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Exploring How Morality Framing And Partisanship Influence Public Perceptions Of Immigration

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EXPLORING HOW MORALITY FRAMING AND PARTISANSHIP INFLUENCE PUBLIC
PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRATION

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2022

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis research project to the person who taught me to see all colors the world has to offer. Thank you for the positive impact that you have continued to make in my life. To adventure through the unknown weather, to travel as melodies, as we continue to soar through the atmosphere.

EXPLORING HOW MORALITY FRAMING AND PARTISANSHIP INFLUENCE PUBLIC
PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRATION

by

GERARDO J. FLORES, BA

THESIS

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Abstract

The goal of this thesis research project is to provide a new theoretical outlook that explores and analyzes how morality framing may affect American political preferences and behavior.

Partisanship and ideological preferences have long been acknowledged as significant predictors of political behavior in the American electorate. I posit the framing of the key issue of immigration through a moral prism can increase support for presidential proposals and may counteract or even overpower the effects of partisanship. When one's views on morality and partisanship are at odds with each other on a given issue, I expect respondents who self-identify as morally driven will more likely embrace morality framing and may even cross party lines. To examine my assertions, I conduct a research survey experiment where 211 respondents react to speech excerpts from a president addressing the issue of immigration, with morality (versus security) framing as the key experimental treatment that triggers more morally-driven perceptions. To analyze the data, I explore key descriptive statistics from the survey sample, run a multivariate analysis of covariates (MANCOVA) in SPSS for main means and pairwise comparisons across domains (including manipulation checks), and run Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models in STATA to explore the full dynamics of the multivariate causal relationships under study. My results confirm the main manipulation checks, demonstrate balanced random assignment across treatment groups, and indicate that the moral framing treatment has a positive and significant impact. Specifically, I find that respondents exposed to the moral framing treatment are significantly more likely to support a presidential immigration policy proposal while the factor of partisanship shows no significant effect. Within key domains, I also find that group empathy helps explain increases support for a morally framed immigration policy proposal (main treatment) while (conservative) ideology increases support for the

security-framed treatment. Among my other findings, I also find that group empathy and (liberal) ideology help explain higher concern for immigrants, that group empathy increases support for a pathway to citizenship for immigrants, and that age has a counteracting effect on these latter relationships. These results provide an avenue for future studies to further explore the potential effects that morality framing can have on public perceptions of policy proposals, including in different contexts and across other policy spheres.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The contemporary political state of the United States of America is one of high—and sometimes even hyper—polarization and partisanship. Politicized, salient issues often make headlines in news articles and constantly trend throughout different social media platforms. Issues such as immigration, abortion rights, gun rights, and voting rights, among others, seem to be omnipresent in the political arena. Political observers note that partisans from each side of the political aisle are often trying to garner outrage from their electorate in order to push their partisan agendas. Scholars have thoroughly studied partisanship to show the effect that it has on voter behavior and how it has increased in the past seventy years (Bartels 2000). Partisanship has also been shown to have an effect on ideology, public opinion, the use of elite cues, and the evaluation of national institutions (Mason 2018; Tesler 2012; Nicholson 2012; Cohen and King 2004). The previous literature on partisanship demonstrates it has a great effect on American political behavior, specifically in the aforementioned issues. However, how does partisanship perform in affecting public perceptions when alternative factors are introduced to frame key issues in a certain way?

Employing an experimental survey design (UTEP IRB approved and exempt), this study will focus on the extent to which morality can impact political behavior when used as a framing tool to elicit support for a presidential policy proposal for immigration reform. I will also consider the extent to which it may compete with or even overpower the influence of partisanship (as well as ideology) when applied in context to the key issue of immigration. By using immigration as a key salient issue, and framing it from a moral perspective, I address the following puzzle: will morally-driven voters move across party lines in order to support what

they view as a morally framed immigration policy proposal, and will they be willing to do so even when it stands at odds with their partisan preferences?

The Demographics of El Paso

For this thesis research project, I will collect survey data from student respondents at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in the El Paso community. Given its location at the U.S.-Mexico border and its rich, largely Mexican American community, the El Paso area provides a unique demographic that has unique potential as a starting point for this type of research.

Accordingly, I will first provide the general descriptive statistics of the El Paso population as well as explore key political perceptions and behaviors attributed to people in the region. Later on, I will likewise examine the descriptive statistics for my survey sample of student respondents and present key findings on how such respondents react to an experimental treatment that tests how morally-driven framing affects public support for immigration policy reform.

To begin, using data from DataUSA (DataUSA 2019), I find some recent information regarding the demographics of El Paso and some key political perceptions and behaviors of the people living in this particular community. Looking at general descriptive statistics, the median age in El Paso is about 32.9 years old. In addition, the three largest ethnic groups in El Paso in order from greatest to least were as follows; White Hispanic, Non-White Hispanic, and White non-Hispanic (DataUSA 2019). For the overall Latinx population in El Paso, a combination of those that are White, Non-white, and multiracial Hispanic is 82.1 percent. To consider the demographics of El Paso Texas in a way that is parsimonious, the term Latinx (or otherwise Hispanic interchangeably) may be used as an all-encompassing term. The remainder of the population is a combination of ethnic groups that identify as white, black or African American, multiracial, Asian, and native American without Hispanic ties or roots. It should also be noted

that the terms Hispanic, Latinx, Chicano(a), and Mexican-American, among others, each have their own unique meaning, and individuals' cultural and political identities are shaped in a variety of ways depending on how they view and relate to such terms. Indeed, previous literature has shown that ethnic identity affects political beliefs (Muñoz 2007). Additionally, for those that identify as Hispanic, Latinx, or Chicano(a), their political beliefs may also differ depending on where they are regionally located in the United States (Rinderle and Danielle 2008). So even when people share the same ethnic identity, or are from the same ethnic group, their political beliefs may also be driven by the socio-political contexts of the state in which they live in. Latinos who live in California have distinct and sometimes different political beliefs than Latinos who live in New Mexico, or Florida. Lastly, previous literature also notes that Hispanics, Latinos, and Chicanos have always had strong sense of collectivism. The willingness to have a close-knit community where mutual help to those within their ethnic community is of the utmost importance (Chavez 1984). As stated previously, ethnic identification of a group can explain their political beliefs, and it may further help predict the likelihood of their participation and preferences in voting. Previous studies have shown that those who identify as Latino voters are more likely to abstain from voting when faced with changing or challenging external conditions. Specifically, when Latino voters find that their precinct has changed on Election Day, they may be less likely to vote in that election cycle (Amos et al. 2017).

In 2019, the foreign-born population in El Paso accounted for 23.1 percent of the population which was a decrease from 23.8 percent from the previous year (DataUSA 2019). The most important nuance presented by this specific data is the age of those who are native-born and the median age of those who are foreign-born. The median age of those who are native born in El Paso is 28 years old, while those who foreign-born have a median age of 54 years old. By

comparing the median age of native-born people living in El Paso, to the median age of all those living in El Paso, which is 32.9, we can see that a significant amount of people who are native-born living in El Paso have a high likelihood of having at least one parent who was foreign born. This is important because it plays into previous literature of political behavior concerning immigrants and immigration. Contact Theory states that people who have had more frequent contact with those that are immigrants, are more likely to be in favor of political policy that is more welcoming of immigration and immigrants (Homola and Tavits 2018). The previous literature has shown that left leaning voters, who traditionally more often vote for the Democrat Party, are more likely to be affected by Contact Theory and thus agree with more liberal, progressive immigration policies. The more they interact with someone who is foreign-born, the more it reduces the likelihood of them perceiving any threats related to immigration trends. The opposite is true for right leaning voters, who usually vote for the Republican Party and are not affected by Contact Theory, especially if they have little or no ties to immigrants in their communities. Instead, in some cases contact with a person who is foreign-born actually increases their threat perceptions of that person and immigrants more generally. One of the key explanations for this partisan-driven behavior of individuals lies in the party platforms addressing immigration-related issues and their acceptance of elite cues from their party leaders on such issues. Continuing to build on Contact Theory, there is a layer of morality that may be attributed to it as well. Knowing a person, or interacting with a person and their needs, can alter one's moral perspective about an individual in a manner that may alter or even counteract one's prior partisan biases and tendencies (Mazumder 2018). This thesis research project can potentially further build on this area of the literature because of the demographic that is being used to conduct the study and the manner in which morality, partisanship, and ideology will be

examined. The likelihood of a UTEP student to have had some form of contact with a person that is foreign-born, whether it is a family member, friend, classmate, colleague, or other known association in this region may provide some interesting insights into such dynamics when they come into play.

Using data from the Association of Religious Data Archives (ARDA 2010) there were an approximate 345,950 people who identified as Catholics compared to 338,500 people who stated they have no religious affiliation. The remainder of the population omitted from answering or had identified to another religion that was non-Christian. With the population of El Paso being approximately 800,000 thousand in 2010, the amount of people who identified as Catholic was larger than those who did not identify with any religion. At the same time, the number of people who identified as Catholic in the city of El Paso has seen a continuous decline since the 1980s (see also the 2020 U.S. Census Data). A possible explanation for this could be a growing generation that was raised in a religious household but not continuing the practice as they go into adulthood. There are different reasons for this occurrence, which fall in different political directions for different people. For example, some people believe the Catholic Church has outdated views and choose not to identify as Catholic. Others may believe that the church has become too liberal and may choose to convert to another, more conservative Christian denomination. Previous literature has identified the impact that religion has on choosing who to vote for in presidential elections (Layman 1997). Furthermore, more recent evidence shows a difference in voting by those who identify with the same religion but have different political and ideological preferences. As such, a person who identifies as Catholic may vote differently depending on whether they identify as conservative or liberal (Layman 1997).

Each of these separate statistics of the demographics within El Paso influences how an individual behaves politically as well as their general political beliefs. The demographics of El Paso provide a unique opportunity to examine a population for which all of these characteristics may vary in unique ways that allow for the testing of key dynamics relating to morality and partisan politics in the area of immigration policy.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Morality Studies

For this thesis research project, I will be using a moral prism in order to test whether morality can counteract or even overpower partisanship and personal ideology. For this reason, I will explore what morality is and what it can mean for an individual person. Given the nuance of morality, specifically in the field of philosophy, the focus will be on how it is applicable to this particular area of political research that focuses on moral framing techniques and some public perceptions related to religious morality. This is with the understanding that this research project will not be able to encompass the entirety of the broader and various other conceptualizations of the 71st century of morality. There are two principles of morality, the first is called absolute morality and the second is relative morality (McDonald 2010). The first type of morality, absolutism, views morality in an objective perspective and can definitively dictate right from wrong. The second type of morality, relativism, which takes a non-absolutist perspective about what is right and wrong and introduces more nuance into morality (McDonald 2010).

The key issue, and most difficult problem of ethics is how a moral principal can be rationally justified. It is not often that the difference between moral right and wrong can be stripped down to a single objective truth. For this reason, to apply a more indicative way to measure morality, and how one may be able to distinguish right from wrong, we can assume that all actors who are participating in such moral judgements are rational actors (Kraus and Coleman 1987). With this baseline assumption of individuals being rational actors, people will need to determine the morality of their decisions based on the information they have in hand. This also requires that the aforementioned rational actor is able to accurately and critically break down the information that is available to them. Without this rational actor assumption, determining what a

moral judgement and decision is may be too difficult to discern (Gewirth 1978). Furthermore, the lived experience of a person plays a large role in their moral judgement, which increases the level of modulation in which morality can be explained.

Throughout the historical development of philosophical literature, we see ideas ranging from Plato's Platonist school of thought, Aristotle's ideas of natural law, Kant's categorical imperative, and Mill's principle of utility, among others. Subsequent scholars have used and built upon these ideas to help discern what constitutes rational justification in ethics and what drives a person to make a moral decision (Gewirth 1978). The literature discusses how a person's deepest convictions and their own personal principles will dictate their rational justification and moral decision-making. A person's lived experience can shape their rational justification, which brings in the complication about how each individual person can have conflicting principles and how they choose to uphold those principles. This creates a scenario where two people may hold principles that are vastly different from each other making it difficult to establish an objective truth to what morality is or should be. An example that can be used is that of a rational actor when it comes to their economic prosperity. When a rational actor needs to have a rational justification for the way they conduct their business, they must take into consideration two key factors. First, a person who is running a business must decide whether they wish to maximize its utility or not. Usually, maximizing their utility, in the economic sense, is a strategic plan where a person attempts to get the highest possible satisfaction that is beneficial to them (Smith 1991). In some instances, including for corporate leaders, the maximization of utility focuses on increasing their profit margins by their own set goal for that year, which may have a negative, perhaps even immoral impact on other actors and society more broadly. The second key conceptualization is for the rational actor whose knowledge stems from what will make them the happiest. In other

words, based on the information that they have, their decision will reflect what they see as most favorable to them. In this example of morality, the person is using rational justification to defend their moral judgement, and whether their decision was moral is subjective by every different person. As well, it may also have a negative, perhaps even immoral impact on other people in the broader society.

Now we are going to use another example that goes beyond the differences of a person's moral judgement based on what they perceive to be right and wrong for their own self-interest. In this example, we will instead use objective truths within a set of rules and boundaries in which the rational actor must exist in. There are different ways in which people guide their lives, especially with the development of societies with structural institutions. A person can use their personal goals, societal rules, personal habits, ideals, and societal institutions to dictate how they create their own moral judgement (McDonald 2010). When introducing this completely new structure, it may cause people's moral judgement to be counteracted, or even overpowered, by the rules of the structure they are participating in. The new rules and structure may be able to even overpower actions that are conducted out of pure self-interest. These structures have an obligatory sense of compliance that is mandatory for every person who is existing in that environment to follow. People participating will need to accept the results of the outcomes, regardless of whether they agree with them or not. The person who is deciding to participate in this structured environment believes the end results are morally justified. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the rules, laws, or etiquette that are required because they help determine their moral judgements. As an example, we can take the game of chess in order to further explain how rules in a controlled environment are able to overpower those deciding for their self-interest. In the game of chess, there are three possible outcomes for each player: a win, loss, or a tie. A

person trying to maximize their utility may see themselves winning as rational justification of their moral judgement. The person then has a decision to make when it comes to possibly cheating in order to make sure their maximization of utility occurs, particularly in the instance when they are losing. They would then have to decide whether to break the moral principles that were established within the structure of the game. In this instance, it would be immoral to cheat in the game of chess because of the established rules, and any person who decides to do so would then stop believing that the end results the structure have created are morally justified, thus making their actions immoral from an objective perspective (McDonald 2010). This example shows how morality can be subjective to a person's lived experience, yet also objective when entering into a structured environment where the people participating in it have agreed to the rules and outcomes beforehand.

Religious Morality and Secular Morality

The framework of morality for this research has been seen as objective morality and relative morality. Diving deeper into morality, we are going to see what differences and similarities there are between religious morality and secular morality. There are similarities in the framework of how both of these moralities can affect a person's analysis of a situation. There are also differences in how separate people receive their moral compass from religion, as well as for those who receive it a secular framework. In reality, religious morality and secular morality both use similar frameworks as they view the world through a moral lens. Interestingly enough, it is their behavior that differentiates the most between those who are theists and nontheists.

Religious and secular morality have a similar framework in which they both individually function. Within both frameworks there is the concept of risk analysis, wherein each person within their respective group is able to analyze what kind of risk and consequence will come

from their actions (Brandt and Rozin 1997). A person who receives their morals from their religious affiliation and group analyzes risk in the same format as the person who attains their morals from a secular framework. Though it should be noted that risk comes from different power structures, such as the omniscient being versus the government for religious versus secular morality, respectively. Furthermore, both kinds of moralities also depend on a method of informing people about risk assessment. People need to understand the level of risk in taking an action, or otherwise in choosing inaction. In other words, if people are not adept at understanding risk, they may remain uninformed about what is considered right and wrong (Böhm and Pfister 2005).

Morality in the religious context has moral stipulations by which people need to follow to abide by their religiosity. If there is a violation of this moral condition, then it is considered to be a sin, which goes against their religious views. The sin that is committed by violating this moral condition is deemed to have a negative effect on the person who committed the sin, whether it occurs physically or spiritually. Also, a person who commits an action that hurts another person (whether physically and/or spiritually) is also considered to have committed a sin. For example, it would go against the moral stipulation to physically assault Ir person, that would be considered a sin, and a detriment towards the persons own spirituality (Brandt and Rozin 1997). Within the framework of religious morality, the religious community to which an individual belongs to has a moral responsibility to attempt to aid the sinner. They can do this by criticizing their own actions, which gives them the possibility to redeem themselves from those actions. For example, a person within the religious framework that steals from another person would either have to return what he or she stole, or otherwise donate something of equal value to a charitable organization (Henrich 2009).

Data from the Pew Research Center (2014) shows that a majority of people across 40 different countries believe that having faith in an omniscient being that is a higher lifeform to that of a human, is necessary to be a morally good person. Therein, those who have attained their moral compass from their religious beliefs, theists, have been seen to be altruistic and biased towards their own ingroups (Henrich 2009). Compared to those who are secular, or do not tie their morality to any religious beliefs, nontheists are shown to be more prosocial towards everyone, even if they are considered to be in the outgroup (Shariff et al. 2014). Theists rely on their communities and have a higher level of social connectedness to their groups than those who are not. These social connections that religious sociality provides have negative consequences that often result in the discrimination against those who are not part of the ingroup (LaBouff et al. 2012). Higher level of social connections lead to higher levels of social discrimination in religious groups which involves discrimination and prejudice against ethnic minorities, those with different sexual orientations, nontheists, and other marginalized groups (Hall et al. 2010). Theists do tend to be charitable and willing to give assistance to those that are within their own religious community. Equally, theists' disparagements of outgroup members match the level of altruism that is given to those in their ingroup. This leads to the exacerbation of having an extremely narrow-minded and limited worldview. Furthermore, this also leads to the exploitation of the ingroup to spread hateful rhetoric towards communities they do not agree with. This comes from the extreme social pressure from the religious community, and groups, which conform to their view of morality (Ginges 2009). This type of social pressure works because of the desirability of theists to be socially accepted within their ingroup (Sedikides and Gebauer 2010).

At the same time, the belief of an omniscient higher being who is continuously monitoring everyday functions of theists serves as a constant motivator to attempt to be virtuous. This belief ties in with the punishment of committing a sin that goes against their religious beliefs, which is an extremely important mechanism that drives their ethical and moral behavior (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012). It discourages any kind of behavior that can be considered selfish by the ingroup and would make them appear as less virtuous. Furthermore, religious morality is seen through a lens that aligns with absolutism and takes away some of the nuance from moral issues. However, those who see their morality through a religious lens tend to be unable to agree when discussing morality with those of an outgroup. Through the lens of absolutism, theists believe that only one person can be right in their moral stance, usually leading to very little compromise or room for middle ground (Rand et al. 2012).

Secular morality does not have the belief of an omniscient being, but people in this category often share plenty of similarities with religious morality. As stated previously, religious morality has the framework of what it considers to be a sin. Instead of having a religious institution create a framework for what is moral and virtuous, those who do not rely on religious morality instead use secular institutions and their own beliefs to shape their moral compass (Sedikes and Gebauer 2010). For example, a person may have the belief that drinking alcohol is immoral, especially when such belief is also broadly embraced by their ingroup. Drinking alcohol is therefore immoral in a manner nearly equivalent to sinning if it was done so in a religious framework. So, a person who sees drinking alcohol as immoral, or is pressured by their social group to feel like drinking alcohol is immoral, may drink on one day and then take steps to redeem themselves from committing such a sin. The attempt to redeem could be in the form of not drinking alcohol on the next social occasion or limiting the amount. Another example could

be a person who sees eating foods that are unhealthy as immoral because it causes more diseases and often the unhealthy food is marketed towards communities or groups that are oppressed (Brandt 1997). When seen as immoral within the ingroup, the consumption of this unhealthy food perpetuates a system that is inherently immoral. Therefore, the consumption of this unhealthy food is seen as a sort of sin, and in order to redeem oneself, the person eats healthier food the next day or exercises. In both cases, the person is committing the immoral act and then taking steps to find redemption which is extremely similar to those who abide by religious morality. Furthermore, secular morality relies on secular institutions, like health organizations, the government, and legal systems. A person living in a society that prohibits stealing, or murder, will understand that doing any of those things is immoral. In contrast, a person who attains their morality from a religious group also sees these acts as immoral, which shows that the framework of religious morality and secular morality are similar up to this point (Gervais and Norenzayan 2012).

Secular morality is able to develop beyond the framework of what is moral and immoral in the religious context. Therefore, secular morality can affect other behaviors that people may take part in, such as drunk driving, smoking, or gun violence. These issues tend to arise through a secular dialogue can provide a motivation for a change in behavior (Brandt 1997). Secular morality also views morality through a relativist lens, as opposed to an absolutist view. This adds a significant level of nuance to what is seen as moral and immoral (Rand et al. 2012).

Previous examples about the consumption of alcohol and unhealthy food can now be expanded upon. Even though both may be seen as immoral, there is nuance as to the amount of what is consumed. For example, having a small drink of alcohol has a different moral consequence compared to someone who drinks alcohol excessively. The same can be applied to those who

feel eating unhealthy food is immoral. There is a significant difference between eating a food that could eventually cause cardiovascular disease versus eating a substance that is toxic or runs the risk of seriously damaging the person consuming it. This nuance is only possible if the morality is relative, and not absolute (Brandt 1997). Additionally, this nuance gives more liberty and freedom to those who gain their morality through secularism because unlike religious morality, the sense of community is not as strong (Graham and Haidt 2010). There is no social pressure from a community or ingroup that restricts their behavior of not consuming an unhealthy product or conducting an immoral act. Social tradition in the United States has always prioritized individual freedom, thus making any kind of societal intervention as improper (Vandello and Cohen 1999).

