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The Impact of Religion on Gender, Sexuality, and Abortion Politics : A Comparative Study of
Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

by

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ABSTRACT

Over time, organized religion has impacted many aspects of societies across the globe. In this study, I focus on the island of Ireland – a clear case study with a history of sectarian religious divides that play out in a democratic society. Through my analysis I find that religion has operated quite differently on both sides of the Irish border as it relates to public opinion on abortion, sexuality, and gender roles. Specifically, there are striking cross-national differences regarding the importance of religious group identity compared to levels of personal religiosity in shaping public opinion on the issues studied.

To examine the relationship between religious group, personal religiosity, and social attitudes (including abortion rights, LGBTQ+ issues, and gender roles in family), I use International Social Survey Programme Religion data from 1991 and 2008 to conduct bivariate and multivariate statistical models. This analysis reveals three major trends. First, both religious group identity and personal religiosity matter a great deal in Northern Ireland as it relates to social attitudes. Additionally, over time the religiously unaffiliated in the North have emerged as a cohesive and politically distinct group that organizes around liberal social and political values. Lastly, in the Republic, personal religiosity is more influential than religious group identification in determining social values on abortion, same-sex marriage, and gender roles. Subsequent qualitative case studies suggest that modern-day rhetoric from religious elites, politicians, and interest groups are still consistent with these cross-national trends decades later.

Introduction

Throughout history, organized religion has maintained a strong influence over issues of social and moral importance across the globe. My younger brother is the product of in vitro fertilization and as a child I remember hearing about a devout Pentecostal man my father worked with who told him taking creation out of God's hands is a sin. In my view, in vitro fertilization and abortion politics in the church are two sides of the same coin regarding women's autonomy in reproduction. Through this project, I hope to better understand the ways organized religion and religious elite rhetoric impact individual views on women's right to control their own reproduction and the policy implications of these views in democratic societies. To study the relationship between organized religion and gendered social politics, I focus on the island of Ireland, which is a clear case study of sectarian, religious divides that play out in democratic societies.

By seeking to better understand the impact that religious institutions can have on women's autonomy issues in cross-national contexts, this study will contribute to the larger conversation surrounding the factors that shape public opinion on women's rights. Most existing research related to religious institutions in Ireland focuses strictly on either Catholicism or Protestantism. Some researchers seek to understand how the political influence of the Church and religious identity has changed over time in Ireland (Buckley, 2016; Inglis, 2007; Inglis, 2017); meanwhile, other scholars directly analyze the positions Irish religious institutions take on abortion politics (Bloomer and Pierson 2017; Bloomer et al. 2019; Dillon 1996; Jelen and Wilcox 2002). Still, other researchers compare the Irish national contexts to trends of abortion politics in other Western nations (Jelen and Wilcox 1998; Randall 1992).

No Irish-specific study explores the interplay between abortion and gender role attitudes under the umbrella of gender equality, though Amy Adamczyk has explored this relationship in an international context using World Values Survey data (Adamczyk, 2013). Another 1998 study by Ted Jelen and Clyde Wilcox uses the World Values Survey to explore political socialization among Catholics in Western Europe. They study the dissemination of “traditional Catholic values”, including attitudes on abortion and (to a lesser extent) gendered family values (Jelen & Wilcox, 1998). My thesis will build on this smaller body of research that views abortion and gendered family roles as functions of a larger conversation of women’s equality and autonomy.

Additionally, few studies compare Catholic and Protestant opinions, even in intranational Irish contexts. Mick Cunningham uses “Family and Changing Gender Roles” ISSP data to hone in on Northern Irish attitudes on gender and family roles around the time of the Good Friday agreement (Cunningham, 2017). My thesis is inspired, in part, by his comparison between religious groups and will expand this framework of comparison to a larger Irish context by including the Republic of Ireland in my cross-denominational analysis.

My thesis uniquely compares the religious contexts of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland using ISSP “Religion” data from 1991 and 2008, as well as modern day case studies to think about old questions related to gender and religion. To explore the intersection of religion, gender, and politics in Ireland, I will look at how religious group identity and personal religiosity measures impact individual opinions on gendered social issues. These issues include abortion, same sex relationships, and gender roles in marriage. I have chosen this set of issues because I view them as related under the umbrella of gender politics and women’s autonomy, an area of which “the Church” has a lot to say. This work is distinct to existing literature in that it accounts

for all major religious groups on the island of Ireland, including the religiously unaffiliated, while analyzing these groups in a cross-national context over time.

The next section will expand on the major religious groups present on both sides of the Irish border and how these groups have changed over time. After this, I will provide an overview of the legal frameworks regarding abortion access, same-sex marriage, and gender roles in family on both sides of the border. Next, I will highlight three theories best supported by the literature that seek to explain which aspect of religion is most impactful in shaping public opinion. Then, I will detail my quantitative research methods and discuss the theories best supported by my statistical analysis. Finally, I will expand on the major quantitative findings by examining how religion has contributed to the most recent gendered policy debates on both sides of the border.

Religious Landscapes

Overview

Religious identity is both a social and personal concept, especially in societies with charged historical contexts around religion (Inglis, 2007, p. 119). Scholars have noted global trends regarding the decline of Catholic religious affiliation and the rise of the religiously unaffiliated as a demographic (Inglis, 2007; Buckley, 2016; Wald and Calhoun-Brown, 2018). These trends are also evidenced in Northern Ireland and the Republic.

In his work, Tom Inglis lays out multiple plausible explanations for the decline in affiliation with the Catholic Church, including “increase in liberal, individualist behavior associated with sexuality, the media, and consumer capitalism in general” (2007, p. 191). Further, David Buckley describes other reasons for this decline, such as the deteriorating

credibility of the Catholic Church amidst a history of sexual abuse scandals and cover ups (Buckley, 2016, p. 62). Meanwhile, the religious landscapes in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland are changing to accommodate increasing religious and ethnic diversity (Buckley, 2016, p. 63-64).

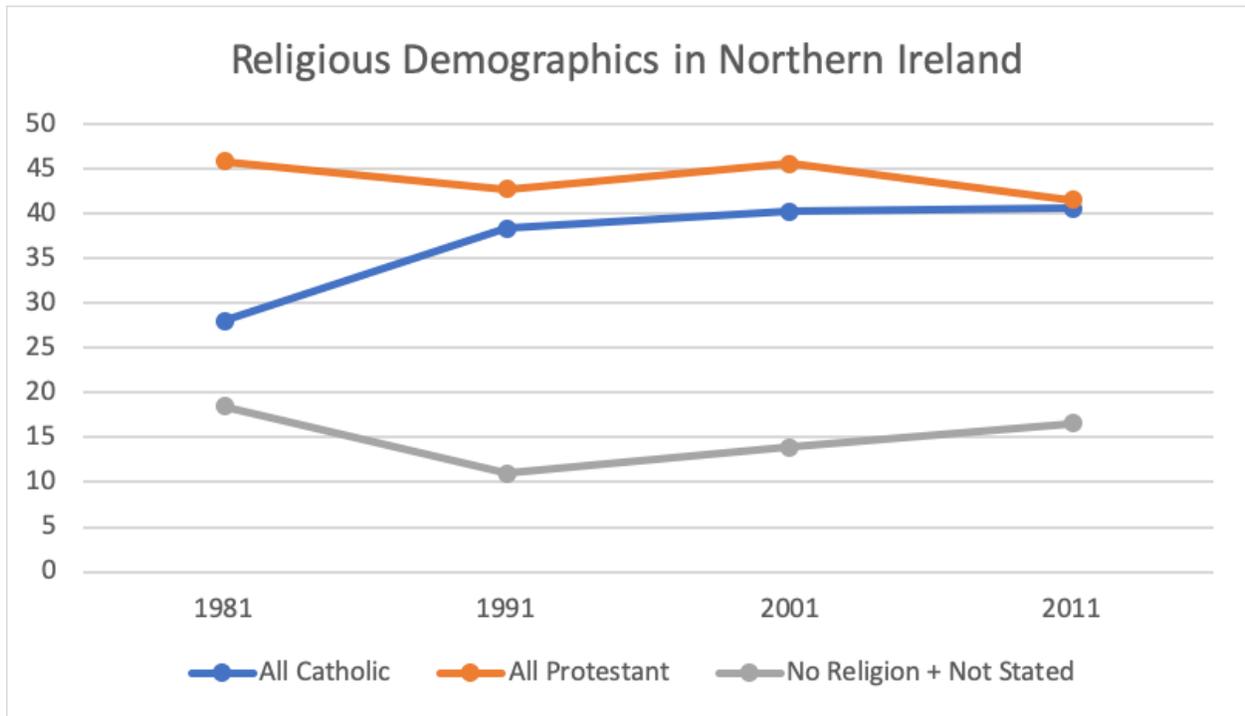
Similarly, global trends regarding the religiously unaffiliated can be seen on both sides of the Irish border. 1991 marked the first time an option to select “none” was included on the religious demographics section of the Northern Ireland census. In that year, 11 percent of the population chose either “None” or didn’t answer the religious demographic census question (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISO), 1991).

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland has a Protestant plurality among its population, with 42% of respondents to the 2011 Census identifying as “Protestant or Other Christian” (NISO, 2011). The Protestant proportion of the population has shrunk over time; meanwhile, the Catholic population has grown at a steady rate since the 1981 Census and now makes up a sizable population in the North (Britannica, 2021). The last census in Northern Ireland took place in 2011, and another is set to occur in 2021. News outlets, such as BBC, speculate that the next wave of census data may show Catholics outnumbering Protestants in the province (Gordon, 2018). These demographic changes could tip the political scale, as more Catholics tend to identify with left wing political parties than Protestants (Cunningham, 2017). More importantly, under the Good Friday Agreement, a majority vote could reunite Northern Ireland with the Republic (Education Service Northern Ireland Assembly, 2021). Because of this provision, a Catholic majority could have great political ramifications for the North.

