholic Hispanic support of a Democratic presidential candidate was in 1996, when 86 percent of Hispanic Catholics voted for Bill Clinton.

Republican George W. Bush heavily lobbied for the Latino vote in 2000 and 2004. It's not a surprise that by 2004, voting trends for Hispanic and non-Hispanic Catholics very similar, with a near split in the votes for candidates of

each party. However, the results were significant only in 1992 and 1996 when Hispanic Catholics overwhelmingly supporting Democratic candidates.

**Graph 4
Hispanic Catholic Voting Trends**



Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=4.077$, $df=1$, $p<.05$
 1996: $\chi^2=14.976$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 2000: $\chi^2=2.113$, $df=1$, not significant
 2004: $\chi^2=.123$, $df=1$, not significant
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Given the high percentage of Hispanics who are Catholics, an assessment of Hispanic Catholic voting behavior is an opportunity for further study.

Region

Regarding the regional variables, it appears that Southern Catholics are the most likely to support Republican candidates. The relationship between voting behavior and living in the South was highly significant in 2000. What is remarkable about 2000 is the dramatic shift in the Southern Catholic vote,

increasing 25 percentage points from 1996. This may reflect the national debates about moral character following the Lewinsky scandal that consumed the country at the time. Out of all Catholics in the regions, Southern Catholics were the only ones to vote in the majority at any point during the study period for a Republican candidate, doing so in 2000 and 2004.

Although the relationship between voting behavior and the variables for the Northeast and West were not significant at any point during the study period, it appears that Northeast and Western Catholics have experienced a shift over the study period toward supporting Republican candidates. Northeast Catholics, who represent an epicenter of Catholics in America, increased their support for Republican candidates by 14 percentage points from 1992 to 2004, and in 2000 nearly split their votes evenly between the Democratic and Republican candidates. In the West, Republican support from Catholics increased 23 percentage points over the period, and in 2004, essentially split their votes between Bush and Kerry. Interestingly, the debate over gay marriage took center stage in the Northeast (Massachusetts) and the West (San Francisco) in advance of the 2004 presidential election. If cultural issues are influencing the Catholic vote, the gay marriage debate in these two regions may have had some bearing on the increase in support for the Republican candidate from Catholics in the Northeast and West. The only other significant regional variable was for Catholic voters in the North Central states in 1992, who were slightly more likely to support the Republican candidate that year. The North Central states include significant population centers of Catholics in Chicago and Pennsylvania.

However, voting behavior of Catholics living in the North Central region was relatively unchanged and relatively split between the Democratic and Republican candidates over the study period.

In evaluating the ethnoreligious model, it appears Catholics, as a class, have shifted from one of less educated, less affluent blue collar workers who support Democratic candidates to one of more educated, more affluent professionals who have shifted away from their strong support for Democrats. Given the significant relationship regarding the education and income variables measuring aspects of class and voting behavior, class politics still appear to be an important factor in voting behavior. These results are supported by studies of realignments of class politics in Western European democracies, which have concluded that “unskilled workers have become less distinctive in their partisan alignments over time, but other classes have experienced offsetting changes, yielding little evidence of a universal decline in the class cleavage.”¹⁸³ Therefore, I am rejecting the hypothesis that Catholics have experienced a decline factors influencing in the ethnoreligious model.

The Culture Wars Thesis

In evaluating the culture wars thesis, the results of the analysis indicate that the relationship between church attendance and voting behavior for Catholics was significant every year except 2000. Understanding Catholic Church attendance trends is important because according to the culture wars thesis, people who attend church more often tend to vote for Republican

¹⁸³ Brooks, Clem, Nieuwebeerta, Paul, and Manza, Jeff, “Cleavage-based voting behavior in cross-national perspective: Evidence from six postwar democracies,” *Social Science Research*, 35, 2006, p. 89.

candidates. In the case of Catholic voting behavior, the culture wars thesis appears to be valid.

Catholics appear to attend church more often than non-Catholics; however, Catholic attendance at Mass appears to be declining. In 1992, 46 percent of Catholic attended Mass every week or nearly every week; by 2004, that number had dropped to 39 percent. In comparison, the percentage of church-going non-Catholics was stable over the study period at 35 percent. In addition, Catholics who said they never attend Mass increased from 22 percent to 27 percent from 1992 to 2004. At the same time, the percentage of secular non-Catholics was relatively unchanged over the period and stood at 36 percent in 2004.

Despite the drop in attendance, Catholics still go to church more often than non-Catholics. This could be a boon for Republican candidates, since Catholics who attend church more often overall have shifted their voting behavior from 1992 to 2004 to voting for more conservative candidates. Even less religious Catholics appear to be moving toward Republican candidates.