Scientific findings, such as the understanding that smoking can cause long term diseases and health concerns, can dictate how new moral issues are derived through secular morality, but that is not the only way moral issues can be created. The role of mass media is also important, as it has been shown to be in other aspects of life. The media main institutional purpose is to provide information to the public, which this gives them the opportunity to gain insight on issues they may never experience firsthand (Brandt 1997). As an example, humanitarian crises can be occurring in any part of the world and mass media can inform people from all other places about such crises and the moral issues they encompass. Since the mass media is a secular institution then these issues can fall in the realm of secular morality (although religiously-driven coverage can also be explored). The mass media has influenced the way people may think and perceive moral issues, especially when driving a political agenda. This can be seen when mass media covers public health awareness about the consumption of specific product while selling airtime for a commercial that advertises a product harmful to people who consume it. This can also be

applied to other moral issues like smoking, immigration, or gun control in which the mass media selectively gives information in order to push their own agenda, and in essence can shape the secular moral issue the way that it desires (Silverstone 2007).

Lastly, secular morality has been able to evolve and essentially create new technological innovations not previously encountered. Since religious morality is bounded by the issues explicitly stated in religious scripture, secular morality is able to step in when new moral issues are created amid contemporary social changes and/or new technology (Brandt 1997). An example of this can be seen with the issue of drunk driving. The invention of the automobile made for the issue of driving while intoxicated a reality, but religious morality, in its absolutism, may not be able to effectively say whether it is immoral or not. Secular morality with its nuance, and relativism, is better adept to directly state the immorality of conducting such an action.

Religious and secular morality have similar frameworks, and while they do have their distinct differences, their similarities of attempting to prevent harm done to others and to themselves also stand out. For this thesis, the moral issue that is being tested is that of how to treat immigrants amid immigration policy reform efforts, and how people who are primed to see the issue of immigration through a moral lens might be more willing to support a reform proposal and perhaps even reach across the partisan aisle. A potential answer could be identified within the similarity of both of these moralities which lies in the mantra of “do no harm” (Shariff et al. 2014). A person who is primed may be willing to reach across the partisan aisle if they believe that no harm will be done. For further studies, with this knowledge about religious and secular morality, one might also consider what are the likely interactions each group faces. Most notably, those that are theists seem to be more welcoming and charitable to their ingroup, while

being critical and cold to those in the outgroup. Those that are nontheists seem to be more welcoming and charitable to everyone, on a more universal level.

Rhetoric of Morality

The final type of morality that will be discussed is morality that is depicted through rhetoric. For rhetoric morality the idea of a rational actor is a key component and the mass media also plays a significant function in maximizing the reach of such messaging. The basis of rhetoric morality is how people in positions of power, such as politicians, media figures, or members of the community use their rhetoric in an attempt to influence public perceptions and generate political mobilization. For this thesis research project, I explore the morality of such rhetoric, consider why people use the language that they do to mobilize those in their communities and constituents, and examine whether and to what extent such rhetoric may influence public perceptions.

Political mobilization is an activity in which participants rally together with those within their community to take action in order to accomplish their desired political goals. To achieve these goals there has to be a motivating factor that makes people interested in their new political goals. This includes a possible change in the behavior of an individual and the issues they are committed to. The mobilizing agent that causes the change in commitment and behavior is the sole determinant of whether the political movement and mobilization are successful or not (Cameron 1974). This is where the mass media and those who have political power come into play. First, in order for an individual to mobilize they need to have a change in commitment. Their commitment at first is attributed to the status quo, which then would have to change to replace the status quo. This commitment to change the status quo would result in political mobilization, but only after there is effectively influential political rhetoric. Political rhetoric can

be seen through the mass media, government officials, and people with platforms who are influential. These platforms keep people informed, and usually push their own agenda. The constant regurgitation of rhetoric is what produces the change in commitment of people. For example, if there is a movement to make school lunches for students in public schools free, in order to get political mobilization, there would have to be constant rhetoric that encourages people to take action. Once people feel that they agree, or even disagree, they will change their commitment from the status quo and seek to change it. This change in commitment is necessary because without a strong belief in the desire to change, the mobilization effect might not occur. The mobilization effect is commonly due to influential rhetoric delivered to the public through the mass media from those in positions of power. An activation or change in a person's behavior is key in order for political mobilization to occur. Normally, a person that is satisfied with the status quo has no need to sign petitions or attend protests. Similar to the change in commitment, the activation or change in behavior is also caused by the constant repetition of rhetoric conducted by the mass media, and those with influence. Therein, how effective the rhetoric determines how successful or unsuccessful the political mobilization and movement for change is.

It is important to note that political mobilization, throughout history, has often occurred among marginalized groups in which the status quo has impacted them negatively. In very recent years in the United States, we can see this kind of political mobilization across the nation, as in the Black Lives Matter movement, and more recently in movements that are for women's healthcare rights (Mazumder 2018). This is the reason that the rhetoric of morality is vital to a functioning society. However, rhetoric can also be used to push personal agendas that will continue to marginalize those communities that have been continuously oppressed. One of the

reasons for this is to maximize their own persona gains, whether it is for monetary gains, power over others, or other types of influence. Oftentimes, different rhetorical frames can lead to competing or counteracting perceptions and mobilized efforts to address a policy issue. For example, we can take an issue like immigration, where political rhetoric can lead to extreme positions and mobilization of people on both sides of the partisan aisle. In the lead up to the 2018 midterm elections for the United States, there was immigration rhetoric that was being used to mobilize voters to go to the ballot box (Iannacone 2021). The phrase “migrant caravan” was consistently used through political messaging from mass media, social media influencers, and politicians. The rhetoric was clearly politically motivated because evidence showed that after the midterms had passed, the rhetoric of a migrant caravan disappeared from the public sphere (Iannacone 2021). As stated previously, morality can be seen through the lens of absolutism and relativism, and by incorporating the morality of rhetoric, we can see that rhetoric can be interpreted as morally correct or incorrect.

Additionally, political mobilization also requires the actor to be rational. When it applies to political mobilization, an actor will only change their behavior and commitment if they find it is beneficial. The participation of the individual requires them to come to the conclusion that their time and effort will result in something that suit their political preferences, including for their own self-interests and/or the greater good of society. People need to justify their actions and will do so through what are known as affective bonds. People create bonds that are based on their own personalized concerns, and that are based on emotional ties to their personal and impersonal relationships. This can be done through sympathy and empathy that allows an emotional bond to a person, group of people, or an organization (Lahusen 1996; Sirin et al. 2016, 2021).

On a further note, rhetoric morality has played a large role in addressing the oppression of marginalized groups throughout American history. This thesis research project could potentially show results that will also provide more supporting evidence of the need to use and create alternative rhetoric in order to address the needs of marginalized groups. Alternative rhetoric is difficult to create because of all the nuances that exist within any group of people. It is difficult to narrow down any single feature and in order to do so must not be stripped of all of its nuance to where loses any meaning (Wallace 1992). After analyzing any potential results, future studies can further explore whether the rhetoric of morality holds the key to creating an alternative rhetoric.

Voter Behavior and Partisanship

In another realm of what motivates public perceptions and behavior, scholars have examined a variety of factors influencing the way people perceive political issues and vote, and why it affects their behavior. Campbell et al. (1960) employ nine case studies to identify that the two strongest predictors of voting behavior are social class and religion. Furthermore, the authors explore how exogenous factors versus relevant conditions affect a voter behavior. There is the classic example of a voter getting a flat tire on their way to the voting location. In this instance, what stopped the voter from casting their vote had nothing to do with political parties, or the voters own political will to cast a vote. In contrast there are relevant conditions that affect the way that a person decides to vote or not vote. One example is the lack of political will to go out and vote. If a person is not interested in the political process they may refuse to go out and vote, while still keeping to their partisan ties. These people will not go out and directly support the candidate of their preferred party but will be happy if and when they win elected office.

There are also personal and external conditions which work in contrast of one another. Personal factors are more easily recognizable as conditions that directly affect the voter. An example of a personal factor can be seen in Campbell et al. (1960) in the third case study. A carpenter in Connecticut stated that economic factors and his son being drafted into the military were both key factors for voting in the 1956 presidential election. These personal factors are what led him to vote for specific candidates. External conditions do not have the same effect on political behavior as do personal factors. In order for there to be an effect on a person there has to be some sort of political stimuli. This political stimulus is only able to affect behavior if the person is able to perceive it. Most of this behavior is based on the perception of the individual about a specific condition, event, or even a person. An example of an external condition is the decision of a person to run for political office. This decision does not directly affect the voter until the political candidate becomes visible to the voter. The political stimulus is then activated within the voter in the instances when the voter is able to perceive the political candidate for the first time.

Lastly, there are political conditions versus non-political conditions mentioned by Campbell et al. (1960) that can be used to understand partisanship and political behavior. If an event occurs that is considered to be an external condition, as mentioned before, then the observer can determine if it is a political condition or not. In contrast, if an event is a personal condition, then it is up to the person to decide whether or not it is political (i.e., the phenomenological interpretation of what it means to be political). The literature has shown partisanship to be an essential cornerstone in attempting explain American political behavior. Previous literature on partisanship, particularly in the United States, is vast. There are different factors that have been used to explain what partisanship is, and why it heavily influences

American political behavior (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). Additionally, comparative studies of partisanship have also discussed the concept of negative partisanship and its vital role in American politics (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). Throughout classical and contemporary studies of partisanship there is one clear consensus: partisanship is a stable, often impactful factor and one of the best predictors of political behavior (Campbell et al. 1960; Barber and Pope 2019). Most recently, heightened (and hyper) polarization seems to have increased the predictive power of partisanship in how self-identified partisans voted in elections. Furthermore, partisan cues have a big influence in how partisan voters participate in politics. In the absence of partisan cues, or elite cues, voters must find a different venue of information to fuel their political participation (Klar 2014). Within this understanding of partisan cues, there is a question of how partisanship can affect public preferences and behavior when a political figure employs moral framing as a means to increase support for a key policy proposal.

Political ideology in American political behavior is likewise considered to have a notable impact in how Americans vote. At first, during the second half of the 20th century, American voters were thought to be unable to think in ideological terms (Converse 1964). However, entering the 21st century it seemed that something occurred within American voters, where they seemed to be more interested in politics and showed increased level of ideological thinking (Carmines et al. 2012). When partisan cues are missing or not available, the increased ability of American voters to think in an ideological manner when dealing with political issues relies more on internal perceptions. While American voters have been increasingly thinking in an ideological manner over the last several decades, the question remains how morality framing, when applied in such context, may further alter or influence the way individuals perceive issues and behave politically.

Macro-Partisanship

Macro-partisanship attempts to look at partisanship through a holistic lens. Instead of interpreting partisanship through individual events that effect political behavior, macro-partisanship looks at aggregate events and how voters identify themselves as a part of a political party. At first, macro-partisanship was thought to be extremely stable, and any changes were thought to be small, did not last a long time, and did not occur very often. These expectations of macro-partisanship proved to be incorrect (MacKuen et al. 1989). Instead, macro-partisanship literature shifted towards viewing party identification as a stronger predictor for American political behavior.

As stated by MacKuen et al. (1989) party identification is a more stable measurement of political partisanship and macro-partisanship than any other measure that was attempted until now. Party identification is the attachment that an individual has towards a specific political party. Furthermore, party identification has been shown to be strong and stable relative to other political attitudes. Party identification only seems to vary when there are presidential elections that are won in a landslide, which seldom occurs. Partisanship effects how people will vote, even in large realignment events, wherein people may or may not adopt new party identifications. This level of partisanship can be explained at micro level of party identification, where voters are not well informed about political issues they are voting for (Mason 2018). Furthermore, since most voters are not well informed about politics in general, they use their party identification, in order to understand politics. When a specific issue comes up that is important to the voter, they can turn to the party they identify with, and it gives them a cue or shortcut on how to view and understand the political aspects of that specific issue.

Lastly, political parties in the United States are able to withstand party turmoil and scandals because partisan voters will continue to vote for the party they identify with. Even the strongest countering indicators of economic performance and presidential approval are not necessarily able to shift a significant number of partisan voters (MacKuen et al. 1989).

Contemporary Partisanship

Amid an increase in empirical studies of partisanship, scholars have continued to explore the key issues that intertwine with partisanship and the behavior of the American electorate. When studying American political behavior, the variables of ideology and partisanship have always been highly correlated with one another. Barber and Pope (2019) used former President Trump as a way to test which had a higher effect on voting behavior between partisanship and ideological preferences. There are two kinds of political voters in the United States, those who are party loyalists and those who are policy loyalist. Those who are policy loyalists will vote according to their ideological preferences over all other reasons. Party loyalists will vote according to party lines by getting cues from political elites, party leaders and partisan media, over all other reasons (Barber and Pope 2019). Former President Trump's shifts from liberal to conservative (or vice versa) policy positions allowed for the opportunity to test to see if people who self-identified as conservatives and Republicans would show either party loyalty or policy loyalty. While most American voters fall somewhere in between being party versus policy loyalists, empirical evidence showed party loyalists were more likely to vote in favor of their preferred political party, breaking away from their policy—and therein ideological—preference (Barber and Pope 2019).

Other contemporary studies of partisanship have introduced negative partisanship, which has been on the rise in recent decades in the United States. Negative partisanship is the idea in

which voters form their political ideology based on opposition to another political party. Instead of forming party identification because they agree with their party, they form party identification as a form of opposition against a political party they dislike. One important aspect about partisanship, specifically negative partisanship, is the political identity of a person has become more aligned with their own social identity, with their culture, and their ideological preferences (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). In other studies, Social Identity Theory in part revolves around the competition between two or more groups in which they vie for resources that are scarce. Social Identity Theory as it applies to partisanship takes the concept of resource scarcity and applies it to electoral power. The United States has single member districts in which only one person is elected to represent that district, which means that only one political party is able to represent that district at a given point in time. Amid a scarcity of resources in the single member district, it can heighten the levels of polarization and partisanship (Andreychik et al. 2009). Social Identity Theory builds on the psychological foundation wherein a person wants to advance their in-group's status and protect themselves from outside threats (Fowler and Kam 2007). This ingroup bias applies to voters who self-identify as either Republican or Democrat. Republicans will continue to vote for their party in order to make sure their group gets protected and advances the status of the group as a whole (Mackie et al. 2000). Furthermore, because of their new built identity, partisans will take political action to ensure their party wins elections and will defend party leaders (and the party itself) from potential political scandals to preserve their image (Huddy 2013). Lastly, social identities towards political parties can be formed based on demographic characteristics such as race, social class, gender, religion, and ethnicity (Roccas and Brewer 2002).

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

A Morally-Driven Framework of Public Perceptions

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which morality framing can influence public perceptions concerning a policy issue. I also consider the extent to which such framing may counter or even overpower partisanship (and other key factors) in shaping opinions. Specifically, I look to see if the moral framing of a presidential policy proposal for immigration reform can increase public support for such proposal (in comparison to national security framing), as well as explore other key dynamics that may shape issue perceptions. As a reminder, the purpose of this study is not to dispute whether the moral understanding of these issues is correct or incorrect. Instead, the purpose of this study is to establish and test a theoretical framework to examine through a survey experimental design how and to what extent opinion dynamics may be influenced by morally-driven rhetoric.

The Role of Morality in Immigration Politics

The topic of morality and moral issues is rarely addressed in the literature. However, it can be an effective variable that influences public perceptions and therefore merits further scholarly inquiry. A moral issue is one which a person finds to be part of their identity and important for how society functions. For example, we can use the topic of immigration in the United States to define what it means for a policy challenge to be a moral issue. The issue of immigration has always fluctuated from low to high salience among the American electorate (Citrin 1997). In recent polarized times, the salience of immigration has been extremely high. During election years, both Democrats and Republicans have used it to push their partisan agenda (Hooghe and Dassonneville 2018). For Democrats, and their base, immigration is about the humanity of the migrant that is coming from their country of origin to the United States. For

them, it is about the humanitarian aspect, the human right to be able to migrate, especially under conditions where their country of origin does not give them an adequate chance at survival (Carens 2015). Lastly, the Democratic Party platform has also pushed for the idea of family reunification and against the separation of families at the border that occurred during the Trump presidency. They present the issue to their electorate as one of compassion and moral obligation to keep and/or reunite families together; regardless of the myriad of challenges to do so, especially once separations and deportations have already occurred (Slack et al. 2015).

On the other side of the moral policy coin, immigration for Republicans is more of a security-based issue invoked as a political tool to gain favor with their electorate. Too often, Republicans use derogatory terms, especially against those who are undocumented, such as illegal aliens, or invaders (Wei et al. 2019). Their description of the southern border is also one that is akin to a military invasion or a natural disaster. Derogatory terms such as invasion, attack of the southern border, a border crisis, and a flood of immigrants are often used. Even when empirical data shows that border crossings and apprehensions remain at constant and stable percentages, Republicans will frame the issue of immigration as an impending, dangerous threat (Cornelius 2005). Additionally, along with these derogatory attacks against immigration, Republicans shape their own moral framing of immigration along the lens of security of Americans—as a moral obligation to keep the country safe from outside threats (Lahav and Courtemanche 2012). The rhetoric of an invasion from the southern border is posited in ensuring the safety of American citizens from potential criminals that are undocumented. There is a strong push towards proper vetting of all immigrants entering the country, especially those who are refugees from countries that are seen as threatening by Republican leaders and their electorate (Williams 2021).

The purpose of this study is to determine if an issue like immigration, when framed as a moral issue, can counteract or even overpower the influence of partisanship and other key control variables. People can be in favor of more open immigration policies. If a person is pro-immigration, or at least supportive of a path to citizenship for all immigrants, it may be for many different reasons. Some of these reasons include but are not limited to; they were an immigrant, they have family members that are or were immigrants, or they have a friend or acquaintance who are immigrants. In line with Group Empathy Theory (Sirin et al. 2016, 2021), they are able to empathize with this on a personal level with this demographic which can extend towards people that they do not personally know. This creates a type of ingroup dynamic where any type of policy or personal opinion that is against immigration becomes an issue that is against their group, and their identity (Andreychik et al. 2009).

In contrast, people who are against immigration, or for restrictive immigration policies, may see their identity of American as being the most important one and may view reform efforts to help immigrants (viewed as the outgroup) as an attack on their ingroup. This may lead to higher levels of polarization and partisanship because an issue that is normally just a policy issue has now become a moral dilemma.

Hypothesis

For this study, I propose one main hypothesis:

H1: When the issue of immigration reform is framed through a moral lens (as opposed to a security lens), respondents will be more likely to support a presidential policy proposal.

It is important to note that the presidential policy proposal in this particular study focuses on the area of immigration reform to see if morality framing versus security framing makes a notable difference in public reactions to presidential rhetorical overtures.

Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

Data and Methods

For this thesis project, I have created a survey questionnaire along with two vignettes that will try to measure the effect that morality framing and other key dynamics have on public perceptions. The questionnaire and the two vignettes can be found in their entirety in the appendix. The survey questionnaire is identical for both version A and version B of the vignettes. The unit of analysis for this study is students, because all respondents are students at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). The total N is 211 for surveys that were completed and submitted with 99 respondents for vignette version A and 112 respondents for vignette version B (out of a total of 299 participants, the surveys that were initiated but not completed and submitted were dropped from the analyses). Lastly, some additional observations were dropped in specific models where certain variables contained missing data due to omitted responses to key questions even though the surveys were otherwise completed and submitted (thus the N for the various models I analyze ranges from 202 to 211 depending on model specifications).

For my analyses, I first conduct a multivariate analysis of covariates (MANCOVA) using the SPSS program to assess the overall impact of the experimental treatment, conduct key manipulation checks, and also conduct balanced random assignment checks. All variables for these analyses are standardized 0-1 and I report key descriptive statistics for the means as well as the significance results for pairwise comparisons (at the .05 level) using the Bonferroni adjustment for multiple comparisons. I then employ the STATA program to derive descriptive statistics for an array of my key survey data results to report and describe the sample population in detail. Last, I conduct a variety of Ordinary Least Squared (OLS) regression analyses for my key dependent variables to assess the impact of morality framing affecting opinion dynamics in

concert with other key factors. In doing so, I employ simple regression models for ease of interpretation with all variables in the models standardized 0-1 and running my models with robust standard errors to report significant findings ranging from marginally significant ($p < .1$) to significant ($p < .05$, $< .01$, and $< .001$) with two-tailed tests.

Results

The results from the survey questionnaire and vignettes have provided interesting insights into how morality framing and other key dynamics may impact public perceptions. Furthermore, I find interesting details about the demographics of the El Paso del Norte region. Below, there will be a discussion on the main effects of the experimental treatment (and manipulation checks therein, the key causal findings for the multivariate regression analyses, as well as a breakdown of the key insights drawn from the descriptive statistics about the student sample taken within the Paso Del Norte region. After discussing the descriptive statistics of our population sample, the SPSS multivariate analyses of covariates (MANCOVA) help demonstrate through key manipulation and balanced random assignment checks that the results of the study are valid and reliable, and not found by mere coincidence. I then detail the results of the various multivariate regression analyses across key dependent variables and the effects and implications of the main causal determinants for each one.

