

IMMIGRATION REFORM AS A MORAL QUESTION: ELITE AND NON-ELITE EVANGELICAL ATTITUDES OF IMMIGRATION REFORM IN THE U.S.A

Abstract

The main goal of this paper is to examine how Evangelicals talk about the topic of immigration in the U.S.A. in an online forum. This investigation centers on an analysis of the twenty-nine magazine articles and online blogs from the magazine *Christianity Today* addressing immigration between January 2007 - September 2012 as well as the four hundred ninety five written online comments in response to these articles. The examination illustrates that while the responses to the articles demonstrated a range of opinion, the percentage of readers' comments sympathetic towards undocumented immigrants has increased since 2009. Respondents questioned the authority and statements of elites. Nevertheless, the majority of posters showed respect for the other commentators and acknowledged differences of opinion and interpretation within the online context.

Keywords: immigration, Evangelicals, political attitudes, elites, non-elites, United States

The relationship between religion and democracy in the west continues to spur debate. On the one hand, religion is argued to support civil society and political participation. On the other hand, religion is often identified as a source of intolerance and exclusivity that is detrimental to democracy in a diverse society. This incongruity is evident in explanations of the correlation between intolerance toward undocumented immigrants and Evangelical membership in the U.S.A. Similar debates exist concerning the influence of the internet over political discourse and civil society. On the one hand, the internet is argued to be empowering since it increases access to information. On the other hand, it is claimed that internet users may not search for contradictory sources of information and may only look for arguments that support their existing positions. The aim of this paper is to merge these two lines of inquiry by exploring the correlation between Evangelical membership and opinions on immigration within an online forum.

1 E-mail: KaftanJ@uhd.edu

The internet has made interaction among Evangelicals - among followers as well as between elites and followers - more possible. The Evangelical media landscape has become more diverse as a consequence. Followers do not have to uncritically accept the proposals of elites and can offer alternative arguments in a public online forum. Followers can voice their own arguments concerning undocumented immigration utilizing religious rationalizations. The interactions between elites and followers as well as the interactions among followers are of particular interest to this paper.

This investigation centers on articles and online blogs from the magazine *Christianity Today*, a well known Evangelical publication, as well as the written online comments in response to these articles by highly committed Evangelicals. Given the heated nature of the public debate concerning immigration in the United States, a review of the themes that are presented by Evangelical leaders as well as how these themes are received by followers in an online forum provides a unique opportunity to examine whether reasoned discourse concerning contested social and political issues - of fundamental importance to the functioning of democracy- is taking place online. In addition, such a review also provides insight into whether the attitudes of the Evangelicals toward undocumented immigration are changing over time. Overall, this paper aims to add to the politology of religion literature by lending insight into the specific "notions, explanations, ... and constructs of [Evangelical] religious dogma, doctrine, its teaching and practice" that are "openly connected with [immigration] politics" in the U.S.A as exhibited in these online interactions.² Several questions guide the analysis.

1) What themes dominate the messages presented by Evangelical leaders concerning immigration and immigration reform in the U.S.A and are these themes also reflected in the discussions of followers?

2) Does the public online response reflect a unified conservative front or do the responses reflect a range of diverse opinions?

3) Does the online interaction suggest changes in the future attitudes of Evangelicals concerning immigration reform in the United States?

4) What is the overall manner of the online interaction by Evangelicals concerning immigration and immigration reform? Is it reflective of discourse beneficial to democracy?

The results of this study show that Evangelical membership does not necessitate intolerance toward undocumented immigrants. Nevertheless, the themes emphasized by followers are not the same as those proposed by elites. Most of the observed elites accentuate sympathy for undocumented immigrants and an extension of grace toward the outsider. Followers, in contrast, are more likely to stress legality and to bring up negative themes such as the costs of undocumented immigration. Followers are also more likely to voice criticisms of

2 Miroljub Jevtic, *Political Science and Religion, Politics and Religion*, Vol. 1 No 1, Belgrade, 2007, pp. 64.

the authors, clergy, politicians and other respondents. A range of diverse positions are reflected in the posts of followers. However, the readers' comments are becoming more sympathetic toward undocumented immigrants over time. Furthermore, discussion is taking place. Almost all of the comments focused on immigration. The vast majority of comments were respectful to others even when opinions differed and the posts were not dominated by a small number of individuals.

Given the interdisciplinary nature of this inquiry, the paper adheres to the following trajectory. First, Evangelical attitudes toward immigration policy in the United States are reviewed. Next, changes in the Evangelical media landscape are described, after which the method of data collection is explained. The results follow including tables summarizing the themes presented by elites as well as the themes expressed by followers in response. Qualitative responses are provided to illustrate the positions of elites and followers in more detail. Finally, conclusions are offered.

Evangelical Attitudes towards Immigration Policy in the United States

The constitutional separation of church from state in the United States guarantees the freedom of religion as a basic right. This freedom of religion precludes the prohibition of an indirect religious influence in politics. When developing their political positions, most religious individuals do not leave their religious convictions at the door. Instead, most strive to shape their social and political worlds based on their religiously centered concept of justice. Therefore, religion remains a variable of fundamental importance when examining any political issue and yet, is one that is often overlooked especially within the field of political science.³

Alfred Stepan has demonstrated that separation of church from state is not a necessary characteristic of democracy and that the relationship between religion and democracy can take many forms.⁴ Social scientists have argued for a connection between religiosity and political conservatism.⁵ In the United States, the link between white Evangelicals and conservative political views as well as

3 Miroslav Jevtic, *Polity of Religion*, Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade, 2009. Here quoted from: Miki Bozinovich, *Polity of Religion, Politics and Religion*, Vol. III, No.2, Belgrade, 2009, pp. 279-282; See also, Miroslav Jevtic, *Political Science and Religion, Politics and Religion*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Belgrade, 2007, pp. 59-69 and Steven Kettell, *Has Political Science Ignored Religion?, PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol.45, No. 1, Washington, D.C., 2012, pp. 93-100.

4 Alfred Stepan, *Religion, Democracy and the Twin Tolerations*, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11. No. 4, Washington, D.C., 2000, pp. 37-58.

5 Robert Wuthnow, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988. David C. Leege et al., *The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post New Deal Period*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002.

Republican Party affiliation is well established.⁶ Regarding the issue of immigration reform, for example, when asked whether immigration policy should prioritize better border security and increased enforcement or whether it should prioritize creating a path to citizenship, white Evangelicals show the strongest support for increased border security and better enforcement (42%) compared with white mainline protestants (40%), black protestants (27%) and Catholics (28%). In 2010, only 15% of white Evangelicals explicitly prioritized a path to citizenship. When compared with white mainline protestants (34%), black protestants (40%) and Catholics (50%), white Evangelicals (27%) were the least likely to say that immigrants work hard and do not burden society. They were also the least likely to say that immigrants strengthen society and do not threaten American values, 36%. Nevertheless, only 12% of white Evangelicals claimed that religion was the most important influence on their opinions concerning immigration policy.⁷

The relationship between Evangelical membership and conservative political attitudes has been attributed to religious beliefs and practices.⁸ Brint and Abrutyn however, argue that religious identity as such has little net impact on political attitudes and that the influence of Evangelical membership as well as that of religious beliefs has been overstated.⁹ Instead they argue that social circumstances such as low education levels and perspectives including moral traditionalism, higher levels of religiosity and male dominant attitudes toward gender roles are the more likely bases of conservative political views on issues of abortion, gay rights and end-of-life care. Contrary to arguments stating that Evangelicals support the broader conservative movement, they assert that white Evangelical protestants are not more likely to adopt conservative anti-immigration positions. Instead, they maintain that moral traditionalism - a cognitive orientation making a stark contrast between right and wrong along with an associated fear of social change - is the most consistent and strongest single source of Evangelical conservatism among white Evangelicals.

