The Face of the Party:

Party Leadership Selection, and the Role of Family and Faith

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Abstract

Political parties in developing country democracies are often characterized by undemocratic internal party practices, including for selecting party organizational leaders. Scholars identify institutional, party-level and demographic factors as driving such practices. In this paper, we contribute to this research by considering the effect of two personal factors – personal religiosity and membership in a political family. Politicians act in accordance with personal values and strategic incentives. We argue religiosity influences both in ways that undermine support for democratic intra-party selection practices. We hypothesize that membership in a political family *increases* the undemocratic effects of high religiosity because it strengthens the capacity of highly religious dynasts to access and mobilize politically through religious and family networks. This strengthens their strategic independence from their party, leading them to support undemocratic leadership selection practices. We test this prediction for the case of Turkey using original data from a 2017 survey of 200 Turkish politicians. We find that religiosity is *only* associated with reduced support for democratic leadership selection practices among politicians who are members of political families. This result is robust to the inclusion of party-specific effects, religious party membership, and individual characteristics including support for political Islam.

Party organizational leaders are central to a party's operations and success. These leaders include party chairmen and members of important organizational bodies including the party executive board, nomination and disciplinary committees. They play key roles in allocating party tickets, patronage and resources; deciding party strategy; and defining the party's image among voters (Cross and Pilet 2016; Norris 2004; Scarrow 2004; Kitshelt 1989). They are also highly influential in establishing the organizational culture of a party and socializing party members and voters into democratic or undemocratic values and practices (Linz and Stepan 1997; Randall and Svasand 2002). The choices and decisions party leaders make therefore affect the careers and political success of individual politicians, the organization, character and success of political parties, and the political culture of a country. Given their impact, the question of how party leaders are selected within parties has rightfully attracted the attention of scholars, policymakers and democracy activists.

In practice, parties use a wide range of *de facto* selection practices for choosing their organizational leaders ranging from direct party-wide elections in which all party members have an equal vote to completely autocratic choices made exclusively by a small clique or even a single individual.[i] While party leaders in established Western democracies are typically selected through competitive internal elections (Cross and Pilet 2016; Cross and Blais 2012), such open selection procedures are strikingly rare among developing democracies (Scarrow 2005; Mainwaring 2018). [ii] Instead, most parties in developing democracies, tend to use more exclusive and less democratic practices such as selection by a small clique of party leaders, the previous party leader or a single family (Chandra 2016; Mainwaring 2018). Given the importance of party leaders for politicians' careers, such practices raise an important question: Why do politicians support such undemocratic selection practices on a decision of such importance to their careers?

To date, scholars have examined how party and personal characteristics, and the design of institutions influences politicians' preference to support or oppose undemocratic leadership selection practices (LSPs) within their party.[iii] However, a personal characteristic that is particularly common among developing country politicians – personal religiosity– has received less attention from scholars. Extensive research in psychology finds that highly religious individuals are more likely to support a variety of undemocratic values, policies and practices because they prefer the values of conformity, order, hierarchy, and obedience to authorities.[iv] Since most developing countries have highly religious populations (Pew 2017, 2014, 2013, 2012), it is likely that many politicians in these countries are personally religious and share these values with voters. However, politicians are also strategic actors, and their strategic incentives could influence them to support or oppose democratic LSPs in their own party. These possibilities raise two questions: does personal religiosity influence politicians to support undemocratic LSPs within their party? Are there factors specific to politicians that strengthen or weaken any association between personal religiosity and support for undemocratic LSPs?

In this paper, we argue that high religiosity encourages politicians to support undemocratic LSPs but the strength of this effect will vary across individuals based on another personal characteristic – their membership in a political family. This characteristic is important because political families are common in many developing countries[v] and scholars find that politicians who belong to political families (PPFs) tend to oppose democratic LSPs (Chhibber 2011; Chandra 2016; Tadem and Tadem 2016). Building on insights from this literature, we argue that religious PPFs will be particularly incentivized to support undemocratic LSPs because they have the motive *and* the means to bypass rank and file party members in seeking party leadership positions. As highly religious dynastic politicians, they have access to both family

networks and religious social networks. This increases their ability to independently mobilize supporters and dispense patronage reducing their reliance on party workers for these tasks. Consequently, they prefer undemocratic LSPs so that they can cultivate party leaders rather than large numbers of party workers to secure valuable resources and positions for their entire family.