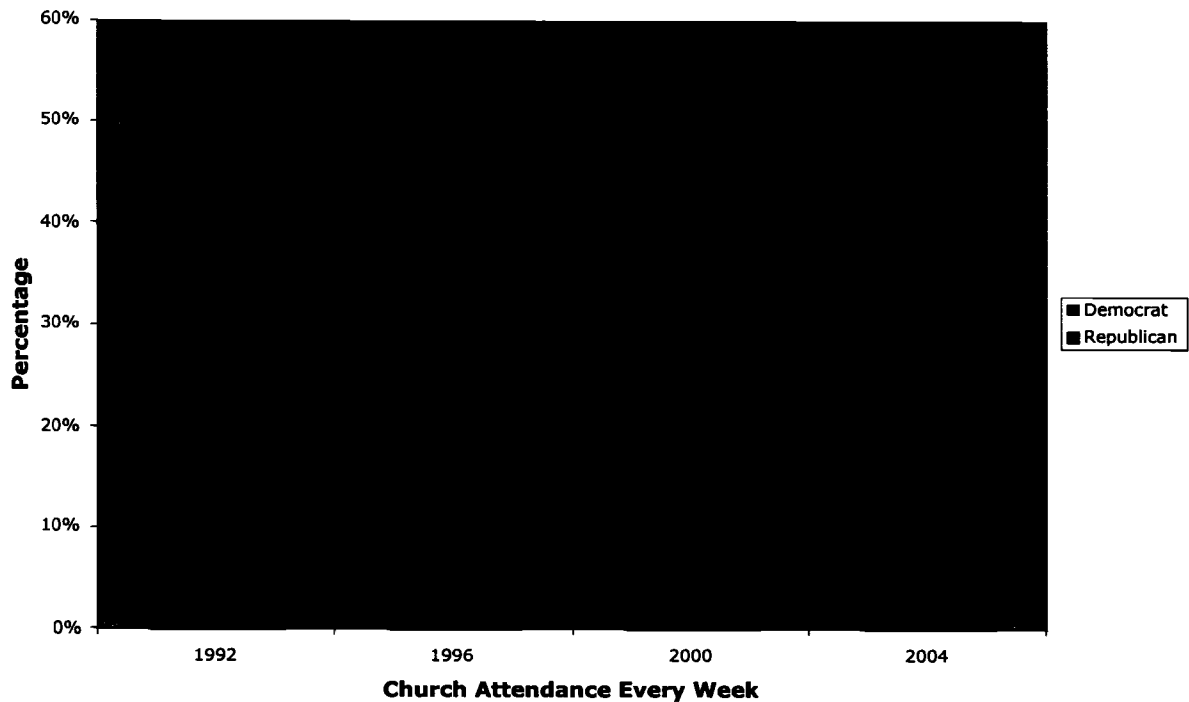
Until 2000, more church-going Catholics tended to vote for Democratic presidential candidates. Clinton received more support from Catholics who attended church every week in 1992, than did Bush. By 1996, the Democrats made substantial gains with moderately religious voters – those who occasionally attended services or did so nearly every week. Though the most religious Catholics had split their votes equally between the Democratic and Republican candidates, both parties increased their percentage of votes from those who

attended Mass every week. Clinton made substantial gains among less religious voters at all levels, including a 10 percentage-point gain among those who are in the pews nearly every week over 1992.

However in 2000, church-going Catholics appeared to slightly shift in a more conservative direction, with 53 percent voting for the Republican candidate. Those who attended church nearly every week experienced a more substantial shift toward the Republican candidate; 53 percent voted for Bush in 2000, compared to 41 percent who voted for Dole in 1996. In addition, Republicans made substantial gains with voters who attend church less often. Perhaps most surprising is that non-church going “secular” Catholics who traditionally favor Democratic candidates split their votes between the Democratic and Republican candidates.

By 2004, a majority of Catholic voters who attended Mass more often were voting for Republican candidates and those attending Mass less often or not at all were voting for Democratic candidates. Of those who attended Mass every week, 57 percent voted for Bush. The Democrats made up ground with those who attended Mass nearly every week, but lost a huge portion – 29 percentage points – of Catholics who went to Mass once or twice a month. Catholics who rarely or never attended Mass, however, overwhelmingly voted for Democrat Bob Kerry. The same was true overall for 2000, although the gap between more and less religious voters was not as wide. This phenomenon may indicate that Catholics are being affected by cultural issues that are influencing more conservative, church-going Catholics to support Republican candidates and