McDaniel et al also warn against explaining anti-immigrant attitudes by Evangelical membership.¹⁰ They argue that Christian nationalism shapes atti-

6 Sunshine D. Hillygus and Todd G. Shields, *Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election*, *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Cambridge, 2005, pp. 201-09. Gary Langer and Joel Cohen, *Voters and Values in the 2004 Election*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 5, Oxford, 2005, pp. 744-59. Jeff Manza and Clem Brooks, *The Religious Factor in the U.S. Presidential Elections, 1960-1992*, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. 1, Chicago, 1997, pp. 38-81.

7 Pew Research Center, *Few Say Religion Shapes Immigration, Environment Views Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey*, September 17, 2010, pp. 4-6, <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/17/few-say-religion-shapes-immigration-environment-views/> (accessed March 27, 2014).

8 Andrew Greeley and Michael Hout, *The Truth About Conservative Christians: What They Think and What They Believe*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006.

9 Steven Brint and Seth Abrutyn, *Who's Right About the Right? Comparing Competing Explanations of the Link Between White Evangelicals and Conservative Politics in the United States*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Hoboken, 2010, pp. 337-341.

10 Eric Leon McDaniel et al., *Divine Boundaries: How Religion Shapes Citizens' Attitudes Toward Immigrants*, *American*

tudes toward immigration more so than religious affiliation. Christian nationalism can be either liberal or conservative in tone. The liberal version views America's role in the world as one that is divinely ordained and brings good things to others. The conservative version believes that America is in a unique covenant with God and must be protected from outsiders and others who would do it harm. Christian nationalists view America as having a divinely inspired mission and link American success to God's approval. McDaniel et al. show that Evangelicals are more supportive of the Christian nationalism belief system than mainline Protestants or Catholics and contend that the association of America with God's plan makes Christian nationalists likely to care about who is part of the nation. Christian nationalists hope to ensure that others neither misdirect the United States from its intended path nor threaten their values. While Evangelical protestants have more negative attitudes toward immigrants than mainline protestants or Catholics, Evangelical opposition can be explained by cultural concerns more so than by economic concerns and is rooted in a view of America's foundation linked with the Christian nation.

The portrayal of Christian nationalists is mirrored in more general representations of pro-border advocates in the U.S.A. Bridget Hayden illustrates that advocates for border protection stress legality and that the USA is a country of laws.¹¹ This emphasis on legality echoes beliefs in a strong division between right and wrong. Pro-border advocates agree that immigrants become American through hard work and sacrifice. However, they claim that while previous generations of migrants were honest and law abiding, the current Latin American migration is characterized by law breakers and cheaters. They insist that equality necessitates that all must play by the same rules. They maintain that they accept diversity, however, they expect assimilation and conformity into a single culture and language thus distinguishing between the nation and "others." They utilize legal definitions to define the term immigrant and associate undocumented immigration with illegality and other illegal activities. According to this position, the new immigrants are unlawful and cannot be part of the legitimate nation. In addition, pro-border advocates view themselves as "citizen victims" as a result of the loss of order and assert that the nation is disintegrating because the new migrants refuse to assimilate. Their insistence on assimilation demonstrates their concern over what they perceive to be a threat to national values.

Even so, Robinson asserts that the relationship between religiosity and tolerance is not fixed.¹² Exposure to differing views can enhance deliberation and tolerance but is more likely to do so when the dissonant arguments are at-

Politics Research, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2011, pp. 212.

11 Bridget Hayden, *Impeach the Traitors: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Nation in Immigration Control Activism in the United States*, *Social Semiotics*, Vol. 20, No. 2, New York, 2010, pp. 159-162.

12 Carin Robinson, *Cross-Cutting Messages and Political Tolerance: An Experiment Using Evangelical Protestants*, *Political Behavior*, Vol. 32, No. 4, New York, 2010, pp. 495-515.

tributed to leaders within the same movement. Exposure to contradictory arguments by leaders outside the movement, in contrast, can actually decrease political tolerance. Therefore, there is more potential for dialogue about contentious issues when there is a degree of similarity among the discussants' worldviews. In addition, level of religiosity has also been linked to increased tolerance. Knoll has argued that those with higher levels of religious commitment are more likely to expose themselves to the messages of religious elites and to internalize religious teachings about compassion for the disadvantaged.¹³ Church attendance has been shown to be positively correlated with more liberal views on immigration when controlling for religious affiliation. Nevertheless, the question of national identity and how Evangelicals view the potential for immigrant integration remains an important one in understanding how Evangelicals view immigration generally. Highly committed Christians are more likely to maintain a view of a Christian American nation. Just as religion delineates group boundaries, conceptions of national identity outline belonging and who we view to be "people like us" and those "others" who do not belong.¹⁴

Nonetheless, Evangelical elites as well as followers may be shifting their views on immigration reform and may reflect less institutional coherence.¹⁵ In March of 2013, for example, 62% of white Evangelicals surveyed said that there should be a way for undocumented immigrants to stay in the U.S. legally. Even so, 55% believed that immigrants are a burden since they take away jobs, housing and health care from residents; 58% also said that they threaten traditional American customs and values. White Evangelicals continue to express lower support for immigrants than the general U.S population as well as other religious groups.¹⁶

The Evangelical Media Landscape

Evangelicals have been especially successful in presenting a unified front supporting conservative Republican candidates since the late 1980's. Boerl and

13 Benjamin R. Knoll, And Who is My Neighbor? Religion and Immigration Policy Attitudes, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Hoboken, 2009, pp. 313-331.

14 Jeremy B. Straughn and Scott L. Feld, America as a "Christian Nation"? Understanding Religious Boundaries of National Identity in the United States, *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 71, No. 3, Oxford, 2010, pp. 300. See also, Clifford Geertz, Religion as a Cultural System, in: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Clifford Geertz (ed.), Fontana Press, London, 1993, pp. 87-125.

15 Gabriella A. Salguero, Immigration, Integration, And National Identity: Making The Case For A Hispanic Evangelical Contribution, *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1, London, 2011, pp. 71-75. See also, Julia Preston, As Evangelical Leaders Change View on Immigration, Congregations Follow, *New York Times*, April 14, 2014, pp. 14-17, New York. See also, Miriam Jordan and James Oberman, Evangelicals Push Immigration Path, *Wall Street Journal-Eastern Edition* Vol. 261, April 8, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324883604578399023366575766> (accessed March 27, 2014).

16 Pew Research Center, Majority of White Evangelicals Back Way for Unauthorized Immigrants to Stay in U.S., April 24, 2013, pp. 1-2, <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/majority-of-white-evangelicals-back-way-for-unauthorized-immigrants-to-stay-in-u-s/> (accessed March 27, 2014).