Many denominations make up the Northern Irish Protestant plurality (Inglis, 2007, p. 118). Specifically, Presbyterians are the largest denomination within the Protestant category in Northern Ireland. Still, many others in the North are Anglican, with the Church of Ireland serving as the largest Anglican Churches on both sides of the Irish border (Church of Ireland, 2021). The Northern Ireland Census has categorized the most prevalent Protestant denominations differently over time. In 2001, Protestant categories were broken up into: “Presbyterian, Church of Ireland, Methodist, and Other Christian”. Only 0.82 percent of respondents chose “other religion or philosophy” in 2001 – up from 0.3% (or less than 5,100) of respondents in 2001 (NISO, 2001; NISO, 2011). It seems that, prior to 2001, “other denominations” served as a blanket category for both “other” Christian and non-Christian denominations, making it difficult to determine the prevalence of non-Christian populations in Northern Ireland prior to 2001 within Census data (NISO, 2021). Figure 1 provides a visual of the changes to the Protestant, Catholic, and unaffiliated populations, according to four decades of Northern Ireland census data.

FIGURE 1¹



Republic of Ireland

There is much less religious diversity in the Republic of Ireland when compared to the North. In the Republic, the vast majority of the population is Catholic (Inglis 2007, p. 118). In 2016, Catholics made up for nearly 80 percent of the total Irish population, which was down about five percent from 2011 (Central Statistics Office, 2016). The Republic of Ireland's Central Statistics Office (CSO) indicates that the Catholic population in the Republic hit a peak of over 94 percent in the 1960's. Since then, the Catholic population has slowly declined (Central Statistics Office, 2016). In 2016, the CSO report indicates that the religiously unaffiliated population grew by nearly 200,000 persons, making it the second largest religious group.

¹ Data from Census Reports (1981-2011). Retrieved from Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.

Protestants are mostly concentrated in the Church of Ireland or Presbyterian Church and make up less than five percent of the Republic according to the 2016 Census (Central Statistics Office, 2016). While Protestants are categorized by denomination, personal religiosity is the main point of diversity within the Catholic population. Inglis expands on this point in his work by discussing the prevalence of individuals who identify with a religious group while their religious behaviours and practices remain nominal (Inglis, 2007, p. 117).

The Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference notes that, while survey measures of religiosity are highly debated, great variance can be seen within the English Values Study data regarding levels of religiosity among Catholics. In their report, they analyze survey data from the fourth wave, which took place in 2008 (O'Mahony, 2010, p. 2). In their data analysis, the Council for Research and Development notes that the proportion of Catholics on the Island attending Mass weekly or more has fallen over time, from over 80 percent in the 1970's to less than half of the Catholic population at the time of the 2010 report (O'Mahony, 2010, p. 5). The report also finds that Northern Irish Catholics attend church more often than those in the Republic (O'Mahony, 2010, p.). This report, derived from English Values Study data, signifies the existence of nominal Catholics who identify with the religion but do not practice conventional indicators of their faith on a regular basis (such as attending Mass and praying regularly).

The Legal Framework

This section will provide an overview of the relevant policy background in both Northern Ireland and the Republic on abortion, LBGTQ+ issues, and issues related to gender roles in the law. Religious groups in Ireland have mobilized on each issue at different points in time, as each topic relates to the traditional social values often held by Protestants and Catholics alike. In their

piece, Smyth links sexuality and reproductive freedom under the same moral umbrella, which play out in nationalist politics and discourse (Smyth, 2006, p. 654). In debates surrounding abortion, LGBT+ rights, and gender roles, churches have played a role in shaping public opinion as well as the policy landscape (Smyth, 2006).

In short, political changes in Northern Ireland around abortion and LGBTQ+ issues have progressed in recent years; however these legal changes have stemmed from legislation passed in the United Kingdom as opposed to the Northern Irish Assembly. On the other hand, Northern Ireland has enjoyed less progress relating to gender roles in family. In fact, Brexit has caused substantial anxiety regarding the potential for regression on issues such as equal pay and non-discrimination measures for pregnant individuals which are protected under European Union measures. Meanwhile, changes to abortion and same-sex marriage in the Republic of Ireland have been achieved through multiple referendums to amend the Constitution. Despite these more direct and fundamental constitutional changes on abortion and LGBTQ+ issues, the Republic has also experienced slower progress as it relates to gender roles in family.

An Overview of Abortion Policy

Northern Ireland

Early Policy

Prior to 2019, abortion was heavily restricted in Northern Ireland in ways unique from the rest of the United Kingdom, as key pieces of abortion legislation reform in the U.K. did not apply to Northern Ireland.² The key basis for Northern Ireland's abortion laws was Sections 58

² Conservative unionists were adamant in every other regard that Northern Ireland be treated no differently than the rest of the United Kingdom; however, when it came to abortion policy, unionists advocated against adopting liberalized abortion policy from the UK.

and 59 of the 1861 Offences Against The Person Act. Section 58 made “attempts to procure an abortion” a felony; meanwhile, Section 59 classifies any attempt to aid a woman seeking an abortion or intentional miscarriage as a misdemeanor (UK Parliament, 1861). The Offences Against The Person Act left no room for exceptions or exemptions related to cases of rape, incest, or medical necessity.

In 1967, England, Scotland, and Wales amended their abortion laws through the Abortion Act 1967 to provide for circumstances in which a legal abortion could be obtained. The 1967 provisions for legal abortions include risk to the pregnant woman’s mental and physical health as well as risk that the child would be born with significant disabilities (UK Parliament, 1967). The Abortion Act 1967 did not apply to Northern Ireland, and so abortions remained illegal in the province; however, many women from Northern Ireland traveled to England, Scotland, and Wales to access abortion services prior to the decriminalization of abortion in 2019 (Boyle & McEvoy, p. 283).

Decriminalization of Abortion

In October 2019, the UK Parliament decriminalized abortion in Northern Ireland with the passage of the *Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Act* (Rough, 2020; UK Parliament, 2019). Though abortion was decriminalized in Northern Ireland, it is important to note that this did not take place through the Northern Irish Assembly. Instead, this Act was an action from the Parliament of the United Kingdom that provided deadlines related to the formation of a Northern Irish Executive after the Assembly collapsed in 2017 (Torrance, 2019). If no executive was put into place by October 21, 2019, the Act would automatically go into effect the following day (Rough, 2020).

No Northern Irish executive was formed by the deadline and so abortion was decriminalized by the Act on October 22, 2019 (Rough, 2020; UK Parliament, 2019). Specifically, Section 9 of the Northern Ireland Act repealed sections 58 and 59 of the *Offences Against the Person Act*, which had made procuring an abortion a felony in Northern Ireland since its passage in 1861 (UK Parliament, 1861; UK Parliament, 2019). The 2019 abortion regulations were later repackaged due to drafting errors and passed again as “Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Regulations 2020” in June 2020, resulting in minor technical changes (Rough, 2020). The Executive Formation Bill is responsible for other social change in Northern Ireland, such as the legalization of same-sex marriage, which will be expanded on in “An Overview of LGBTQ+ Policy: Northern Ireland”.

Republic of Ireland

Early Policy

Section 58 and 59 of the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 also provided the original basis for abortion laws in the Republic of Ireland. Though this Act was passed well before the Republic of Ireland was declared independent from the U.K. in 1919, it was one of many U.K. laws that persisted in the Republic of Ireland after gaining independence (Burrell & Griffiths, 2017); however, unlike Northern Ireland, most legal changes regarding abortion in the Republic of Ireland have taken place via referendums on constitutional amendments.

The laws surrounding abortion in the Republic of Ireland remained unchanged until the 8th Amendment Referendum which passed with a two-thirds majority vote in 1983 (Gilmartin &

White, 2001, p. 276).³ This amendment legally established an equal “right to life” for both mother and child and treats any fetus as a person under law (De Londras & Máiréad, 2018, pg. 2; Hillard, 2016; Nugent, 2018). De Londras, Máiréad, and other scholars discuss the 1983 8th Amendment referendum as a movement influenced by conservative and religious forces in response to women’s liberation movements around the world. Notably, both the United States and the United Kingdom liberalized their abortion laws during the 1960’s and 70’s via *Roe v. Wade* and the Abortion Act of 1967 respectively (De Londras & Máiréad, 2018, pg. 3; Nugent, 2018).

Abortion Tourism & The X Case

Just like in Northern Ireland, there were many documented cases of women traveling from the Republic to the United Kingdom to receive abortions prior to the liberalization of abortions laws (Barry, 1998; Lentin, 2013, p. 132). Gilmartin and White refer to this trend as “abortion tourism” (pg. 276); meanwhile, Lentin estimates that over 150,000 women with addresses in the Republic of Ireland traveled to Britain to access abortion services between 1980 and 2011 (Lentin, 2013, p. 132).

One of the most famous examples of “abortion tourism” in the Republic of Ireland was “The X Case”, which was tried before the Irish Supreme Court in 1992 (Gilmartin & White, 2001; Lentin, 2013, p. 132). The case centered around a 14-year old girl who was impregnated by her rapist and was prevented from traveling to Britain for an abortion, despite a significant risk of suicide. The Supreme Court ruled in the girl’s favor, recognizing the risk a forced

³ Because the 8th Amendment was passed, it necessitated that future changes to abortion policy would have to come through a constitutional amendment. Some scholars posit that this was a strategic move by the pro-life movement in the Republic to make it more difficult to change abortion laws (Carnegie & Roth, 2019).

pregnancy posed to her mental health. This precedent established the right to travel for abortion access (Gilmartin & White, 2001, p. 277; Lentin, 2013, p. 132). The Court again upheld this precedent in 2007 when the “D Case” came before the Court, with similar facts regarding a seventeen-year-old’s right to travel for an abortion (Gilmartin & White, 2001, p. 277).

The right to travel, or “abortion tourism”, became a specific inflection point in the discourse surrounding abortion access in Ireland, leading to the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution Acts in 1992. The Thirteenth Amendment Act changes the Eighth Amendment, also referred to as Article 40.3 of the Constitution, to clarify and reinforce the freedom to engage in interstate travel for abortion access (Ireland, 1945). Meanwhile, the Fourteenth Amendment Act of 1992 amends Article 40.3, protects the right to obtain information about legal abortion services available in another state (House of the Oireachtas, 1992).⁴

Though the right to travel for an abortion is guaranteed by the Irish Constitution, Gilmartin and White rightfully critique the equitability of this option. While all Irish women have the right to travel to receive an abortion, this “solution” is unattainable for those without the socioeconomic means to afford substantial expenses associated with travel. Further, race and nationality prevent other women from accessing safe and legal abortion via travel due to complicated laws and visa processes (Gilmartin & White, 2001, pg. 278). Without equitable, safe, and legal access to abortion, women who are marginalized on the basis of class, nationality, or race are more likely to pursue dangerous alternatives.