Descriptive Statistics

To fully understand the student sample data at a holistic level, we will first take a look at the descriptive statistics. This will allow for a deeper understanding, specifically because I am looking to study the demographics of the El Paso del Norte region. As stated before, I can compare how the demographics of the region compare to those of the state and nationally, where appropriate and applicable.

The first notable describing statistic concerns age (see Figure 1 and all other tables and figures in the Appendix). The statistics for this continuous variable were as expected with 139 of respondents being between the ages of 18 to 24. This is approximately 66% of the sample size and is by far the largest portion. The next largest group were the ages of 25 to 35, which had 46 respondents and accounted for 22% of the total sample. Lastly, the smallest group was from 36 to 62, which accounted for 12% of the sample size amounting to 26 respondents. These results show that the sample size is fairly close to the demographics of the entire population of UTEP students. The percentage of students who are between the ages of 18 to 24 is 67.7 percent, which is very close to our approximate 66 percent. Furthermore, for the range of 25 to 34 the percentage of students is 22.8 percent, which is close to our overall approximate 20 percent. Lastly, from the range of 35 and above, the percentage of students at UTEP is 9.5 percent, which is still comparable to our 14 percent (NCES 2021). Overall, the age of this sample size is, at the very least, comparable to the age of the entire UTEP population. These statistics add credence to our collection method by showing a good amount of variation within the age groups.

The second descriptive statistic illustrated in Figure 2 is gender. There were 63 respondents who identified as male, which is approximately 30 percent of the sample size. There were 141 respondents who identified as female, which is approximately 67 percent of the sample size. Lastly, there were 7 respondents that identified as non-binary or other, which is approximately 3 percent of the sample size. Looking at the gender demographic of UTEP, our sample size is skewed towards having a larger female representation. The population of UTEP is approximate 56 percent female and 44 percent male, with no representation for those who identify as other or non-binary (NCES 2021). The discrepancy with our sample could be attributed to many different factors, including random error. However, the most interesting

possibility is that females are more willing and likely to respond to online surveys. This possible theory is entrenched within the social exchange theory. Specifically, females value characteristics within their own connective self like empathy and emotional closeness. By contrast, males tend to value characteristics that are individualistic at their core (Smith 2008). Given there was absolutely no incentive given to participate in the survey in the form of goods, money or extra credit, participation was completely voluntarily. This type of response is expected according to previous research done on the topic.

The third descriptive statistic is ethnicity, which looks at whether students identify themselves as Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin as shown on Figure 3. This is a dichotomous variable, so the only available answers are yes or no. For the research survey 186 stated they were from Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin, which is approximately 89 percent of the sample population. The remaining 24 respondents selected no, which amounts to approximately 11 percent of our sample population. UTEP demographics for ethnicity are 87 percent for Hispanic and Latino, and 13 percent for every other ethnicity (NCES 2021). Once again, the sample population is similar to the population of the student body attending UTEP, which gives validity to the results found in our survey. Furthermore, it also shows how well the collection process turned out and the potential of non-random selection bias to muddle the sample is minimal.

The fourth descriptive statistic shown on Figure 4 is race, which was originally a nominal variable containing eight different categories. Unfortunately, there was not enough variation within the answers for the analytical models because there were 161 respondents who identified as white, which is approximately 76 percent. The remaining seven categories were combined into one category where 50 respondents identified as non-white, which approximately accounts

for 24 percent of the sample population. Unfortunately, UTEP does not collect data separately for race and ethnicity, which in turns makes it difficult to compare the demographics of the sample size of the study to that of the UTEP student population. Furthermore, a reason for this skewness of variation could be because ethnicity and race were measured separately. This allows for Latinos and Hispanics to choose whether they identify themselves as white Latinos/Hispanics, or as non-white Latinos/Hispanics. The separation for ethnicity and race was done with consideration of how political surveys are conducted at the national level by organizations like ANES and the PEW Research Center.

The fifth descriptive statistic is party identification illustrated in Figure 5. The responses are as follows; there were 4 respondents who identified as a strong Republican, 10 respondents who identified as Republican, 16 who identified as a leaning Republican, 54 who identified as Independent, 40 who identified as a leaning Democrat, 57 who identified as Democrat, and 26 identified as a strong Democrat. By combining all respondents who identified as Republican, we get a total of 30, which equals to approximately 14 percent of the sample population. There were 54 Independent respondents, which is approximately 26 percent of the sample population. Lastly, there were 123 respondents who identified as Democrat, which is approximately 60 percent of the sample population. It should also be noted that only 207 of the 211 respondents that completed the survey answered this question, leaving us with a sample that has 4 less respondents. This specific kind of descriptive statistic is not collected by UTEP, so it will not be compared to the general population of UTEP students like the previous statistics were. However, as stated in the literature review, this is expected from the demographic of the sample size. Additionally, we can compare to see how much it varies from the sample size to the county of El Paso. To compare active voters, we can look to the Midterm Elections of 2022 to see how

residents in El Paso County voted. There are an approximate 165,000 voters from El Paso who participated in the 2022 Midterm Elections. For the United States 16th House District there were a total of 148,963 votes cast. Of those votes, 94,266 were for the Democratic candidate and 54,697 for the Republican candidate. This leads to an approximate percentage of 63.2 and 36.8 for the Democratic and Republican candidates, respectively. For the Governor's race, there were 103,864 votes for the Democratic candidate and 57,255 votes for the Republican candidate. This is an approximate percentage of 63.3 and 34.9 for the Democratic and Republican candidates, respectively. It should also be noted for the Governor's race, all the remaining percentage of voters voted for a third party or a write-in candidate (El Paso Matters 2022). Furthermore, we can see that the votes amongst those who voted for the candidate from the Democratic party is around 60 percent which is close to the number of respondents who identified as a Democrat in the survey sample population. The number of respondents who self-identified as Republicans differed by an approximate 10 percentage points. One of the possible explanations for this is that for our survey questionnaire provided the choice of identifying as an Independent (and a notable number of independents in Texas tend to lean more conservative). Furthermore, voters may think more strategically when voting and choose a specific party to vote for since elections have consequences. Comparing that to a survey where respondents can select their partisan affiliation, or in this case no partisan affiliation, voters may decide to not affiliate with one of the two main parties since there are no consequences for partaking in the survey. The sample population, regarding party identification, may not be exactly representative of the El Paso Del Norte Region, but that should be expected. The sample population, as stated previously and will be seen later, are a unique demographic. They are young, have some degree of college education, are predominantly Latino/Hispanic, and live in a border community. With consideration of all

these difference variables, we can expect for respondents to lean Democrat while still having good variation across the scale (Muñoz 2007; Rinderle and Danielle 2008).

The sixth descriptive statistic is political ideology, as illustrated in Figure 6. The responses are as follows; 6 respondents identified as very conservative, 13 respondents identified as conservative, 14 respondents identified as slightly conservative, 64 respondents identified as moderate, 23 respondents identified as slightly liberal, 52 respondents identified as liberal, and 35 identified as very liberal. Additionally, it should also be noted that 4 respondents who completed the survey did not answer this question, which results in 207 total respondents for this variable. Furthermore, combining all respondents who identified as conservative at some level gives a total of 33 respondents, which equates to 15.9 percent of the sample population. For those who identified as moderates the percentage of the sample population is approximately 31 percent. Lastly, those who identified at some level as a liberal accounts for 110 respondents, which equals a percentage of approximately 53.1. For this descriptive statistic, we will compare it to party identification as illustrated in Figure 7. Comparing these two descriptive statistics, we can see interesting shifts that occur. First, we see there are three more respondents who identified at some level of conservative who did not identify as Republican. Second, we can see there was also a decrease in the number of respondents who identified at some level as a liberal, a decrease of 13 respondents. Interestingly, I find respondents were more willing to consider themselves a strong conservative or strong liberal as compared to them self-identifying as a strong Republican or strong Democrat. Lastly, there were 10 more respondents who considered themselves to be moderates than identify as an independent voter. By combining the data from party identification and political ideology, Figure 7 provides a more comprehensive illustration of the overlap (and lack thereof) between the variables. Amid the current political era of high salience and

polarization, the results seen from these respondents is interesting and can entail a completely different research project for the future.

The seventh descriptive statistic is religion, which was originally measured as a nominal variable with a total of 11 categorical variables. Unfortunately, similar to the race variable, there was not enough variation between the categories such that it became necessary to aggregate the results into a dichotomous variable between those who identified as Catholic and non-Catholic, as shown in Figure 8. I found that 96 respondents identified as Catholic, which is approximately 45 percent of the sample population. There were also 115 respondents who identified as some form of non-Catholic, which equates to approximately 55 percent of the sample population. According to the Catholic Diocese of El Paso, the great El Paso Del Norte Region has a Catholic population of approximately 80 percent (El Paso Diocese 2021). At first glance, the sample population may not look representative of the population of the El Paso Del Norte region, which is understandable given that 10 different nominal variables were combined to create the variable of non-Catholic. Furthermore, if we were to compare the Catholic to every other non-combined response, it would give a better representation of the Catholic demographic.

The eight descriptive statistic is religiosity as illustrated in Figure 9. For this variable, respondents self-identify the level of religiosity they feel applies to them. There were 54 respondents who identified as not religious (otherwise implicitly secular), which is approximately 25.5 percent of the sample population. There were 73 respondents who identified as slightly religious, which is 34.5 percent of the sample population. Furthermore, there were 65 respondents who identified as moderately religious, which is approximately 31 of the sample population. Lastly, there were 19 respondents who identified as very religious, which is approximately 10 percent of the population. This variable is not directly comparable to the

population of UTEP or to the El Paso del Norte region, but it will give us a better understanding of how religious our sample population really is. There is a notable difference between identifying with a specific religion and being a person who is religious. As stated previously in the literature review, we know that a high percentage of people in El Paso are Catholic, but it is also known that, among young adults who grew up in a household with strong ties to their Mexican familial roots (Latino/Hispanic), they are more likely to identify as a part of the Catholic religion but are not especially religious (Layman 1997). This variable will also help understand the following descriptive statistics, which together will give us a better understanding of the religious affiliation and participation of the sample population.

The ninth descriptive statistic is the attendance of religious services and ceremonies at their respective place of worship, as illustrated in Figure 10. First, there were 77 respondents who stated they never attend any religious services, which is equal to 36.5 percent of the sample population. Second, there were 76 respondents that stated they only attended religious services a few times a year, which is equal to approximately 36 percent of the sample population. Third, there were 15 people who stated they occasionally attended religious services once or twice a month, which is equal to approximately 7 percent of the sample population. Fourth, there 18 respondents who stated they attended religious services almost every week, which equates to approximately 8.5 percent of the sample population. Lastly, there were 25 respondents who stated they attended religious services every week, which equals to an approximate percentage of 12. Once again, for this variable we cannot directly compare it to the demographics of UTEP or the region of El Paso, but we can see differing results between this variable and religiosity. The most notable difference is that over 70 percent of the sample population does not attend religious services, and if they do it is only a few times out of the year. In the religiosity scale, there were

127 respondents who considered themselves to be slightly religious or not religious at all. When comparing it to the 153 respondents that hardly attend church services, if ever, there is a notable increase. Even though some respondents consider themselves as slight religious, there are a good amount of them who do not attend any religious services. Additionally, there were initially 19 respondents who considered themselves to be very religious, and as per religiosity, there were 25 respondents that stated they attend religious services weekly. This difference of 4 respondents is interesting because it is possible that even people who do not consider themselves to be highly religious are still attending church services on a regular basis. This could be due to the fact that they attend with family members as a personal choice. Lastly, a total of 58 respondents stated that they attend religious services at the minimum once a month, and often more. The number of respondents is 26 lower than those who identified as moderately religious and very religious, which indicates that there are respondents who believe their level of religiosity is somewhat high but still do not attend any religious ceremonies on a consistent basis. There are a multitude of reasons as to why this is the case, which could merit further inquiry for a different research study.

In Figure 11, we can see religious morality, which measures how respondents feel about how necessary it is for a person to believe in God in order to have a moral character or otherwise presumably ascribe to secular morality not drawn from God. First, there were 37 respondents who stated they believed it was extremely necessary, which is equal to approximately 17.6 percent of the sample population. Second, there 27 respondents who stated it was somewhat necessary, which is 12.9 percent of the population sample. Third, there were 72 of respondents who found it was neither necessary nor unnecessary, which equates to 34.3 percent of the population sample. Fourth, there were 15 respondents who stated it was somewhat unnecessary, which is equal to

approximately 7.1 percent of the population sample. Lastly, there were 59 respondents who stated it was extremely unnecessary, which equals to an approximate percentage of 28.1. From Figure 11 we can find very interesting results by comparing it to the previous data of attendance of religious ceremonies and religiosity. It should be noted that only 210 of the respondents that completed the survey answered this question, there was one respondent who did not answer this question. First, we see that there were a total of 64 respondents that believe it is at least somewhat necessary for a person to believe in God in order to be of a good moral character. When we compare this to data on how often people attend religious ceremony at least once a month, we see there were only 58 respondents in such vein. The difference amounts to 6 respondents, but it is very interesting to see that there are at least 6 respondents, if we assume those who attend religious ceremonies at least once a month are part of the 64 respondents, who may not attend religious ceremonies even though they consider a belief in God is necessary to have a good moral character. If we only account for respondents who attend religious ceremonies at almost every week or more, then the difference becomes 21 respondents. So even though there are only 43 respondents who attend religious ceremonies, at the minimum, almost every week, there are 21 respondents who state a belief in God is necessary to have good moral character. It is an interesting contrast for which we can infer that for a portion of the sample population, they receive their morality from their religious views, or at least what their perception of being of good moral character is. Next, 34.3 percent of the sample population states that they do not think it is necessary or unnecessary for a person of good moral character to have belief in God. Comparing this to religiosity we can see that the number of respondents who consider themselves to be slightly religious and those who state they only attend religious ceremony a few times are extremely similar. One possible explanation is that people who consider themselves to

be slightly religious only attend religious ceremonies on days they view to be of high importance to them, and therefore view the need to have a belief in God to be of good moral character as something that they are neutral on. Lastly, there are a total of 74 respondents who do not believe that state belief in God is, at least partially, unnecessary to be of good moral character. This coincides with the number of respondents who never attend religious ceremonies. If we look at only those respondents who believe it is extremely unnecessary, we can see that it is only has 5 respondents more compared to the 54 respondents who identified as not religious. Overall, we were able to find some interesting results, but most importantly we can see a good amount of consistency across the answers of our respondents in terms of how they self-identify their level of religiosity, how often they attend religious ceremonies, and how they view moral character on the basis of religion.

I also include a survey question on the importance of calling out a person who is saying or doing something that is seen as immoral, which is more of a secular morality construct. In Figure 12, the results are as follows; there were 4 respondents who believed it was extremely unimportant, 25 respondents stated it was very unimportant, 2 respondents believed it to be unimportant, 7 respondents stated it was not important or unimportant, 61 respondents stated it to be important, 46 respondents believed it to be very important and 66 respondents believed it was extremely important. An approximate 82 percent of respondents believed it was important to call out behavior that was immoral, while 14.6 percent did not think it was important at all. Overall, the population sample skews heavily towards having group empathy for others. One possible explanation for this was stated in the literature review, which is Contact Theory, where people in the El Paso Del Norte region have an understanding, or at least a form of quality and quantity of contact, with people who are from an underserved community and often interacting with

immigrants in such community. It is important to control for group empathy in order to determine the extent to which treatment of the vignettes and other key causal dynamics are being driven by morality framing versus empathic responses.

For this study there were two questions that were included as an additional control for partisan dynamics, as illustrated in Figures 13 and 14. For Figure 13, we see that 47 respondents believed the Democratic Party would be better at handling issues of national security, 59 respondents believed the Republican Party would handle it better, and 104 respondents stated that there would not be a difference between either party. It should be noted that for the national security question there were 210 respondents who answered the question. This figure has some interesting results, as seen in Figure 5 there were 30 respondents who identified as Republicans, but there were 59 respondents who believed the Republican Party would handle the issue of national security better. Furthermore, there were also 123 respondents who identified as Democrats and only 47 respondents thought Democrats would handle national security better. Lastly, 104 respondents constituting 49.5 percent of the total did not believe there is a difference between either party. These responses suggest partisan preferences split between the two parties, with many more left in the middle. There are a multitude of potential reasons for why this could be occurring, which merit further inquiry, but it generally suggests that participants from this particular sample population may not be explicitly driven by partisan loyalties.

Figure 14 asks respondents which party they believe would handle the issue of immigration policy better. It should be noted that there were 209 respondents who answered this question. There were 94 respondents who believed the Democratic Party would handle immigration policy better, and 25 respondents believed that the Republican Party would handle immigration policy better. As stated previously, there were 123 respondents that identified as

Democrats and there were only 94 respondents that believed the Democratic Party was the better choice. The same can be seen for the Republican Party, for which where there were 30 respondents who identified as Republican but only 25 respondents who believed they would do a better job. This potentially means that approximately 3 Republicans did not believe their party would handle immigration party at a higher level than the Democratic Party. Once again, there was a high number of 90 respondents who did not believe there would be a difference between parties when it comes to immigration policy. Once again, we can see that partisan politics is not overbearing on how respondents answer the question to the survey, which is something to keep in mind as we continue to discuss the results of the study.

The following figures will focus on posttest questions which respondents answered after receiving the treatment of the vignette. Figure 15 shows how concerned respondents felt about the challenges that are facing immigrants in society. The results are as follows; there were 9 respondents that were not at all concerned, 16 respondents were not too concerned, 43 respondents were somewhat concerned, 71 respondents were fairly concerned, and 71 respondents were very concerned. As an additional note, there were 210 responses for this variable, meaning there was 1 respondent who completed the survey but did not answer this question. As expected, there is heavy concern for the challenges that immigrants face in society today. There were a total of 25 respondents, which is approximately 12 percent of the population sample. In the literature review, Contact Theory explains why people who have more frequent contact with an outgroup develop a more favorable view of them and why it lowers threat perceptions. Furthermore, Contact Theory seemed to heavily work on those who self-identified as Democrats, compared to those who identified as Republicans (Homola and Tavits 2018). Given this previous research and knowing the large percentage of the sample population that

identified as Democrats, it is not a surprise to have 88 percent of the population sample show some level of concern for immigrants.

For Figure 16, the post-test question of how important national security is to respondents is shown. The results are as follows; 108 respondents stated national security is extremely important, 71 states that it is somewhat important, 9 respondents stated that it was not important or unimportant, 7 respondents stated that it was somewhat unimportant, and 16 respondents stated it was extremely unimportant. Previous literature has found that both the Republican Party and the Democratic Party care significantly about national security, and more importantly, try to portray themselves as strong on the issue to the media and to the American voters (Baum and Groeling 2009). With previous literature showing how national security is considered for both political parties in their platforms, it is logical that voters will pick up on these elite cues and view national security as important.

The final figure for this section illustrates how many students favor or oppose a pathway to citizenship for immigrants who are not criminals. Figure 17 shows following data; 6 respondents state they strongly opposed a pathway to citizenship, 8 respondents stated they somewhat opposed it, 19 respondents stated they did not favor or oppose a pathway toward citizenship, 52 respondents stated they somewhat favored a pathway toward citizenship, and 126 respondents strongly favored a pathway toward citizenship. The results from this question are as expected from the descriptive statistics that have been collected from this population sample. More specifically, approximately 84 percent of the population sample favors a pathway toward citizenship for immigrants that are not criminals. As stated in the literature review, support for immigrants to gain citizenship was expected given the demographics of the El Paso del Norte region.

Multivariate Analysis of Covariates (MANCOVA) in SPSS

The main goal of this thesis project was to employ an experimental treatment to see the extent to which a morality framework can affect public perceptions—namely measuring support of a presidential policy proposal on immigration reform. To test this, two vignettes were created, one that gave a morality-framing treatment for immigration reform, and the other a national security frame. Before we can attribute any meaning to our results, it was important to ascertain whether the respondents understood what each treatment was conveying and whether any other biases might undermine the key experimental treatments. Accordingly, I conducted manipulation checks for the main morality framing vignette as well as for the national security framing one. The manipulation check for the morality framing was successful, demonstrating a p-value of approximately < 0.001 , which is statistically significant as seen in Table 2. This means that the respondents who took the morality treatment understood what was being asked. This check is important because it shows the survey was understood by its respondents and was not by chance or for other reasons whether they agreed or disagreed with it.

Additionally, the same type of manipulation check was applied to version B of the vignette with the national security framing domain. The p-value for this was also approximately < 0.001 , which is statistically significant as seen in Table 2. This also means that the respondents who took the national security treatment likewise understood the security framing that was being conveyed. The results of these manipulation checks thus demonstrate a minimal possibility of results being skewed because of a misunderstanding of the vignettes or otherwise due to random error.

Aside from these manipulation checks, we also conducted additional checks for balanced random assignment; in other words, to make sure that there was not selection bias within the

sample and that the selection was random across groups. Although the procedure conducted was done on a random basis, where the survey questionnaire and vignettes were presented to respondents on a completely voluntary basis with no incentive, a balanced random assignment check can help more explicitly verify the validity of the results. There were two key questions asked before and after the treatments that were used to check for random assignment. The first question asked respondents what level of concern they had for immigrants in the United States, and the second one asked for their level of concern for national security. As shown in Table 2, the results demonstrate that neither of these questions show notable changes in the levels of concern, nor statistical significance in changes across groups before and after the treatments. As shown in Table 1, based on a 0 to 1 scale, that concern for immigrants in the United States ranges from 0.7260 to 0.7398 for the security treatment and morality treatment, respectively. Furthermore, concern for national security ranged from 0.7404 to 0.7755 for the morality treatment and security treatment, respectively. These results show that no matter if the respondent was taking version A or B of the vignette, there were similar levels of concern across domains, thereby minimizing the likelihood of selection bias. In other words, the random check assignment shows similar measures of value for both morality and national security which is good and rules out the possibility that results could be null because of potential non-random selection bias.