We test this hypothesis using original survey data from a *nationally representative* sample of about 200 Turkish politicians. Turkey provides an appropriate case to begin examining these questions because like most developing democracies, it is highly religious with vibrant religious social networks (WVS 2017; Pew 2013; Yavuz 2003; Lord 2018; Yadav 2021) and has a moderate number of political families (Uysal and Topak 2010; Ilyas 2009). As expected, we find that religiosity does not have homogeneous effects among politicians. Instead, it is *only* among PPFs that religiosity is associated with significantly lower support for democratic LSPs. Among non-PPFs, religiosity is *not* significantly associated with LSPs. These results are robust to controlling for politicians' sociodemographic characteristics, their strategic incentives and their membership in a religious or non-religious party. The frequent presence of *both* high religiosity and political families may therefore explain why so many parties in developing countries use undemocratic practices for selecting party leaders.

This paper contributes to research on political parties in developing countries by identifying two personal characteristics of politicians that help sustain undemocratic LSPs in many of their parties. It contributes to research on religion and politics by providing a rare study of politicians' religiosity and its political consequences and, contributes to research on dynastic politics by elucidating how religiosity mediates the impact of political families on intra-party politics. Next, we first derive our hypotheses by briefly reviewing the religiosity and dynastic

politics literatures and then present the Turkish case, the data, the statistical results. We conclude with a discussion of research implications.

Personal Religiosity and Support for Democratic Values and Practices

Religiosity is commonly defined as "the strength" with which individuals internalize and follow religious ideas, norms, and traditions (Basedou 2018: 1108-9). Highly religious individuals consider religion to be important in their lives, hold strong beliefs in the inerrancy of scripture and theology, regularly engage in religious practices such as praying, attending religious services and, observing dietary restrictions, and are more committed to their religious denomination.[vi] Conversely, less religious individuals do not consider religion to be important in their lives, are less likely to believe in core religious theology, less likely to engage in these prescribed religious behaviors and identify less strongly with their religious denomination. Research in psychology and political science link personal religiosity to a variety of social, economic and political choices through individuals' values. The most influential framework for understanding values first developed by Schwartz (1992), identifies ten basic values – tradition, conformity, security, power, achievement, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, and hedonism. Conformity, tradition, and security are "values emphasizing submissive self-restriction, preservation of traditional practices and protection of stability" of self and society (Saroglou et al 2004:724) while self-direction and stimulation are values emphasizing an individual's "own independent thought and action and change."

Scholars find that *across religious traditions* (including Islam) and countries, religiosity is positively correlated with conformity, tradition and security and negatively correlated with self-direction, stimulation, achievement, power, and universalism.[vii] In experimental studies, religious primes activated submissive thoughts in the form of "obedience, compliance,

conformity, dependence, [and] restriction of free will" (Saroglou et al 2009: 114). Religious individuals are more likely to trust others (Wisneski et al 2009), accept authority (Jacobson 1999) and believe that group interests come above individual interests (Beit-Hallahmi 2015:148; Johnson et al 2010). In turn, among religious individuals, these values are positively correlated with undemocratic and illiberal outcomes including prejudice against ideological, racial or ethnic outgroups (Johnson et al 2010; Hall et al 2010) and, lower support for civil liberties and women's rights (Norris and Inglehart 2004) and democratic regimes (Norris and Inglehart 2004; Bloom and Arikan 2012).

To the best of our knowledge, empirical studies of religiosity among politicians are simply not available. The few studies of politicians' values in general find that politicians sometimes share the values of their citizens (Miller et al 1995). Furthermore, research finds that despite the similarity of the strategic opportunities and constraints politicians' face due to party and institutions, differences in personality traits lead to differences in politicians' ambition, willingness to cooperate, their legislative effectiveness, support for obstructive procedures and credit claiming behaviors.[viii] These findings suggest that the relationship found between religiosity and values among citizens may also exist among politicians. Building on this, we now discuss how and why we might expect religiosity to affect politicians' preferences regarding party LSPs.

Politicians' Religiosity and Their Preferences Over Party LSPs

Parties adopt a variety of *de facto* leadership selection methods which vary tremendously in how democratic they are (Cross and Pilet 2016; Poguntke et al 2016).[ix] The inclusiveness of the selectorate, the body that selects the party leaders, is a fundamental factor defining how

democratic the selection process is (Cross and Pilet 2016; Kenig 2009; Scarrow 2005). At one extreme, parties hold direct party-wide elections where every member has an equal vote, an inclusive selection practice consistent with high levels of intra-party democracy (Cross and Pilet 2016; Kenig 2009). At the other extreme, selection decisions are made by a selectorate composed of a small clique or even a single leader, both highly exclusive selection rules, consistent with low intra-party democracy. As we discuss below, by shaping party culture and organization, leader selection mechanisms can affect the very same values that existing literature suggests religious politicians should care deeply about. Consequently, we argue that religiosity should influence politicians' *a priori* preferences over LSPs.