⁴ Notably, the passage of the 15th Amendment happened around the same time, which legalized divorce in the Republic. Many of the same groups mobilized against the passage of this Amendment (for more information, see Barry, 1998).

Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act

Despite the vast political mobilization around abortion access in the 1990's, little legislative change occurred for two decades. The issue of abortion access was brought back to the forefront of Irish politics with the wrongful death of Savita Halappanavar in 2012. Halappanavar was a migrant woman who sought medical attention for a miscarriage in Galway at seventeen weeks of pregnancy. Though it was clear she would die due to her medical complications, she was repeatedly denied termination of her pregnancy because Ireland is a "Catholic country" and a fetal heartbeat was still detectable (Lentin, 2013, p. 130). Ronit Lentin describes the intersectionality of this tragedy best by saying, "beyond being a woman who unnecessarily died in childbirth in Ireland's post-Catholic patriarchy, Halappanavar was a migrant woman, whose death requires theorizing the Republic of Ireland as a gendered racial state" (Lentin, 2013, p. 130).

Savita's entirely avoidable and wrongful death demonstrated yet again the serious consequences of Ireland's regressive abortion policies. Less than a year later, the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act (PLDPA) was passed to allow for termination of pregnancy if multiple doctors agreed it was necessary to protect the mother's life, including risk of suicide; however, the Act did not make additional exceptions for "rape, incest or fatal fetal abnormalities" (Burrell & Griffiths, 2017; Carnegie & Roth, 2019).

The PLDPA was largely ineffective and, according to the Irish Department of Health, less than thirty abortions have been carried out under the parameters of the act per year since its passage (Carnegie & Roth, 2019, p. 112). Multiple United Nations committees took issue with these small changes to Ireland's abortion policies. Most notably, The UN Committee on

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights indicated possible human rights violations in the Republic and called for the repeal of the Eighth Amendment in 2015 (Hillard, 2016).

Repealing the 8th Amendment

In 2016, the Oireachtas, or the legislature of Ireland, voted to create an impartial Citizen's Assembly to discuss a range of issues including the Eighth Amendment (Carnegie & Roth, 2019, p. 113). Interest groups participated heavily in the discourse around the Eighth Amendment, including the Abortion Rights Campaign (ARC). The ARC helped provide first-hand narratives of women who had been harmed by Ireland's regressive abortion policies. Despite skepticism among some pro-choice groups, the Citizen's Assembly sided with change and urged for a referendum on the Eighth Amendment (Carnegie & Roth, 2019, p. 114). In May, 2018, the Eighth Amendment was repealed by a 2-to-1 vote and the new legislation was signed by the President in December, 2018 (Carnegie & Roth, 2019, p. 115).

Today, abortion is available and free in Ireland during the first trimester of pregnancy (Carnegie & Roth, 2019, p. 116); however, Carnegie and Roth note that abortion is still criminalized by Irish law. The new legislation merely identifies acceptable instances in which an exception can be granted (Carnegie & Roth, 2019, p. 117). The authors worry that this "criminalization framework" unnecessarily burdens women seeking abortions, as well as healthcare providers, and opens the door for anti-choice movements to interfere with a woman's right to terminate a pregnancy.⁵

⁵ Irish legislation exclusively uses "Termination of Pregnancy" to refer to abortion services; however, throughout this piece, I use those terms interchangeably.

An Overview of LGBTQ+ Policy

Northern Ireland

Though the 1998 Northern Ireland Agreement included specific language regarding the promotion of “equality of opportunity” related to identity factors including sexuality, progress has been slow for the LGBT community in Northern Ireland (Northern Ireland Office, 1998, p. 20). In 1967, private homosexual acts among adults were decriminalized in England and Wales via the Sexual Offences Act; Meanwhile, Northern Ireland did not change their laws to match until fifteen years later (UK Parliament, 2021). Livingston posits that this slow progress was due in part to Northern Ireland’s preoccupation with political and religious cleavages taking place at the time (Livingston, 2003, p. 1210). Northern Ireland’s history of conflict resulted in a post-agreement fixation with national and religious identity that made progress for other identity groups, such as LGBTQ+ individuals, a low priority issue for many leaders (Livingston, 2003).

Still, numerous groups mobilized around equality for Northern Ireland’s LGBTQ+ community before and after the Troubles (Livingston, 2003). The Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association was formed in 1975, and began petitioning for the repeal of the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 as well as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1855 (Livingston, 2003, p. 1215). Both Acts criminalized homosexual activity until gay sex was legalized by the European Court of Human Rights in 1981 (Livingston, 2003; Savage, 2019).⁶ After the decriminalization of gay sexual intimacy, the next policy push focused on civil partnerships and same-sex marriage.

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 was passed by the UK Parliament and made applicable to Northern Ireland through Part 4 of the Act (UK Parliament, 2004). This Act allowed for the legal

⁶ Notably, gay sex was decriminalized in the rest of the United Kingdom over a decade prior (Savage, 2019).

recognition of same-sex partnerships. Interestingly, Part 4 of the Act bars religious services from being used during the officiating of a civil partnership (UK Parliament, 2004). This Act marked great progress for LGBT rights; however marriage equality remained the ultimate goal.

Initially, no Northern Irish political party supported same-sex marriage; however, Sinn Fein, Northern Ireland's left wing revolutionist party, incorporated marriage equality as a policy platform beginning in 2012. The party also introduced a motion to the Northern Ireland Assembly to legalize same-sex marriage that same year (Savage, 2019).⁷ The incorporation of same-sex marriage in the Sinn Fein platform was a big step for the LGBTQ+ movement in the North. On the other hand, the Democratic Unionist Party has stood firmly against the legalization of same-sex marriage. Notably the Democratic Unionist Party was founded by Ian Paisley Sr. in 1971, the same man who founded the Free Presbyterian Church decades earlier (Savage, 2019).⁸

Between 2012 and 2015, the Northern Ireland Assembly voted on same-sex marriage five times. On the fifth vote, a majority was reached in favor of the measure; however, the Democratic Unionist Party vetoed it via a "petition of concern" (BBC News, 2015). The House of Commons Library Briefing Paper on marriage of same sex couples in Northern Ireland notes that multiple bills were proposed after the measure was blocked by the DUP in 2015; however, no real progress was made until the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Act passed in Westminster in 2019 (Fairbairn, 2020).

This legislation essentially forced Northern Ireland's hand on multiple issues, including abortion rights and same-sex marriage equality. Ian Paisley Jr. spoke out against the Bill and many other legislators took issue with such legislation coming from Westminster, as opposed to

⁷ The incorporation of this platform also contributed to the longstanding tension between Sinn Fein and the Catholic Church (Sinn Fein, 2014; Savage, 2019).

⁸ Ironically, the Democratic Unionist Party and Free Presbyterian Church clashed in 2019 over the party's selection of an openly gay candidate, Alison Bennington (Manley, 2019).

the Northern Irish Assembly (Fairbairn, 2020). Nonetheless, the bill was passed and no Northern Irish executive was formed by the deadline set (Fairbairn, 2020; Torrance, 2019). As a result, the Executive Formation Act went into effect on October 22, 2019. Section 8 of the Act required Northern Ireland's Secretary of State to make changes to allow for legal same-sex marriage "on or before 13 January 2020" (Fairbairn, 2020, p. 3); thus, same-sex marriage has been legal in Northern Ireland for over a year at this point in time.

Ireland

While the Republic of Ireland took longer to decriminalize gay sex than Northern Ireland, marriage equality in the Republic occurred years prior to the change in the North. The Republic of Ireland criminalized homosexual sodomy until 1993 and same-sex relationships were not legally recognized until the passage of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Acts in 2010 (Dunne, 2015, p. 77). Still, civil partnerships differed from marriage in many important ways. Most notably, same-sex partners were not able to adopt children together, only separately (Dunne, 2015). Even after policies surrounding same-sex relationships liberalized in the 2010's, employment legislation from earlier eras persist, allowing LGBT individuals to be discriminated against if medical or employment institutions disagree with their identity on a religious basis (Dunne, 2015).

In 2015, Ireland made history as the first country to adopt same-sex marriage equality by referendum (Caolláí & Hilliard, 2015). The referendum came as a result of the Irish Constitutional Convention, which met many times between 2013 and 2014 to discuss a myriad of issues facing Ireland (The Convention on the Constitution, 2014). Same-sex marriage was one of many topics discussed at the Convention. In their final report, the members of the Convention

recommended a constitutional amendment to provide for same-sex marriage equality (The Convention on the Constitution, 2014).

This referendum took place on May 22, 2015 and passed with 62.1% of voters supporting the measure (Amnesty International UK, 2015). The thirty-fourth Amendment to the Constitution, otherwise known as The Marriage Act of 2015, followed the referendum and made the will of the people law. Section 4 of The Marriage Act 2015 amended the Civil Registration Act of 2004, which prohibited same-sex partners to marry (House of the Oireachtas, 2015). The Marriage Act also includes provisions protecting religious institutions from having to officiate marriage ceremonies to which they don't agree (McGee, 2015).

An Overview of Gender Roles in Law

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, women still face significant legal barriers to true equality in society. According to the Women's Resource and Development Agency, most of these legal barriers reside in the area of women's employment and gender pay equity (Powell, 2020). This trend is additionally evidenced by the Economic Justice Pillar of the Northern Ireland Women's Manifesto, drafted by international partners who make up the Women's Policy Group (WPG) (WPG, 2019). According to the Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), the labour-markets in Northern Ireland are still highly segregated by gender (Powell, 2020). This gender segregation is harmful to women's equality because it reinforces the notion that women should be doing certain kinds of labour – typically low paying service and hospitality positions involving significant emotional labor (Powell, 2020). Additionally, this gender sorting says a lot

about the inherent value of women in Northern Irish society, and is an indication of deeper gender disparity present in the province.

The WRDA and WPG alike express concern over the risks to women's rights associated with Brexit, as many rights enjoyed by women in Northern Ireland are a result of European Union policies, including measures such as equal pay, protections against discrimination on the basis of pregnancy (Powell, 2020; WPG, 2019). One particular area for improvement in Northern Irish law is in the issue of parental leave (WPG, 2019). As of now, parental leave consists of eighteen weeks of unpaid leave for each eligible child (Labour Relations Agency, 2019). This framework is consistent with the measures set forth by the UK, but insufficient to support women's progress in the workplace and the broader society (Government Digital Service, 2015; WPG, 2019).