Graph 5
Voting Behavior of Catholics Who Attend Mass Every Week



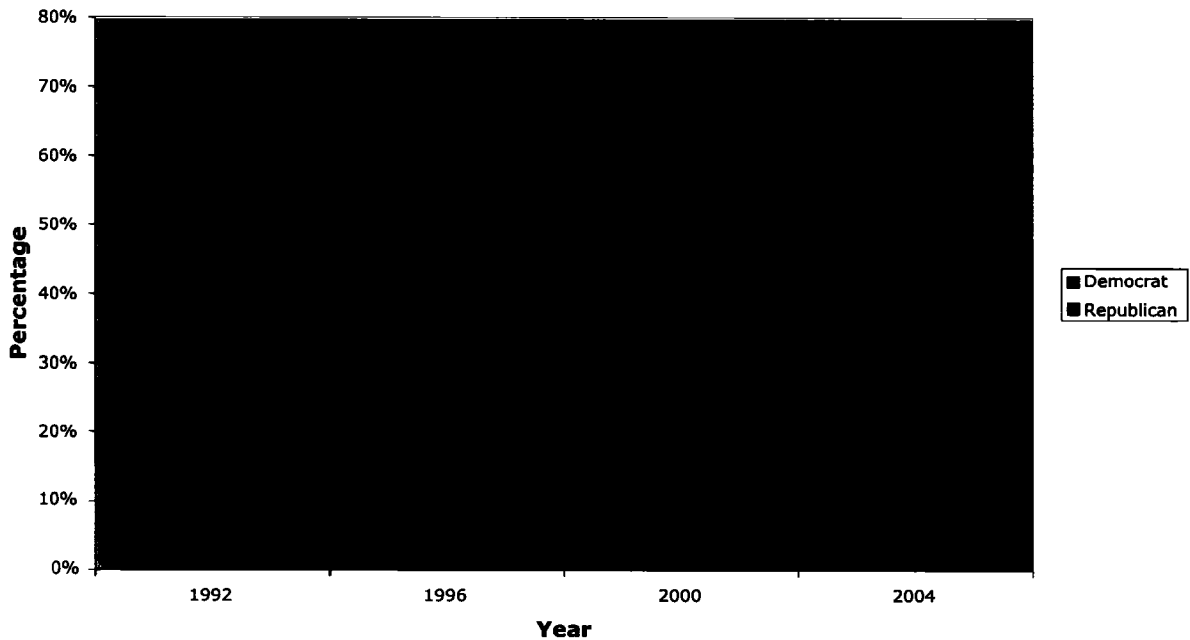
Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=19.027$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 1996: $\chi^2=7.891$, $df=4$, $p<.05$
 2000: $\chi^2=1.768$, $df=4$, *not significant*
 2004: $\chi^2=17.408$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

more liberal, less church-going Catholics to vote for Democratic candidates.

It appears that cultural issues are influencing Catholics voting behavior.

The relationship between church attendance and abortion was highly significant every year, with those who attend church more often having the most restrictive views on abortion. At the same time, there were highly significant relationships regarding voting behavior for the variables measuring two polarizing cultural

Graph 6
Voting Behavior of Catholics Who
Attend Mass a Few Times a Year



Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=19.027$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 1996: $\chi^2=7.891$, $df=4$, $p<.05$
 2000: $\chi^2=1.768$, $df=4$, *not significant*
 2004: $\chi^2=17.408$, $df=4$, $p<.001$
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

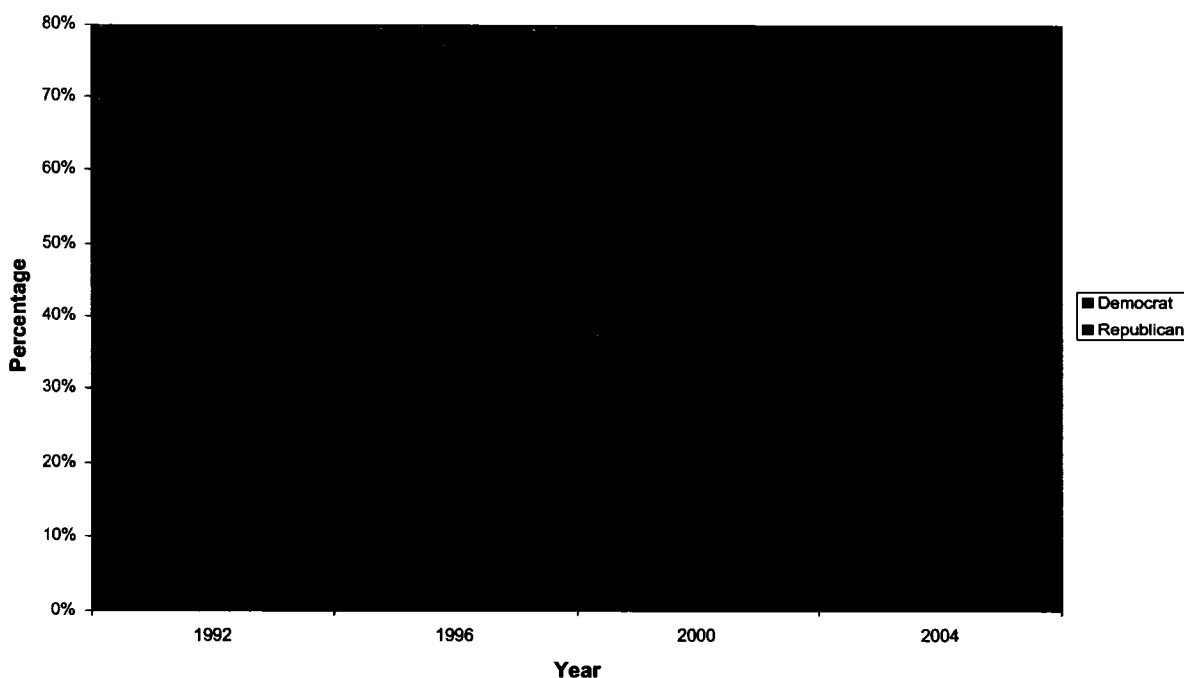
issues – abortion and gay rights. Given that the analysis indicated a significant relationship between church attendance and voting behavior, and that church attendance is an extremely strong predictor of views on abortion, I can conclude that the culture wars thesis strongly influences Catholic voting behavior and reject the null hypothesis that cultural issues are not influencing Catholic voters.