In a party which uses direct, party-wide elections to select party leaders, candidates must win enough votes *personally* to secure their desired leadership position. Party-wide elections therefore encourage party members to run against each other, cultivate personal reputations, emphasize their differences, and build personal factions within the party (Kenig, Rahat and Tuttnauer 2015; Kenig, Rahat and Hazan 2013; Kenig 2009). Such intra-party competition is more likely to result in non-conformist opinions and behaviors among members and an increase in intra-party conflict over tactics, policies and legislative votes. Additionally, it could expose current party practices and leadership decisions to public criticism and increase demands for representation in party bodies and platforms by diverse interests (Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006; Chhibber 2011). Such behaviors can *potentially* reduce organizational coherence and increase organizational disorder within parties (Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006; Chhibber 2011). These are outcomes that religious individuals are more likely to *disli*ke because they clash with their values of conformity, respect for authorities, and order. Furthermore, direct elections create the possibility that less morally suitable but more tactically sophisticated aspirants may

win leadership positions because they know how to appeal to competing intra-party selectorates. Since religious politicians are more likely to value moral legitimacy (Djupe and Gilbert 2009), this possibility should further reduce the appeal of using elections to choose party leaders for them.

Conversely, giving current party leaders control over the process used to fill organizational leadership positions allows them to penalize non-conformity and independence, and reward loyalty to party norms related to values and behavior while avoiding open conflict and internal disorder (Carey 2007; Kitshelt 1989). Allowing current party leaders to choose future leaders should therefore increase the chance that only loyal, obedient members who are aligned with the party's image and current policy agenda are chosen. Such autocratic control is more likely to produce an organization characterized by conformity, deference to hierarchy, organizational coherence and order – values research suggests should be dear to religious politicians. These contrasting organizational outcomes suggest that, compared to less religious politicians, *ceteris paribus*, religious politicians could be *more* willing to support undemocratic LSPs.

Politicians also differ in other personal and political ways that existing studies suggest influence their preferences over leadership selection practices. High personal capital (Tavits 2009), incumbent party membership (Slapin et al 2018; Kitshelt 1989), age, education, and being a male can incentivize politicians to demand more democracy within their parties. More political experience could make religious politicians more tolerant of dissent and democratic values (Schwedler 2011). Membership in a new party, suffering electoral defeat or suffering declines in membership can incentivize party leaders to support democratic party practices including in leadership selection (Kitshelt 1989; Cross and Blais 2012).

Next, we discuss how a politician's membership in a political family is another personal attribute that is associated with preferences over LSPs.

PPFs And Party Leadership Selection Preferences

Political families are defined as extended family groups in which multiple members (for example spouses, children, siblings, nephews, and in-laws) hold office, often simultaneously.[x] They are particularly common in developing countries where they can be found in local, state, and national politics, and in parties spanning the entire ideological spectrum.[xi] For example, 25% of Indian legislators (Chandra 2016), over 51% of the 2013 national parliament in Pakistan (Ahmad and Rehman 2019) and, 74% of members in the 2013 Philippines legislature (Tadem and Tadem 2016) were PPFs. Research shows that one of the most important differences between PPFs and non-PPFs is that PPFs work to promote the success of their entire families, not just their personal political fortune.[xii] This incentivizes them to create different relationships with their voters, supporters and parties, and creates a strong preference for undemocratic LSPs (Chhibber 2011; Ahmad and Rahman 2019; Chandra 2016; Amundsen 2016; Purdey 2016). This preference is driven by two political dynamics.

First, PPFs work to build, share and bequeath leadership positions and valuable political and leadership connections to other family members (Chhibber 2011; Smith and Martin 2017). These privileged positions and relationships substantially increase the likelihood that the entire family has access to and retains valuable political resources and positions through periods of poor performance in elections or office (Patrikios and Chatzikonstantinou 2015; Amundsen 2016; Smith and Martin 2017). Direct elections for party leadership positions risk the loss of

these valuable benefits if the family's allies in the leadership lose (Uysal and Topak 2010; Amundsen 2016; Chhibber 2011).

Second, PPFs build, use, and share exclusive family networks to mobilize voters and dispense patronage, services and goods to their supporters.[xiii] These family networks are more reliable than party networks since they are based on kinship and are exclusive to the family.[xiv] These features make PPFs' success *less* dependent on the party machine and *less* vulnerable to a lack of wider support within the party and, thus decrease their incentives to build grassroots party support for their families.[xv] Therefore, while PPFs seek out party leadership positions they do not necessarily need or want to build party-wide support for their candidacy among party workers. As a result of these two dynamics, PPFs prefer that party positions are filled by party leaders, whom they cultivate, rather than through party-wide elections (Cruz et al 2017; Purdey 2016; Chandra 2016; Chhibber 2011).