Given these key manipulation and random assignment checks, we can now see whether and to what extent respondents supported the policy proposal given by the president in each of the vignettes. In Table 2 we can see that, in line with Hypothesis 1 (H1), the difference in support for the morality versus security treatments was substantively higher and statistically significant with a p-value result of approximately < 0.001 . As shown in Table 1, the average

level of support for the presidential policy proposal for those who received the morality treatment was 0.7704. The basis of the measurement is from 0 to 1, where 0 equals strong disagreement with the president policy decision and 1 shows strong agreement with the president policy decision. For the morality treatment, it shows that respondents significantly agreed with the president policy decision. By contrast, respondents who received the security treatment the average response was 0.4784, which is also based on a 0 to 1 scale. For respondents who received the security treatment often somewhat agreed with the president policy decisions. For all of the results described above, the multivariate analyses of covariates apply the Bonferroni test for adjustment for multiple comparisons.

Figure 18 provides a visual representation that there is not overlap in confidence intervals for the manipulation checks for the morality versus security treatments. This tells us that people understood that version A of the vignette was based on a moral framework. The same is seen Figure 19 for the manipulation check for the security treatment, where respondents of version B also understood the vignette was based on a security perspective. Figure 20 provides a visual representation that there is no notable difference between treatment groups as per responses about concern for the challenges that immigrants face in the United States. Table 2 further illustrates that the results for these were not statistically significant ($p = .927$) which provides a positive check for random assignment. In Figure 21 and Table 2, we see similar results which are not statistically significant ($p = .632$) providing a positive check for the random assignment based on the respondents concern of national security. Figure 22 provides a visual illustration of how support for a presidential policy proposal is substantively higher and statistically significant ($p < .001$) in the morality treatment, since there is no overlap between either confidence intervals that are presented.

Multivariate OLS Regression Analyses in STATA

In addition to the Multivariate Analyses of Covariance (MANCOVA), I also conduct an array of Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) multivariate regression models with robust standard errors with all variables standardized 0-1 and all results for two-tailed tests. These models are employed to further add credence that the main results are not washed away amid other key controls included in the regression model specifications. In addition, I conduct further tests for other key dependent variables to examine in more detail the extent to which morality versus other key dynamics influence particular facets of public perceptions pertaining to moral and security frames relating to immigration policy.

The data seen in Table 3 examines the factors that influence support for a presidential proposal with the main independent variable being the treatment across both vignettes. The results indicate that, in line with Hypothesis 1 (H1), the main morality framing treatment (1) is substantively more impactful than the security framing treatment (0) and statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. It should be noted that this regression analysis is using respondents from both version A and version B with the number of observations totaling 206. As stated previously, even though there were 211 respondents that completed the entire survey, 5 observations were dropped because of their omission of specific questions. Respondents who took vignette version A received the issue of immigration through a moral lens, and respondents that took vignette version B received the same issue of immigration but framed through national security lens. Respondents in both vignettes were more likely to support the presidential policy proposal that was done within a moral framework. Respondents who are from the morality domain framework versus security domain framework are more likely to support the presidential policy by a coefficient of 0.27. Additionally, Table 3 indicates the control variable of political ideology

is statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ because this model specification includes both versions of the vignettes, one cannot interpret the direction of the effect without disaggregating the results (which is done in the next two models for Tables 4 and 5). Lastly, I find that partisanship has no significant effect in this model (or for any of my subsequent models), which lends credence to my expectations from Hypothesis 2 (H2).

The model specification for Table 4 focuses on support for morally framed presidential proposal as the main dependent variable. As such, this model specification focuses only on observations from vignette version A with a total of 101 observations. The group empathy factor is positive and statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. This indicates that for every one unit increase in empathy, the level of support for the presidential policy will increase by a 0.39. It is also worth noting that the variable of attendance of church services was found to be marginal significant at $p < 0.1$ (given a two-tailed test as for all other results in this section). This can be interpreted that given a one unit increase in attendance of religious services, there may be an increase of 0.204 in support for the presidential policy.

Next, the model specification for Table 5 illustrates the factors that influence support for security framed presidential policy proposals for immigration reform. For this, political ideology is statistically significant ($p < .01$) and has a negative relationship with support for presidential policy proposal. It can be interpreted that the more liberal a person is, the less likely they are to support a national security proposal. For every one unit increase in the level of liberal a person is, there is a 0.44 decrease in support for presidential approval. The inverse can also be said, where a person who is more conservative is more likely to support a presidential policy proposal for immigration reform that is security based. Meanwhile, religiosity was found to have a marginal significance of $p < 0.1$ and has a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For

every one unit increase there may be a 0.25 increase in the level of support for presidential policy proposal.

The next model specification is for the morality manipulation check, which was also done using the MANCOVA analysis on SPSS. The reason for conducting this model in STATA is for a robustness check and to further solidify that the results that have been found are not washed away when adding all the other control variables. As shown in Table 6, the model specification includes the morality manipulation check (for the question asking how morally-framed the vignette was seen to be by respondents) as the main dependent variable and the treatment as the main independent variable, with the remaining variables being control variables. The model is conducted with using both versions of the vignettes for a total of 206 observations. The treatment is found to have a positive and statistical significance of $p < 0.001$ when one is in the morality domain (1) compared to the alternative security domain (0). As per what other factors can influence the extent to which one views the main treatment as a morally-driven one (compared to the alternative security frame), the variable of political participation has a statistical significance of $p < 0.01$ and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. Thus, for every one unit increase in political participation, there is a 0.21 increase in being able to identify the moral framework. Last, the variable of religiosity appears to have a marginal significance of $p < 0.1$ (two-tailed test) and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For this, the more a religious a person is, then the likelihood to identify the moral framework may increase by 0.16.

Table 7 has a model specification that examines the veracity of the security manipulation check (i.e., whether respondents could correctly ascertain when they were exposed to the security framing domain), which was also conducted using the MANCOVA analysis in SPSS. As with the previous model, we are conducting this model specification on STATA as a robustness

check. It includes a total of 205 observations across both versions of the vignettes. The treatment is found to have a statistical significance of $p < 0.001$ and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. In other words, one is significantly more likely to correctly see the framing as security-based when exposed to the security vignette (0) as opposed to the morality framed vignette (1). Meanwhile, the variable of political ideology has a marginal significance of $p < 0.1$ and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. As a side note, this marginal effect of this variable cannot be directly interpreted like other variables. The logic behind the explanation is not straightforward, as it would infer that someone that is more liberal would have more difficulty identifying a security framework. As stated previously, this model specification was conducted an additional robustness check, but the marginal significance found for political ideology may merit further inquiry in a future study.

For Table 8, the main dependent variable is concern for immigrants and the main independent variable is the treatment. For this model specification, the treatment is not statistically significant which further solidifies the SPSS results as a robustness check suggesting no significant changes in levels of concern for immigrants occurs when exposed to the presidential speech. In other words, the reason that the treatment was not statistically significant was because it did not have significant variation between the pretest and posttest answers. As seen on the Table 2 from the SPSS analysis we can see that concern for immigrants remained high for both groups before and after the treatment, such that the morality treatment is only impactful for supporting a presidential proposal for immigration reform as shown previously. Meanwhile, the variable of group empathy has a statistical significance of $p \leq 0.001$ and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in the level of empathy a person has, the concern for immigrants increases by 0.29. The next variable that is

statistically significant is political ideology with a $p < 0.01$ and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. Here, for every one unit increase the level of liberal a person is, there is a 0.26 increase in concern for immigrants. The next variable with statistical significance of $p < 0.001$ is age and has a negative relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in age, there is a 0.39 decrease in concern for immigrants. In other words, as a person gets older, the likelihood for them to have concern for immigrants decreases. Surprisingly, the variable of Latino also has a statistical significance of $p < 0.01$ and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. For this variable, if a respondent identified as a Latino, then there was a 0.12 decrease in concern for immigrants. The last variable is single status, which has a statistical significance of $p < 0.01$ and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. For this variable, if a person is single, then the likelihood of there being a concern for immigrants decreases by 0.14. Lastly, the variable of political participation has a marginal effect of $p < 0.1$ and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in political participation there is a 0.14 increase in concern for immigrants.

Table 9 shows the model specification for the importance of national security as the dependent variable. The number of observations for this model is 205 as it is using both versions of the vignette and is being conducted in STATA as a robustness check. The treatment is not statistically significant in this model, which is what the MANCOVA analysis on SPSS showed as well. The reason it is not statistically significant is because the responses for the importance of national security in the pretest and posttest did not have a significant amount of variation over time. As seen on the Table 2 from the SPSS analysis, we can see that concern for national security thus remained high for both groups before and after the treatment. Aside from that confirmation, I find that the attendance of church services has statistical significance of $p < 0.02$

is and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in the attendance of church services, there is a 0.18 decrease in the importance of national security. The next variable is age which has a statistical significance of $p < 0.05$ and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in age, there is a 0.26 increase in the importance of national security. The last variable that has statistical significance is household income, which has a significance level of $p < 0.05$ and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in household income, there is a 0.13 decrease in the importance of national security. There is also a notable, if marginal, effect for the variable of religiosity where $p < 0.1$ and has a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in religiosity, there may be a 0.18 increase in the level of importance of national security.

The final model illustrated in Table 10 focuses on support for a pathway toward citizenship for immigrants as the dependent variable. The number of observations for this model is 198 as it is using both versions of the vignette and is being conducted in STATA as a robustness check. The variable of group empathy has a statistical significance of $p < 0.001$ and a positive relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in empathy, there is a 0.23 increase in the support of a pathway toward citizenship. The next variable is age which has a statistical significance of $p < 0.02$ and a negative relationship with the dependent variable. For every one unit increase in age, there is a 0.27 decrease in the support for pathway toward citizenship.

Lastly, it is worth noting that for all of the model specifications that were conducted in STATA for both the pre and posttest questions, a T-test was also conducted to ascertain for any notable differences before and after exposure to the experimental treatments. Among all the key

factors tested, only the one concerning the impact of security framing on support for pathway to citizenship demonstrated a statistically significant decrease of 0.0453 for the T-test.

Discussion

Analyzing the descriptive statistics there is clear evidence that the population sample collected showed many similarities with the demographics of the UTEP student population and, at times, with the population of the El Paso del Norte region as well. This is a great first step into showing that the results from this study are valid for the target population. As per the key experimental treatment and testing of main causal relationships, the MANCOVA analysis conducted in SPSS also gives more validity to the results. Conducting a manipulation check for both the morality framework and security framework shows that respondents understood the vignettes. Respondents who took version A of the vignette understood that it was a moral framework. Respondents who took version B of the vignette also understood the framework was from the standpoint of security, thereby making it clear that there was no confusion, or deception, from the treatment and that it was well understood. Additionally, the balanced random assignment checks demonstrating no notable differences across groups/domains helped confirm that there was bias in the selection of respondents. Specifically, I found that respondents from both surveys had a high concern for immigrants and believed national security was of high importance. Respondents from version A had a similar average response towards concern for immigrants and national security as compared to those who took version B.

While looking at the descriptive statistics, the variable of gender may seem to be somewhat skewed towards one gender. As mentioned previously, Social Exchange Theory suggests that females are more likely to participate in surveys. One of the main reasons is because males tend to have more characteristics that are individualistic as compared to females

who tend to have more characteristics in line with collectivism. It also should be noted that a control variable for gender was included in every model specification, and it did not come out as statistically significant in any of them, which provides confidence that despite having more female respondents, it did not dictate or problematically influence the results.

According to Table 3 and in line with Hypothesis 1 (H1), the main test of the morality framing treatment is statistically significant for increasing support for a presidential policy proposal for immigration reform compared with the security framing domain. This is the most important finding from the results because it shows that a moral framework is able to positively affect public perceptions in response to a presidential moral frame that is implicitly secular in nature but appeals more across all respondents.

Regarding Table 4, the dependent variable is support for a morally framed presidential proposal using survey respondents from version A only. The group empathy index is the only statistically significant variable, which makes sense that people who have higher levels of empathy will support a presidential proposal that helps immigrants (see also Sirin et al. 2016, 2021). Additionally, there appears to be a marginally positive effect for the variable of attendance of church services, which means that the more that people attend church services the more likely they may be to support presidential policy that helps immigrants. A future research could potentially look at this variable and see if the study could be refined to better capture the relationship dynamics, such as by looking into the humanitarianism of those who spend more time with their religious community.

As per Table 5, the dependent variable is support for a security framed presidential proposal using survey respondents from version B only. Political ideology is statistically significant, such that when a person is more liberal, they are less likely they are to support the

presidential proposal for increased security while the inverse is true for those who are conservatives. This finding is expected as conservatives have generally been shown to be more in favor national security in previous studies.

The Table 6 results correspond to the model specification for the morality framing manipulation check, which was also done in SPSS using the MANCOVA analysis. This additional regression analysis was done as a robustness check once again demonstrating that respondents were able to correctly ascertain they were exposed to a moral frame. Table 7 is the model specification for the security manipulation check similarly solidified the manipulation check results from SPSS showing that respondents likewise were able to ascertain when they were exposed to a security framing approach.

For Table 8, the dependent variable was concern for immigrant as per the challenges they face in society. The group empathy factor is positive and statistically significant, which is consistent with previous literature that specifies people that are more empathetic would have a higher level of concern for others (see Sirin et al. 2016, 2021). Political ideology is also statistically significant which can be interpreted that the more liberal a person is the higher the level of concern they have for immigrants. This is also supported by previous literature including Contact Theory. The variable for age is negative and statistically significant, and can be interpreted such that the older that a person is, the less likelihood they will have concern for immigrants and the challenges they face. Surprisingly, the variable of ethnicity, whether a person identified as Latino or not, is also negative statistically significant which can be interpreted that if a person identifies as Latino, they are likely to have less concern for immigrants. The last variable that was statistically significant was marital status of a person, which can be interpreted as a person who is single is less likely to have concern for immigrants. Further studies could be

conducted based on the results from this study in order to get a greater understanding of these latter results. It could be the wording of how the vignettes do not specify what kind of immigrants, which could have been interpreted in different ways.

Regarding Table 9, the dependent variable is the importance of national security. Attendance of church services shows a negative and significant relationship, indicating that the less a person attends church services the more likely they are to value national security. As stated previously, this could be that when a person is more involved within their religious community, they may be more likely to have higher levels of humanitarianism, but for this specific finding more research is needed to fully ascertain the dynamics at play. The variable of age is positive and statistically significant which can be interpreted such that the older a person gets, the more importance they will give to national security. This could be because the older a person gets, they may have family and friends which they seek to protect and thus see national security, and security as a whole, as a higher priority. Lastly, the variable of household income is negative and statistically significant which can be interpreted such that the more income a household has, the less likely one is concerned about national security. This could be attributed to the idea that people with higher incomes are more likely to live in safer neighborhoods. Additionally, those who have less income may live in more urban areas, which may be more susceptible to terrorist attacks and other forms of security issues (LaFree and Bersani 2014).

Lastly, for Table 10, the model specification has pathway toward citizenship as the dependent variable. The group empathy factor is positive and statistically significant and can be interpreted such that people who have higher levels of empathy are more likely to support a pathway toward citizenship for immigrants. As stated previously, it makes sense for people with high levels of empathy to support others more, including those from outgroups such as

immigrants when they put themselves in others' shoes (see Sirin et al. 2016, 2021). The variable of age meanwhile is negative and statistically significant and can be interpreted as the older a person gets, the less likely they are to support a pathway toward citizenship (perhaps as the inverse for having higher security priorities at an older age). For all these findings, a future study could help further examine and more fully understand what the underlying explanations for these dynamics are.

Chapter 5: Future Studies

Morality and Partisanship

The results of this thesis research project have provided key insights that are applicable for numerous potential avenues to future studies. The variable of group empathy came out statistically significant on tables, 4, 8, and 10, which shows that there is a possible correlation that is worth future research. As stated previously, there is a distinct difference between morality and empathy, and in the results the variable of empathy often came out as significant with distinct dynamics across specific models. The variables of political ideology and political participation are also shown to have significant findings for different models, but not partisan identification. One potential research design for a subsequent project would be to add partisan identification for each vignette version. This would have had a Republican and Democratic version of the president presenting the excerpt (specifically the morally-driven version to focus on a more direct measure of the impact of partisan views), which would have result in a total of four vignette domains for comparative purposes. Furthermore, political ideology could be used in a similar way where each version of the vignette could have a liberal and conservative identification for the president. The addition of measuring for these variables could provide a more direct comparison between morality and partisan/ideological identification. Lastly, political participation is an interesting variable that could produce significant results. There is also a possibility that political participation could be an interactive variable with other variables such as political identification, partisan identification, and possibly even group empathy.

Another possible future study that can be taken from this project could be changing the public figure that is giving the excerpts for respondents to react to. The main reasoning a fictitious president was used for this thesis research project was to try and minimize any political

baggage that a real political figure could have. Additionally, the use of the political figure being a president was done as an attempt to give more importance to the excerpts that were being presented, but in a future study that could be altered. Instead of having a fictitious president, there could be another public figure such as a mayor, member of Congress, or governor to see how that might impact the results.

While the experimental design of this thesis research project has particularly strong internal validity within its findings, future studies could look to expand on tests that maximize external validity. This can be done in small steps, including by expanding the sampling to the city and county level, and eventually to the state and national level for more broadly representative analyses and inferences. Even so, the results were significant to show that morality framing can and does work. Morality framework, within isolation, is a powerful predictor of support for policies. Future studies work to increase measures external validity with further multi-method approaches, which would also be generalizable beyond the local level. It would be able to give a better idea of how well morality framework functions when other factors come into play that can only be found in real-world scenarios.

Other general approaches to future studies that can stem from this thesis research project are ample, specifically with a variety of other issues that could be examined when framed as key moral issues. One may further examine how people may merge such moral issues into their own identities and its impact on public perceptions dynamics.

Additional Avenues of Personal Value to Potentially Revisit

With regard to even more options for future study that are of particular personal value to the author, I should note that the initial plan included many additional vignettes and treatments that would have given the president a specific partisan identification and would have also

examined the issue domain of abortion, but had to be cut down due to time constraints as well as key contextual challenges that presented themselves in the midst of this project (see also the next sections below for further explanation on the decision to exclude the models for abortion). For example, vignette version A, which has the morality framing, would be converted into two different vignettes. Everything of the vignette would remain the same except it would be explicitly stated that the president would be given partisan identification of Democrat or Republican. The same would be done with vignette version B, which is the security framing, which would remain the exact same, but will give partisan identification to the president of Democrat or Republican. For the abortion domain version of vignettes, the first version of the vignette would have the theoretical framing that would focus on the life of the unborn child, while the second version of the vignette would be framed with the focus of women's rights and healthcare. In both of these vignettes, a similar approach would have been taken where a fictitious president would be giving an address to the nation in the not-too-distant future. The wording of both vignettes would be identical up until the treatment. Additionally, each of these different frameworks would be then made into two different vignettes where a partisan identification would be given to the president of Democrat or Republican.

As per the two vignettes that were used for this research project, they were framed through the lens of secular morality. However, as discussed in the literature review, there are significant nuances and differences between religious and secular morality. For this thesis, in order to continue the trend of being as inclusive as possible, a decision was made use secular morality as the main framework. For future studies, there could be shift in how the vignettes are constructed to use religious morality to see what kind, if any, effect it has on public perceptions. As an example, a future study could reframe vignette version A by altering it where it would use

deliberate religious morality rhetoric framework, which will be used as the main treatment. The second vignette would vignette version A and keep the same secular morality rhetoric framework as its treatment. This will allow for a more direct testing of the possible different effects of religious versus secular morality.

As a social scientist, it is often easy to get overly motivated to want to test all kinds of theoretical frameworks about the world around us. While creating this research project, an important goal that I set for myself was to make sure that the research I conducted was not extractive, where I would benefit from studying a subset of people that I am not able to identify with. As a male, who is a first generation American, the issues of abortion and being an immigrant in the United States are something that I will never experience firsthand. The purview of my personal lived experience will never encompass those issues in a meaningful way. This led to the idea of studying the El Paso del Norte region, by using the sample population of student respondents at UTEP, because this is where I was born and where I have lived for most of my life. The El Paso del Norte region has an extremely unique demographic that I believe has been understudied for a long time. Combining that with the gap in previous literature of the role of morality framework in predicting American political behavior allowed for the ideal thesis research approach where I could add my own personal value. The El Paso region has always had a strong sense of community Ie of our unique circumstance of being a border city. Being a community that is predominantly Catholic, with Latino roots of origin and that tends to elect Democratic leaders with instances of significant fluctuation of voter turnout, I find it particularly important to continue this line of research. The hope is that through this thesis research project and future endeavors, we are able to eventually test how this community as a whole, responds to policy issues through a moral lens. If people in this feel apathetic towards the political system

and are unwilling to be politically active for their own sake, then perhaps a morality framework will get them to be proactive for others in their community. Conducting research to help those who are being studied should always be the ultimate goal, which I believe this thesis research project has taken the very first step to achieving that goal.