Single-Issue Voters

Abortion

The variables used to measure whether Catholics appear to be single-issue voters on highly debated cultural issues, abortion and gay rights, were highly significant during nearly every election cycle for candidates of both parties. Catholics who supported Democratic candidates hold more liberal views on both issues, and Catholics who supported Republican candidates hold more conservative views on both issues.

Graph 7
Catholic Voters Who Never Support Abortion



Independent Sample

1992: $\chi^2=18.641$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

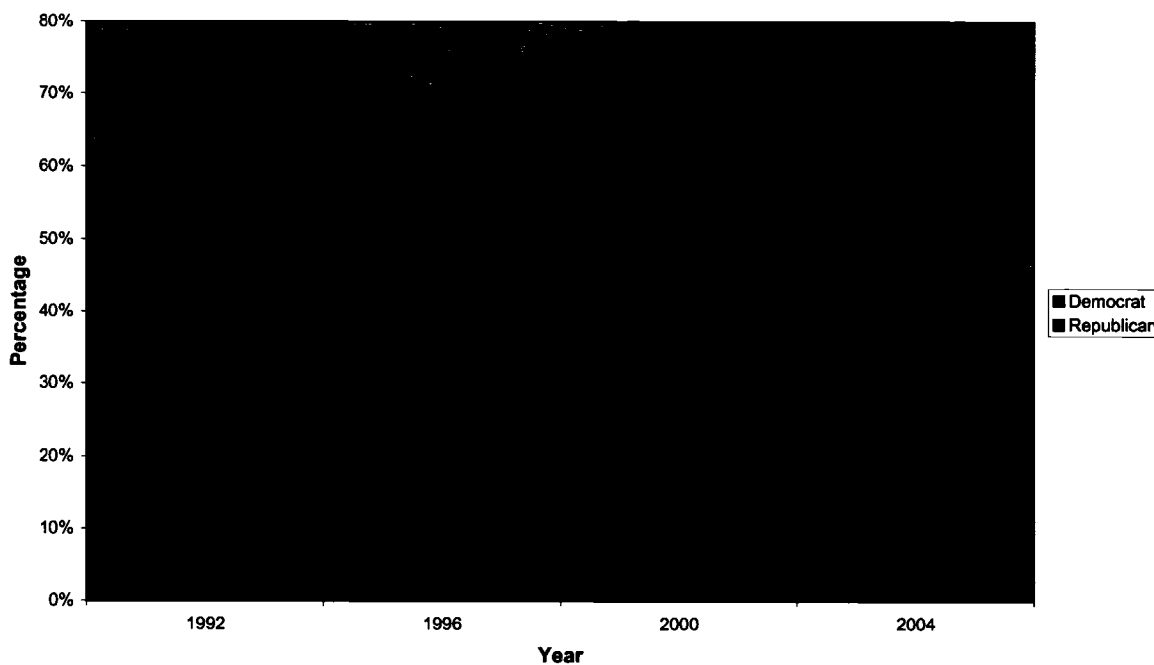
1996: $\chi^2=9.843$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

2000: $\chi^2=12.653$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

2004: $\chi^2=15.701$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Graph 8
Catholic Voters Who Always Support Abortion



Independent Sample

1992: $\chi^2=18.641$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

1996: $\chi^2=9.843$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

2000: $\chi^2=12.653$, $df=3$, $p<.01$

2004: $\chi^2=15.701$, $df=3$, $p<.001$

(Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

Overall, Catholics have become more conservative in their views on abortion since 1992. In 1992, 42 percent of Catholics held the most restrictive views on the issue, believing that abortion should be illegal or only permitted in the case of rape. By 2004, that number had increased to 48 percent. Even those who made exceptions for rape and when a woman's life was in danger decreased 7 percentage points from 25 percent in 1992 to 18 percent in 2004. At the same time, the percentage of Catholics who believe abortion should be allowed in all situations dropped 9 percent from 43 percent to 34 percent.