Ireland

In their final report in 2014, the Constitutional Convention included a recommendation to amend Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution. Article 41.2 reads,

“ (1) In particular, the States recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. (2) The State shall, therefore, endeavor to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.” (Ireland, 1945).

After meeting for multiple years to discuss problems facing the Republic of Ireland, the Constitutional Convention recommended that “Article 41.2 should be made gender-neutral to include other careers both ‘in the home’ and ‘beyond the home’ (Convention on the Constitution, 2014, Appendix D).⁹ Further, the convention recommended additional amendments to make

⁹ The Constitutional Convention met to review pressing issues in the Republic of Ireland and suggest changes or areas for concern. Unlike in the American context, the members of the Convention were not empowered to draft a constitution, or even amend the document themselves.

constitutional language gender inclusive and provide explicit language on gender equality (Convention on the Constitution, 2014, Appendix D). The Irish government established task forces on these issues in 2014; however, little progress has been made since its adoption.

In 2018, the Irish Human Rights and Equity Commission issued a report recommending changes to Article 41.2. In the report, IHREC cites previous proposals on Article 41.2, including the Convention's work and the subsequent task force (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, 2018). A referendum on removing Article 41.2 from the Constitution was supposed to take place on October 26, 2018; however, the Oireachtas Justice and Equality Committee opted to continue "pre-legislative scrutiny", which pushed back the timeline (Department of Justice, 2018; McMorrow, 2018). Most recently, the matter has been referred to the Citizen's Assembly. In 2020, a majority of the Assembly noted their support for the article's deletion, though the article remains unchanged in 2021 (Irish Legal News, 2020).

Theoretical Framework

Political issues related to gender, such as sexuality, abortion, contraception, divorce, family, and gender roles are all matters of social traditionalism to which various organized religious groups have weighed in on at various points in time. Organized religion has the capacity to influence perceptions on these issues at both the individual and societal level (Bloomer et al., 2019, p. 51). Particularly, I will focus on how Protestant and Catholic religious organizations have weighed in on the issues of reproductive freedom, same-sex relationships, and gender roles.

No one denomination has a monopoly on these issues. Catholic and Protestant groups have lobbied, both separately and together, regarding gendered political issues (Bloomer et al,

2019, p. 60). Abortion has been a continued topic of particular salience for both groups in recent history. Authors like Vicky Randall attribute the historical salience of abortion in the secular and religious realms to the rise of second wave feminism in the 1960's and 70's (Randall, 1992, p. 112). Governments maintained regressive, strict abortion restrictions, often supported by religious institutions and interest groups. As religious groups mobilized in support of abortion bans, secular and feminist groups would push back in opposition (Randall, 1992). This push and pull between religious and secular groups on opposite sides of gendered issues has persisted to today's political climate.

The literature around Irish religious and national identity is nuanced and suggests multiple distinct, and somewhat conflicting, views as to how religious identity operates on both sides of the Irish border. My analysis will shed light on which frameworks are apparent on each side of the Irish border and how they impact personal opinions on social policy. Here, I will expand on each theory as it is supported by the literature. This section closes with an overview of these theories and how they may be evidenced in my analysis.

Countermobilization Theory

The countermobilization theory is most strongly supported by the 1993 piece by Jelen, O'Donnell, and Wilcox which studies abortion attitudes in Western Europe. Their piece suggests the presence of a countermobilization effect, especially as it relates to religious minority mobilization in Catholic-majority countries (Jelen, et al., 1993). This piece posits that, while the Catholic church is effective in socializing Catholics to a pro-life stance, this effectiveness motivates a countermobilization of pro-choice, non-Catholics (Jelen, et al., 1993, p. 380). In their study, the respondents most sympathetic to abortion rights were non-Catholics living in Catholic-majority countries (p. 381). Further analysis suggests that this countermobilization may also

operationalize in the other direction, with Catholic respondents in Protestant-majority countries providing the most conservative, pro-life responses (p. 381). According to the countermobilization theory, it matters most whether an individual is a member of the majority or minority religious group in their country. If the countermobilization theory is present in this context, it would likely be most evident amongst the Protestant minority in the Republic of Ireland.

Ethno-Religious Theory

The ethno-religious theory refers to the idea that religious group identification is the most determinative factor of social and political beliefs. A prime example of this ethno-religious model can be seen in the American context. In their book, Wald and Calhoun-Brown discuss the political cohesion present within the Black Church and the Jewish community. For these groups, their religious identity has political meaning. The authors note that these groups are both religiously and politically distinct, as Jewish individuals and members of the Black Church tend to support the Democratic Party (Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018).

If the ethno-religious theory is universally applicable and religious identity is always the most salient indicator, national contexts shouldn't matter. On the other hand, it is possible that this theory is not equally applicable to all societies. It may be that religious group identity matters greatly in divided societies, such as Northern Ireland, due to the history of social and political ramifications of religious group identity.

There is some evidence to support the idea that ethno-religious patterns are particularly relevant in the Northern Irish context. In his 2007 piece, Tom Inglis notes that religious identity is particularly salient in Northern Ireland due to the history of religious conflict in the country

(Inglis, 2007). Further, Claire Mitchell discusses the social and psychological impact religious group identity can have, particularly in the Northern Irish context (Mitchell, 2005). Specifically, Protestant and Catholic divisions in Northern Ireland have exhibited notable impacts on employment, housing, and education to name a few areas (Mitchell, 2005). In addition, Mitchell says, “Protestant and Catholic identifications in Northern Ireland still matter to one’s life chances and place in society” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 5). The author goes on to discuss the importance of religious group identity in the Northern Irish political arena. My data analysis will use survey data from both sides of the Irish border to determine whether there is support for the ethno-religious model and, if so, where it is most salient.

Religiosity Theory

According to the religiosity theory, how religiously devout an individual is matters more than what religious group they are a part of. There is both a private and social aspect of religiosity. It could be that a person’s private religious practices are most impactful, such as daily prayer. Alternatively, the frequency of a person’s church attendance might be more determinative of their social values. Additionally, individual beliefs about the Bible may help determine attitudes on gendered topics, as those who believe in biblical literalism may be more legalistic on social issues. Even still, each measure may play its own role in the ultimate formation of social attitudes. If the religiosity theory holds true, it means that there is more diversity within religious identity groups than between people of different religious traditions. For example, in the context of this study, the religiosity theory would indicate that there are more significant differences between the social beliefs of devout and nominal Catholics than between a devout Catholic and a devout Protestant.

It is important to note that there is significant debate among scholars as to which measures of religiosity matter most, particularly as it relates to survey questions. In the 1960's, Glock and Stark put forth a multidimensional framework of religiosity that still impacts the study of religion to this day (Clayton & Gladden, 1974). In that framework, Glock and Stark posit that there are five main dimensions to religiosity, including belief, knowledge, religious rituals, personal religious experiences, and secular consequences of belief (Clayton & Gladden, 1974). Since then, researchers have tried to operationalize this framework through the creation of survey questions honing in on these various dimensions of religiosity; however, no one group of indicators are universally accepted. According to McAndrew and Voas, "it has become conventional to focus on three aspects of religious involvement: belief, practice, and affiliation" (McAndrew & Voas, 2011, p. 3). Still, well-respected institutions like the Pew Research Center use measures including "affiliation, importance of religion, worship attendance, and frequency of prayer" (Pew, 2018).

McAndrew and Voas note an important limitation of survey responses related to religiosity – Americans tend to overreport religious attendance in surveys when they are asked how often they attend (Hawaway & Marler, 1992; McAndrew & Voas, 2011, p. 5); however, this trend runs the opposite way in countries like France (Brenner, 2011, p. 35). Existing literature does not uncover which way this trend runs in the Irish context. McAndrew and Voas also note sensitivity to question wording as a challenge for those interested in studying religiosity, as the way a question is worded may significantly change the answer a respondent provides. They note that the International Social Survey Program is attractive to this point because they maintain a great deal of consistency in question wording related to religiosity over time (McAndrew & Voas, 2011, p. 11). Multivariate analysis will uncover which measures of religiosity significantly

impact views on abortion, same-sex marriage, and gender roles on both sides of the border when all other variables are controlled for.

Theories of religion and political socialization

Countermobilization Theory

Definition: Political success of a religious minority motivates countermobilization of religious minorities with differing opinions (Jelen, et al., 1993).

Example: The success of pro-life Catholics spurs the mobilization of pro-choice Protestants.

If this theory is present in the Irish context, I expect to find the strongest evidence in the Republic of Ireland between the Catholic majority and Protestant minority.

Ethno-religious Theory

Definition: Religious group identification is the most determinative factor of social and political beliefs (Inglis, 2007; Mitchell, 2005).

Example: In the American context, Jewish voters tend to support the Democratic Party.

If this theory is present in the Irish context, I expect to find strong sectarian differences between Protestants and Catholics on the issues studied.

Religiosity Theory

Definition: How religiously devout an individual is matters more than what religious group they are a part of (Clayton & Gladden, 1974; McAndrew & Voas, 2011).

Example: There are significant differences in the opinion of a Sunday School teacher and someone who only attends church on religious holidays.

If this theory is present in the Irish context, I expect to find strong, statistically significant results for each measure of personal religiosity on each dependent variable.

Data, Variables, and Methods

The quantitative portion of this study is based on International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) data from 1991 and 2008.¹⁰ The ISSP conducts a survey yearly which is distributed cross-nationally. The ISSP repeats some surveys over time to follow trends in social values, including topics like the environment, gender roles and family, and religion. The Religion ISSP survey was conducted in 1991, 1998, 2008, and 2018; however, Northern Ireland was not included in the 2018 wave of the survey. In this quantitative analysis, I use data from the 1991 and 2008 survey waves, as they represent the oldest and newest religion data available from ISSP on both sides of the Irish border.

The two main categories of independent variables in this analysis are religious group identity and personal religiosity. In each wave of the survey, respondents were asked to identify their religious identity group. To best represent the Irish context, I created dummy variables for Catholics, Protestants, and those with “No Religion”. Though the denominational categories available in each wave of the survey are somewhat unique, the Protestant category encompasses denominations such as Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and those who identify themselves as “other Christian”. The “No Religion” category, also referred to as the religiously unaffiliated, only include individuals who indicated their religious group as “None”. The inclusion of “none” as a religious group category is consistent with the operationalization of religious unaffiliation in recent social science research on religion and politics (Wald & Calhoun Brown, 2018, p. 26).