Perkins have argued that much of the strength of the Religious Right has historically come from its effective use of communication technologies.¹⁷ They argue that as a rule, religious organizations have leaders who utilize their position to advocate political and social issues. Shared theology and shared identity within congregations or even within entire denominations make mobilization efforts less difficult. Unifying multiple religious organizations with denominational differences on the other hand, is a much more daunting task. Boerl and Perkins argue that the effective use of radio broadcasts and televangelism especially after 1960 allowed the Christian Right to overcome these established denominational differences and to create a unified identity with a set of accepted core values.

Televangelism and its conservative message were especially appealing to those who were troubled by the social upheavals of the 1960's. Televangelists worked to create a community of conservative Christians whose numbers grew with the spread of cable television. The result was the homogenization of initially divergent groups. When the same radio and television programs are listened to or watched heavily by diverse groups, the result is that the political and social attitudes of the members of these groups become more similar. In the case of American televangelism, this "mainstreaming" effect pushed Evangelical attitudes toward the conservative end of the political spectrum reflecting the views of the televangelists themselves. Once caught up in the "mainstreaming" effect, individuals sought out additional programming that reinforced these conservative political views.¹⁸

Nonetheless, the link between the American Evangelical community and support for conservative Republican candidates may be threatened by the increasing number of Evangelicals utilizing the internet. While the technologies of radio and television had a unifying effect given that communication predominantly took the form of monologue by religious elites, the internet allows for a dialogue among not only religious elites but among all regardless of status. The internet is an interactive medium. It is global and anyone can participate with little expense and relative ease.¹⁹ The internet empowers individuals to find information easily as well as to foster new networks of individuals with similar interests irrespective of geographic location. Thus individuals increasingly become more aware of their political power and potential to contest political authority. The implication is that the internet is leading to "accelerated pluralism" whereby interest-based group politics is transforming into more fluid issue-based group politics with the effect of decreasing institutional coherence.²⁰

17 Christopher W. Boerl and Chris Perkins, The Political Pluralization of American Evangelicals: How Old Media Built a Movement, and Why the Internet is Poised to Change It, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* Vol. 11, No.1, London, 2011, pp. 66-78.

18 *Ibidem*, p. 70.

19 Lorne L. Dawson and Douglas E. Cowan, Introduction, in: *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, Dawson, L and D. Cowan (eds.), Routledge, New York, 2004, pp. 1-16.

20 Bruce Bimber, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*, Cambridge

The internet is empowering divergent groups within the Evangelical community. Emergent Evangelicals, in particular, are voicing their concern over social as well as environmental issues. They have expressed dissatisfaction with the dominant expression of the contemporary Evangelical church and are calling for a re-conceptualization of Evangelical tradition.²¹ Evangelicals are not theologically identical. With the increasing utilization of the internet by Evangelicals, the Evangelical media landscape has become more diversified and decentralized. The process of exchange between the media and the audience has become more interactive.

Media act as intervening variables between the public and policy makers.²² Religious media act as mediating variables between religious leaders and their flocks. Media products reproduce and disseminate contemporary arguments regarding contemporary social and political issues that are pressing to the leadership and worshippers alike. In addition, changes in media access have made it possible to interact with authors as well as readers like never before. Many magazines, for example, now allow readers to post comments to articles documenting virtual conversations among readers. Any reader can now publicly react to the content of articles, the opinions of the authors of articles as well as to the responses of other readers. In other words, the internet has opened an outlet for discourse with mass participatory potential. In addition, the internet provides unsurpassed access to alternative sources of information allowing readers to inform themselves about political issues before deliberation.²³

It has even been suggested that internet blogs are a new phase in political communication and may be an answer to the problem of the unidirectional flow of information that characterizes mass-mediated democracy.²⁴ This potential for mass discourse however, does not necessitate that the virtual dialogue must follow the dictates of rational dialogue.²⁵ In order for the online discussion to qualify as deliberative, there must be an equal opportunity for participation, the focus of the discussions should be on substantive issues and the participants

University Press, Cambridge, 2003. Cited from: Christopher W. Boerl and Chris Perkins, The Political Pluralization of American Evangelicals: How Old Media Built a Movement, and Why the Internet is Poised to Change It, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* Vol. 11, No. 1, London, 2011, pp. 71.

- 21 Scott Bayder-Saye, The Emergent Matrix: A New Kind of Church?, *The Christian Century*, Nov. 30, 2004, . pp. 20-27, Chicago. Cited from: Christopher W. Boerl, From Monologue to Dialogue How the Internet is Empowering the Evangelical Periphery, *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 8, London, 2013, pp. 1232.
- 22 Sean Aday, Leading the Charge: Media, Elites, and the Use of Emotion in Stimulating Rally Effects in Wartime, *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 60, No. 3, Hoboken, 2010, pp. 440-465.
- 23 Harold J. Jansen and Royce Koop, Pundits, Ideologues and Ranters: The British Columbia Election Online, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Vancouver, 2005, pp. 613-632.
- 24 Stephen Coleman and Scott Wright, Political Blogs and Representative Democracy, *Information Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 1-2, Amsterdam, 2008, pp. 1-6. Cited from: Michael Keren, Blogging and Mass Politics, *Biography*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Hawaii, 2010, pp. 1.
- 25 Michael Keren, Blogging and Mass Politics . . . pp. 110-126.

should be open to the arguments of others.²⁶ Bart Cammaerts (2008: 95), however, suggests that internet bloggers are not likely to expose themselves to multiple viewpoints concerning political issues.²⁷ Instead they are more likely to link to sites that strengthen their existing positions. According to Cammaerts, it is highly optimistic to think of the blogosphere as a participatory space of equal, status-less participants where real rational discourse and debate take place. So, even though the Evangelical media landscape may have become more diverse, this does not necessitate that individuals within the Evangelical community seek out alternative perspectives. While this paper does not focus on blogs, per se, the question of whether virtual comment areas reflect a participatory space of rational discourse still applies.

Method

Given the continuing association between conservative attitudes concerning immigration reform and evangelical membership, this paper aims to examine both the themes presented by Evangelical leaders and the reaction to these themes in order to see whether the public online response reflects a unified conservative front or a range of diverse opinions.

In order to examine the themes presented in the discussion of immigration within the context of an Evangelical framework, I focused on all of the articles making a reference to the word, "immigration" found through the online search engine of the magazine, *Christianity Today*. The search listed a total of twenty-nine articles addressing immigration between April 2007- September 2012 including articles in the print version of the magazine as well as the online-only Politics Blog. In its self description, *Christianity Today* reaches an audience of over 2.5 million people every month (when including print publications) and "seeks to be a trustworthy voice of Evangelical Christianity, presenting the thoughtful, civil viewpoints, opinions, lifestyles, and leaders of orthodox Christianity to the culture at large. This voice more accurately and positively positions Evangelicalism in the culture, and better helps shape the conversation in the public square."²⁸ The average reader of *Christianity Today* is married (79%), male (63%), Caucasian (94%), with a median age of 53.9 years, is highly educated (83% college graduate and 51% with post graduate degrees) and has a median household income of \$54, 673.²⁹ While, the readers of *Christianity*

26 Koop and Jansen interpret equal opportunity for participation to mean relative equality of participation between participants.

27 Cammaerts Bart, Critiques on the Participatory Potentials of Web 2.0, *Communication, Culture, and Critique* Vol. 1, No. 4, Hoboken, 2008, pp. 95.