Religious PPFs And Preferences Over LSPs

We now argue that religious PPFs have the strongest preference for undemocratic LSPs because they can mobilize political support effectively through religious and family networks rather than their party organization. Highly religious individuals are significantly more likely to attend religious services at a place of worship such as a mosque, church or temple and become active participants in its congregation.[xvi] Congregation members share strong moral and community ties and participate actively in many of the informal and formal groups that operate in their place of worship to perform various religious, administrative, charitable and community tasks.[xvii] Scholars find that as they perform these various tasks and, socialize with each other, congregation members become embedded in a dense religious social network created through

such congregational involvement.[xviii] Many mosques and churches are also associated with larger religious orders such as Sufi orders or Jesuit or Dominican orders respectively making them part of larger cross-congregation religious networks. Religious network members share common worldviews, have higher levels of mutual trust, and form close social ties, and are therefore able to exert more influence on each other on religious *and* non-religious matters (Spierings 2019; Djupe and Neiheisel 2019; Everton 2018; Putnam and Campbell 2010). As a result, these religious social networks become important sites of *political* mobilization among members and can become significant sources of funds, manpower, connections, publicity and votes.[xix] Less religious individuals are significantly less likely to attend religious services and become part of the congregations associated with their place of worship, and therefore are significantly less likely to participate in the various types of groups and activities associated with congregations. Consequently, they do not become part of the religious social networks that emerge from the interactions among members in these groups.

This research therefore suggests that highly religious politicians will be more likely to belong to religious congregations and their religious social networks and, be better able to mobilize these religious networks to benefit their political careers than less religious politicians. Moreover, researchers find that high status individuals activate their social networks more extensively for their personal benefit and, they are more effective at mobilizing them (Hasani-Mavriqi 2016; Smith, Menon and Thompson 2012; Djupe and Gilbert 2009). Among religious social networks specifically, Djupe and Gilbert (2009:242-43) note the ability to mobilize the network depends on the social status of the member. While all religious politicians are likely to be higher status than other network members by virtue of being politicians, religious PPFs will enjoy even higher social status since their membership in political families makes them members

of the social elite as well (Chandra 2016; Tadem and Tadem 2016; Ahmad and Rehman 2019). Religious PPFs should therefore be particularly effective in mobilizing religious social networks for political purposes.

Religious PPFs therefore enjoy access to and influence over both religious and family networks which endows them with considerable reputational, mobilizational, and distributional advantages in creating and maintaining political support over religious non-PPFs, less religious PPFs and less religious non-PPFs. Highly religious non-PPFs have access to religious social networks but do not have family networks. Less religious PPFs have access to their family networks but lack access to religious social networks. Less religious non-PPFs lack access to both family and religious networks. Given these political assets, we expect that religious PPFs will be the least reliant on their party organizations, and consequently the least supportive of democratic LSPs while the less religious non-PPFs will be the most reliant on their party and, the most supportive of democratic LSPs. However, we cannot theoretically predict whether religious social networks or family-based networks will be more politically valuable for individual politicians and hence cannot predict which network type will make them less reliant on their parties. Therefore, we look to the empirical analysis to reveal whether access to religious or family networks produces less support for democratic LSPs.

Note, that this argument predicts the *relative*, not absolute level, of support that each of these four distinct types of politicians should express for democratic LSPs. Whether the absolute level of support among all or any of the four groups rises to the extent of supporting democratic LSPs is an empirical question this paper addresses. Finally, the object of inquiry here is politicians' preferences, not their actions. As with any decision, preferences are limited by binding constraints. For example, lack of political resources or opportunities, party popularity or

institutional design may compel politicians who genuinely prefer democratic selection to reluctantly accept undemocratic LSPs. However, if these adverse conditions change and politicians are in a strong position to demand democratic LSPs, they will do so *only if* they genuinely prefer democratic LSPs. If instead, politicians sincerely do not prefer democratic LSPs, there will be little demand for democratic intra-party reforms even under favorable conditions. We therefore need to understand what shapes underlying individual preferences in order to understand subsequent actions and potential for democratic intra-party reforms.

Empirical Analysis: Case, Data and Results

Turkey: A Representative Case for Developing Countries

In this paper, our population of interest is that of politicians in developing countries. Our analysis requires data on politicians' LSP preferences, political family membership, and religiosity. These are simply unavailable for any country. Given resource constraints, we chose to address this question by collecting original data in Turkey. Turkey is an insightful case for two reasons. First, its population religiosity level is close to the global average of 93% with 88% of Turks saying that religion is important to them (Pew 2013). Second, in the absence of systematic cross-country data on PPFs, we examined qualitative studies of various developing countries and identified Turkey as a case with moderate levels of PPFs (Uysal and Topak 2010; Ilyas 2009). 20% of the respondents in our *nationally* representative Turkish sample were PPFs, a share consistent with existing qualitative studies (Uysal and Topak 2010; Ilyas 2009).