I have chosen three independent variables related to personal religiosity, including frequency of church attendance, self-reported religiosity, and beliefs about authorship of the

¹⁰ The ISSP data and survey mechanisms used in this study can be found at <http://w.issp.org/data-download/by-topic/> under the Religion section.

Bible. These particular variables were chosen to encompass the competing views regarding measures of personal religiosity discussed above. Some believe socially based indicators of religiosity matter more, such as church attendance. Meanwhile, others believe what individuals do on their own time is more indicative of their true religiosity, such as their personal beliefs about the Bible and how often they pray.

In this analysis, I use church attendance to encompass the social aspect of personal religiosity. On the other hand, self-reported religiosity and feelings about the Bible highlight the second, more individualistic, mode of religiosity. Self-reported religiosity is measured on a seven-point scale from extremely religious to extremely non-religious (see Appendix 1 for full wording of questions used). Additionally, related to their feelings about the Bible, respondents are asked whether they believe the Bible is the actual word of God, the inspired word of God, or an ancient book of fables.¹¹ These responses indicate the level of biblical literalism exhibited by the respondent.

The distinction between individual and social aspects of religiosity became apparent early in this study. Initially, I intended to create a religiosity index of two questions including how often a respondent prays and how often they attend church. Interestingly, in each wave of the survey data, the alpha for these questions was not high enough to support the creation of an index. In my view, this inability to create a religiosity index implies that the scholarly debate regarding indicators of personal religiosity is particularly relevant to this case study. I hope that my analysis will shed light on which metrics of personal religiosity are most impactful in the Irish context.

¹¹ The question regarding Biblical literalism was not asked in Northern Ireland in 2008.

Additionally, this project revolves around three dependent variables, including attitudes on abortion, same-sex relationships, and gender roles in the family. To study attitudes regarding abortion access, two questions are indexed. The first abortion question revolves around access to abortion in the interest of maternal health; meanwhile, a second question focuses on abortion access due to financial necessity.¹² In 2018, the alpha for the abortion index in Northern Ireland was 0.739 and 0.809 in Ireland. In 1991, the alpha in Northern Ireland was 0.697 and 0.793 in Ireland. In each year, the abortion questions are asked on a six-point scale. Responses include: almost always wrong, always wrong, wrong only sometimes, not wrong at all, can't choose, and no answer. For the purposes of this analysis, responses of "can't choose" and "no answer" are coded as missing data. Thus, the abortion index is measured on a scale of 2-8, with lower values indicating more conservative responses and vice versa.

To study attitudes on same-sex relationships, I use identical questions from the 1991 and 2008 waves of the survey, which ask respondents to report on a four-point scale the degree to which they believe sexual relations between two people of the same sex are wrong or not wrong (see Appendix 1 for question wording). Additionally, to measure attitudes about gender roles, I pull data from a question asked in both 1991 and 2008 regarding a respondent's level of agreement with the statement that a husband's job is to earn money while a wife's job is to take care of the home and family (see Appendix 1). Responses were given on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For both the same-sex and gender roles question, an option was provided for those who "can't choose". For each question, I have coded these responses as missing data. In addition, all variables are coded so that responses with lower numerical values

¹² Note that question wording on abortion differs between 1991 and 2008 (See Appendix 1 for full question wording). In 1991, respondents are asked their thoughts on whether the *law* should permit abortion in various circumstances; meanwhile, in 2008, the questions hinge on one's *personal beliefs* regarding abortion. Neither wave of the ISSP survey asks respondents about their general feelings on abortion without these particular circumstances.

indicate conservative values while higher values indicate liberal attitudes. To test the relationship between religion and various social values, I performed both bivariate and multivariate ordered probit analysis.

Statistical Results

Overview

The crux of my findings indicate that religion and personal religiosity operate differently on both sides of the Irish border. In other words, my analysis of the Irish case study does not provide universal support for any one theory set forth in the literature. In Northern Ireland, sectarian differences between Protestants and Catholics on issues of abortion, same sex relationships, and gender roles are apparent in the data. This finding indicates that religious identity operates in a way most congruent with the ethnoreligious model in the North. In other words, religious group identity matters a great deal alongside personal religiosity in Northern Ireland. There is also support for the religiosity model in the North. Meanwhile, in the Republic of Ireland, sectarian differences are not as apparent regarding the issues studied. Instead, personal religiosity is the primary driver of attitudinal differences on social issues regarding gender and sexuality. As such, there is strong evidence of the religiosity model in the Republic. No statistical findings offer support for the countermobilization theory in the Irish context.

Northern Ireland

The trend evidenced in Northern Ireland between 1991 and 2008 indicate strong support for the proposed ethnoreligious and religiosity models. In other words, my data analysis shows that both religiosity and religious identity matter a great deal in Northern Ireland. In 1991 and 2008 alike, sectarian differences are clear between Protestants and Catholics in their attitudes on

social issues, with a higher proportion of Catholics exhibiting conservative views on abortion than Protestants (see Table 1).

It is important to contextualize these results in light of the questions asked about abortion access. Notably, in each year, both abortion questions indexed ask the respondent about their level of agreement with abortion access in the event of medical necessity and financial necessity respectively (See Appendix 1). This means that more liberal scores on the abortion index indicate more agreement with these exceptions which would allow for abortion access. More liberal scores on the abortion index do not necessarily mean that respondents agree with more generalized abortion access without medical or financial necessity.

The sectarian divide changes in regards to Northern Irish religious attitudes about same-sex relationships. In both 1991 and 2008, bivariate ordered probit models show that Protestants were significantly more conservative than non-Protestants in their beliefs on same-sex relationships and gender roles in family. Bivariate models also indicate that Catholics were more liberal than non-Catholics in 2008 regarding same-sex relationships, while no statistically significant relationship can be found in 1991. Alternately, Catholics exhibited more liberal beliefs than non-Catholics on gender roles in 1991, while no statistically significant relationship emerges in the 2008 data. The bivariate models indicate that neither Catholics nor Protestants are consistently liberal or conservative on the issues of abortion, LGBT relationships, and gender roles.

Table 1: Northern Ireland, Abortion Index 2008 ¹³

	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
2 (most conservative)	39.35	20.69	13.89
3	7.97	10.46	8.33
4	18.05	16.88	8.8
5	10.08	13.44	14.81
6	12.36	18.67	18.52
7	3.58	5.47	5.56
8 (most liberal)	8.62	14.39	30.09
Total	100	100	100
Sig	***	***	***

*The values of each column sum to 100 after rounding. "Sig." reports statistical significance of bivariate ordered probit models testing the relationship between the Column variable and the Abortion index. *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$*

¹³ The trend demonstrated in this table is also evidenced in the 1991 Northern Ireland data.

An Emerging Ethno-religious Group: The Nones in Northern Ireland

While bivariate ordered probit models are useful in showing the general trends in belief between those in the religious in-group and out-group, multivariate ordered probit models allow for a more rigorous analysis. When all variables are accounted for in the model, different and more nuanced trends emerge (see Table 2). Most notably, the multivariate model indicates that the religiously unaffiliated population emerged as its own politically cohesive group between 1991 and 2008. Further, by 2008, the “nones” follow the same ethnoreligious pattern demonstrated by Catholics and Protestants across all waves of Northern Ireland data.

This multivariate model is coded to compare all listed variables to the un-listed religious identity group – Catholics. Strikingly, the “No Religion” group is not statistically significant on any dependent variable in 1991, but was significant across all dependent variables in 2008.¹⁴ This means that the religiously unaffiliated in Northern Ireland were not yet acting as a politically cohesive group in 1991, which changed by 2008. It follows that, by 2008, the “nones” began to map onto the sectarian, ethno-religious pattern observable between Protestants and Catholics in the North since the earliest waves of data collection, which supports the presence of an ethnoreligious model as it relates to the Northern Irish case.

It is worth noting that the gendered social issues studied do not line up neatly along the Protestant-Catholic split. While Catholics are conservative on abortion, they are liberal on same-sex marriage and gender roles. At the same time, Protestants are liberal on abortion while holding more conservative views on same-sex marriage and gender roles; however, the unaffiliated are consistently liberal on all topics studied (see Table 2). These findings suggest

¹⁴ This is not to say that the unaffiliated population weren't a generally liberal group in 1991. Bivariate cross tabulations indicate religiously unaffiliated individuals were more liberal than religiously affiliated individuals (including Protestants and Catholics) in 1991.

that Protestants and Catholics in the North do not view the issues of abortion, same-sex marriage, and gender roles as interconnected when forming their political opinions. I will further expand on this dynamic in the qualitative portion of my thesis.

The Northern Ireland multivariate analysis also reveals a consistent pattern over time regarding measures of personal religiosity and their impact on social values. Interestingly, attendance, self-identified religiosity, and feelings about the Bible all exhibit a statistically significant relationship with the dependent variables in Northern Ireland, with one exception. It seems that attendance at religious services is not a good indicator of gender role attitudes, which is evidenced by the lack of significance in Table 2 across all years. In sum, it appears there is substantial evidence supporting the existence of both the ethno-religious and religiosity theories in Northern Ireland.

Table 2: Northern Ireland Multivariate Analysis¹⁵

	1991			2008		
	Abortion Index	Same-Sex	Gender Roles	Abortion Index	Same-Sex	Gender Roles
Protestant	0.586*** [0.116]	-0.446*** [0.132]	-0.245** [0.100]	0.375*** [0.087]	-0.771*** [0.103]	-0.121 [0.082]
No Religion	0.208 [0.206]	-.412 [0.254]	-0.253 [0.189]	0.797*** [0.184]	0.508** [0.225]	0.274* [0.159]
Attendance	-0.076*** [0.022]	-0.061** [0.028]	-0.003 [0.021]	-0.076*** [0.021]	-0.114*** [0.024]	-0.008 [0.019]
Self-identified religiosity	-0.163*** [0.056]	-0.169** [0.074]	-0.133** [0.060]	-0.214*** [0.040]	-0.218*** [0.047]	-0.113*** [0.034]
Feelings about Bible	-0.240*** [0.078]	-0.312*** [0.097]	-0.267*** [0.070]			
<i>N</i>	652	701	751	876	860	1,030

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Ordered Probit Models with Standard Errors in Brackets.