28 *Christianity Today*, Our Mission, <http://www.christianitytoday.org/ministry/mission/> (accessed May 1, 2013).

29 MTI-Magazine Training International, Christianity Today Subscriber Profile: Personal Profile Section, <http://www.magazinetraining.com/PublisherResources/samples/Advertising/SubProfiles/SubProfileCTI/#anchor3>. (accessed February 4, 2013).

Today are on average, older, more educated and have higher levels of income than the typical U.S. adult, they nonetheless, provide a reasonable representation of Evangelical “men and women—in the U.S. and abroad—who are serious about their faith. Leaders and influencers—young and old—who are serious about wanting their lives to be used by God as a counterculture for the common good.”³⁰ The readers of *Christianity Today* who post responses exemplify highly committed Evangelicals who wish to live their faith and apply it to social and political concerns. As never before, online digital media presents them with an ability to respond to elite messages and to actively participate in the dialogue concerning the proper role of Evangelicals and the application of their faith to social issues. The online dialogue concerning immigration reform illustrates the eager response by a large number of readers to the themes presented by elites as well their responses to the arguments of other online respondents.

I inductively identified the following themes from the articles: position toward immigration, use of theological justification, the extension of grace to the outsider, a call for social justice, a focus on legality, a focus on specific anti-undocumented immigration legislation and a call for immigration reform. Once the themes were identified, all articles were reread and coded in light of the complete set of codes. I also identified a separate list of open codes from the online responses to these articles. All coding was completed within a one month period. There were a total of 495 written responses to the 29 articles from a total of 317 respondents (based on login names). The responses to the articles revealed several of the themes expressed in the articles such as position concerning immigration, specific anti-undocumented immigration legislation, law and legality, theological justification, and a call for immigration reform. However, the responses presented additional themes that were less evident in the articles such as criticism of the author, clergy, liberals, Republicans, politicians and other respondents. The negative effects or “threats” of undocumented immigration and the relationship between religion and politics were additional themes expressed by respondents.

In addition to reviewing the themes discussed by these evangelical leaders and followers, this paper also examines the overall manner of the online interaction in order to evaluate not only whether actual discussion was taking place but also to examine whether the interaction suggests changes in the future attitudes of evangelicals concerning immigration reform in the United States. In order to assess the nature and tone of the blogged interactions, I coded the responses according to the typology of online modes of discourse by politically engaged bloggers that was developed by political scientist, Michael Keren.

Keren developed a typology of eight ideal types meant to classify comments concerning political affairs.³¹ Keren intended this typology to be used to

30 *Christianity Today*, Our Mission, <http://www.christianitytoday.org/ministry/mission/> (accessed May 1, 2013).

31 Michael Keren, *Blogging and Mass Politics...* pp. 110-126.

classify bloggers' comments on the present conditions in society and future action and intended it to be used "as a guide for systematic research on the political implications of the new freedom of expression granted to us in the Internet age."³² He views bloggers as examples of present day public intellectuals since they take on issues of public interest and share their view points. The eight ideal types are determined by a combination of three variables - structure, style and content. The structure variable contains two contrasting categories: a discursive structure defined by orderly reasoning versus an intuitive structure characterized by direct, immediate, habitual statements. The style variable is differentiated by the tone of the comment. Is the tone of the comment moderate and restrained or is it rabid, uncompromising and bigoted? The content variable is also divided into two opposing categories: an introspective content involving some degree of self-reflection and ability to critically examine one's own position versus a vacuous content lacking self-reflection and self examination. Civilized political deliberation, the highest level of deliberation, entails a discursive structure, a moderate style and an introspective content. Civilized dialogue necessitates reasoning, a moderate respectful tone and involves an expectation that the speaker will also listen, learn and engage in self-reflection. Comments falling into the category of mass man, in contrast, exemplify the lowest level of deliberation and represent an online version of the "Mass Man" modeled in José Ortega y Gasset's *The Revolt of the Masses*. The ideal type of "mass man" reflects an intuitive structure, a rabid style and vacuous content. Keren suggests that the nature of online discourse increases the probability of the "mass man" category to dominate online exchanges. Please see Table 1 for the features of the eight ideal types.

Table 1 Keren's eight ideal types of bloggers who comment on public affairs

	<u>Civilized</u>	<u>Egghead</u>	<u>Contentious</u>	<u>Pretentious</u>	<u>Pristine</u>	<u>Noble Savage</u>	<u>Adolescent</u>	<u>Mass Man</u>
Structure	Discursive	Discursive	Discursive	Discursive	Intuitive	Intuitive	Intuitive	Intuitive
Style	Moderate	Moderate	Rabid	Rabid	Moderate	Moderate	Rabid	Rabid
Content	Introspective	Vacuous	Introspective	Vacuous	Introspective	Vacuous	Introspective	Vacuous

³² *Ibidem*, p. 113.

It is important to note that Keren's typology is made up of ideal types that do not refer to specific bloggers whose blog entries may fall into more than one category. The typology is intended to classify online texts only. As ideal types, no claim to validity can be made in terms of an actual reproduction of social reality. Instead, these ideal types are only intended to provide order to and to reveal the elements common to most cases of particular phenomena - the structure, style and content of online interaction as revealed by these online responses. While Keren envisioned his typology to apply to the comments of individuals who write web blogs, I have expanded its use to evaluate public responses to published online magazine articles. I have included Keren's typology to illustrate the nature and tone of the discourse concerning immigration among highly committed Evangelicals as well as to see whether the nature and tone of the dialogue have changed since 2007. A change in the nature and tone of the interaction - whether toward a more discursive and moderate tone or in contrast toward a more impulsive and contentious tone - offers insight into whether general attitudes are becoming more or less accepting of immigrant-centered immigration reform. Keren's labels are applied only to the comments and not to the respondents. The typology is neither intended nor able to assess the acumen of respondents.

It is also important to note that using the online comments of the readers of these articles presents particular methodological problems. While this analysis includes every comment made in response to the articles, the respondents are self-selected. Therefore, no generalizations to the larger readership of *Christianity Today* should be made. In addition, there is no way to determine the rationale for abandonment of an interactive series of posts. Therefore it is often impossible to conclude whether the interaction has altered a poster's perspective. Furthermore, most respondents comment under an alias and do not identify themselves. Consequently, there can be no expectation for accountability by the posters other than that their posts may be removed from the site. Since the unit of analysis is at the level of comment not the respondent, little additional information - other than belonging to the readership of the magazine - about the respondent is available. Also, while concerns over reliability are minimal given that all articles and responses were coded by a single coder within a one month period, concerns over rater-specific error cannot be eliminated. Finally, while the respondents to these articles fit the description of highly committed individuals particularly well, additional research including individuals from lower socio-economic groups would be fruitful in differentiating whether it is religious commitment or other socio-demographic variables such as level of education and economic class that play a larger role in attitudes toward immigration, support for elite hierarchy, or the nature and tone of interaction.

Results

Table 2 lists the number of articles and the number of internet comments in response to those articles in any given year. The greater number of blog entries per article reflects the increased attention concerning immigration in response to the introduction of new immigration legislation starting with Arizona's SB 1070 that was passed in 2010. Compared to 2007, there were more than twice the number of comments per article in 2009 and more than three times the number of comments in 2010. In 2012, even though there were more articles written about immigration, the number of comments per article decreased to one half of the 2007 level.