Turkey uses a closed-list proportional electoral system with multi-member districts in a unitary system with a parliament (in 2017) and a directly elected president. Institutional theories predict that these should create party-centered strategic behaviors among *all* Turkish politicians.

Holding these institutional incentives constant across individuals within a single country facilitates the analysis of the individual-level factors that are the focus of this paper.

Brief Overview of Contemporary Turkish Parties

More than 175 ideologically diverse parties have been active in Turkey's multi-party democracy since 1950 (Sayari et al 2018). Among *currently* active parties, only the religious Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi (AKP), the right-wing nationalist Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP, founded 1969), the secular center-left Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (CHP, resurrected in 1992), the progressive pro-Kurdish Halkların Demokratik Partisi (HDP), and the religious Saadet (SP) have won parliamentary seats since 2001 and, the AKP has formed all the national governments since 2003 (Lord 2018). Comparing AKP and Saadet politicians allows us to differentiate between the effects of government incumbency and religiosity since studies find that membership in a ruling party can influence obedience to party wishes (Kitshelt 1989; Slapin et al 2018).

The 1983 Political Parties Law #2820 currently in effect requires parties to create municipal, district, provincial and national level branches and, hold party conventions to fill organizational posts including chairs and functional committee at each level (Sayari et al 2018). However, researchers find that in *all major parties* across the ideological spectrum, including *AKP*, the party president and his immediate circle of confidantes manipulate these *de jure* requirements to directly make appointments to party positions themselves (Sayari et al 2018; Musil 2011: 130-138).[xx] Furthermore, not all politicians are opposed to such leadership behaviors.

A TESEV (1998) study of 782 active party members from all major parties found that 55% believed that their party had a leadership oligarchy and 50% that it lacked internal

democracy. Yet, many *supported* such leadership oligarchies particularly in right-wing parties (13% support among MHP and Anavatan Partisi activists, TESEV 1998). In her 2011 study of 99 party activists from the AKP, CHP, MHP and the pro-Kurdish DTP Musil (2011: 120-126) also found that most party activists believed their specific party used undemocratic LSPs. Again, many party members resented this and wanted democratic LSPs but others felt that *"Yes, leadership dominance is a clear fact. But this is how it should be. It is the right of the leader to make the final decision" (*Musil 2011:107). These studies therefore find exactly the kind of variation in preferences over party LSPs in Turkey that this paper is seeking to explain.

Political Families, Religious Networks and Political Mobilization in Turkey

To the best of our knowledge, no existing studies *comprehensively* document the presence of PPFs in Turkish politics. However, several studies of PPFs in single cities (Bayraktar and Altan 2013), single provinces (Ilyas 2009; Guida 2013) and a national sample of 187 politicians in 14 cities (Uysal and Topak 2010) provide valuable insights. These find that Turkish PPFs have been active at all levels of government since the 1950s and are more common in Turkish politics than is commonly appreciated. PPFs operate in urban (e.g. Istanbul and Adana) and rural (e.g. Elazig and Sanliurfa) areas, include dynastic and concurrent families (including children, siblings, spouses, nephews, uncles, and in-laws) and, are found in right-wing, religious, centrist, leftist, and progressive parties. The religious AKP and secular CHP had the highest numbers of PPFs (Uysal and Topak 2010). Finally, families often switch party allegiances and multiple members may join rival political parties.

Two examples from very different regions illustrate many of these traits. The Kavakci-Islam family from urban Istanbul and Sakarya districts includes two sisters Merve Kavakci

(Refah Party, MP in1999) and Razva, (AKP, 2015- now), Merve's spouse (Cihangir Islam, SP 2018), father-in-law Nadir Islam, (MP in Justice Party, 1973) and sister-in-law Aysenur Islam (AKP, 2011 and 2015). The Seyhanli family in more rural Sanliurfa started with Omer Cevheri (1940 and 1950 CHP, 1960 Democratic Party, 1965 Justice Party), includes his son Necmettin (1969-1977 Justice Party, 1991-1999 DYP), grandson Ibrahim (1995, DYP), and grand-nephews -- Mehmet Ali (AKP), Sabahattin (DYP, independent and then AKP) and Seydi Eyupoglu (ANAP 1991, 1995, independent 2007, AKP 2011).[xxi]