¹⁵ Every dependent variable is coded so that higher values indicate more liberal views and lower values indicate more conservative views.

The Republic of Ireland

Analysis of the data in the Republic of Ireland most strongly supports the religiosity theory, wherein religiosity is the most impactful religious indicator for individual beliefs. While bivariate models show some impact for religious denomination variables, in the more rigorous multivariate analysis, it is the religiosity variables that are more robustly tied to views on gender and sexuality.

In Ireland, bivariate analysis shows that Catholics are consistently more conservative than non-Catholics on the issue of abortion in 1991 and 2008. Analysis of the 1991 wave of data indicates that Catholics were also more conservative on issues of same sex couples and traditional gender roles at that time. Interestingly, in 1991 bivariate analysis, Protestants were found to be more liberal on issues of abortion than non-Protestants, yet there is no statistically significant relationship present in 2008. Further, in 2008, Protestants were found to be more conservative on same sex relationships when compared to those in the outgroup. Consistent to the literature, the bivariate analysis indicates that the religiously unaffiliated were consistently more liberal than the religiously-affiliated on all issues in 1991 and 2008 (See Table 3).

Table 3: Ireland Abortion Index, 2008 ¹⁶

	Catholic	Protestant	No religion
2 (most conservative)	33.44	23.06	14.63
3	8.69	16.13	5.75
4	18.64	19.42	14.58
5	14.62	12.39	11.88
6	12.57	8.14	22.33
7	3.92	10.09	7.56
8 (most liberal)	8.1	10.78	23.27
Total	100	100	100
Sig	***		***
<p><i>The values of each column sum to 100 after rounding. "Sig." reports statistical significance of bivariate ordered probit models testing the relationship between the Column variable and the Abortion index. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1</i></p>			

However, when controlling for all variables at once, it becomes clear that religious identity operates differently on this side of the border. Unlike in Northern Ireland, the sectarian differences between Protestants and Catholics in the Republic are not the significant driving force of differences on abortion, LGBT relationships, and gender role attitudes. Instead, multivariate analysis shows that measures of personal religiosity are consistently significant as it relates to each dependent variable across all waves of data (See Table 4).

¹⁶ Similar trends are found in 1991 for Catholics and the Nones; however, there is a statistically significant relationship in 1991 in the positive direction, indicating Protestants were more liberal than non-Protestants on abortion attitudes in that wave of data.

Table 4: Ireland Multivariate Analysis¹⁷

	1991			2008		
	Abortion Index	Same-Sex	Gender Roles	Abortion Index	Same-Sex	Gender Roles
Protestant	0.275 [0.199]	-0.319 [0.265]	-0.239 [0.212]	0.075 [0.160]	-0.486*** [0.242]	0.075 [0.136]
No Religion	0.09 [0.331]	0 [0.303]	0.313 [0.309]	-0.201 [0.173]	-0.244 [0.242]	-0.193 [0.174]
Attendance	-0.119*** [0.019]	-0.123*** [0.023]	-0.038** [0.019]	-0.1*** [0.026]	-0.158*** [0.027]	-0.064*** [0.021]
Self-identified religiosity	-0.088* [0.046]	-0.154** [0.061]	-0.143*** [0.046]	-0.2*** [0.041]	-0.171*** [0.051]	-0.085 [0.046]
Feelings about Bible	-0.278*** [0.061]	-0.378*** [0.068]	-0.392*** [0.058]	-0.306*** [0.062]	-0.262*** [0.067]	-0.127** [0.059]
<i>N</i>	862	840	919	1,235	1,274	1,510

*** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, * $p < 0.1$

Ordered Probit Models with Standard Errors in Brackets.

¹⁷ Every dependent variable is coded so that higher values indicate more liberal views and lower values indicate more conservative views.

In the Republic, multivariate analysis indicates that personal religiosity matters more than religious group identity in shaping attitudes about abortion, LBGTQ+ issues, and gender roles. In other words, it doesn't matter whether an individual identifies as Catholic, Protestant, or religiously unaffiliated. What really matters is their personal level of religiosity. Interestingly, though I have earlier expanded on the debate between scholars regarding measures of personal religiosity, this multivariate model indicates that church attendance, self-rated religiosity, and level of Biblical literalism are all consistently impactful in the context of the Republic.

Similarly to the North, bivariate analysis indicates that the unaffiliated hold significantly more liberal opinions on social issues than the religiously affiliated. Interestingly, when models take account of religiosity measures, the unaffiliated in the Republic do not follow the same trend earlier evidenced in the North. The “nones” do not emerge in 2008 as a politically distinct group, which is demonstrated by the consistent lack of statistical significance in the multivariate model. This stark difference in trends across the Irish border supports my position that the impact of religion on social values is unique to each national context.

Liberal Catholics in the Republic of Ireland

The lack of statistical significance in the multivariate model across time for the unaffiliated does not contradict earlier findings that the unaffiliated are a generally liberal group. Instead, this lack of significance likely says more about the Catholic population in the Republic. The multivariate model compares groups listed to groups unlisted, meaning that the “No Religion” line compares the religiously unaffiliated to the Catholic population in the Republic. The consistent lack of significance may indicate that there are many nominally religious Catholics in the Republic of Ireland; however, not all liberal Catholics are nominal in their

personal religiosity. This non-effect could also indicate the presence of devout Catholics who merely disagree with the Catholic Church's stance on various social issues. I will further expand on this phenomenon in the qualitative section of this project.

As for nominal Catholics, while these individuals still consider themselves to be Catholic, their levels of personal religiosity are more similar to those reported by the religiously unaffiliated in the Republic. Like the religiously unaffiliated, these nominal Catholics also tend to hold liberal beliefs on abortion, LGBTQ+ relationships, and gender roles. I will expand on this group of liberal Catholics in the qualitative section of this paper. These findings are not inconsistent with existing literature which has documented the decline of the Catholic "Moral Monopoly" as well as significant differences between nominal and devout Catholics in Ireland (Buckley, 2016, p. 67, 79). Overall, though many individuals still label themselves as Catholic, they are not distinguishable as a traditionally "conservative Catholic" when their social and political beliefs are held up against others in Ireland.

Qualitative Evidence

When it comes to the impact of elite rhetoric on social values, Pierson and Bloomer say it best when noting "who says what about abortion contributes to the outcomes that we will see in law and policy" (Bloomer & Pierson, 2017, p. 174). Given the strong relationship in the quantitative data between religion and all social values studied, I posit that "who says what" about abortion, LGBTQ+ issues, and gender roles all matters a great deal. In this portion of my study, I will expand on my statistical findings by analyzing various public statements published by religious and activist groups on both sides of the Irish border. If the findings of my statistical

models have persisted to modern day, I anticipate qualitative sources will provide evidence of three main trends.

First, in the North, I expect to find the presence of major religiously unaffiliated groups mobilizing around the latest social controversies regarding abortion and LGBTQ+ rights.¹⁸ Further, consistent with statistical findings, sectarian differences in elite rhetoric and framing of social issues should be apparent in the North. Lastly, if the trends in the Republic have persisted, I anticipate the presence of liberal Catholic groups mobilizing around today's gendered social issues; however, I do not expect to find evidence of these individuals mobilizing within the Church due to their nominal religiosity and opposition to traditional Catholic teachings.

In this portion of my study, I will present multiple case studies which suggest that each quantitative trend uncovered has persisted to modern day debates on gendered social issues; however, it is important to note that this analysis is in no way exhaustive or fully representative of religion and social values in Ireland today. Future research should expand on this framework to collect a representative sample of public statements from churches and religiously unaffiliated activist groups to perform a more structured content analysis.

Northern Ireland: Sectarian Divides

While statistical evidence shows that Northern Irish Protestants hold more liberal beliefs than Catholics on the issue of abortion, Protestants exhibited more conservative views on same-sex relationships than Catholics in 2008. This quantitative evidence demonstrates that gendered social issues do not line up neatly down the Protestant and Catholic divide. That is, neither

¹⁸ Here, I omit analysis of elite rhetoric on gender roles due to lack of modern day qualitative material on gender roles in law in Ireland. There have not yet been widespread modern day debates on gender roles in law on either side of the Irish border; however, future research should closely follow these issues for changes, such as the potential referendum on Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution (Convention on the Constitution, 2014, Appendix D).

Protestants nor Catholics are consistently liberal or conservative on all gendered social issues. This quantitative trend suggests potential for differences in religious elite rhetoric, particularly on the issues of abortion and LGBTQ+ issues. In this section, I will compare the sectarian trends uncovered in the ISSP analysis to modern-day elite rhetoric from Protestant and Catholic leaders.

Sectarian Divides in Religious Elite Rhetoric on Abortion

In April 2020, the Catholic Bishops of Northern Ireland submitted a letter to the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly regarding abortion regulations that were being debated at the time. The letter makes it clear that the Catholic leadership in Northern Ireland still stands firmly against abortion rights. The letter states,

“ Our opposition to the new abortion Regulations brought into effect here by the Westminster Parliament is rooted in the Catholic Church’s teaching concerning the dignity of every human life, regardless of age, ability, gender, or background. This teaching prohibits the direct and deliberate intention to end the life of an unborn baby at any state of his or her development. This right to life of the child is inextricably linked to the right to life and well-being of the mother” (Martin, et al., 2020).

This 2020 statement suggest that the elite rhetoric on abortion by Catholic leaders in the North still maps onto sectarian trends evidenced in the 1991-2008 ISSP data.

One major point of difference between Protestant and Catholic elite rhetoric on the issue of abortion is the right to access abortions out of medical necessity. A 2016 article quotes Tim Bartlett on this issue. At the time, Bartlett served as the secretary of the Catholic Council for Social Affairs (Sherwood, 2016). Bartlett emphasized that the Catholic Church works with “women whose babies have life-limiting conditions” (Sherwood, 2016). Bartlett goes on to say that “the child is still technically, clinically and in every sense alive as a human person, and is entitled to have their life protected” (Sherwood, 2016). On the other hand, Normal Hamilton, an

affiliate of the Presbyterian Church expressed different sentiments. Though Hamilton emphasized the Presbyterian Church's objection to abortion as a form of birth control, he describes the Church as being "content" with regulations which allow for abortion access when it is medically necessary (Sherwood, 2016).