In addition, a comparison of Catholic voting behavior and views on abortion shows a clear and growing divide between those who hold more traditional, conservative Catholic views on abortion and those who hold more liberal views on abortion. In 1992, the Democratic candidate drew 58 percent of the voters who thought abortion should be illegal. By 2004, that percentage had plummeted to 31 percent. At the same time, Republican candidates nearly doubled their support from this group, with 42 percent of those who believed abortion should be illegal voting for the Republican candidate in 1992 and 69 percent voting for the GOP in 2004. Although Republican candidates gained some support from Catholics who held more liberal views on the legality of abortion, by 2004 there was a clear split: those holding conservative views on abortion preferred Republican candidates and those holding liberal views on abortion preferred Democratic candidates. In the analysis, the relationship between abortion and voting behavior was significant for every year.

The results reinforce the conclusion that Catholics who voted for Republican candidates tended to be more conservative regarding under what circumstances abortion should be legal, if at all. By 2004, they were the most polarized on the issue, with those favoring the strongest abortion restrictions favoring Republican candidates and those favoring wider access to abortion favoring Democratic candidates.

Interestingly, Catholics' views on abortion appear in sync with other denominations, which also have shifted to favor more restrictive measures regarding the procedure. In 1992, 38 percent of non-Catholics held the most

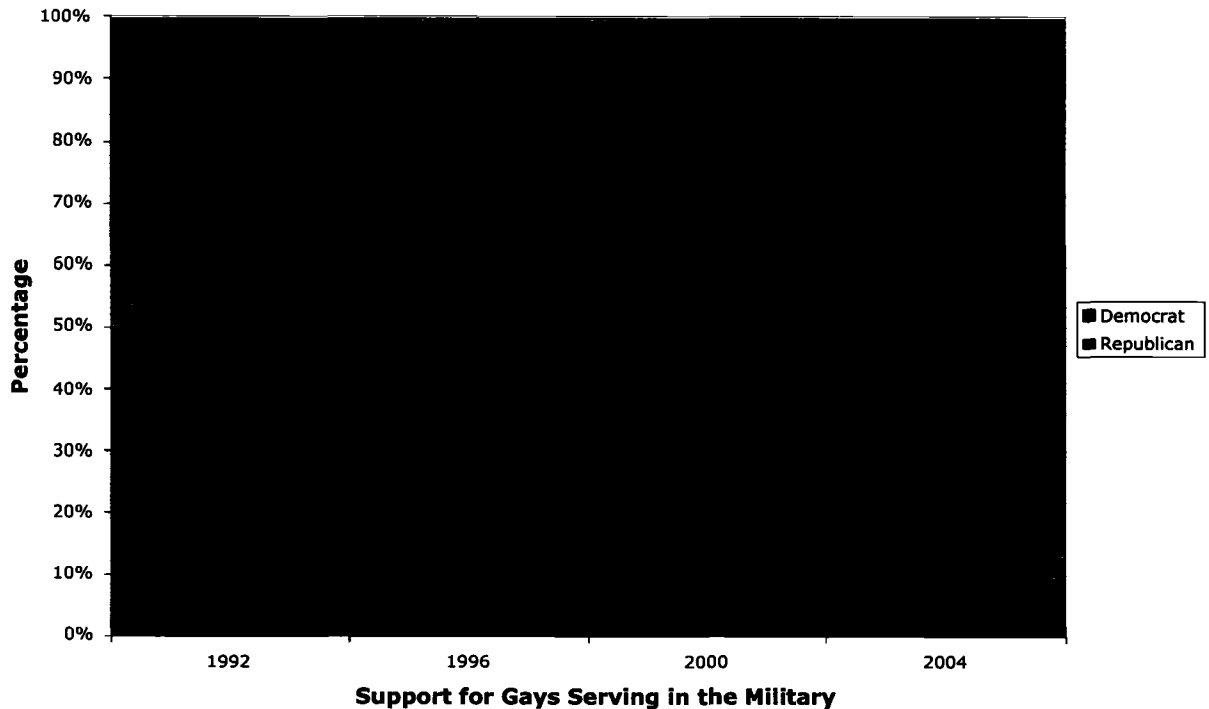
restrictive views on abortion; by 2004, that number had increased to 44 percent. In addition, the percentage of non-Catholics who believed abortion should be legal without restriction dropped 10 percentage points from 48 in 1992 to 38 percent in 2004. While the percentage of Catholics who held more restrictive views on abortion is slightly higher than non-Catholics, their views were shifting in the same direction as non-Catholics. This indicates that cultural issues may be impacting the views of the entire electorate, including Catholics. Had Catholics held substantially different views about abortion in comparison to non-Catholics, one could hypothesize that the teachings of the Catholic Church may be influencing Catholic voters. While the Catholic Church's views on abortion may influence Catholics to some extent (given that they, in general, hold more restrictive beliefs on abortion than non-Catholics), it appears that the issue of abortion is a cultural issue that is dividing Americans of all faiths.