Extant research finds that Turkish PPFs share many of the goals and tactical advantages common among PPFs in other countries. Turkish PPFs work to capture leadership and membership of party governing boards and councils at national, provincial, and local levels in order to secure the collective future of their families (Uysal and Topak 2010; Bayrakhtar and Altan 2013: 70-71). This happens even in the AKP which, on paper, prevents multiple family members from holding party offices simultaneously in the same district (Uysal and Topak 2010). Turkish PPFs enjoy the same advantages as PPFs in other countries – their brand name, cozy connections to party leaders, and ability to mobilize family networks (llyas 2009; Uysal and Topak 2010; Bayrakhtar and Altan 2013). Family brand value can stem from the prestige of family members, kinship ties, and family histories of effectively providing patronage and services to constituents (Ilyas 2009; Guida 2013). Uysal and Topak (2010) find in their 14-city study that PPFs enjoy privileged access to party leaders because "*in political parties too, the institution of family plays a major role in both accumulation and transfer of privileges and reproduction of social relations.*"[xxii] In contrast, non-PPFs work to make such connections, and many fail. Turkish PPFs' also rely on loyal family networks for vital tasks including mobilizing votes, fund-raising, and organizing protests and rallies (Uysal and Topak 2010; Bayrakhtar and

Altan 2013; Lord 2018). These networks are highly valued by all parties particularly at the local level where party branches are active only around election times and serve to further strengthen PPFs' relationships with party leaders (Uysal and Topak 2010; Ilyas 2009; Musil 2011).

Finally, various studies find that religious Turkish politicians are regular attendees at their selected mosques; active participants in various charitable, administrative and community groups based in their mosque-congregations; and many are also active members of religious Sufi orders such as the Gulen, Isikcilar, Suleymanci (Yadav 2021; Arat and Pamuk 2019; Lord 2018; Walton 2017; Yavuz 2003; White 2001). Religious Turkish politicians are therefore embedded in dense religious social networks through their participation in the various informal and formal groups and organizations associated with their mosques. Many PPFs (e.g. Septioglus, Ozals, Cevheris, Ciceks, Aksus) have been prominent members of specific mosques and religious orders (Eligür 2010; Uysal and Topak 2010; Yavuz 2011; Walton 2017; Lord 2018; Aviv 2018). These religious networks command formidable manpower and, logistical, financial and media assets (White 2001; Yavuz 2003; Eligür 2010; Walton 2017; Lord 2018; Yadav 2021). Consequently, religious politicians belonging to religious and non-religious parties have been using these congregation-based religious social networks and the networks of their affiliated religious orders to mobilize political support for decades (Yadav 2021; Arat and Pamuk 2019; Lord 2018; Walton 2017; Eligür 2010; Yavuz 2003; White 2001). Collectively, these characteristics suggest that Turkey should provide a good case to explore the relationship between elite religiosity, membership in political families and LSPs.

Data

The data for our analysis are from the *third wave* of a 3-wave panel survey fielded in May 2015, November, 2015 and April, 2017. Using a *stratified, clustered, random sampling design* we obtained a nationally representative sample of 216 politicians from a population of 2750 parliamentary candidates, contesting from 40 out of 85 electoral districts for the June 2015 parliamentary elections.[xxiii] Candidates were only drawn from the five existing parties that have entered parliament since 1993 -- AKP, CHP, MHP, HDP and SP. Interviews were conducted face-to-face in Turkish by FREKANS, an Istanbul-based survey firm. 54% of politicians contacted for an interview, completed one.

The party affiliations of respondents were 18.5% AKP, 18.5% *Saadet,* 18.5% CHP, 18.5% MHP, and 25% HDP. The average age of respondents was 47.3 years, 93% held college degrees, 31% were women and respondents' ranks on the party list ranged from 1 to 15. Note there is no comprehensive database which records these demographic characteristics for all parliamentary candidates in Turkey. Therefore, unlike citizen surveys, one cannot design a sampling scheme which stratifies based on demographic characteristics of respondents. Instead, the survey is designed to achieve political representation through the sampling design. The realized sample of 216 represents all five major parties in 47% of all electoral districts making it highly representative both statistically and substantively.[xxiv] *Section I in the supplemental appendix has more survey details.*

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is a politician's preference over democratic or undemocratic selection methods for filling party organizational positions. We use a question which allowed

respondents to state their preference between two options: (i) supporting the most *inclusive* selection method -- party-wide direct elections or (ii) the most *exclusive* method – selection by current party leaders. This formulation does not allow respondents to express preferences over other selection rules corresponding to intermediate levels of intra-party democracy. However, from the view of inference, these options are unambiguous and offer distinct and well-understood choices to respondents. Future work can build on this to examine more nuanced differences.