Hamilton's statements are consistent with other statements from major Protestant churches in the North. In 2019, the Church of Ireland submitted a "Response to Abortion Services Framework Consultation". In this response, the Church of Ireland details their belief about each provision of the proposed abortion legislation (Church of Ireland, 2019). Throughout this document, the Church reiterates their objection to "abortion on demand" (Church of Ireland, 2019, p. 1); however, the Church of Ireland directly states their belief that abortion should be "available in cases of medical necessity" (Church of Ireland, 2019, p. 1). That is, abortion should be available when there is "a risk to the life, or of serious harm to the health, of the pregnant woman" (Church of Ireland, 2019, p. 2).

As I noted in the quantitative results section, the ISSP survey questions on abortion only ask about a respondent's level of agreement with abortion access in the event of medical and financial necessity. This means that Protestants in the North were found to be more liberal than Catholics in their views regarding access to abortion under these circumstances. As such, the statements from Catholic and Protestant leaders in the North about when abortion should be available are consistent with trends uncovered in my quantitative analysis.

Sectarian Divides in Religious Elite Rhetoric on Same-Sex Marriage

Meanwhile, analysis of the ISSP data uncovered that Northern Irish Protestants held more conservative beliefs regarding same-sex marriage than Catholics. As noted in the policy

overview, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has stood firmly against the legalization of same-sex marriage. Further, the DUP has longstanding ties to the Free Presbyterian Church, as each organization was founded by Ian Paisley Sr (Savage, 2019). As such, I look to the Free Presbyterian Church for evidence of their religious elite rhetoric around same-sex marriage today.¹⁹

In January 2020, the General Presbytery of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster published two press releases in response to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the North, which began on January 13, 2020. In the first press release, the Church re-emphasized their belief that “marriage is a holy institution given by God for the monogamous, lifelong, marital union of men and women” (Dane & Greer, 2020). This first statement also issues a grave warning to “legislators of evil” who will be called to account on Judgement Day (Dane & Greer, 2020).

The second press release, also issued in January 2020, is a statement that directly urges politicians to prevent same-sex marriage in the Republic. In this statement, Reverends Dane and Greer emphasize their view of Scriptural teachings on marriage. Specifically, the Reverends argue “God’s abhorrence of same-sex sins above other sins”, as they believe the people of Sodom were destroyed due to their engagement in same-sex relationships (Dane & Greer, 2020). The Reverends warn that similar destruction will be forthcoming if society does not repent of same-sex sins (Dane & Greer, 2020).

Meanwhile, the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference also published a “Response to the Northern Ireland Office Consultation on same-sex religious marriage” (Martin, et al., 2020).

¹⁹ The Free Presbyterian Church is a minority population within the larger Northern Irish Protestant community that evidences an extreme sectarian view of same-sex marriage. I do not posit that this view is reflective of the entire Protestant community. I present these statements as limited evidence of modern-day conservative views on LGBTQ+ issues among Protestants in the North.

Throughout this statement, the Bishops emphasize the rights and freedoms of religious organizations and advocate for regulations which protect the rights of churches to refuse to perform “religious same-sex marriages” if they are not comfortable doing so (Martin, et al., 2020). While the Irish Catholic Bishop’s Conference advocates for these religious protections, the rhetoric used is quite different from that of the Free Presbyterian Church. To quote from the response,

“ As Pope Francis explained in his Apostolic Exhortation on ‘The Joy of Love’ (Amoris Laetitia), ‘The Church makes her own the attitude of the Lord Jesus, who offers his boundless love to each person without exception... We would like before all else to reaffirm that every person, regardless of sexual orientation, ought to be respected in his or her dignity and treated with consideration, while every sign of unjust discrimination is to be carefully avoided, particularly any form of aggression and violence’ ” (Martin, et al., 2020).

Though the Free Presbyterian Church and Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference seemingly agree that churches in Northern Ireland should not be forced to perform same-sex religious marriage, there is a stark contrast in the rhetoric chosen by each group. While the Free Presbyterian Church uses rhetoric that emphasizes sin, repentance, and Judgement Day, the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference opts for affirmation and compassion for all people regardless of their sexuality. Further, the Free Presbyterian Church calls on legislators to reverse the legalization of same-sex marriage while the Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference only advocates for regulations which would ensure religious institutions have a choice in performing same-sex religious marriage ceremonies. This conflicting, sectarian rhetoric from religious elites in the North offers limited qualitative support for my quantitative finding that Northern Irish Catholics exhibit more liberal views on same-sex marriage than Protestants. To more definitively assess whether the sectarian divides from 1991 and 2008 have persisted to modern day,

future research should aggregate a more representative sample of statements from religious elites in the North and conduct a more rigorous content analysis.

Northern Ireland: The Nones

Consistent with earlier statistical analysis, the religiously unaffiliated are still a cohesive, influential group in Northern Ireland today. From 2013 to 2018, many atheists organized under Atheist Northern Ireland; however, this group dissolved in 2018 (Atheist Northern Ireland). In their final Facebook post, Atheist Northern Ireland encouraged their members to follow Northern Ireland Humanists, as many of the group's administrators would be taking leadership posts there. From that time on, Northern Ireland Humanists became one of the biggest and cohesive networks for the religiously unaffiliated. Northern Ireland Humanists was officially founded in 2016, though the group's website notes that they have been active for decades prior (Northern Ireland Humanists, 2021). Further, Northern Ireland Humanists is a section of Humanists UK, which only adds to their legitimacy and cohesion.

Northern Ireland Humanists have been a part of multiple successful campaigns related to the social values pertinent to this study. As midnight passed on October 21, 2019, the deadline to form a Northern Irish Executive officially closed. A blog post was shared to the Northern Ireland Humanist website late that night celebrating the simultaneous passage of provisions legalizing same-sex marriage and decriminalized abortions (Northern Ireland Humanists, 2019). The author of the blog post notes that Northern Ireland Humanists and Humanists UK had campaigned on these issues for decades. The existence and growth of the unaffiliated population demonstrated by the success and status of Northern Ireland Humanists is consistent with the trends evidenced in the 2008 ISSP data.

Even as the group celebrated their success in 2019, they emphasize that their work is far from over. The October 21 blog post says,

“However, work has not finished: over the coming months we need to closely watch the legislation to ensure that these rights promised to women and LGBT people are delivered in full.” (Northern Ireland Humanists, 2019).

Today, abortion is still listed as a campaign platform for Northern Ireland Humanists, as they are still active in ensuring abortions are “safe, free, and available to all (Northern Ireland Humanists, 2021). The Northern Ireland Humanists have partnered extensively with the British Humanist Association as well as Humanists UK to campaign for abortion rights in the North. This advocacy has primarily taken place through litigation. Recent successes this coalition include multiple legal wins which ensure women in Northern Ireland have access to safe and free abortions through the National Health Service (Humanists UK, 2016). Future research should continue to follow the growth and mobilization of the religiously unaffiliated in Northern Ireland as they work to further liberal social causes.

A Brief Note on Nones in the Republic

Subsequent research should also track the growth of the religiously unaffiliated population in the Republic of Ireland. The biggest unaffiliated network in the Republic is Atheist Ireland and was founded in 2008 (Atheist Ireland, 2021). Similarly to the Northern Ireland Humanists, Atheist Ireland has been active and successful in their efforts to liberalize access to abortions and same sex marriage. This group has been particularly critical of Catholic rhetoric on abortion and LGBT issues since 2008. In 2017, Atheist Ireland addressed the Citizens Assembly as they debated issues such as abortion rights at the constitutional convention (Atheist Ireland,

2021). Today, Atheist Ireland is working to roll back Constitutional provisions that discriminate against non-religious individuals, reform Census questions regarding religion to better represent the religiously unaffiliated, and repeal Ireland's blasphemy law (Atheist Ireland, 2021).

Liberal Catholics in the Republic

After a thorough search, I was unable to find a single prominent organization specifically founded for liberal Catholics in the Republic; however, upon second glance, this is not a surprising result. Statistical analysis indicated that group identity was not salient in the Republic from 1991-2008. So, the lack of modern-day cohesive political or religious group for nominal Catholics is further indication that group identity is still not salient in the Republic today.

Instead, interviews with Irish Archbishops and other church leaders directly address the impact of nominal Catholics – a population that is implied by earlier statistical analysis in the Republic.

In a 2018 interview the current archbishop of Armagh, Archbishop Eamon Martin, discussed the categories of Catholics from his point of view (Sherwood, 2018). First, he describes the modern-day devout Catholics as “a remnant” of what once was in the Republic. He then acknowledges the magnitude of people who consider themselves to be “nominally or culturally Catholic but who have drifted away from regular practice” (Sherwood, 2018). Lastly, there are individuals who have entirely rejected the Church's teachings and are openly hostile to the religion (Sherwood, 2018). In another interview with the New York Times, Martin expands on why he believes the Catholic church is losing influence in Ireland.²⁰ He says,

²⁰ Interestingly, in 2015, Martin refrained from telling Catholics how they should vote regarding the same-sex marriage referendum. Though it was public knowledge that he intended to vote No, he was not affiliated with any campaigns regarding the vote (McGarry, 2015). In my view, it seems that Martin is sensitive to negative opinions about the Church and has tried to refrain from furthering such sentiments through his actions.

“The scandals emerged at a moment which was either just the wrong time or the right time, depending on which side you are, for them to emerge. The two things, the change in the attitude to the church and the abuse, came together and had a disastrous effect” (Stack, 2017).

Martin’s firsthand account regarding the causes of the Catholic Church’s downfall in the Republic are consistent with scholarly literature on the topic (Buckley, 2016; Inglis 2017). A 2010 research report from the Irish Catholic Bishops Conference provides additional support for the existence of nominal Catholics in the Republic. The report notes that Catholics in the Republic pray less often, on average, than those in the North. Additionally, fewer Catholics in the Republic report attending Mass once a week or more compared to Catholics in Northern Ireland (O’Mahony, 2010).

Martin later expands on his beliefs regarding the number of true Catholics in Ireland. While over three-fourths of the population in the Republic identified themselves as Catholic in the 2011 census, “the archbishop said he believed the figure for true believers was closer to 20 percent” (Stack, 2017). These statements from the Irish Archbishop make complete sense when compared to the statistical findings of this piece. Martin’s analysis of nominal Catholicism support the conclusion that no significant difference could be found between the nones and Catholics in my multivariate analysis because many people who are actually rather distant from the Church in practice and belief still call themselves Catholic and respond in kind on surveys. Further, there are those who are entirely hostile to the Church, who now likely identify as a religious “none”, both in day-to-day life as well as when they are asked to identify on surveys.