Abortion: The Decision to Exclude it and Future Opportunities

An additional issue that was originally going to be examined in this thesis research project was the issue of abortion. However, given the recent Supreme Court ruling in the United States (along with time constraints), the saliency of the issue is too high to be able to effectively conduct additional experimental treatments that would not be contaminated by overwhelming external biases in the timeframe of data collection and analyses. Instead, I will discuss the topic of abortion at this point to help lay the groundwork for potential future research projects. The issue of abortion is another moral issue where Democrats and Republicans are at significant odds in policy (Castle and Stepp 2021). For Democrats, the policy issue is based on civil liberties for providing and protecting the right to choose for women who are pregnant. In this vein, the decision of whether to carry a pregnancy to term, or to terminate it, should be decided by the woman. Democrats advocate for abortion to be accessible to women on demand, based on principles of woman sovereignty and medical autonomy. For Republicans, the issue is based on the life of the unborn child that is being carried to term and given the opportunity to live.

The debate over abortion has had different levels of salience across time in the United States. This also means that both the masses and political elites have changed their stances on abortion, whether they are pro-life or pro-choice. The issue has commonly been studied across two eras: before the supreme case of *Roe v. Wade* (1973) and after the case was decided. It should be noted that there is now a third era just underway as of June 24, 2022, with the

overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Because the immediate fallout continues with the latest Supreme Court ruling and some uncertainty persists on what the full extent of its long-term effects will be, for the purposes of this study we will focus mainly on covering the two aforementioned eras for future studies. The debate over abortion centers around the rights of the unborn versus the rights of the women having sovereignty over their own body. Before 1979 Senate Republicans and House Democrats were split, within their own parties, on how to vote on the issue of abortion (Adams 1997). After 1979, there was notable change in how Senate Republicans and House Democrats began voting on the issue of abortion. Not only did the parties unify on their stance of abortion, pro-choice for Democrats and pro-life for Republicans, they significantly diverged from each other. An increase in salience on the issue caused for high levels of polarization to occur. Political elites quickly realized that the issue of abortion had high enough salience in the electorate and played a significant role in elections. This led to parties quickly establishing the framework of their stance on abortion and allowed little room for pro-life Democrats and pro-choice Republicans (Rose 2011).

As political elites and the American electorate saw abortion gain salience in public discourse, polarization grew exponentially after the Supreme Court case of *Casey v. Pennsylvania* (1992). This case would set the stage and parameters for how Democrats and Republicans would need to do in order to protect or diminish the right to an abortion. The court case of *Casey v. Pennsylvania* (1992) upheld *Roe v. Wade* (1973) but also gave states more power to regulate abortion however they pleased. This was an important signal to both Republicans and Democrats. Republicans that were pro-life knew that there would need to be a significant shift in the structure of the Supreme Court, more conservative judges, in order to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (1973). For pro-choice democrats it showed that *Roe v. Wade* (1973) was

clearly under attack, and the right to an abortion was not a constitutional law that was assured. This led to more polarization and also showed evidence of pro-life Democrats were willing to walk across the aisle and change parties. Similar evidence can be seen for pro-choice Republicans, although the party shift was not as significant as it was for pro-life Democrats (Killian and Wilcox 2008).

The framework of abortion from the Republican standpoint has taken different shapes. First, the framework revolved around how abortion had extreme medical consequences for women. This framework was not as successful due to the scientific nature of the pro-choice framework that was able to scientifically prove that as long as the abortion was conducted by medical professionals in a controlled environment the negative consequences were limited (Rose 2011). Therefore, the Republican framework, shifted towards a focus on the fetus, specifically right after the court decision of *Roe v. Wade* (1973). The anti-abortion movement used fetal imagery as its established framework which derived itself from a subset of its framework that was based in traditional Christian morality (Killian and Wilcox 2008). The fetal framework of antiabortion activists made it the concern of abortion shifted from the mother towards the fetus. Within this framework, anti-abortion activists were able to shift from focusing on the mother to focusing on the unborn child as who faced the consequences of having an abortion. This framework then presumes that women in America who have had an abortion have acted immorally and even established their actions as a potential crime against their own unborn child. The framework allowed for the development of the fetus as a person, and in doing so made the pregnant woman disappear from their purview (Daniels 1996).

The increase of polarization across the American electorate has not slowed down as the years have gone by. With the greater ability for states to regulate abortion, pro-life Republican

states have continued to push the boundaries of their legislative authority to regulate abortion. The states of Texas, Ohio, and Oklahoma are some examples of the most restrictive kinds of abortion, that make it illegal for an abortion to occur after the first six weeks of pregnancy, even though the proceedings would be civil and not criminal (Tanne 2021). Even so, with these restrictive abortions, in Oklahoma, abortion is still legal in the case of rape or incest, and if the life of the woman is at risk (Tanne 2022). It should be noted that the abortion still needs to be conducted before six weeks, and if it was because of rape or incest it has to be reported to law enforcement, if not then it will still be illegal to conduct the abortion (Tanne 2022). The regulation these states have signed into law shows the beginning of a new trend of the regulation of abortion in which it is becoming more restrictive (Arnold 2022). It is no coincidence that the restrictiveness of abortion varies from state to state, but there are general similarities across states that have Democratic leadership and those that have Republican leadership. Evidence points towards Republican states having more restrictive policies against abortion, and even though they still allow under certain circumstances, because of how the reproductive system of a woman works, the ban of abortion after six weeks effectively bans abortions as a whole. In other words, some women may not know they are pregnant until the six weeks pass, making their chance to get an abortion limited to nonexistent (Heymann 2022).

The issue of abortion is one where people identities can split them into different ingroups and outgroups. First, while not all Republicans have a religious affiliation, there is a subsection where their religious identification—which often drives their morality views—is of the utmost importance to them. Furthermore, there is some variation when it comes to their perspective of abortion. In the most conservative view, Republicans believe that life begins of at conception and that all life is sacred no matter the circumstances. There are, however, instances of rape, incest,

or if the pregnancy presents a danger to the mother's where abortion is viewed as permissible by some Republicans. Even so, recent political news on the issue shows that some self-identified partisans of the Republican Party support banning abortions completely, or after the first six weeks (Crawford et al. 2021). With this understanding, we can see that a person with religious ideals may see that an abortion is against their ingroup, and against their primary identity. Those who use their religious identification as their primary identity will also primarily abide by the standards set by their religion. This can include basic rules that determine and differentiate what is right and wrong (Maguire 2016). Therefore, any and most types of abortions are perceived as going direct against who they are, if that is what their religious text dictates. This converts the issue of abortion into a religiously based moral issue, which increases the level of polarization and partisanship.

The issue of abortion has high salience where the average voter will have at least minimal knowledge about. It is also clear that the two main political parties in the United States have clear stances on this issue and common strategies on how they frame and introduce talking points to argue their respective sides of these issues. For these reasons, I believe that through a moral prism, we can frame the issue of abortion to test if morality can cause people to cross over party lines. Furthermore, if a person is exposed to a moral frame where their partisan and political ideology is contrasted against their moral nature, can the moral framework counteract or even overpower the partisan view? For a future methodological experiment, a test can be conducted where random groups across different scenarios to look for those paradoxes within their moral views, to see which factor—morality or partisanship—is a stronger driver of political behavior. Even if morality does not end up overpowering partisanship for either issue, it may be able to shift opinions to counteract partisanship in significant way.

At the preliminary stages of this thesis research project, the original plan was to see how a person's partisan nature is affected when presented through a moral lens. Within this original framework the decision to use two moral issues in which could be used on both side of the political spectrum. The first moral issue, immigration, will now be the focus while the issue of abortion will be set aside for this project. The singular reason for this decision is based on the recent ruling of the United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS) to overturn the decision of *Roe v. Wade* (1973) on June 24, 2022. With the decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (1973) ushered in the new era of *Dobbs v. Jackson* (2022) (Tanne 2022). The purpose of this section is not meant to justify or criticize the decision, instead it will serve as an explanation as to why an issue like abortion is omitted.

Abortion: The Hyperpolarization of Healthcare

The issue of abortion in the United States has always maintained a relevant amount of salience across the United States (Raymond 2011). When an issue like abortion, that is already highly salient, is thrown into the political arena, causes hyperpolarization of the issue. When hyperpolarization of an issue occurs, people tend to behave in a more partisan behavior (Bartlels 2000). People will be more likely to not be able to reach a compromise, and unlikely to reach any middle ground. The possibility of reaching a logical solution is no longer possible (Castle and Stepp 2021). Furthermore, the continual rise of negative partisanship also plays a role. An issue like abortion that is seen by people as a moral issue, like those who base it off of their religious morality, causes the exacerbation of negative partisanship (Abramowitz and Webster 2016). To test an issue like abortion during a tumultuous time would increase the likelihood of finding null results. More importantly, the framework that would have been used to test this issue of abortion would be inappropriate. While this thesis research project is motivated purely by filling in the

gap of the literature, it is also important to understand the emotions and the thought of people who this issue affects. While it is important to continue scientific research, it is also important to be considerate and not resort to extractive research that could only benefit the researcher. For these reasons, the testing of the issue of abortion for this thesis project will be set aside for a future study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis project has provided a new theoretical outlook that explores and analyzes how morality framing may affect American political behavior. I posited that the framing of the key issue of immigration through a moral prism could increase support for presidential proposals and possibly counteract or even overpower the effects of partisanship. When one's views on morality and partisanship are at odds with each other on a given issue, I further argued that respondents who self-identify as morally driven could more likely embrace morality framing and perhaps even cross party lines. To explore these assertions, I conducted a research survey experiment where 211 respondents reacted to speech excerpts from a president addressing the issue of immigration, with morality (versus security) framing as the key experimental treatment that triggers more morally-driven perceptions. To analyze the data, I reported key descriptive statistics from the survey sample, ran a multivariate analysis of covariates (MANCOVA) in SPSS for main means and pairwise comparisons across domains (including manipulation checks), and ran Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression models in STATA to explore the full dynamics of the multivariate casual relationships under study. My results confirmed the main manipulation checks, demonstrated balanced random assignment across treatment groups, and indicated that the treatment has a significant impact. In line with my main hypothesis (H1), I found that respondents exposed to the moral framing treatment were significantly more likely to support a presidential immigration policy proposal while the effects of partisanship show no significant effect (lending credence to Hypothesis 2). However, as per the latter consideration, there was no direct evidence that respondents were willing to cross party lines to support the presidential policy proposal, which leaves the door open to further examination down the road. Among other key findings, I found that within each vignette domain, group empathy helps

explain increases support for a morally framed immigration policy proposal while (conservative) ideology increased support for security-framed immigration policy proposal. Moreover, I also found that group empathy and (liberal) ideology help explain higher concern for immigrants, that group empathy increases support for a path to citizenship for immigrants, and that age has a counteracting effect on the latter relationships. These results provide an avenue for future studies to explore further the potential effects that morality framing can have on public perceptions and political behavior, including in different contexts and across other policy spheres.

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Appendix

Figures and Tables

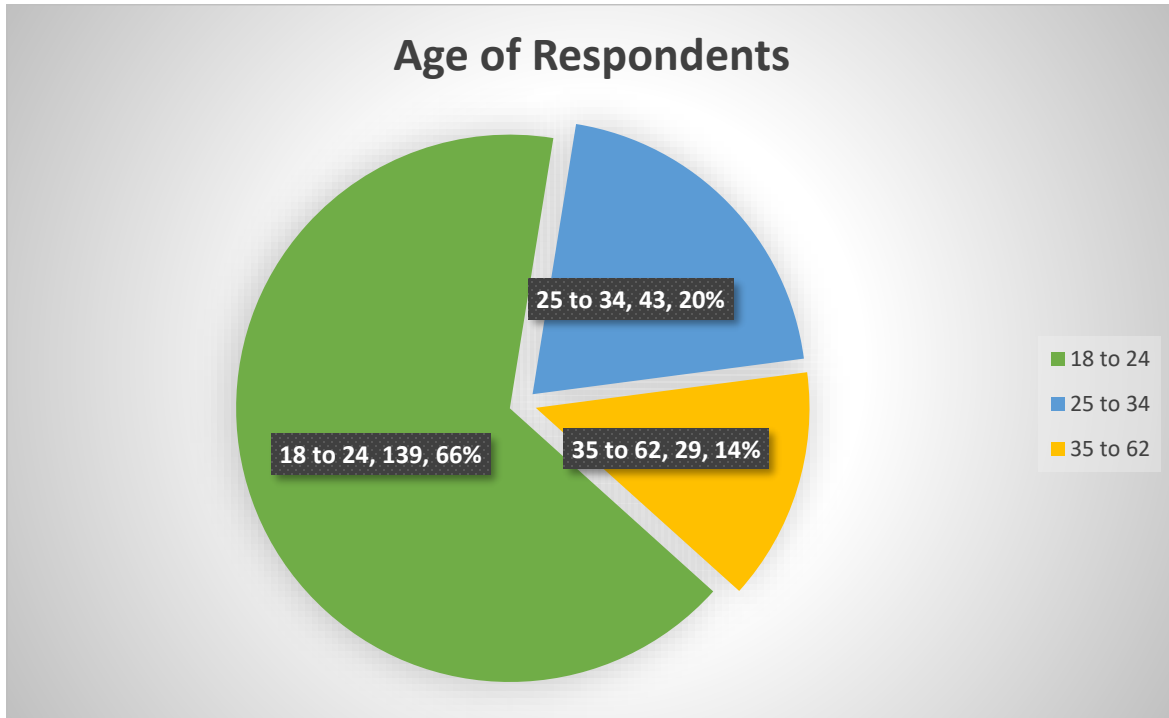


Figure 1.

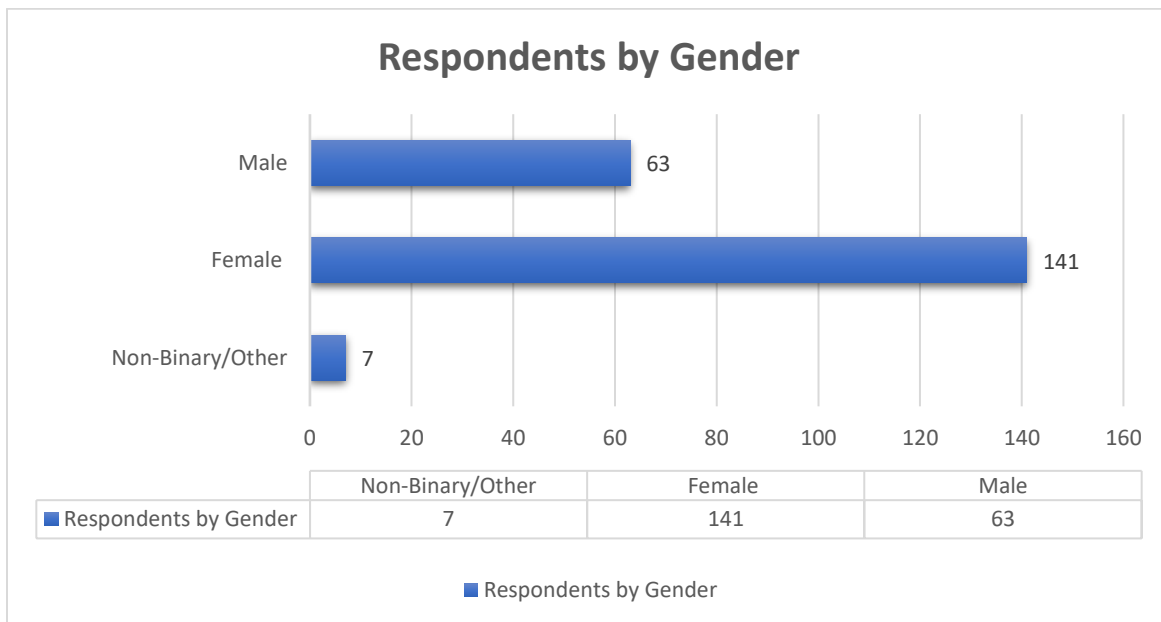


Figure 2.

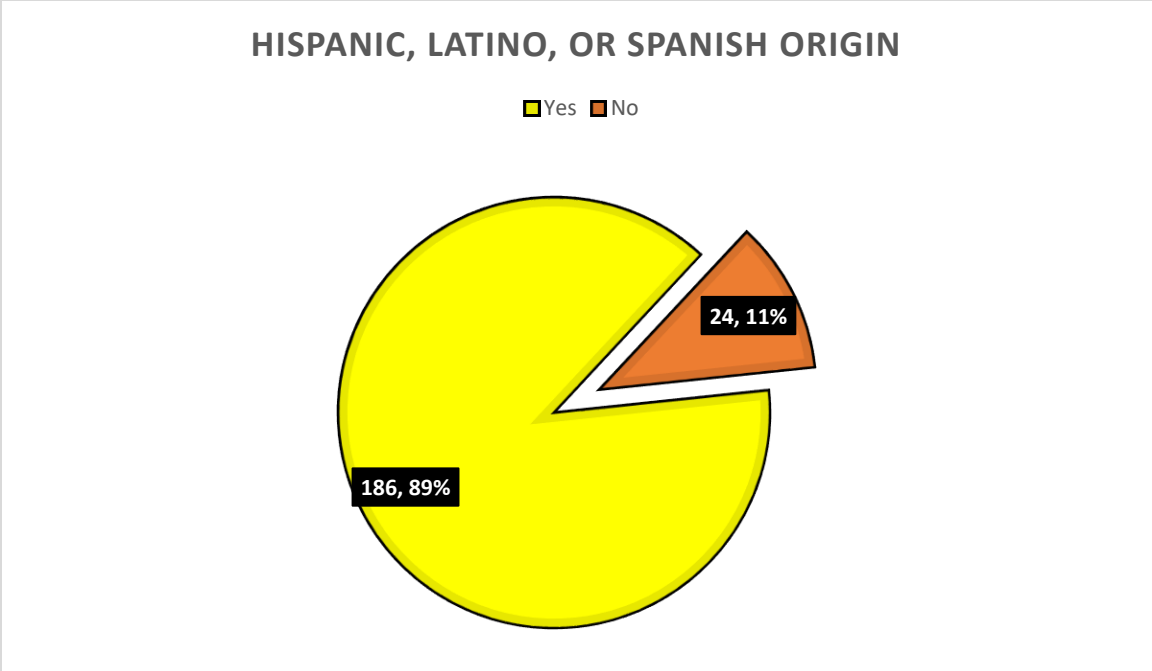


Figure 3.

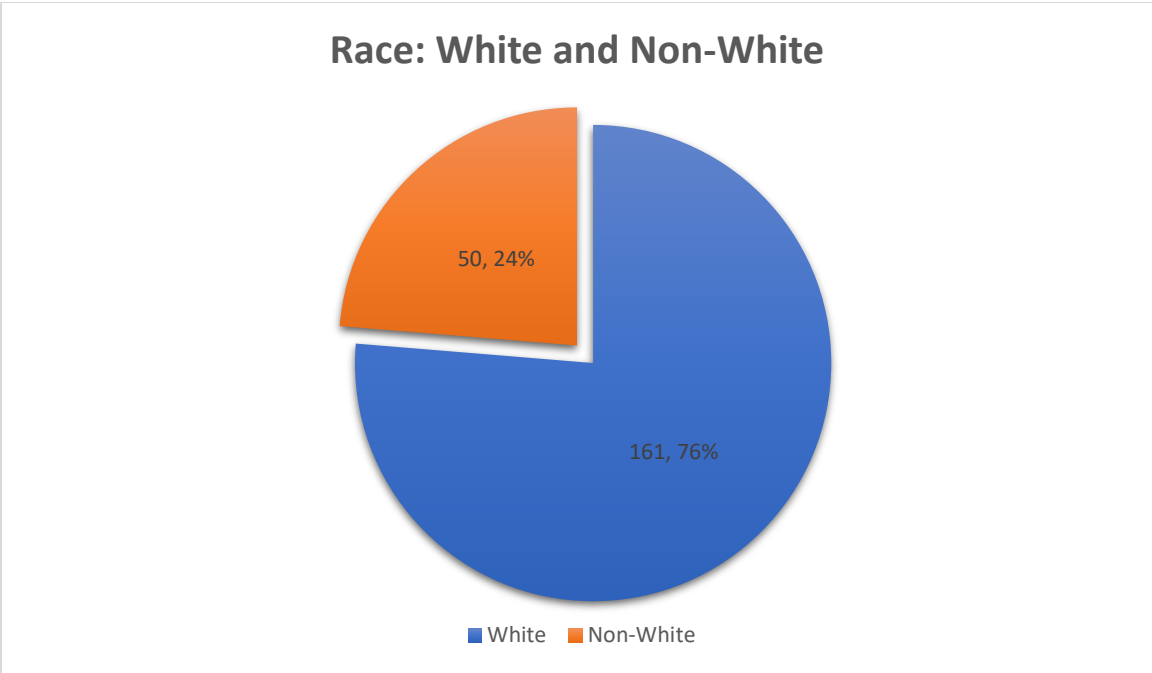


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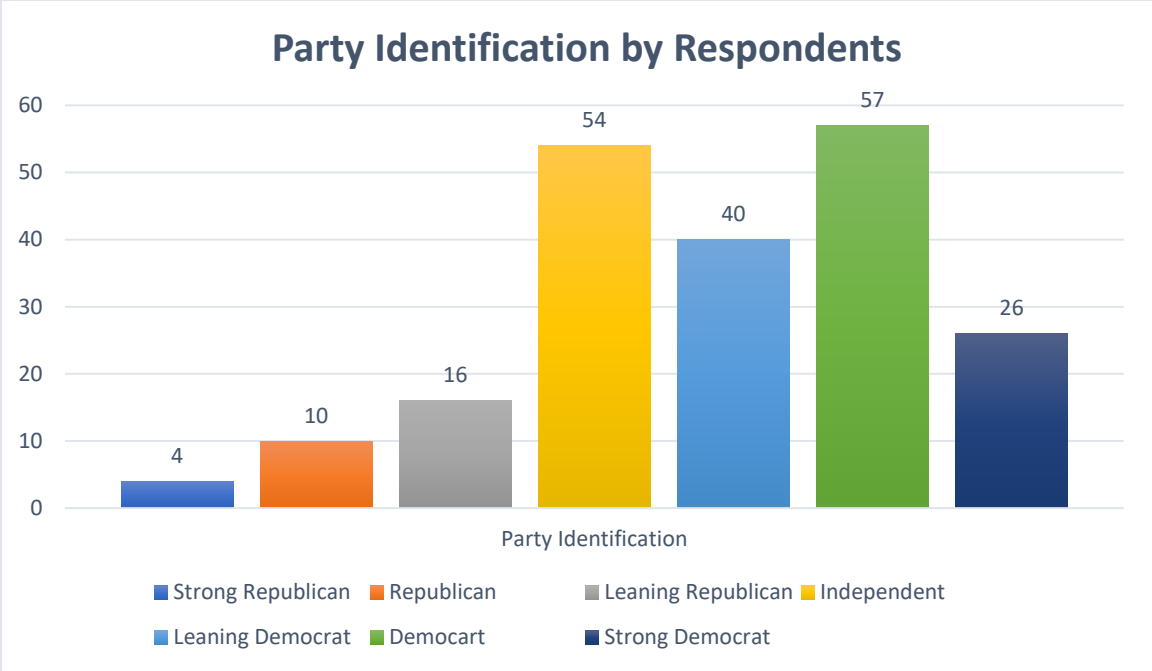