Gay Rights

Catholics have become more supportive of certain gay rights over the study period. They consistently were more supportive of gays serving in the military and job protection of gays than non-Catholics every year of the study period. In addition, Catholics who supported these gay rights tended to vote for Democratic candidates, although the relationship declined in significance over the study period until it was no longer significant in 2004.

Regarding gays serving the military, Catholic support increased from 64 percent in 1992 to 84 percent in 2004. In comparison, non-Catholic support for gay military service increased from 57 percent in 1992 to 80 percent in 2004.

Graph 9
Catholic Voters Who Agree With Gays Serving in the Military



Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=29.346$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 1996: $\chi^2=18.574$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 2000: $\chi^2=11.340$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 2004: $\chi^2=2.075$, $df=1$, *not significant*
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

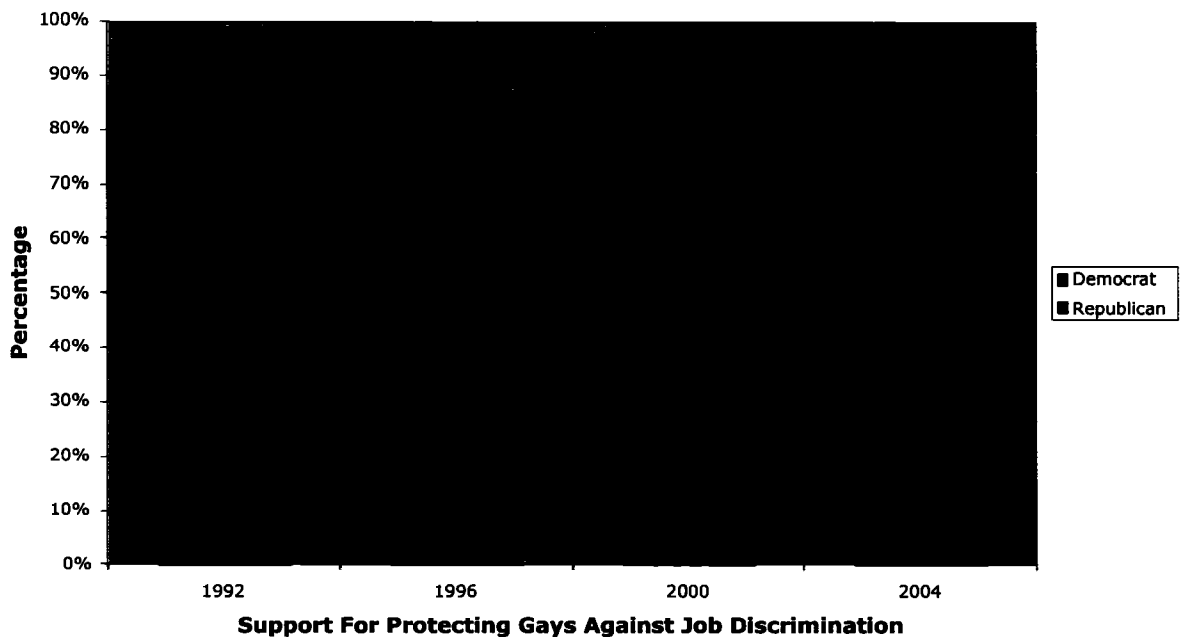
Over the study period, Catholics were more supportive of gays serving in the military than non-Catholics, and by 2004, the two groups were more in agreement on the issue than at any other point in the study period. By 2004, the relationship between Catholic voting behavior and gay military service was no longer significant.

In addition, Catholics who strongly supported gays serving in the military tended to vote for Democratic candidates. In 1992, there was a clear division based on voter choice, with 77 percent of Catholics who voted for the Democratic candidate supporting gay military service, compared to 47 percent of Catholic

who voted for the Republican candidate. By 2004, however, large majorities of Catholics who supported candidates of both parties also supported gays serving the military.

On the issue of support for laws that protect gays from job discrimination, Catholics are more likely to support such laws than non-Catholics. The results were significant for every year. In 1992, 68 percent of Catholics favored such laws, compared to 58 percent of non-Catholics. By 2004, 82 percent of Catholics believed gays should be protected from job discrimination, compared to 73 percent of non-Catholics.

Graph 10
Catholic Voters Who Favor Laws
Protecting Gays Against Job Discrimination



Independent Sample
 1992: $\chi^2=11.093$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 1996: $\chi^2=12.483$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 2000: $\chi^2=16.604$, $df=1$, $p<.001$
 2004: $\chi^2=.242$, $df=1$, *not significant*
 (Significance based on 1-sided t-test.)