Table 2. Number of Articles and Blog Entries by Year

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Number of Articles	1	0	6	9	5	8	29
Number of Blog Entries	9	0	119	244	86	37	495

Thirty-one percent of the articles incorporated religious arguments on the issue of immigration. Please see Table 3. Forty-one percent of the articles included arguments that were sympathetic toward "illegal"/undocumented immigrants.³³ For example, in a blog article the author quotes Rev. Rich Nathan, Pastor of Vineyard Church of Columbus. *In the Hebrew Bible, special provision is made for immigrants, along with orphans and widows, to safeguard the most vulnerable people in Israelite society. God's call to people who value the authority of the Bible is clear: remember where you came from and act with justice and love towards the immigrant in your midst.*³⁴

Another example is found in an article in the politics blog that cites Jim Wallis, President and CEO of Sojourners.

*This is a matter of faith for us. The way we treat the stranger, the scriptures say, is the way we treat Jesus in himself. And the stranger, in the face and form of undocumented people, is not being treated very well.*³⁵

33 Most of the articles use the term, "illegal immigrants."

34 Sarah P. Bailey, Rallying for Immigration Reform, *Christianity Today*, March 22, 2010. http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctpolitics/2010/03/rallying_for_im.html (accessed May 1, 2013).

35 Alicia Cohn, Christian Activists Push for Immigration Reform, *Christianity Today*, June 11, 2009, http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctpolitics/2009/06/christian_activ.html (accessed May 1, 2013).

Table 3. Themes within Newspaper Articles * - Percent

Position concerning immigration:	
Need for Increased Border Protection	3 (1)
Sympathetic toward Immigrants	41 (12)
Neither sympathetic nor advocating for stricter enforcement	38 (11)
Theological justification/discussion of religious doctrine	31 (9)
Extension of grace to the outsider	79 (23)
Call for social justice	28 (8)
Execution of justice/Focus on legality	21 (6)
Anti-Illegal Immigration legislation	24 (7)
Calling for immigration reform	59 (17)

*Articles could be coded into more than one subtheme.

Raw numbers are in parentheses.

Another thirty-eight percent of the articles did not lean toward one side or the other. The tension between competing obligations can be seen in the statements of Mark DeYmaz, directional leader at Mosaic Church of Central Arkansas as he addresses the question of church membership by undocumented individuals.

When it comes to meeting the spiritual, material, and physical needs of immigrants, there is strong biblical precedent for getting involved (Ex. 22:21; 23:9; Lev. 19:33-34; Deut. 27:19). But New Testament teaching also makes it clear that as followers of Christ, we are to honor the law and respect the rulers of our land (Luke 20:23-25; 1 Pet. 2:13-14). How should we resolve this apparent tension?³⁶

Only one article was visibly critical of Evangelical leaders leaning toward liberalizing immigration reform. In the article, Alan F. H. Wisdom, vice president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy, states the following.

With so many Christian leaders on one side of immigration reform, how could there be any doubt? But there is doubt. Polls show church members with deeply divided opinions. The issue is far more complicated than the rhetoric used by many who favor liberalizing current immigration law.³⁷

The theme that appeared the most often was extension of grace to the outsider (79%). Fifty-nine percent of the articles called for immigration reform. Multiple guidelines for reform were proposed. In addition, twenty-four percent of the articles cited specific immigration legislation and twenty-one percent acknowledged a concern over legality. Alan F. H. Wisdom provides an illustration of emphasis on the rule of law:

36 Mark M. DeYmaz, Daniel R. Carroll, and Matthew Soerens, *Illegal Immigrants in the Church?*, *Christianity Today*, March 1, 2011. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/february/vg-doeverythinglegal.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

37 Wisdom Alan F. H., *Immigration Reform: Another Christian View*, *Christianity Today*, July 13, 2010. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/julyweb-only/58-21.0.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

Alongside the biblical teachings about hospitality to strangers also stand the teachings about the rule of law. The Christian point of view on immigration reform should also look at passages such as Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2. They stress a clear responsibility to obey properly constituted human authorities when their demands do not violate conscience. U.S. authorities are well within their proper powers in controlling immigration.³⁸

In considering the themes expressed in the responses to these articles, while only one of the articles clearly advocated stricter border protection and a strong concern over “illegal” immigration, 47% of the total number of responses expressed such concerns. Thirty-three percent of the total number of comments expressed sympathy and fourteen percent stressed that it was a complex issue. Please see Table 4. Interestingly, there were more sympathetic comments (43%) and fewer border protection comments (32%) in 2012. It appears that sympathy for or at least toleration of undocumented immigrants is increasing among the commentators.

Readers’ comments reveal multiple frustrations and concerns. While the percentages were small, some bloggers took the opportunity to criticize the author of the article, clergy who support immigration reform, democrats and politicians in general, sometimes criticizing multiple targets in the same comment. Only four comments were critical of Republicans. Seventeen percent of the comments specifically criticized the comments of other bloggers. An example of criticism of clergy follows.

Shame on the pastors of America who pander to the left instead of standing up for truth! Shame on the pastors of America who are willing to allow the truth to be twisted for political gain! Shame on the pastors of America who do not have the courage to proclaim that the Christian culture must take precedence in the life of the believer over the secular earthly culture of race and ideology! Shame on you, you betray the gospel!

Thirteen percent of the comments were direct, non aggressive responses to the comments of other bloggers. Significantly, twenty percent of the comments in 2010 - the year of the introduction of Arizona’s SB 1070 and a period of intense domestic debate concerning immigration in the U.S.A. - are categorized by this type of introspective reply. Introspective responses were much less common regarding immigration articles in secular publications of the same time period.³⁹ While the respondents are visibly invested in the topic of immigration, hostility towards fellow respondents is less evident and is eclipsed by calls for compassion as illustrated by the following comment.

My words are hot, for my heart is boiling, and my words overflow from my

38 Wisdom Alan F. H., Immigration Reform: Another Christian View, *Christianity Today*, July 13, 2010. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/julyweb-only/58-21.0.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

39 Joanna Kaftan, National Identity During Periods of Controversy: Celebrating Cinco de Mayo in Phoenix Arizona, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 19, No. 1, London, 2013, pp. 167-186.

heart. But all I say not because I hate you, Tom, but because I have been their myself, thought your very thoughts, and over years God has turned me from them, slowly, gently. Perhaps my words seem too harsh, too impatient, and will only inflame you further. But I ask you to consider the radical implications of really, really, really loving your neighbor as yourself. I haven't arrived, but I'm striving towards the goal.

Twenty-four percent of comments emphasized legality. While not mentioned in the articles, several negative associations with "illegal" immigration were voiced in the comments: the cost to citizens (13%), the threat to U.S. culture (11%), criminal activity (8%) and terrorism (1%). Fear of social change - expressed as a concern over a threat to U.S. culture - and the expectation for assimilation can be seen in the following examples.

I live in Arizona and am a devoted Christian. If other states were being invaded like we are by many violent illegals and by the drug and human smuggling cartels, there would be greater understanding of the significance of securing our borders ... Some hospitals have had to close their emergency rooms because they could no longer finance the medical care of so many who could not pay, i.e., many illegal aliens.

Of all the things I am surely persuaded of, HIS way is not communism. There is a vital difference in the immigrants of the past then those of today; immigrants in the 1800's were similar enough in their culture to America's that they eventually assimilated into society by dropping most of their negative cultural attributes in the process. There is no middle way, we either make a flood of illegal immigrants into registered, far left-wing voters who will destroy the current political and economic system of America or we do not.

