

Title: Religious Reputations: A Symbolic-Interaction Analysis of the Political Impact of Religion on Immigration

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The use of religion as a motivator and the social rules of behavior within religious institutions contributed to favorable attitudes towards immigration. According to symbolic-interactionist theory, individuals construct reality based on social interactions. Roles and statuses developed in which the religious leader had a standing, authoritative role while the follower had a seated, obedient role. This contributed to the dynamics of the religious leader's influential power over their followers. Through analyzing empirical data from the Pew Research Center, religious commitment, particularly religious affiliation and attendance at religious services, were shown to be positively correlated to favorable attitudes towards immigration. Elite opinion theory, explained by Zaller, was employed by religious leaders to create a simple reality for followers to understand. Through higher perceived status, religious leaders influentially utilized their Biblical interpretations to guide followers. Through Biblical texts that favored immigration, priests exercised "moral authority" to advocate for liberal immigration policies. The priest interpreted the Bible during religious services. Frequent attendance, in part of the follower, to religious services increased the follower's exposure to the priest's interpretations. According to Blumer's three premises, the follower is consequently more likely to act accordingly given the priest's higher status and the meanings associated with religion. Despite the multitude of different perspectives regarding religion and immigration attitudes, interactionist theory provides a closer look at the interactions between individuals. Using religion as a guiding ideal, religious leaders fostered supportive immigration attitudes. Thus, liberal immigration policy reform was sought after by both religious leaders and their followers.

Works Cited

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