The particular wording used in the survey, reported in Section III in the supplemental appendix, is strongly supported by prior studies in other developing countries including India (Chhibber 2011; Chandra 2016), Pakistan (Ahmad and Rehman 2019), Bangladesh (Amundsen 2016) and particularly Turkey (TESEV 1998; Musil 2011; authors' open-ended interviews in 2015). These studies find that many politicians believe that *only* national party leaders have the vision to make the right choices for their party. For example, politicians in the AKP and MHP respectively justified their support for their parties' undemocratic LSPs by stating that *"Our leader and his perspectives are the reasons for why we are here today"* and, *"Any decision made by our leader is right."* (Musil 2011:105, 108).

Responses ranged from indicating strong (1) or moderate (2) support for direct party-wide elections to moderate (3) or strong (4) support for selection by current party leaders. For ease of interpretation, the scale of this variable labelled *LSP Position* is flipped so that 4 now indicates strong support for democratic practices and 1 indicates strong support for undemocratic practices. Fully 28% of respondents strongly or moderately supported selection by party leaders over direct elections as their preferred method to fill party organizational posts.

Independent Variables

There are two independent variables – political family membership and personal religiosity. We created a binary variable, labelled *PPF*, identifying whether (1) or not (0) a politician had family members who had either participated in elections or served in elected office at any level. Almost 20% of all respondents are PPFs. Given the stratified, clustered, random sampling design which drew politicians from 47% of all electoral districts and all major parties, this 20% figure provides a systematic estimate of the frequency of PPFs among parliamentary candidates in Turkey in 2015. The share of PPFs is comparable across the AKP (25% of members), CHP (28%) and the HDP (22%) but is much lower for the two most right-wing parties, the MHP (8%) and SP (8%). We address this cross-party difference in our empirical analysis by conducting robustness checks. *Supplemental appendix Section III has further details on these variables.*

Scholars have conceptualized, measured, and analyzed religiosity as having different dimensions including religious beliefs, behaviors, belonging, religious fundamentalism, intrinsic religiosity and general religiosity.[xxv] Since this paper represents a first cut on the consequences of politicians' religiosity we follow Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (2004: 51) principle of maximizing "topical breadth" rather than focusing on a single narrow dimension and use seven questions spanning these multiple dimensions of religiosity to estimate a latent measure of religiosity using an item response theory (IRT) model. Two commonly used items measure *general religiosity (how religious are you, how important is religion in your life),* one item measures *religious belief fundamentalism (inerrancy of scripture), one item measures religious exclusiveness (acceptability of family members marrying non-Muslims)*, and three items operationalize Islam-specific *religious practices (importance of avoiding alcohol, praying five*

times a day, and observing halal for Muslims). Exploratory factor analysis suggests that these seven items conform to one dimension and they display a high degree of internal consistency (alpha=0.89). Since the responses are ordinal, we use a graded response model (GRM) (Samejima 1969) and estimate it as a Bayesian GRM using uninformative priors. *Details about these items, the estimation process and the latent measure are in Section II of the supplemental appendix.*

The resulting latent variable, labelled *Religiosity*, ranges from -1.98 to 1.93, with a mean of .043 and a standard deviation of .947. 61.5% of the sample has religiosity scores over 0 and *36%* (78 respondents) have scores in the highest range – from 1 to 2. 92.5% of AKP, 100% of SP, 60% of MHP, 32.5% CHP and 35.2% HDP politicians had religiosity scores above 0 while 40% of AKP, 49% Saadet, 30% MHP, 30% CHP and 27.5% of HDP politicians had very high scores above 1. This distribution aligns with our expectations because religious party politicians score significantly higher than others on our religiosity scale. Finally, these numbers show that there is considerable variation in religiosity among politicians within religious and non-religious parties.

Is religiosity correlated with a preference for obedience and tradition among politicians*?* Using additional survey questions, we find that *Religiosity* among Turkish politicians is indeed *positively correlated* with personal values that prize respect for traditions (.36, 5% significance) and obedience to authority (.55, 1%). Furthermore, these correlations strengthen among religious PPFs to 0.48 (1% significance) and 0.63 (1% significance) respectively (see section III in *supplemental* appendix for details). When asked about the importance of political family membership in their party's choice of candidates to fill

organizational positions, 74% of all respondents believed it was very or decisively important indicating the relevance of political families in Turkey.