Only seven percent of the comments focused on the need for immigration reform. Fifteen percent of comments cited specific bible verses to explain their positions. Twenty-four comments addressed the relationship between religion and politics. Some argued that religion has a place in politics while others argued that religion has no place in politics. On the one hand, immigrants were called sinners and the sovereignty of nations was asserted. On the other hand, immigrants were defended as acting against unjust authority and the bibles assertion to welcome the stranger was expressed. The following two comments illustrate such opposing positions.

Wanting a better lifestyle doesn't justify being in a country illegally, a crime in any nation. ...The illegals are stealing our tax money and robbing our society of things that aren't theirs. Just because they want it doesn't mean they can have it or are entitled to it. No one forced them to come here and live shadow lives as trespassers and fugitives. Maybe Jesus would escort them back to Mexico, all the while admonishing them to go back and sin no more.

"Just as God sees ALL sins the same, so should our government see all ILLEGAL things the same." I hear that all the time, but the Bible is very clear that all sins are not the same, as the Old Testament Law gives different responses to various sins. And it's obvious that not all illegal things should get the same treatment: illegal parking is

not as serious as murder. So the question is not whether illegal acts are wrong, the question is, what is the appropriate response? If a law does not fit the crime it punishes, it is an unjust law, and (as Augustine argued) an unjust law is no law at all. I think the current law is like burning down Chicago to deal with the gangster problem: it's so disproportionate to the crime, it is an unjust law.

Table 4. Themes within bloggers comments - Percent*

Year		2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Attitude concerning undocumented immigration							
	Need for Increased Border Protection	33.3 (3)	55 (66)	47 (115)	43 (37)	32 (12)	47 (233)
	Sympathetic towards Immigrants	33.3 (3)	32 (38)	33 (80)	31 (27)	43 (16)	33 (164)
	Neither/ Complex Issue	33.3 (3)	9 (11)	12 (30)	19 (16)	21 (8)	14 (67)
Criticisms							
	Author	22 (2)	7 (8)	5 (11)	16 (6)	14 (5)	6 (32)
	Clergy	0 (0)	10 (12)	4 (9)	3 (3)	14 (5)	6 (29)
	Democrats/liberals	0 (0)	4 (5)	8 (19)	5 (4)	0 (0)	6 (28)
	Republicans	0 (0)	1 (1)	.4 (1)	1 (1)	3 (1)	1 (4)
	Politicians (general)	44 (4)	10 (12)	11 (26)	6 (5)	14 (5)	11 (52)
	Other bloggers	33 (3)	32 (38)	12 (30)	15 (13)	3 (1)	17 (85)
Non-hostile Interaction		0 (0)	4 (5)	20 (49)	7(6)	11 (4)	13 (64)
Harmful effects (Threats) of Undocumented immigration							
	Cost to citizens	0 (0)	23 (27)	10 (24)	12 (10)	11(4)	13 (65)
	Threat to culture	11 (1)	14 (17)	13 (32)	3 (3)	8 (3)	11 (56)
	Terrorism	11 (1)	0 (0)	1 (3)	1 (1)	(0)	1 (5)
	Criminal activity	0 (0)	13 (15)	5 (13)	9 (8)	8 (3)	8 (39)
Legality/Strict Division Between Right and Wrong		0 (0)	26 (31)	22 (53)	27 (23)	27(10)	24 (117)
Immigration Legislation		0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (17)	19 (16)	5 (2)	7 (35)
Theological Justification							
	Bible verse reference	11 (1)	21 (25)	15 (36)	13 (11)	8 (3)	15 (76)
	Sinners	0 (0)	7 (8)	3 (8)	3 (3)	5 (2)	4 (21)
	Unjust authority	11 (1)	6 (7)	3 (8)	10 (9)	0 (0)	5 (25)
	Sovereignty of nations	22 (2)	2 (2)	3 (8)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (14)
	Compassion/what would Jesus do	11 (1)	16 (19)	13 (31)	23 (20)	14 (5)	15 (76)
	Stranger/outsider	0 (0)	6 (7)	5 (13)	0 (0)	6 (2)	4 (22)

Religion and Politics							
	Religion has a place in politics	0 (0)	0 (0)	4 (9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (9)
	Religion has no place in politics	0 (0)	3 (3)	2 (6)	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (9)
	Politics has no place in religion	0 (0)	1 (1)	.4 (1)	2 (2)	5 (2)	1 (6)
Call for Reform		0 (0)	7 (8)	7 (18)	7 (6)	14 (5)	7 (37)

*Individuals comments were coded into all relevant themes.

Turning to Keren's typology of bloggers, we can see that 63% percent of the total number of comments revealed an introspective content: civilized (10%), contentious (10%), pristine (20%), adolescent (23%). Please see Table 5. These comments included elements of self reflection. Only twenty-two percent of the responses fall into the category of "mass man."⁴⁰ In order to fall into this category, the response had to have an intuitive structure categorized by direct, habitual statements. The response also had to have a rabid style and a vacuous content. Notably, comments became more introspective and self-reflecting over time. The percentage of comments falling into the category of mass man declined in 2011 and 2012.

Table 5. Keren's Typology of Bloggers –Percent

Year	2007	2009	2010	2011	2012	Total
Civilized	11 (1)	8 (9)	14 (33)	5 (4)	11 (4)	10 (51)
Egghead	11 (1)	2 (3)	4 (9)	0 (0)	3 (1)	3 (14)
Contentious	11 (1)	23 (27)	6 (14)	5 (4)	8 (3)	10 (49)
Pretentious	0 (0)	2 (2)	3 (8)	1 (1)	5 (2)	3 (13)
Pristine	0 (0)	13 (15)	21 (51)	29 (25)	21 (8)	20 (99)
Noble Savage	11 (1)	9 (11)	9 (23)	5 (4)	11 (4)	9 (43)
Adolescent	33 (2)	14 (17)	21 (52)	37 (32)	30 (11)	23 (115)
Mass Man	22 (2)	29 (35)	22 (54)	18 (16)	11 (4)	22 (111)
Total number	(9)	(119)	(244)	(86)	(37)	(495)

Raw numbers are in parentheses.