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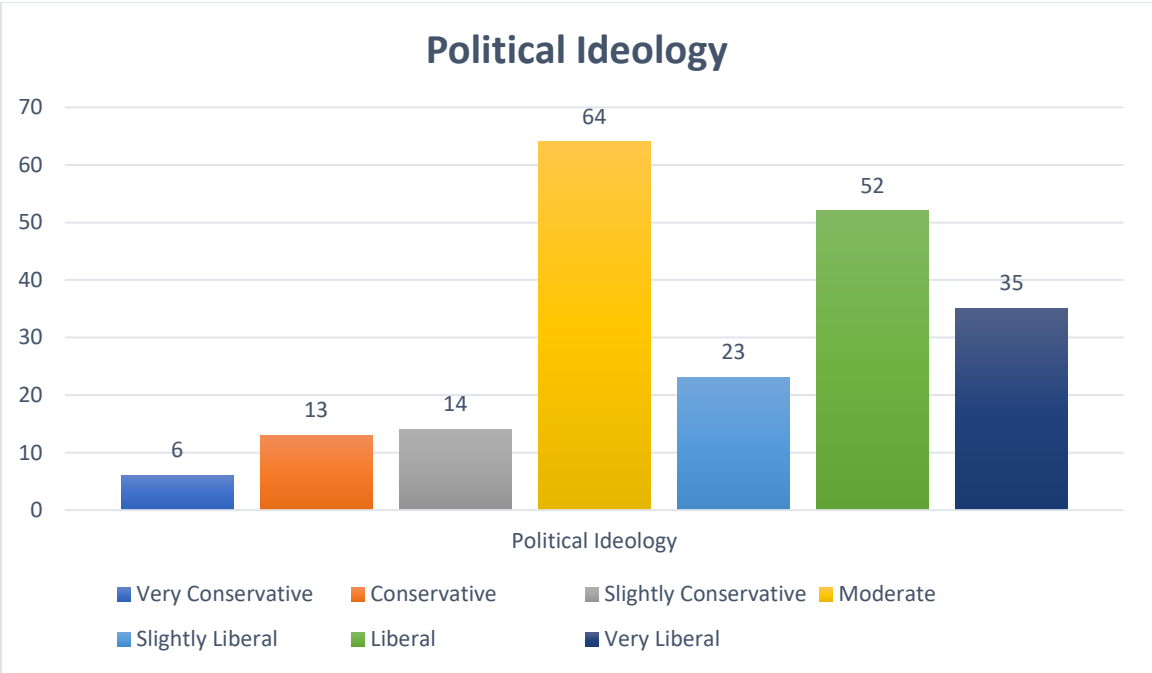


Figure 6.

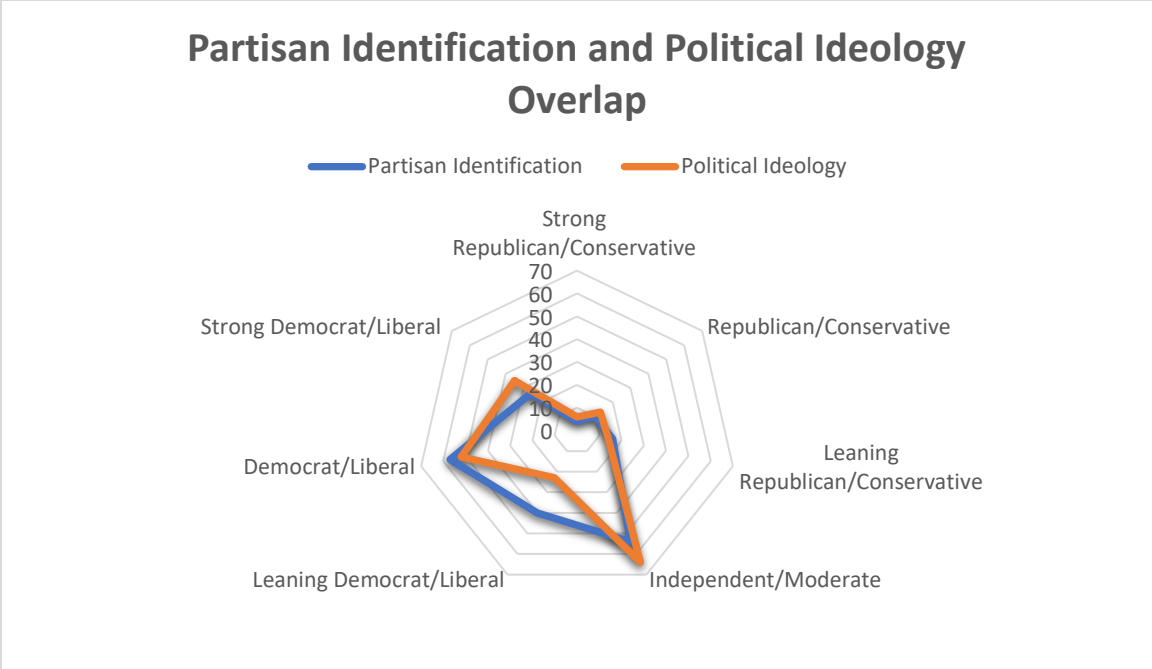


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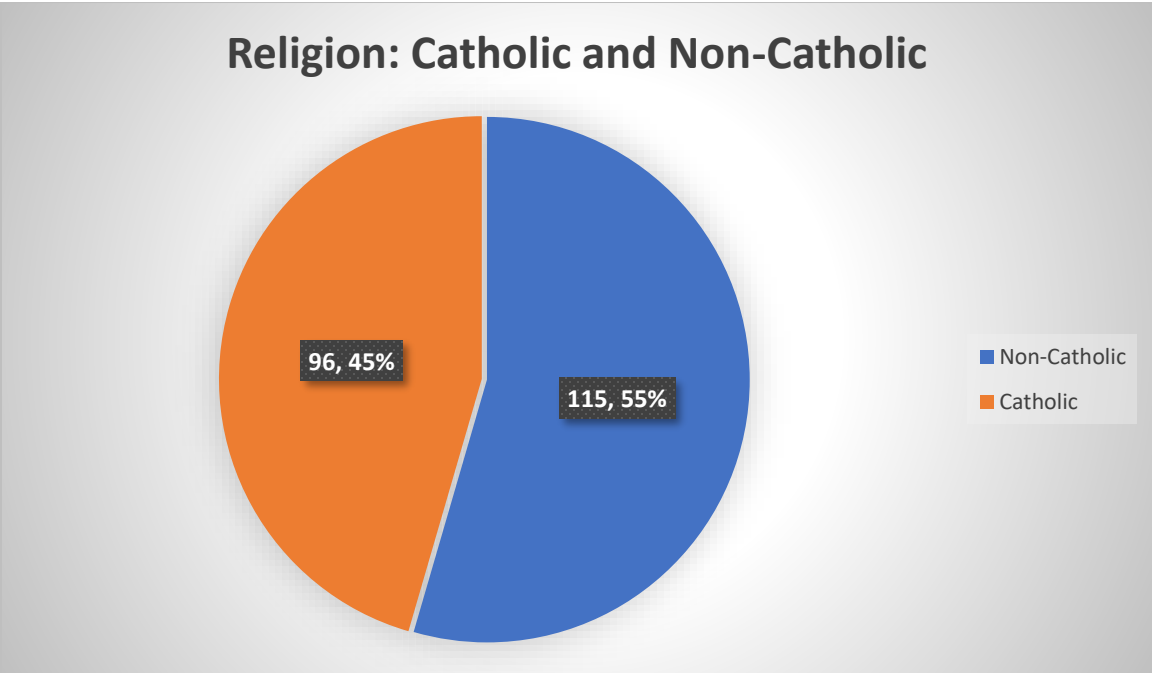


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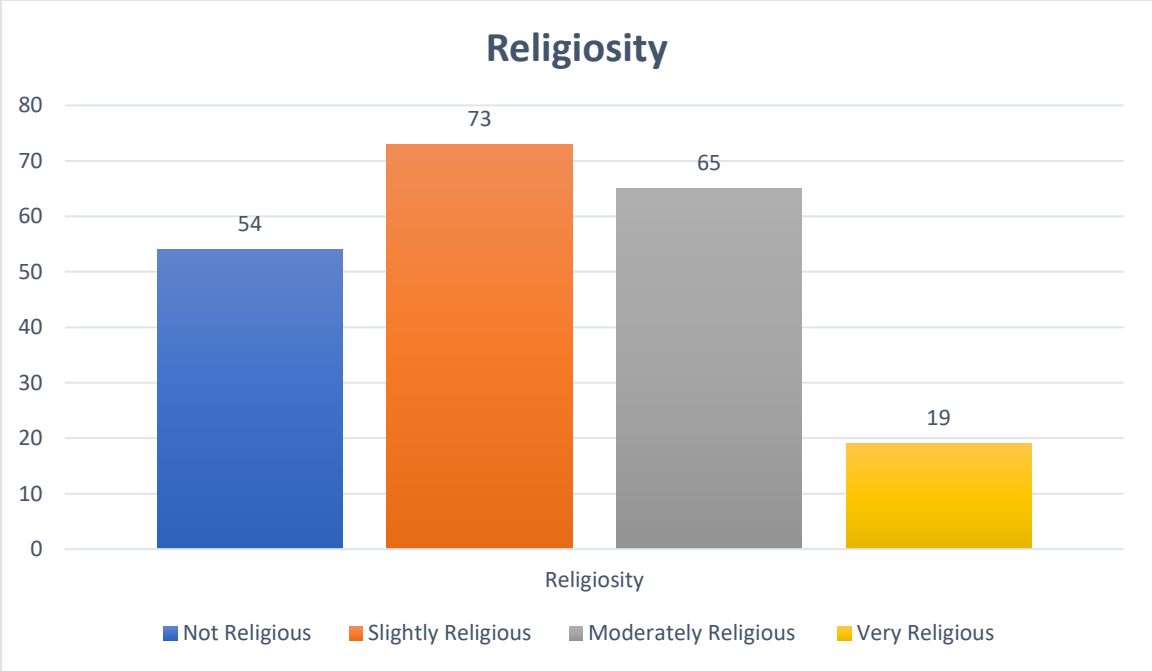


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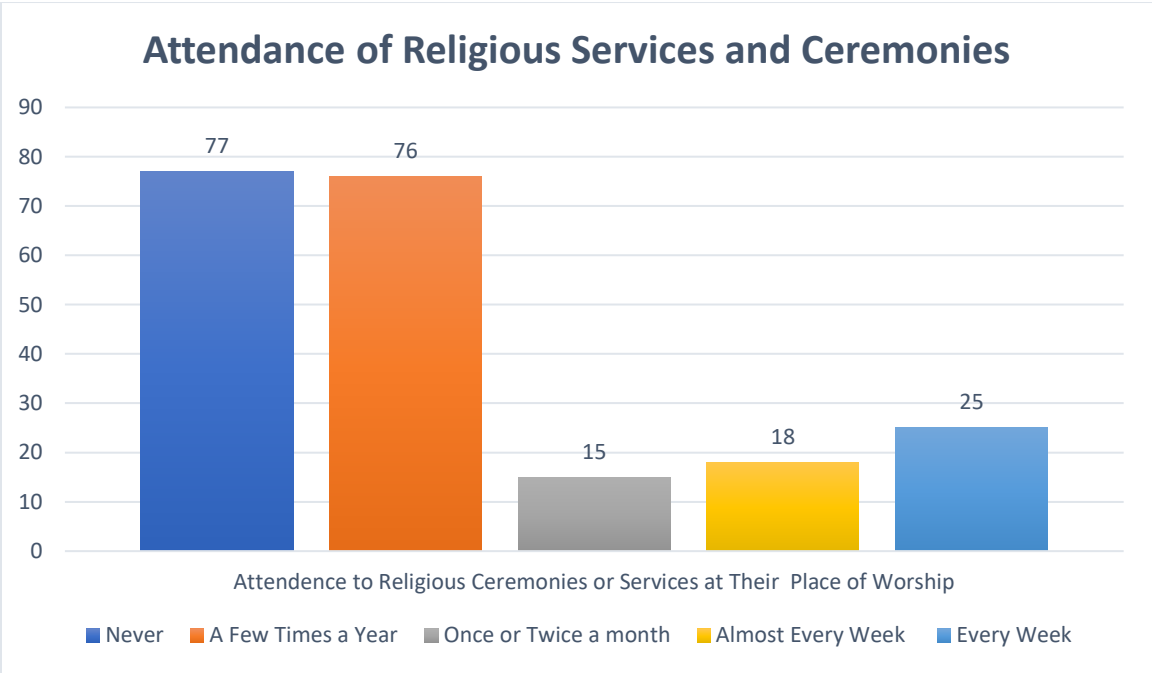


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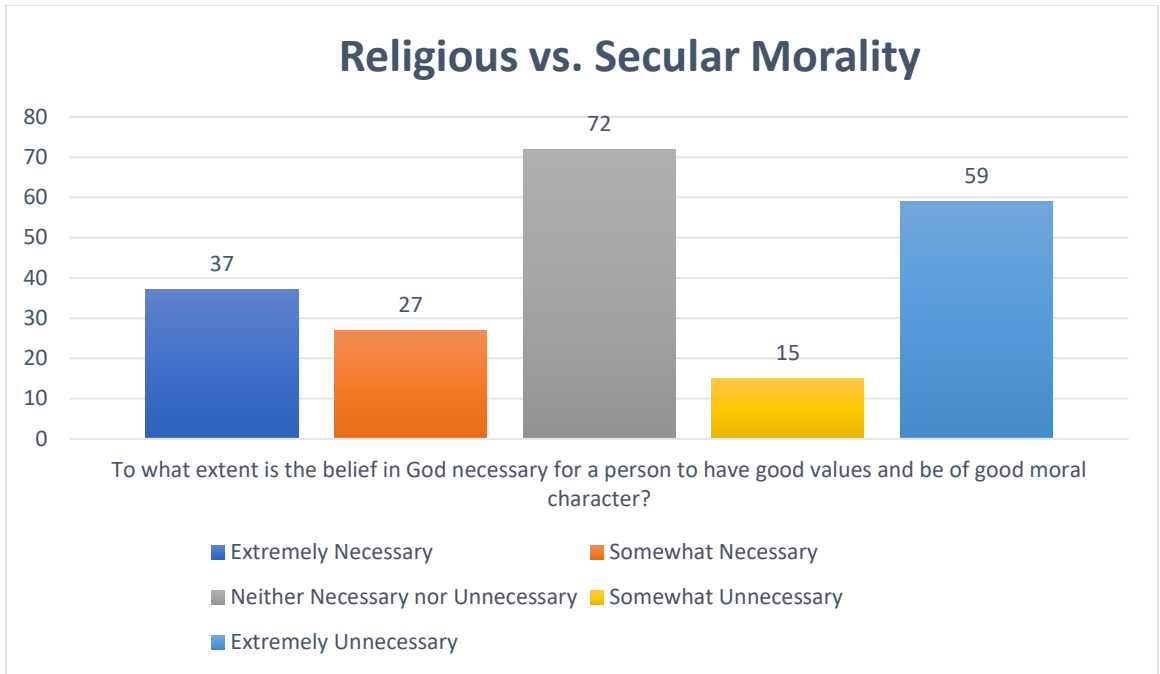


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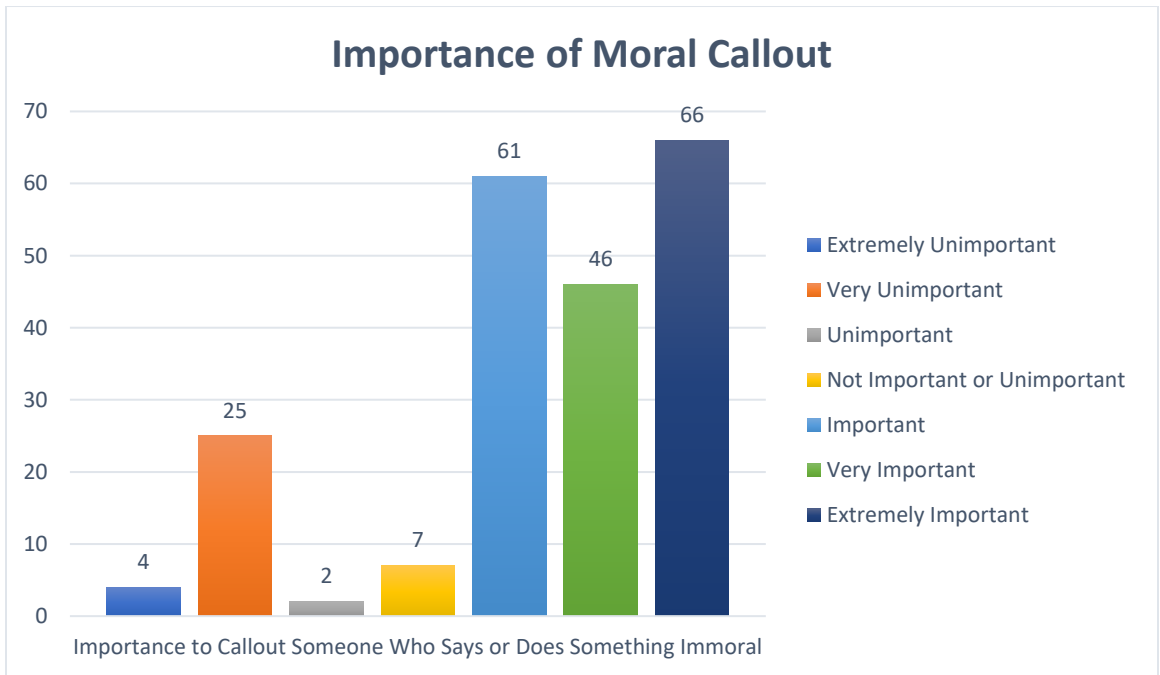


Figure 12.