In addition, Catholics who supported laws protecting gays from discrimination tended to vote for Democratic candidates. This relationship was significant every year except 2004. And like the results regarding Catholic voting behavior and gays serving in the military, by 2004, Catholics were the least polarized on the issue of protecting gays against job discrimination, regardless of party. A substantial majority of Catholics who voted for the Democratic and Republican candidates – 86 percent of Democratic voters and 83 percent of Republican voters — supported such laws.

Finally, although the issue of whether gays should be able to adopt children was measured only in 1992, 2000 and 2004, the results indicate a highly significant relationship every year with voting behavior. In addition, both liberal and conservative Catholics have experienced a shift in their views on gay adoption, becoming more supportive of it. In 1992, 40 percent of those who voted for the Democratic candidate and 19 percent of those who voted for the Republican candidate supported gay adoption; by 2004 those numbers had increased to 68 percent of Democratic voters and 45 percent of Republican voters. It appears that Catholics are becoming more supportive of gay adoption as they have become more supportive of other gay civil rights. Unfortunately, data about views on gay marriage, which was called a wedge issue in the 2004 presidential election, was not available over the study period from the dataset used. Given that the issue of traditional vs. non-traditional marriage has strong religious overtones, further study of Catholic voting behavior and new gay civil rights issues warrants close attention.

The results of this analysis indicate that Catholics have strong tendencies toward being single-issue voters on cultural issues, particularly regarding abortion. Therefore, I can reject the null hypothesis that single issues, such as abortion and gay rights, are not significantly influencing Catholic voters.

Final Thoughts

The results of this analysis confirm that Catholics voters are not swing voters in American politics. They appear to be split 50-50 on who to vote for president that is in keeping with voting trends across the nation. Although class and cultural issues have significantly influenced Catholic voting behavior, they also have significantly influenced non-Catholic voting behavior in similar ways. While the “Catholic Vote” may once have been a significant factor in electoral politics, today Catholics are more likely to vote like the rest of the country than ever before.

Today’s Catholics are more educated and more affluent than their ancestors, and these two factors appear to positively impact their support for Republican candidates. Regional distinctions do not appear to play a substantial role in Catholic voting behavior, although Southern Catholics are more likely to vote for Republican candidates. In contrast, Hispanic Catholics are more likely to vote for Democratic candidates, although that support has weakened substantially since 1992. Given that Hispanics represent approximately 20 percent of all Catholics and that Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing

minority in the United States¹⁸⁴, trends regarding Hispanic Catholic voting behavior merit further study.

On cultural matters, the abortion issue appears to be one of the most polarizing for Catholics. Those who hold conservative views on abortion now tend to favor Republican candidates and those with liberal views now appear to prefer Democratic candidates. In addition, the relationship between Catholic voting behavior and gay rights issues was significant for certain years during the study period and indicated that Catholics with more liberal views about gay rights voted for Democratic candidates, while conservative Catholics favored Republican candidates. The results found there was a significant relationship between church attendance and voting behavior in most years, with Catholics who attend Mass more often tending to vote for conservative candidates and those who attend less often favoring liberal candidates. While the culture wars thesis may be impacting Catholic voting behavior, Catholics also appear to have strong tendencies toward being single-issue voters.

The conclusion that Catholics are strongly influenced by a combination of religious, cultural and class factors finds support in the academic community. According to Kohut and his colleagues, "It is important not to overstate the impact of religion on attitudes, party identification and voting behavior. Religion is only one of many influences on political behavior: a 'multiplicity of interests' – which James Madison viewed as one of the virtues of a large and diverse republic – continue to hinder the development of large, unified factions based on religion or any other single attribute. Nonetheless, among the many influences on attitudes,

¹⁸⁴ U.S. Census Bureau Report, "The Hispanic Population: Census 2000 Brief," May 2001, p. 1.

partisanship, and votes, religion is nearly as important as demographic factors such as gender, race, income, and education.”¹⁸⁵

Achterberg has found similar results in his assessment of 20 Western European democracies. He concluded that traditional issues of class are just as relevant to voters as new cultural and environmental issues, in some instances, more relevant. “All in all, in the new political cultures, the old politics of class have come to share the stage with new issues.”¹⁸⁶

Layman recognized this dilemma and suggested that scholars work to develop a new model that factors in both religious and non-religious influencers of voter behavior. “The model should account for the possibility that religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy have effects on political attitudes and partisan ties independent of religious tradition, just as the culture wars thesis suggests. However, it also should account for political differences between religious traditions and the possibility that the effects of beliefs and behaviors are dependent on tradition, just as the ethnoreligious viewpoint contends.”¹⁸⁷

Further study of Catholic voting behavior is particularly important in light of the devastating priest sexual abuse scandal that continues to impact the church. For many laity, it has shaken the very foundation of their faith. In the mid-1980s, the first indications of widespread sexual abuse of children at the hands of the clergy began to surface. The church eventually paid out millions to the victims, but what was most unsettling to many American Catholics was the manner in

¹⁸⁵ Kohut, Andrew, et. al., 2000, p. 124.