My search for case studies doesn't specifically reveal liberal Catholic groups mobilizing around abortion access in the Republic; however, prominent pro-choice Catholic figures demonstrate that not all liberal Catholics are nominal in their personal religiosity. For instance, the most prominent example of a practicing liberal Catholic is former president of the Republic, Mary Robinson. Mary Robinson is an outspoken pro-choice Catholic who has consistently advocated for abortion rights. Robinson's biography, authored by Olivia O'Leary and Helen Burke, revealed that Robinson was in favor of abortion access in the Republic (Molloy, 1998). This move shocked many Catholics in the Republic and beyond and spurred great pushback within the Catholic community (Molloy, 1998).

In the biography, Robinson says, "I was very angry at a lot of what the Church stood for at that time [the 1960's], at how religion could become power-play and oppressive, undermining the true sense of spirituality and the true ethical norms and standards that are at the highest reaches of the human mind" (Molloy, 1998). Similarly, in a 2009 interview, Robinson criticizes the Catholic Church for the religious framework and traditions which "subjugate women" to "second class citizens" (The Elders, 2009). Despite her sustained, public criticism of the Church, Robinson has been quite open about her personal religiosity and Catholic identity. She says, "I'm deeply spiritual and I'm seeking to understand the way in which so much of the Catholic Church is so authoritarian not supporting family planning" (Irish Central, 2013). Robinson goes on to share her belief that, "the gospel of Jesus as being the highest standard that we can attain" (Irish Central, 2013). The way that Robinson reconciles her personal political views, career in public service, and personal religious identity sheds light on the presence of

devout liberal Catholics whose personal spirituality bolsters their individual political beliefs, even when The Church decrees a different teaching.

Future research should further interrogate the presence and magnitude of liberal Catholics, including those who are nominal in their personal religiosity as well as those who use a spiritual lens to frame their liberal views. This context regarding the presence of liberal Catholics in the Republic is particularly relevant as it relates to the collection of future survey data in the country. As my study demonstrates, the presence of nominal Catholics in the “Catholic” pool can cause confusing results without context regarding the salience of religiosity in the Republic. Future quantitative research should consider using religiosity indicators to group Catholics in the Republic from the outset. Parsing out devout and nominal Catholics in this way would allow liberal Catholicism in the Republic to be better understood and analyzed in future studies.

Discussion and Conclusion

To summarize, quantitative analysis of ISSP data reveals that religious identity and personal religiosity are both salient in Northern Ireland. Further, over time, the religiously unaffiliated have become their own distinct group within this ethnoreligious framework in the North. Meanwhile, religiosity is most salient in the Republic of Ireland. The lack of distinction between the religious nones and Catholics in the multivariate analysis suggests the presence of nominal Catholics in the Republic who hold liberal social beliefs, breaking from the Church’s teachings on abortion, same-sex relationships, and gender roles. Additionally, qualitative case studies pertaining to each trend provide evidence, albeit limited, that each trend uncovered by my

quantitative analysis has persisted in modern day debates around abortion and same-sex marriage.

Limitations and Potential for Future Research

I hope this project meaningfully speaks to the unique ways that religion and national context intersect to shape public opinion on issues related to gender. While I am proud of this work which builds on larger bodies of research related to the intersection of gender, politics, and religion, there are limitations to this piece that should inform future research endeavors. Some of these limitations are due, in part, by the COVID-19 pandemic which limited my ability to incorporate interviews into my research design and impacted the structure of my qualitative analysis.²¹

First, Northern Ireland was not included in the 2018 ISSP Religion survey, which limited my ability to track quantitative trends to modern day. Future research could apply my quantitative methods to 2018 ISSP religion data from Ireland to determine if and how the trends evidenced here have changed in the decade since 2008. I would also like to see future research build gender, race, sexuality, and class identities into the multivariate model to construct a more intersectional analysis. As Ireland continues to diversify both racially and religiously, the intersections of these identities will become an even more pressing topic of study. Specifically, future research should interrogate the ways that the intersection of race, religion, and gender might matter differently for men and women.

²¹ More generally, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the face of research today. For instance, this entire thesis project was conducted during COVID-times, which necessitated fully virtual meetings with my advisor, research methods that could be conducted remotely, and a hybrid defense format.

I also believe the qualitative portion of this project leaves ample opportunity for growth in future research. Here, I have provided limited case studies pertaining to each trend evidenced in my statistical analysis. Moving forward, a representative sample of elite rhetoric from multiple traditions could be studied through a more rigorous and systematized content analysis. I find it interesting that, when conducting the qualitative analysis, I struggled to find sources related to gender roles in family. Most public statements from religious and political leaders are specific to more contentious issues that can be directly legislated. I believe that interviews could bridge the gap between the quantitative findings about gender roles and the lack of qualitative material on the topic on both sides of the border. In addition, my research points to multiple groups which are seemingly understudied in the Irish context, such as liberal Catholics in the Republic and the religiously unaffiliated. Because these groups often mobilize outside of religious settings, interviews could also prove useful in better understanding these communities in future studies.

After finishing this project, I am also left curious about the disconnect between everyday religious folks and religious elites as it relates to social issues. Future research should expand on both the substance of these divisions and the reasons behind such divides. I believe interviews with everyday individuals and religious elites could prove valuable in uncovering the disconnect on various gendered church teachings. Throughout the qualitative portion of this piece, I found records of interviews with religious elites to be particularly helpful in understanding the divide between elite rhetoric and the political mobilization of everyday people, which often contradicts church teaching. For these reasons, I encourage future researchers to pursue interviews on these topics when in-person research methods are more able to comfortably and safely resume.

Now that progress has been made on abortion and same-sex marriage on both sides of the border, future researcher must consider which social issues will be most salient moving forward

and how these issues should be studied. In my view, researchers should keep an eye on transgender and gender-inclusive movements on both sides of the border, as issues relevant to these communities have been absent from the more widespread push for same-sex marriage. Public opinion survey organizations, such as ISSP, should begin to consider how attitudes on these issues could be measured in upcoming surveys. Specific to the Irish context, researchers should also keep an eye on the potential upcoming referendum to amend constitutional language on gender roles in the Republic. If this referendum were to occur, more qualitative material from religious elites on gender roles would likely surface.

More generally, this project demonstrates that religion impacts public opinion in unique ways depending on the national context. I hope that this finding informs future research regarding possible theories of religious impact. The findings of my project indicate that there is likely not one correct answer when it comes to theorizing the impact of religion on public opinion. I believe that the findings of this study could translate to broader conversations surrounding religion and social values, such as the liberalization of abortion policy in Argentina or the continued disputes about religious exemptions for same-sex unions in the United States. Additionally, my work has identified the religiously unaffiliated as an important player in the Irish political arena. In my view, this is an understudied topic in the Irish context and ripe for future research. Future work should track the growth of the religiously unaffiliated and their political salience in future debates of social importance on both sides of the border.

As I wrap up this project, I look back on the lived experiences that first motivated my interest in gender, sexuality, and religion. I realize now that, despite my own devout religious background, I have viewed the role of religion in shaping gendered social values with a lot of

contempt. I have seen firsthand the hurt that can be caused when socially conservative, religious values are forced on others.

In light of these personal experiences and frustrations, the story of social progress on both sides of the Irish border has been inspiring to study. Moving forward, more people will have to reconcile the role of religion in society and politics, especially as many societies undergo social progress. In my view, those of us who firmly believe in equal rights and social progress have two choices. We can leave the Church and join the rapidly growing community of the religiously unaffiliated. Alternatively, we can stay within our religious communities and help create spaces where progressive social values and religious beliefs are not at fundamental odds. As for me, I haven't yet decided which path I will choose; however, I am thankful and proud to have undertaken a project that leaves me with more questions to explore as I move on from my time at the University of Louisville.

APPENDIX 1

2008 QUESTIONNAIRE

Dependent Variable Questions

Same sex relationships

And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, is it...

- Always wrong (1)
- Almost always wrong (2)
- Wrong only sometimes (3)
- Not wrong at all (4)
- Can't choose (8)

Abortion

Do you personally think it is wrong or not wrong for a woman to have an abortion?

a). If there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby?

b). If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children

- Always wrong
- Almost always wrong
- Wrong only sometimes
- Not wrong at all
- Can't choose

Gender Roles

Do you agree or disagree...

A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree
- Can't choose

Independent Variable Questions

Feelings about the Bible

Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?

- The Bible is the actual word of God and it is to be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is the inspired word of God, but not everything should be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by man
- This does not apply to me
- Can't choose

Religious attendance

28. How often do you take part in the activities or organizations of a church or place of worship other than attending services?

Never

Less than once a year.

About once or twice a year

Several times a year

About once a month

2-3 times a month

Nearly every week

Every week

Several times a week

Self-Reported Religiosity

Would you describe yourself as...

- Extremely religious
- Very religious
- Somewhat religious
- Neither religious nor non-religious
- Somewhat non-religious
- Very non-religious
- Extremely non-religious
- Can't choose

APPENDIX 1 (cont.)

1991 QUESTIONNAIRE

Dependent Variable Questions

Same sex relationships

And what about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex, is it...

- Always wrong
- Almost always wrong
- Wrong only sometimes
- Not wrong at all
- Can't choose

Abortion

Do you think the law should or should not allow a woman to obtain a legal abortion...

- a). If there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby?
- b). If the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children?
 - Definitely should allow it
 - Probably should allow it
 - Probably should not allow it
 - Definitely should not allow it
 - Can't choose

Independent Variable Questions

Feelings about the Bible

Which one of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?

- The Bible is the actual word of God and it is to be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything should be taken literally, word for word
- The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral teachings recorded by man
- This does not apply to me
- Can't choose

Religious Attendance

Now, thinking about the present, how often do you attend religious services?

- Never
- Less than once a year
- About once or twice a year
- Several times a year
- About once a month
- 2-3 times a month
- Nearly every week
- Every week
- Several times a week

Self-Reported Religiosity

Would you describe yourself as...

- Extremely religious
- Very religious
- Somewhat religious
- Neither religious nor non-religious
- Somewhat non-religious
- Very non-religious
- Extremely non-religious
- Can't choose

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