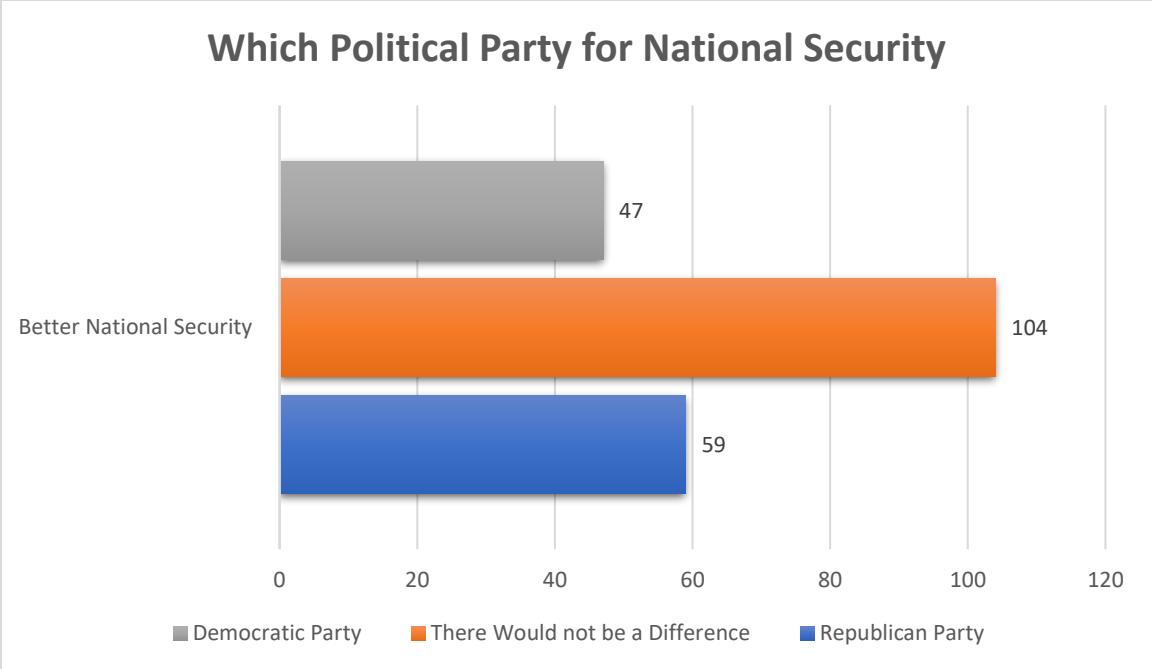


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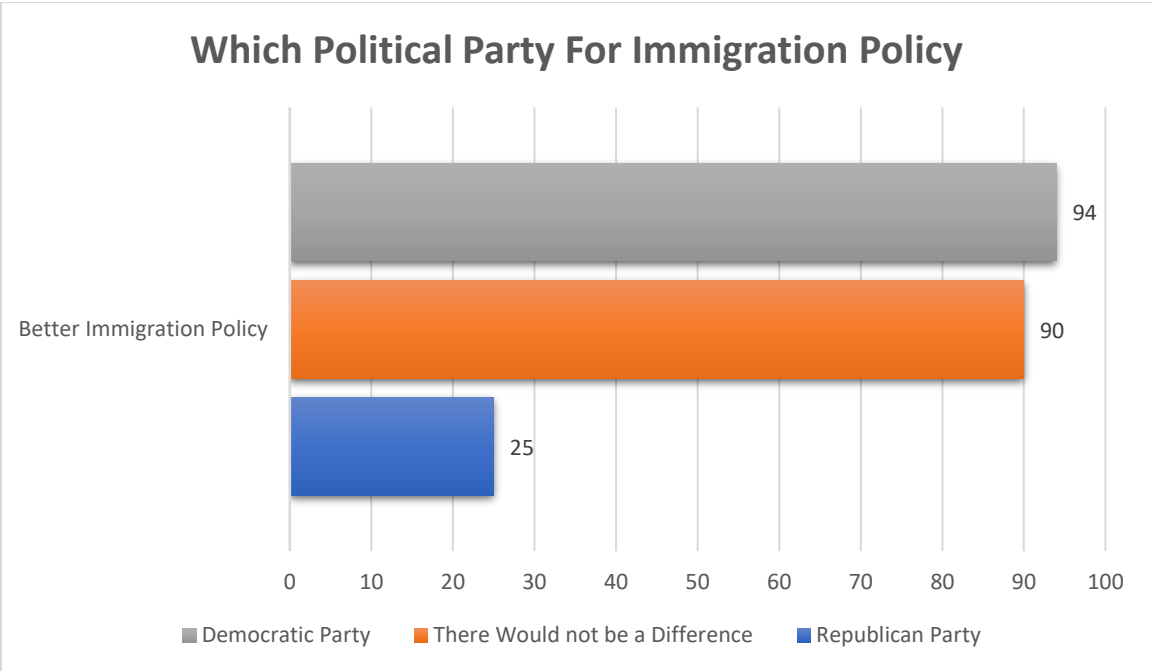


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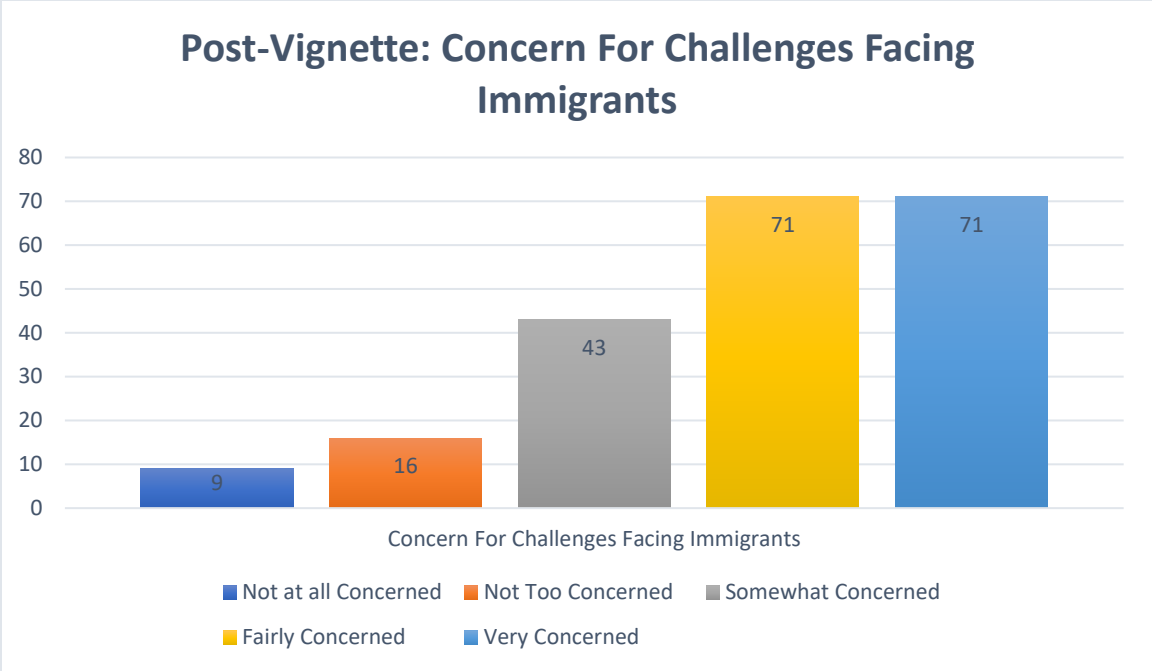


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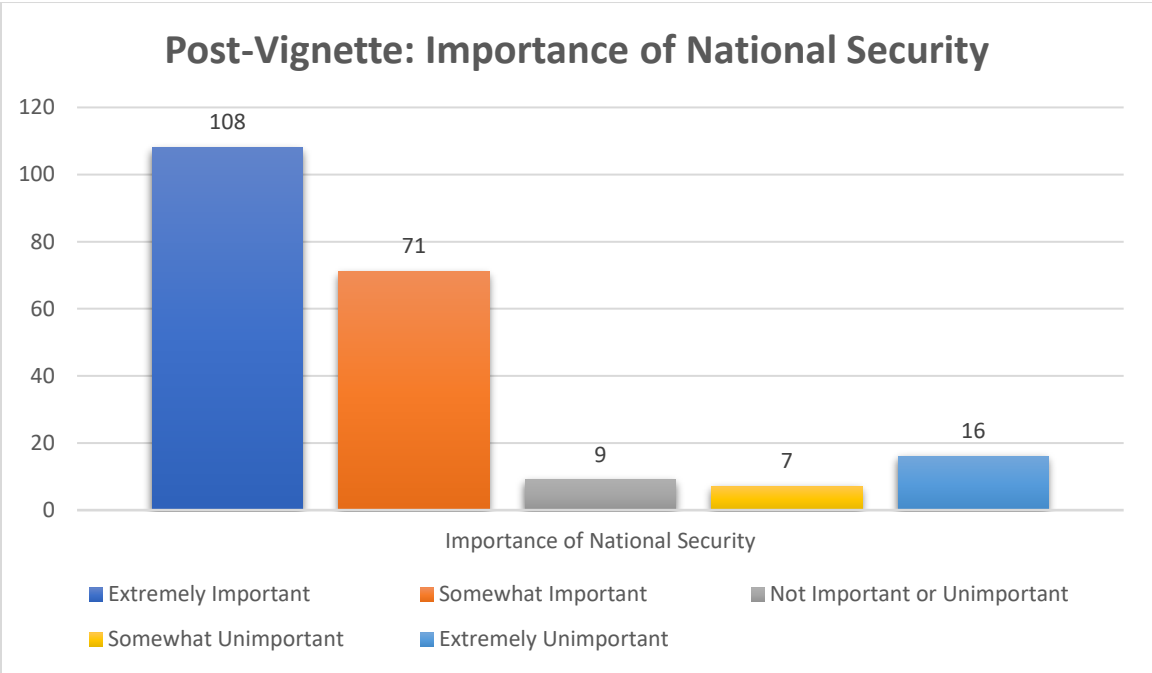


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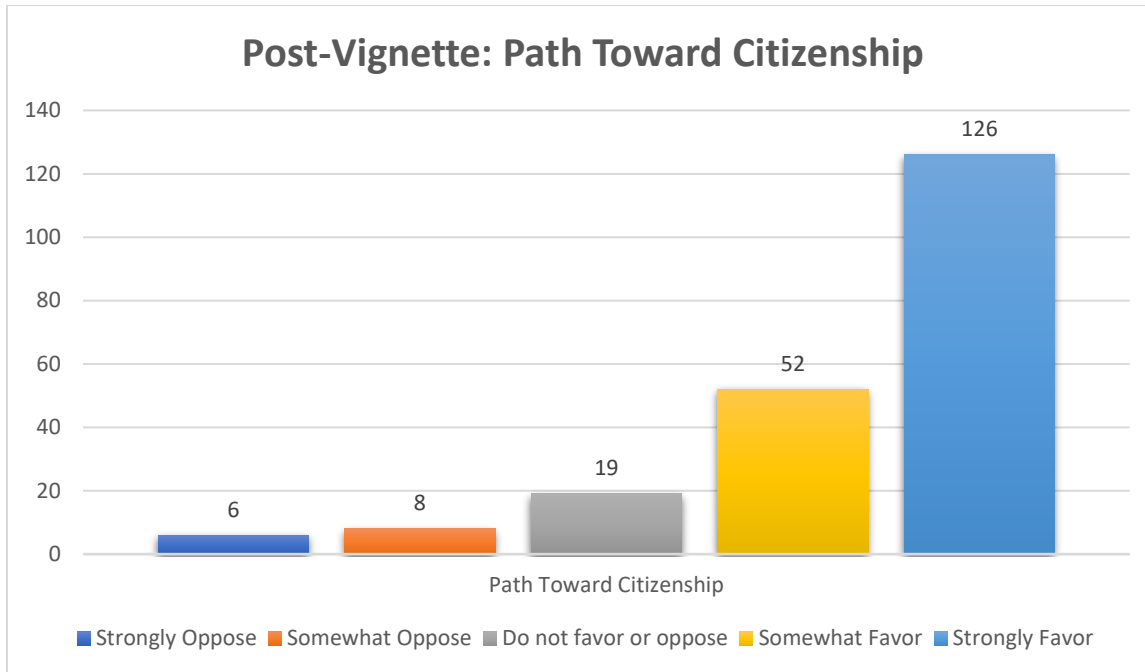


Figure 17.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics

	Experimental Condition	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Morality Framing Manipulation Check	Morality Treatment	.7372	.21650	98
	Security Treatment	.4784	.25626	104
	Total	.6040	.27036	202
National Security Framing Manipulation Check	Morality Treatment	.5179	.22775	98
	Security Treatment	.6875	.25540	104
	Total	.6052	.25628	202
Concern for Immigrants (Balanced Random Assignment Check)	Morality Treatment	.7398	.26360	98
	Security Treatment	.7260	.26649	104
	Total	.7327	.26452	202
Concern for National Security (Balanced Random Assignment Check)	Morality Treatment	.7755	.27688	98
	Security Treatment	.7404	.29338	104
	Total	.7574	.28533	202
Support for the Presidential Policy Proposal	Morality Treatment	.7704	.27262	98
	Security Treatment	.4784	.29990	104
	Total	.6200	.32150	202

Table 2.

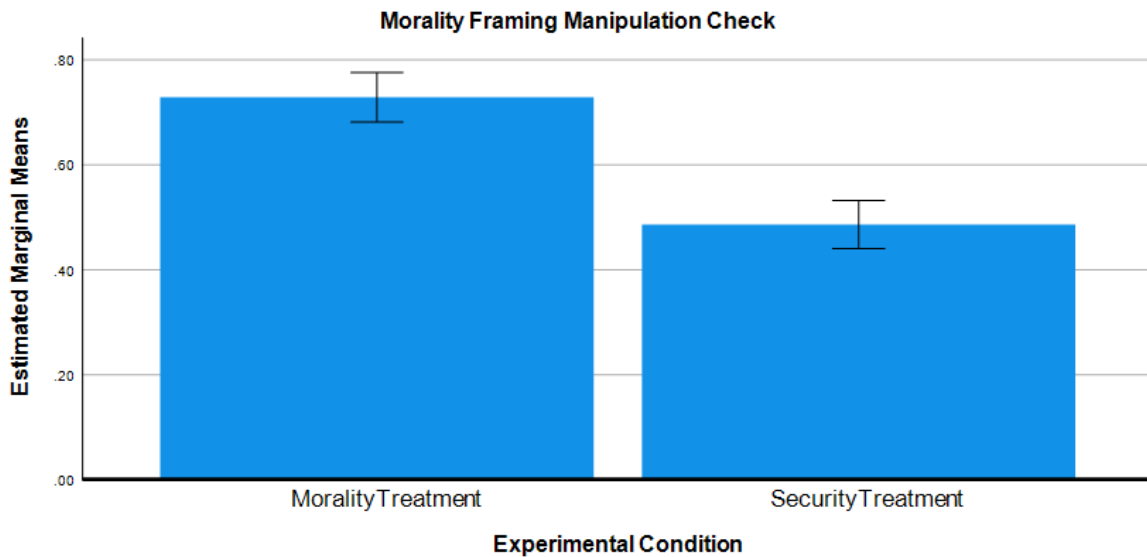
Pairwise Comparisons

Dependent Variable	Experimental Condition		Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	95% Confidence Interval for Difference ^a	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Morality Framing Manipulation Check	Morality	Security	.242*	.034	<.001	.175	.310
	Security	Morality	-.242*	.034	<.001	-.310	-.175
National Security Framing Manipulation Check	Morality	Security	-.180*	.035	<.001	-.250	-.110
	Security	Morality	.180*	.035	<.001	.110	.250
Concern for Immigrants (Balanced Random Assignment Check)	Morality	Security	.003	.032	.927	-.060	.065
	Security	Morality	-.003	.032	.927	-.065	.060
Concern for National Security (Balanced Random Assignment Check)	Morality	Security	.019	.040	.632	-.060	.099
	Security	Morality	-.019	.040	.632	-.099	.060
Support for the Presidential Policy Proposal	Morality	Security	.283*	.041	<.001	.201	.364
	Security	Morality	-.283*	.041	<.001	-.364	-.201

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: religmorality_I = 4505, moralcallout_I = 7202970320, churchattend_I = 2871, religiosity_I = .3993399433, gefactor_I = 695750289060, partyid_I = .6476897682, ideology_I = 6369636938, polpart_I = 4108910937, age_I = .16021602228, female_I = .65, white_I = .77, latinx_I = .89, single_I = .80, income_I = .3742574318

Error bars: 95% CI

Figure 18.

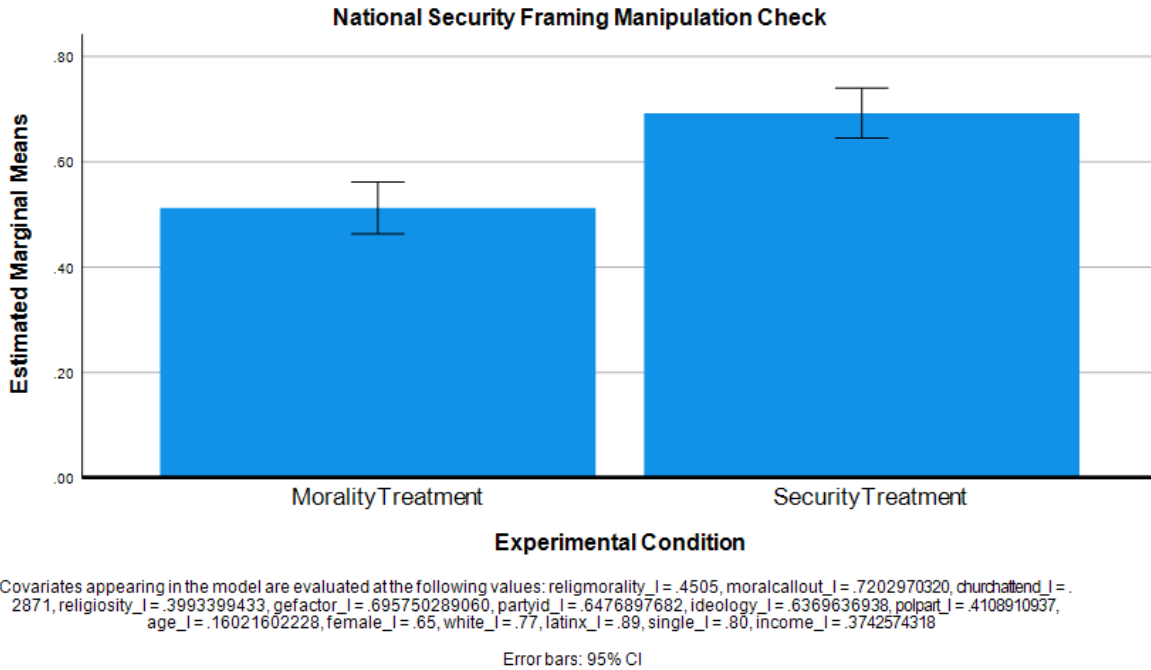


Figure 19.

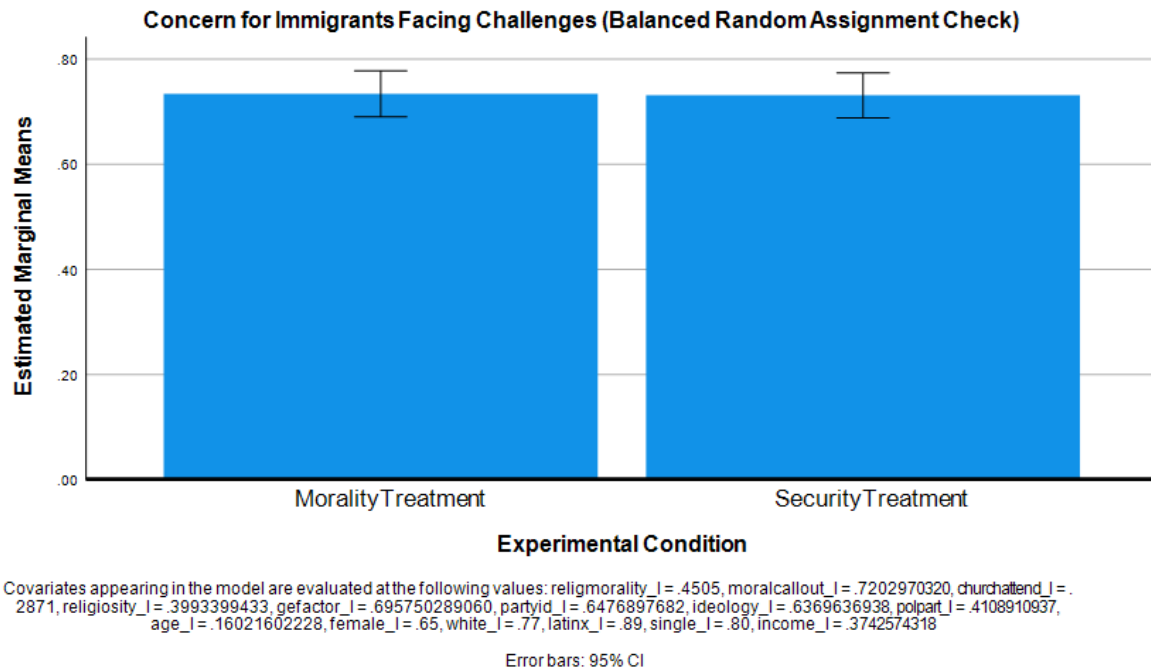


Figure 20.

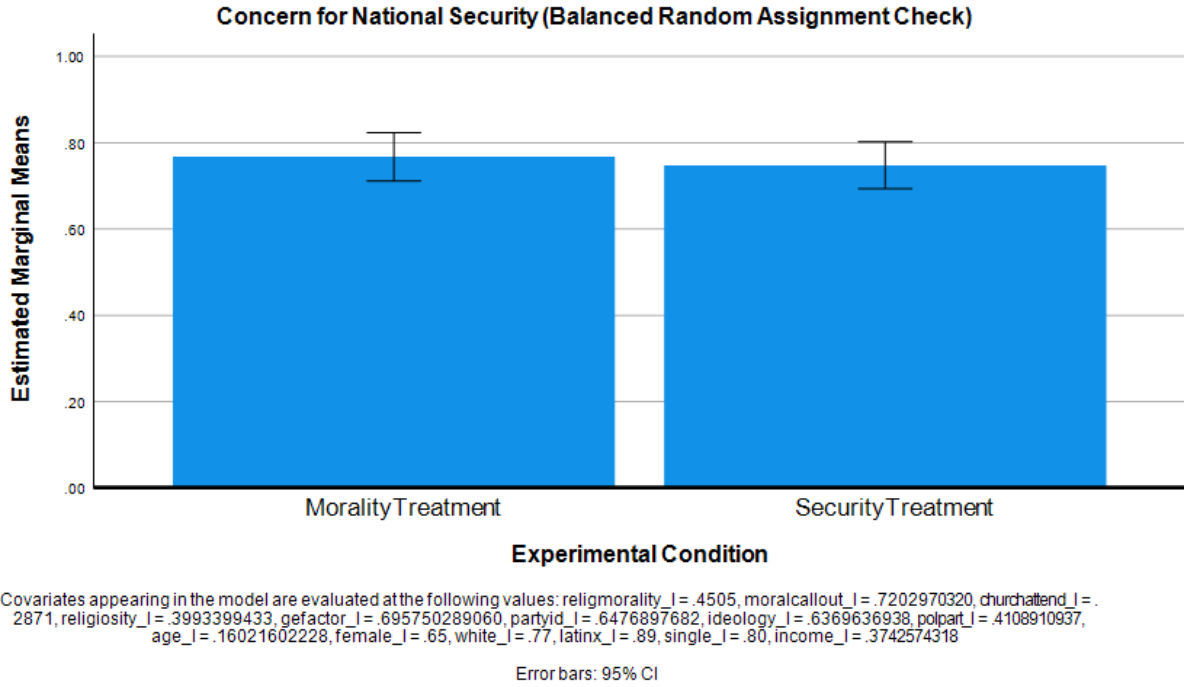


Figure 21.