¹⁸⁶ Achterberg, Peter, “Class Voting in the New Political Culture,” *International Sociology*, 21:2, 2006, pp. 254.

¹⁸⁷ Layman, p. 68.

which the church dealt with the issue internally. Instead of taking action to ensure clergy who had preyed on young parishioners would never commit such acts again, the laity learned that in many cases, the church knowingly moved abuser priests to different parishes and engaged in a massive cover-up of priest abuse. The Northeast, one of the epicenters of American Catholics, experienced some of the most chilling incidents, including that of defrocked priest John Geoghan, who was believed to have molested 150 children in his 30 years in a half a dozen parishes in the Boston Archdiocese.¹⁸⁸ “In the ensuing national uproar, there were admissions of dozens of molestations and cover-ups across the country, accompanied by the suspensions or resignations of more than 200 priests, including at least four bishops.”¹⁸⁹

*For decades, within the U.S. Catholic Church, sexual misbehavior by priests was shrouded in secrecy - at every level. Abusive priests — Geoghan among them — often instructed traumatized youngsters to say nothing about what had been done to them. Parents who learned of the abuse, often wracked by shame, guilt, and denial, tried to forget what the church had done. The few who complained were invariably urged to keep silent. And pastors and bishops, meanwhile, viewed the abuse as a sin for which priests could repent rather than as a compulsion they might be unable to control.*¹⁹⁰

Since 1950, there have been an estimated 4,983 accused priests and 12,537 victims.¹⁹¹ By 2006, the total cost of the scandal to the church – settlements, therapy for victims, attorneys fees – had exceeded \$1.5 billion.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ “The Geoghan Case,” *The Boston Globe*, accessed online 2 May 2006, at <http://www.boston.com/globe/spotlight/abuse/geoghan/>.

¹⁸⁹ Reichley, p. 322.

¹⁹⁰ “Church allowed abuse by priest for years,” *The Boston Globe*, accessed online 2 May 2006, at http://www.boston.com/globe/spotlight/abuse/stories/010602_geoghan.htm.

¹⁹¹ Ecksrom, Kevin, “Church Spending on Catholic Sex Abuse Scandal Tops \$1 Billion,” *Religion News Service*, 30 March 2006. Access online 2 May 2006 via LexisNexis at http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=0a8df18a3442688bb3391d882a3e1028&_docnum=2&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkVA&_md5=be1615cef794ee49e2dfc390d4889247.

Many parishes still are struggling to achieve pre-scandal attendance levels, but some are noting signs of a rebirth of the Catholic faith and a level closure on the scandal. In the Boston Archdiocese, “though anger lingers, a strong devotion to the Gospel, Catholic liturgy and doctrinal teachings appear to have kept many Catholics rooted in their pews through difficult times.”¹⁹³ This may be due, in part, to the “deep staying power” and “enduring moral authority” of the church; despite the scandal, many Catholics cannot imagine being otherwise, and appear to have “glue that Protestants do not have.”¹⁹⁴ According to Davidson and Hoge, while the laity consider the priest sex-abuse scandal to be the number one issue facing the church and a large portion (78 percent) are ashamed and embarrassed for the church, overall the “majority of Catholics are strongly committed to their faith – to the point that they remain loyal to the church even in the midst of what many consider to be the worst crisis in U.S. church history.”¹⁹⁵

When Catholic immigrants first came to the New World, they thought of themselves as Catholic Americans – Catholic first and American second. Over the course of several generations, their views of themselves evolved to thinking of themselves as American Catholics – American first and Catholic second. Kapp explains these two conflicting beliefs as the communitarian creed and the

¹⁹² “Cost of Sexual Abuse Now Exceeds \$1.5 Billion,” *America*, 194:15, 24 April 2006, p. 7.

¹⁹³ Hovanasian, Debbie, “Catholics were tested by a sex-abuse scandal and church closings. Now the faithful are seeing signs of renewal,” *Lowell Sun*, 16 April 2006, accessed online via LexisNexis at http://web.lexis-nexis.com/universe/document?_m=0a8df18a3442688bb3391d882a3e1028&_docnum=6&wchp=dGLbVzb-zSkVA&_md5=97c12aced14f4e2765ac796d6d05efe8.

¹⁹⁴ Reichley, p. 323.

¹⁹⁵ Davidson, James D., and Hoge, Dean R., “Catholics After The Scandal,” *Commonweal*, 19 November 2004, p. 15.

individualistic creed – one emphasizes Catholic communal teachings and the other moral and/or economic individualism.¹⁹⁶ While it appears that Catholics are in sync with the individualistic creed and of the two creeds, consider themselves American Catholics, perhaps they have moved even farther away from their Catholic roots. Given that Catholics are trending in such similar ways as non-Catholics regarding who they choose for president, perhaps today's Catholics, when going to the polls, think of themselves as simply Americans.

¹⁹⁶ Kapp, pp. 123-124.

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