In sum, while the themes of extension of grace to the outsider, calls for social justice, call for immigration reform, specific legislation, and a focus on legality dominate the articles authored by religious elites, the readers' responses

40 Analysis of secular newspaper articles shows that the percentage of "mass man" reader responses to articles addressing immigration can be much higher (49%) as Keren predicted. See Kaftan, J. 2013. National Identity During Periods of Controversy: Celebrating Cinco de Mayo in Phoenix Arizona. *Nations and Nationalism* 19 (1): 167-186.

are more likely to stress legality, the costs of undocumented immigration and to voice criticisms. While only one of the articles was critical of sympathetic views towards undocumented immigrants in the United States, forty seven percent of the respondent comments in contrast, advocated for stronger enforcement and border security. While fifty-nine percent of the articles spoke of reform, only seven percent of the respondents' comments called for reform. As Brint and Abrutyn (2010) suggest, a fear of social change expressed as a concern over a threat to U.S culture along with an emphasis on legality were apparent in the written responses.⁴¹ The comments emphasizing the illegality of undocumented immigration made a clear distinction between right and wrong. Additionally, even the sympathetic comments framed the undocumented immigrant as a "stranger" or "outsider" setting them apart as separate and distinct from the legitimate nation. Resistance to assimilation by immigrants was framed as a threat to the U.S. nation. It is important to note that these respondents were not replying to direct questions about the impact of undocumented immigration. Instead they were responding to the arguments presented by the authors of the articles and to the issue as framed by these elites. Even considering the lack of direct questioning, thirteen percent of the comments expressed frustration over the cost to taxpayers and citizens. Eleven percent, on the other hand, voiced fear over "illegal" immigration's threat to U.S. culture. Another eight percent labeled "illegal" immigrants as criminals. This labeling bridges both economic and cultural concerns reaffirming that apprehension over undocumented immigration is multifaceted. Twelve percent of the comments directly criticized clergy and the authors of the articles for their sympathetic stance thus illustrating that followers do not unequivocally accept elite messages, especially when presented in an online forum. Nevertheless, the responses appear to be getting more sympathetic over time given that the percentage of comments arguing for stricter enforcement declined from 55% in 2009 to 32% in 2012.

Notably, the online discussion of undocumented immigration in response to articles and blog posts published by *Christianity Today* suggests that the majority of posters respected the other commentators and accepted that they had differences of opinion and interpretation. Only seventeen percent of the comments were aggressive towards the comments of others. To some degree, the discussion followed the requirements for deliberation put forth by Koop and Jansen: equal opportunity for discussion, a focus on substantive issues and constructive engagement.⁴² In terms of the requirement of equal opportunity for participation, the threads following any of these twenty-nine articles were gen-

41 Steven Brint and Seth Abrutyn, Who's Right About the Right? Comparing Competing Explanations of the Link Between White Evangelicals and Conservative Politics in the United States, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 49, No. 2, Hoboken, 2010, pp. 328-350.

42 Royce Koop and Harold J. Jansen, Political Blogs and Blogrolls in Canada: Forums For Democratic Deliberation?, *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Thousand Oaks, 2009, pp. 155-173.

erally not dominated by a small number of bloggers. In the twenty-nine threads, only ten had more than five posts by the same blogger. These threads had comments from other posters as well. The largest number of posts by a respondent in any thread was eight. While the discussion was not dominated by a small number of respondents, nevertheless, it may be overly optimistic to call the threads real discussion since the majority of posters only posted one comment. It should be noted, however, that this does not mean that respondents did not continue to read the posts of others after posting their own comment. Considering the second requirement of a focus on substantive issues, virtually every comment specifically addressed undocumented immigration.

The third requirement - constructive engagement and an openness to the arguments of others - is harder to assess within these threads. The requirement necessitates that the respondents will not all be like minded and that there will be variation in opinion. The respondents in these threads were clearly not unified on the issue of immigration. Sympathy and calls for enforcement were presented using biblical references and arguments. Engagement clearly crossed partisan lines. Thirteen percent of the responses revealed an unambiguous openness to the specific comments of others. Unfortunately, given the nature of these posts it is impossible to determine whether the majority of respondents were swayed by the comments of others.

In considering the nature and tone of the dialogue, the percentage of comments in the category of "mass man" declined over time. In addition, the majority of comments were introspective (63%). They revealed self reflection and critical examination. While twenty two percent of the total number of comments fell into the category of mass man - intuitive, rabid and vacuous - these comments did not dominate the discussion. Moreover, while the majority of comments were expressed to the readership generally, thirty percent of the comments were direct responses to the comments of others. Forty-three percent of the comments responding to others were engaging and not accusatory in tone. Only seventeen percent of the total number of comments was openly critical of the comments of other bloggers and the percentage fell sharply from 2009, (32%) to only one comment (3%) in 2012.

Conclusion

The articles in *Christianity Today* and the public responses to these articles illustrate that Evangelical membership does not necessitate intolerance towards undocumented immigrants. The articles also show that the internet provides an opportunity for dialogue among elites and followers making a unified front on contentious social and political issues difficult to maintain. The magazine articles illustrate elite sympathy for undocumented immigrants with the majority of authors calling for an extension of grace to the outsider and for immigration

reform. Nevertheless, the readers of these articles expressed a range of opinion concerning undocumented immigration often openly disagreeing with the authors and clergy. Legality and concerns over the costs of “illegal” immigration were expressed. Clergy as well as the authors of sympathetic articles were supported by some and criticized by other respondents exhibiting skepticism toward elites. Notably, the percentage of comments sympathetic towards undocumented immigrants increased over time and by 2012, the number of sympathetic comments outnumbered the comments for increased border protection.

It is important to note, however, that even though there appears to be a trend in the direction of increasing sympathy towards undocumented immigrants, the comments sympathetic to undocumented immigrants nevertheless, labeled them as “strangers” and “outsiders.” Tolerance of undocumented immigrants was expressed as a Christian duty to extend hospitality to strangers. Even in the sympathetic comments, undocumented immigrants were still regarded as separate from the nation. This view of immigrants, including legal as well as illegal immigrants, as separate until assimilated reflects the expectation of conformity into a single language and culture. It reflects the perceived threat of external-cultural influence over U.S. culture. This view would hold that only when assimilated can immigrants be accepted as part of the nation rather than just be tolerated by the nation. Toleration, after all, does not necessitate acceptance.

Nonetheless, even though the comments revealed a range of diverse opinions, the majority of comments exemplified respect and an acceptance of differences in opinion and interpretation within this online context. This is especially notable considering the lack of accountability common in online discussions thus suggesting that these respondents wished to perpetuate online discussion on the topic of immigration. Religious arguments can have a moderating influence on the hostility surrounding contentious issues. As Knoll pointed out, those with higher levels of religious commitment are more likely to expose themselves to the messages of religious elites and to internalize religious teachings about compassion for the disadvantaged.⁴³ For highly committed individuals, religious discourse can surround an issue with significance and bond respondents while respecting differences in opinion and interpretation. Only twenty-two percent of the comments were intuitive, rabid and vacuous- a much smaller percentage than found in the online comments responding to articles on the topic of immigration in secular publications. These results suggest that political discourse concerning contentious social and political issues is possible within an online context. It suggests that the respondents may be open to alternative arguments and wish to take part in meaningful discussions on the topic of immigration.

43 Benjamin R. Knoll, And Who is My Neighbor? Religion and Immigration Policy Attitudes, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Hoboken, 2009, pp. 313-331.

References

Aday Sean, Leading the Charge: Media, Elites, and the Use of Emotion in Stimulating Rally Effects in Wartime, *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 60, No. 3, Hoboken, 2010.

Bayder-Saye Scott, The Emergent Matrix: A New Kind of Church?, *The Christian Century*, Nov. 30, 2004, Chicago.

Bailey Sarah Pulliam, Rallying for Immigration Reform, *Christianity Today*, March 22, 2010. http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctpolitics/2010/03/rallying_for_im.html (accessed May 1, 2013).

Bimber Bruce, *Information and American Democracy: Technology in the Evolution of Political Power*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003.

Boerl Christopher W., From Monologue to Dialogue How the Internet is Empowering the Evangelical Periphery, *Information, Communication & Society*, Vol. 16, No. 8, London, 2013.