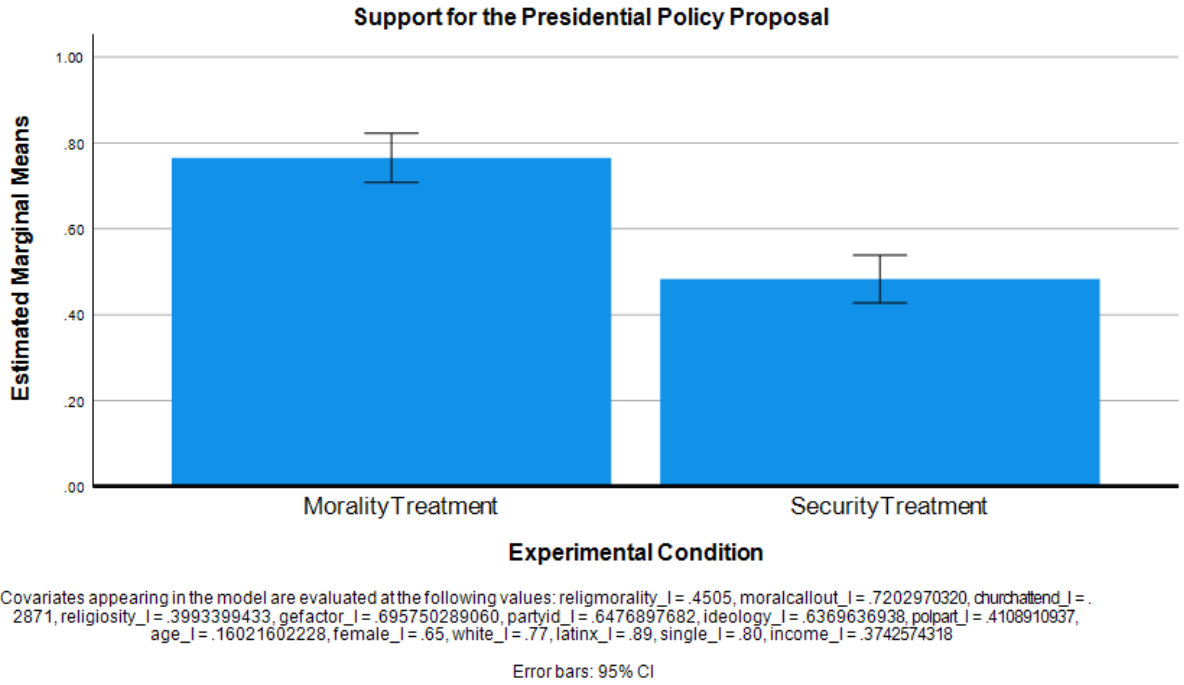


Figure 22.

Table 3.	Main Model: Support for Presidential Policy Proposal (across Moral and Security Framing Vignettes)		
Support for Presidential Proposal (Overall)	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Treatment	.2781311	.0393548	0.000***
Religious vs. Secular Morality	.0754156	.0728916	0.302
Moral Callout	-.0367839	.0932665	0.609
Religiosity	.0437798	.0778244	0.639
Attendance of Church Services	0.649575	.0778244	0.405
Catholic	-.0170114	.0454435	0.709
Group Empathy	.1177652	.1155869	0.310
Party Identification	.07031	.111957	0.531
Political Ideology	-.2257801	.1093797	0.040*
Political Participation	.0542933	.1018435	.0595
Age	-.0927281	.1318434	0.483
Female	-.0346528	.0463879	0.456
Latino	.0048256	.0657434	0.942
White	.0347037	.0482019	0.472
Single	-.0279004	.624283	0.655
Household Income	.0223491	.0668649	0.739
_cons	.4586251	.1543498	0.003
Number of Observations	206		
F(16, 189)	5.52		
Prob > F	0.0000		
R2	0.2806		
Root MSE	.28406		

Table 4.	Support for the Morally Framed Immigration Reform Presidential Policy Proposal		
Support for Morally Framed Presidential Proposal	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Religious vs. Secular Morality	-.0380385	.1021423	0.711
Moral Callout	.0529378	.0920823	0.567
Religiosity	-.0104158	.1021471	0.919
Attendance of Church Services	.2042742	.1046311	0.054~
Catholic	-.051227	.0616286	0.408
Group Empathy	.3909599	.1381225	0.006**
Party Identification	-.1659552	.1571837	0.294
Political Ideology	.236877	.1655131	0.156
Political Participation	.0001971	.1234553	0.999
Age	-.1111412	.154851	0.475
Female	-.0677158	.0581298	0.247
Latino	-.1010598	.0624488	0.109
White	.827445	.0649074	0.206
Single	-.0289917	.0763207	0.705
Household Income	-.0289917	.0870828	0.160
_cons	.4730666	.1856398	0.013
Number of Observations	101		
F(12, 85)	2.54		
Prob > F	0.0036		
R2	0.2412		
Root MSE	.2574		

Table 5.	Support for the Security Framed Immigration Reform Presidential Policy Proposal		
Support for Security Framed Presidential Proposal	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Religious vs. Secular Morality	.0531464	.0990771	0.593
Moral Callout	-.0598566	.1063731	0.575
Religiosity	.2567256	.1469267	0.084~
Attendance of Church Services	-.1000969	.1210889	0.411
Catholic	-.0253424	.06412	0.694
Group Empathy	-.1893194	.159031	0.237
Party Identification	.1127253	.1392763	0.420
Political Ideology	-.446588	.1456926	0.003**
Political Participation	.132735	.1549623	0.394
Age	.0283113	.1985912	.4229077
Female	.0161673	.0642677	.1438658
Latino	.0898571	.0803304	.2494718
White	.0360276	.0693349	.1737946
Single	-.096904	.1104492	.1225562
Household Income	-.0068785	.0854343	.1628776
_cons	.6938153	.2070418	1.105203
Number of Observations	105		
F(15, 89)	4.35		
Prob > F	0.0000		
R2	0.3364		
Root MSE	.26601		

Table 6.	Morality Framed Manipulation Check: Ability to Correctly Identify the Framing as Morally-Driven		
Morality Manipulation Check	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Treatment	.2407834	.0333787	0.000***
Religious vs. Secular Morality	-.0452865	.059852	0.450
Moral Callout	-.0611423	.0692488	0.378
Religiosity	.1627489	.0915995	0.077~
Attendance of Church Services	-.0031569	.0722348	0.965
Catholic	-.0292654	.0362245	0.420
Group Empathy	-.0872786	.100259	0.384
Party Identification	.1681011	.1049326	0.111
Political Ideology	-.1371365	.0966123	0.157
Political Participation	.2185012	.080803	0.007**
Age	-.1588735	.1346878	0.240
Female	.0029538	.0381311	0.938
Latino	-.0861473	.0581828	0.140
White	.0377457	.0394834	0.340
Single	.0125722	.0562758	0.823
Household Income	-.0094738	.0624938	0.880
_cons	.5133236	.1208614	0.000
Number of Observations	206		
F(16, 189)	7.56		
Prob > F	0.0000		
R2	.3146		
Root MSE	.23222		

Table 7.	Security Framed Manipulation Check: Ability to Correctly Identify the Framing as Security-Driven		
Security Manipulation Check	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Treatment	-.1715945	.0344768	0.000***
Religious vs. Secular Morality	-.089296	.064153	0.166
Moral Callout	-.0511167	.0665952	0.444
Religiosity	.0970029	.0865683	0.264
Attendance of Church Services	.0028003	.0815315	0.973
Catholic	.0098108	.0382865	0.798
Group Empathy	.0778519	.1045054	0.457
Party Identification	.1280324	.1094444	0.244
Political Ideology	-.1847167	.1006376	0.068~
Political Participation	.0729681	.0956655	0.447
Age	.000667	.13320292	1.000
Female	.0055752	.0395425	0.888
Latino	.0115218	.659931	0.862
White	.0256382	.0411028	0.534
Single	.0465853	.0656077	0.479
Household Income	.0514084	.0566779	0.366
_cons	.5802406	.1429108	0.000
Number of Observations	205		
F(16, 188)	3.16		
Prob > F	0.0001		
R2	0.1582		
Root MSE	.24676		

Table 8.		Factors Influencing Concern for Immigrants		
Concern for Immigrants	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value	
Treatment	.0050735	.0303453	0.867	
Religious vs. Secular Morality	.0251571	.054465	0.645	
Moral Callout	.0279979	.0598305	0.640	
Religiosity	-.0597639	.0766226	0.436	
Attendance of Church Services	.0628323	.0585476	0.285	
Catholic	.0464744	.0360311	0.199	
Group Empathy	.290759	.0823257	0.001***	
Party Identification	.0799454	.0848907	0.348	
Political Ideology	.2624337	.0908388	0.004**	
Political Participation	.1403003	.0794809	0.079~	
Age	-.3992325	.1090369	0.000***	
Female	-.010047	.0374968	0.789	
Latino	-.1209913	.0453709	0.008**	
White	-.0218474	.0383954	0.570	
Single	-.143599	.0447214	0.002**	
Household Income	-.0396977	.04585	0.388	
_cons	.5291895	.1093486	0.000	
Number of Observations	205			
F(16, 188)	7.67			
Prob > F	0.0000			
R2	0.3727			
Root MSE	.21814			

Table 9.	Factors Influencing Importance of National Security		
Importance of National Security	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Treatment	.0231993	.0384096	0.547
Religious vs. Secular Morality	.080107	.077044	0.300
Moral Callout	.0361519	.0742876	0.627
Religiosity	.1812622	.1031037	0.080~
Attendance of Church Services	-.186558	.0767821	0.016*
Catholic	.046196	.0407176	0.258
Group Empathy	-.0287032	.1036244	0.782
Party Identification	-.1065595	.0976068	0.276
Political Ideology	-.0472182	.1167856	0.686
Political Participation	.1021799	.0962482	0.290
Age	.2672849	.1344705	0.048*
Female	-.0037483	.0431606	0.931
Latino	-.1209913	.0760848	0.417
White	-.0038295	.0539653	0.944
Single	.0876664	.0752235	0.245
Household Income	-.1328647	.0638869	0.039*
_cons	.6074993	.166011	0.000
Number of Observations	204		
F(16, 187)	3.29		
Prob > F	0.0000		
R2	0.1397		
Root MSE	.27487		

Table 10.	Factors Influencing Support for Pathway to Citizenship		
Pathway to Citizenship	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-Value
Treatment	.0220019	.0351658	0.532
Religious vs. Secular Morality	.0157772	.0590752	0.790
Moral Callout	.097888	.0647358	0.132
Religiosity	-.1171434	.0938705	0.214
Attendance of Church Services	.034819	.0702013	0.621
Catholic	0.265942	.0347583	0.445
Group Empathy	.2322588	.077723	0.003**
Party Identification	.0898549	.0901376	0.320
Political Ideology	.1464527	.093851	0.120
Political Participation	.0150888	.0958676	0.875
Age	-.2744757	.1156524	0.019*
Female	-.0389083	.0356775	0.277
Latino	-.0730854	.0594679	0.221
White	.0162253	.0427095	0.704
Single	-0.218956	.0459721	0.634
Household Income	.074685	.0470746	0.114
_cons	.5418499	.1316795	0.000
Number of Observations	198		
F(16, 181)	4.74		
Prob > F	0.0000		
R2	0.2641		
Root MSE	.22956		

Informed Consent for the Survey Questionnaire (UTEP IRB Approved and Exempt)

Hello:

You are invited to participate in our survey.

Before completing this survey, please note: (1) the survey is voluntary, (2) no confidential information (e.g., student ID, IP address, etc.) will be collected, (3) all nonconfidential information that is collected from the survey questions will be kept anonymous, and (4) the study does not involve any deception (measures are collected agnostically and reported objectively). This survey will take approximately 12-15 minutes to complete.

Thank you very much for your time and support. Please begin with the survey now by clicking on the “Start” button below.

Pre-Test Questions

1. What is your age?
 - a. Fill in:
2. Please select the Gender you identify as:
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Non-binary
 - d. Other _____
3. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. Which category describes you? Please select all that apply.
 - a. White
 - b. Indigenous American/First Nations (American Indian or Alaska Native)
 - c. Asian
 - d. Black or African American
 - e. Middle Eastern
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. Multiracial
 - h. Other
5. How concerned do you feel about the challenges immigrants face in our society these days?
 - a. Not at all concerned
 - b. Not too concerned
 - c. Somewhat concerned
 - d. Fairly concerned
 - e. Very concerned
6. How important do you believe national security is?
 - a. Extremely important
 - b. Somewhat important
 - c. Not important or unimportant

- d. Somewhat unimportant
 - e. Extremely unimportant
7. To what extent do you favor or oppose providing a path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants who obey the law, pay a fine, and pass security checks?
 - a. Strongly oppose
 - b. Somewhat oppose
 - c. Do not favor or oppose
 - d. Somewhat favor
 - e. Strongly favor
 8. What religion do you belong to or identify with the most?
 - a. Asian Folk Religion
 - b. Hindu
 - c. Jewish
 - d. Muslim
 - e. Mainline Protestant (Christian)
 - f. Evangelical Protestant (Christian)
 - g. Black Protestant Church (Christian)
 - h. Catholic (Christian)
 - i. Non-traditional, orthodox
 - j. Other _____
 - k. Agnostic
 9. To what level, do you consider yourself to be religious?
 - a. Not religious
 - b. Slightly religious
 - c. Moderately religious
 - d. Very religious
 10. How many times do you attend religious services or ceremonies at your place of worship?
 - a. Never
 - b. A few times a year
 - c. Once or twice a month
 - d. Almost every week
 - e. Every week
 11. To what extent is the belief in God necessary for a person to have good values and be of good moral character?
 - a. Extremely necessary
 - b. Somewhat necessary
 - c. Neither necessary nor unnecessary
 - d. Somewhat unnecessary
 - e. Extremely unnecessary
 12. What is your political identification?
 - a. Strong Republican
 - b. Republican
 - c. Leaning Republican
 - d. Independent

- e. Leaning Democrat
 - f. Democrat
 - g. Strong Democrat
13. What is your political ideology?
- a. Very Conservative
 - b. Conservative
 - c. Slightly Conservative
 - d. Moderate
 - e. Slightly Liberal
 - f. Liberal
 - g. Very Liberal
14. Which political party do you think would be the most likely to get the government to do a better job in dealing with the issue of immigration – the Democrat Party, the Republican Party, or there wouldn't be much difference between them?
- a. Republican Party
 - b. There would not be a difference
 - c. Democrat Party
15. Which political party do you think would be the most likely to get the government to do a better job in dealing with the issue of national security – the Democrat Party, the Republican Party, or there wouldn't be much difference between them?
- a. Republican Party
 - b. There would not be a difference
 - c. Democrat Party
16. How important is it to call people out when they say or do something that is morally wrong?
- a. Extremely unimportant
 - b. Very unimportant
 - c. Unimportant
 - d. Not important or unimportant
 - e. Important
 - f. Very Important
 - g. Extremely Important
17. How often would you say you try to better understand people of other racial or ethnic groups by imagining how things look from their perspective?
- a. Not often at all
 - b. Not too often
 - c. Somewhat often
 - d. Very often
 - e. Extremely often
18. Before criticizing somebody from another racial or ethnic group, how often do you try to imagine how you would feel if you were in their place?
- a. Not often at all
 - b. Not too often
 - c. Somewhat often
 - d. Very often

- e. Extremely often
19. How often would you say that you have tender, concerned feelings for people from another racial or ethnic group who are less fortunate than you?
- a. Not often at all
 - b. Not too often
 - c. Somewhat often
 - d. Very often
 - e. Extremely often
20. When you see someone being taken advantage of due to their race or ethnicity, how often do you feel protective towards them?
- a. Not often at all
 - b. Not too often
 - c. Somewhat often
 - d. Very often
 - e. Extremely often
21. Are you currently registered to vote?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't Know
22. In what ways are you politically active? Please select all that apply.
- a. I vote
 - b. I follow local and national politics
 - c. I am politically active online (social media, blogs, etc.)
 - d. I am involved with an off campus political organization
 - e. I am/have volunteered to work on a campaign
 - f. I am a member of a student organization on campus
 - g. I talk about politics casually with friends and family
23. What is your marital status?
- a. Single (never married)
 - b. Married, or in a domestic partnership
 - c. Widowed
 - d. Divorced
 - e. Separated
24. What is your Household income
- a. Less than \$20,000
 - b. \$20,000 to \$34,999
 - c. \$35,000 to \$49,999
 - d. \$50,000 to \$74,999
 - e. \$75,000 to \$99,999
 - f. Over \$100,000
25. Some scientists have predicted that in the next 100 years self-driving cars that are capable of flying will become an eventuality, while others think it may take much longer. Among the different car manufacturers, Tesla is expected to lead the way on such efforts. How likely do you

believe that self-driving cars capable of flying will be the main method of transportation in the United States by the year 2100?

- a. Extremely likely
- b. Somewhat likely
- c. Not sure
- d. Somewhat unlikely
- e. Extremely unlikely

Vignette Version A

Scroll down to read the following hypothetical excerpt of a speech by a fictitious president and then please answer the questions below. The year is 2045, and the President of the United States is addressing the nation at the annual State of the Union.

President Anderson addresses the nation at the 2045 State of the Union:

“The United States of America was created as a beacon for democracy, freedom, and hope for those who fled persecution. The United States since its creation has welcomed those who found themselves without a home, those who were hardworking, brave, and determined to create something better. The United States has prospered as a nation because of the contributions that immigrants and their descendants cultivated on our soil. It was their desire to be free from tyrants and persecution that led them to create the America we know today. The United States has benefited from the fact that it can attract people from all over the world and allow them to create a space in which they can become Americans. For these reasons, we must continue our moral mission to welcome immigrants who are fleeing war and famine to give them the same opportunities that were once afforded to us and our ancestors. We welcome refugees, asylum seekers, and people of all walks of life because as our character is judged by how we treat those who are in need at the part of their life when they are at their most vulnerable. Thus, I propose immigration reform that reflects our moral values to help immigrants first and foremost because it is the only honorable path forward and vital to the continuation of a prosperous America.”

Vignette Version B

Scroll down to read the following hypothetical excerpt of a speech by a fictitious president and then please answer the questions below. The year is 2045, and the President of the United States is addressing the nation at the annual State of the Union.

President Anderson addresses the nation at the 2045 State of the Union:

“The United States of America was created as a beacon for democracy, freedom, and hope for those who fled persecution. The United States since its creation has welcomed those who found themselves without a home, those who were hardworking, brave, and determined to create something better. The United States has prospered as a nation because of the contributions that immigrants and their descendants

cultivated on our soil. It was their desire to be free from tyrants and persecution that lead them to create the America we know today. As much that we owe to those who came before us, we must now shift our attention to those who are Americans today. It is vital, for the security of America and Americans, to focus our attention on national security. While immigration has been and will continue to be important to the United States, our primary focus as of right now should be securing our borders and ports of entry. We must do this to protect Americans from the tyranny, persecution, disorder, and danger they fled. It is the principled imperative to protect those within the nation, even if it means greatly limiting and possibly stopping immigration into the United States. Thus, I propose immigration reform that reflects our need to increase national security first and foremost because it is the only safe path forward and vital to the continuation of a prosperous America.”

Post-Test Questions

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the excerpt you just read above? (You may scroll back up to review if needed).
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Somewhat agree
 - c. Do not agree or disagree
 - d. Somewhat disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. How morally-driven do you find this reform proposal to be?
 - a. Not at all morally-driven
 - b. Not too morally-driven
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat morally-driven
 - e. Highly morally-driven
3. How security-oriented do you find this reform proposal to be?
 - a. Highly security-oriented
 - b. Somewhat security-oriented
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Not too security-oriented
 - e. Not at all security-oriented
4. How concerned do you feel about the challenges immigrants face in our society these days?
 - f. Not at all concerned
 - g. Not too concerned
 - h. Somewhat concerned
 - i. Fairly concerned
 - j. Very concerned
5. How important do you believe national security is?
 - a. Extremely important
 - b. Somewhat important
 - c. Not important or unimportant
 - d. Somewhat unimportant
 - e. Extremely unimportant

6. To what extent do you favor or oppose providing a path to citizenship for unauthorized immigrants who obey the law, pay a fine, and pass security checks?
 - a. Strongly oppose
 - b. Somewhat oppose
 - c. Do not favor or oppose
 - d. Somewhat favor
 - e. Strongly favor

Vita

Gerardo Jesus Flores was born in El Paso, Texas, on September 23, 1996. He attended elementary schools in El Paso Independent School District and graduated from Valle Verde Early College High School in June 2015. The following August he entered the University of North Texas and in December 2016 received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Political Science with Summa Cum Laude honors. He entered the University of El Paso at Texas in January 2021 and received a Master of Arts in Political Science in December 2022.