Boerl Christopher W. and Chris Perkins, The Political Pluralization of American Evangelicals: How Old Media Built a Movement, and Why the Internet is Poised to Change It, *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* Vol. 11, No.1, London, 2011.

Bozinovich Miki, Politology of Religion, *Politics and Religion*, Vol. III, No. 2, Belgrade, 2009.

Brint Steven and Seth Abrutyn, Who's Right About the Right? Comparing Competing Explanations of the Link Between White Evangelicals and Conservative Politics in the United States, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 49, No. 2, Hoboken, 2010.

Cammaerts Bart, Critiques on the Participatory Potentials of Web 2.0, *Communication, Culture, and Critique* Vol. 1, No. 4, Hoboken, 2008.

Christianity Today, Our Mission, <http://www.christianitytoday.org/ministry/mission/> (accessed May 1, 2013).

Cohn Alicia, Christian Activists Push for Immigration Reform, *Christianity Today*, June 11, 2009, http://blog.christianitytoday.com/ctpolitics/2009/06/christian_activ.html (accessed May 1, 2013).

Coleman Stephen and Scott Wright, Political Blogs and Representative Democracy, *Information Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 1-2, Amsterdam, 2008.

Dawson Lorne L. and Douglas E. Cowan, Introduction, in: *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*, Dawson, L and D. Cowan (eds.), Routledge, New York, 2004.

DeYmaz Mark, M. Daniel Carroll R., and Matthew Soerens, Illegal Immigrants in the Church?, *Christianity Today*. March 1, 2011. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/february/vg-doeverythinglegal.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

Geertz Clifford, Religion as a Cultural System, in: *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, Clifford Geertz (ed.), Fontana Press, London, 1993.

Greeley Andrew and Michael Hout, *The Truth About Conservative Christians: What They Think and What They Believe*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2006.

Hayden Bridget, *Impeach the Traitors: Citizenship, Sovereignty and Nation in Immigration Control Activism in the United States*, *Social Semiotics* Vol. 20, No. 2, New York, 2010.

Hillygus D. Sunshine and Todd G. Shields, *Moral Issues and Voter Decision Making in the 2004 Presidential Election*, *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 2, Cambridge, 2005.

Jansen Harold J. and Royce Koop, *Pundits, Ideologues and Ranters: The British Columbia Election Online*, *Canadian Journal of Communication*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Vancouver, 2005.

Jevtic, Mirosljub, *Politology of Religion*, Center for Study of Religion and Religious Tolerance, Belgrade, 2009.

Jevtic, Mirosljub, *Political Science and Religion*, *Politics and Religion*, Vol. 1 No 1, Belgrade, 2007.

Kaftan Joanna, *National Identity During Periods of Controversy: Celebrating Cinco de Mayo in Phoenix Arizona*, *Nations and Nationalism*, Vol. 19, No. 1, London, 2013.

Kettell, Steven, *Has Political Science Ignored Religion?*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, Vol.45, No. 1, Washington, D.C., 2012.

Keren Michael, *Blogging and Mass Politics.*, *Biography*, Vol. 33, No. 1, Hawaii, 2010.

Knoll Benjamin R., *And Who is My Neighbor? Religion and Immigration Policy Attitudes*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol. 48, No. 2, Hoboken, 2009.

Koop Royce and Harold J. Jansen, *Political Blogs and Blogrolls in Canada: Forums For Democratic Deliberation?*, *Social Science Computer Review*, Vol. 27, No. 2, Thousand Oaks, 2009.

Langer Gary and Joel Cohen, *Voters and Values in the 2004 Election*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 5, Oxford, 2005.

Leege David C. et al., *The Politics of Cultural Differences: Social Change and Voter Mobilization Strategies in the Post New Deal Period*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2002.

Manza Jeff and Clem Brooks, *The Religious Factor in the U.S. Presidential Elections, 1960-1992*, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. 1, Chicago, 1997.

McDaniel Eric Leon et al., *Divine Boundaries: How Religion Shapes Citizens' Attitudes Toward Immigrants*, *American Politics Research*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 2011.

Miriam Jordan and James Oberman, *Evangelicals Push Immigration Path*, *Wall Street Journal-Eastern Edition*, Vol. 261, April 8, 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424127887324883604578399023366575766> (accessed

March 27, 2014).

MTI-Magazine Training International, Christianity Today Subscriber Profile: Personal Profile Section, <http://www.magazinettraining.com/PublisherResources/samples/Advertising/SubProfiles/SubProfileCTI/#anchor3>. (accessed February 4, 2013).

Pew Research Center, Few Say Religion Shapes Immigration, Environment Views Results from the 2010 Annual Religion and Public Life Survey, September 17, 2010. <http://www.pewforum.org/2010/09/17/few-say-religion-shapes-immigration-environment-views/> (accessed March 27, 2014).

Pew Research Center, Majority of White Evangelicals Back Way for Unauthorized Immigrants to Stay in U.S., April 24, 2013, pp. 1-2, <http://www.pewresearch.org/daily-number/majority-of-white-evangelicals-back-way-for-unauthorized-immigrants-to-stay-in-u-s/> (accessed March 27, 2014).

Preston Julia, As Evangelical Leaders Change View on Immigration, Congregations Follow, *New York Times*, April 14, 2014, pp. 14-17, New York.

Robinson Carin, Cross-Cutting Messages and Political Tolerance: An Experiment Using Evangelical Protestants, *Political Behavior*, Vol. 32, No. 4, New York, 2010.

Salguero Gabriella A., Immigration, Integration, And National Identity: Making The Case For A Hispanic Evangelical Contribution, *Review of Faith & International Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1, London, 2011.

Stepan Alfred, Religion, Democracy and the Twin Tolerations, *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 11. No. 4, Washington, D.C., 2000.

Straughn Jeremy Brooke and Scott L. Feld, America as a "Christian Nation"? Understanding Religious Boundaries of National Identity in the United States, *Sociology of Religion*, Vol. 71, No.3, Oxford, 2010.

Wisdom Alan F. H., Immigration Reform: Another Christian View, *Christianity Today*, July 13, 2010. <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2010/julyweb-only/58-21.0.html> (accessed May 1, 2013).

Wuthnow Robert, *The Restructuring of American Religion*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1988.

Џоан Кафтан

ИМИГАЦИОНА РЕФОРМА КАО МОРАЛНО ПИТАЊЕ: ЕЛИТИСТИЧКИ И НЕЕЛИТИСТИЧКИ ЕВАНГЕЛИСТИЧКИ СТАВОВИ ПРЕМА ИМИГРАЦИОНОЈ РЕФОРМИ У САД

Резиме

Главни циљ овог рада јесте да испита евангеличке ставове на онлајн форумима који се тичу имиграције у САД. Овај чланак се фокусира на анализу двадесет девет чланака и онлајн блогова који се баве питањима имиграције у магазину *Christianity Today* између јануара 2007. и септембра 2012. године, као и 495 онлајн коментара за ове чланке. Истраживање показује да иако постоји широк спектар мишљења и одговора на чланке, проценат позитивних коментара према непријављеним имигрантима се повећао од 2009. Аутори доводе у питање ауторитет и саопштења елита. Ипак, већина показује поштовање за остале коментаре и признаје разлику у мишљењу и интерпретацији у онлајн окружењу.

Кључне речи: имиграција, евангелици, политички ставови, елите, неелите, САД

Примљен: 12.1.2014.

Прихваћен: 17.5.2014.