We measure religiosity rather than membership in a religious social network because it was not possible to ask respondents if they belonged to a religious social network. The Erdoğan government had been shutting down mosques, endowments, schools, associations and other bodies associated with the Gűlen order since 2014 and prosecuting its real and imagined members. However, as discussed earlier, the absence of such data is not a major concern because existing qualitative evidence on Turkish politicians consistently finds that highly religious Turkish politicians, like highly religious Turkish citizens, also actively participate in religious services held at mosques and are embedded in the religious social networks associated with these mosques while less religious politicians rarely attend mosques regularly or participate actively in religious social networks and, the rare attempts less religious politicians have made to use religious networks to mobilize political support have failed (Yadav 2021; Arat and Pamuk 2019; Lord 2018; Walton 2017; Yavuz 2003; White 2001).[xxvi]

Controls

Since their party's election performance can incentivize politicians to challenge or align with party practices, particularly in a party-centered institutional system (Kitshelt 1989; Carey 2009), we include *Party Brand Value* operationalized as the difference in the district vote share of the respondent's party between the June and November 2015 elections. Politicians with more personal political capital are more likely to desire autonomy from party leaders (Tavits 2009). We therefore account for this by operationalizing *Party Rank* as the candidate's rank on her party's district election list adjusted for the total number of seats in that district in the June 2015

elections. Since membership in the ruling party can increase or reduce demands for intra-party democracy (Slapin et al 2018; Kitshelt 1989), we include an AKP dummy. Prior experience with elected office and diverse voters can increase tolerance for dissent and demands for intra-party democracy (Schwedler 2011), we therefore control for prior elected office experience (*Office Experience*) and frequency of voter contact (*Voter Contact*). We also control for education and rural districts (see Section III in Supplemental Appendix for details).

Results

Since the dependent variable is categorical, we estimate ordered probit models. These are reported in table A4 in the *supplemental* appendix. Model 1 includes only the individual variables *Religiosity* and *PPF,* model 2 adds their interaction and model 3 controls for *Personal Political Capital, Incumbent Party, Party Brand, Voter Contact, Office Experience, Education* and *% Rural Population.* All models are estimated with and without sampling weights. The results for models 1 and 2 do not change when their estimation sample is restricted to the sample used for model 3. The individual *Religiosity* term is only significant in model 1. Its insignificance in models 2 and 3 which include an interaction term with PPFs suggests that *among non-PPFs*, *Religiosity* had no significant correlation with preferences over LSPs. *PPF* is negative and statistically significant in all three models indicating that among politicians with *Religiosity*=0 (recall mean=.04) being a PPF is associated with a statistically significant *decline* in their support for democratic LSPs. To calculate the marginal effects of the interacted terms for a non-linear ordered probit model, we first calculate the predicted probabilities that politicians express strong support for elections at the mean-median profile in the sample (*Religiosity* .043,

Voter Contact 1, *Office Experience* 0, *Incumbent Party* 0, *Party Brand Value* .169, *% Rural* .199) and then take the difference in the appropriate predicted probabilities.

Figure 1 illustrates the marginal effect of *Religiosity* on a politician's strong support for *democratic* LSPs (*LSP Position* = 4), *conditional* on being a *PPF* or not. Figure 2 illustrates the marginal effect of being a PPF on the probability that a politician strongly supports *democratic* LSPs (*LSP Position* = 4), *conditional on* religiosity. The marginal effects in 1a and 2a are calculated using the coefficients from model 2 which has no control variables while those in 1b and 2b are calculated using the coefficients from model 3 which includes all control variables. As figure 1a and 1b show, among non-PPFs, increased religiosity is not associated with any significant change in support for democratic LSPs. However, among PPFs, religiosity has a negative and significant effect on support for democratic LSPs. As figure 1b illustrates these results hold after controlling for sociodemographic and political factors. The least religious PPFs are about 88.4% likely to support democratic LSPs, while the most religious are only 1.9% likely, a precipitous decline of 86.5 percentage points (1% significance). Comparing moderately (.043) and highly religious PPFs (*Religiosity*=1.93), the probability of supporting democratic LSPs declines by 28.7 percentage points (5% significance). Compared to the least religious politicians, even moderate religiosity leads to a very significant decline of 57 percentage points (1% significance) in the probability of strongly supporting democratic LSPs among PPFs.

[Place figure 1 here]

Furthermore, among PPFs, the probability that a highly religious PPF will support undemocratic LSP (*LSP Position*=1) is higher than a moderately religious PPF by 54.8 percentage points (1% significance) and higher than a minimally religious PPF by 84.8 percentage points (1% significance). Among non-PPFs, there is no statistically notable difference in support for undemocratic LSPs regardless of religiosity. Collectively, these results suggest that religiosity is *not* uniformly associated with support for undemocratic selection practices in parties among politicians. Instead, the strength of its effects depends on whether a politician belongs to a political family.

Figure 2 illustrates the marginal effect of being a PPF on a politician's strong support for *democratic* selection practices (*LSP Position* = 4) *conditional on* their level of religiosity. As figures 2a and 2b show, at lower levels of religiosity (below -.10), being a PPF has no significant effect on a typical politician's likelihood of supporting direct party-wide elections for choosing party leaders. However, as religiosity levels increase above this threshold, being a PPF is associated with a statistically significant *decline* in support for direct elections. At the mean level of religiosity (*Religiosity*=0.043) in the sample, being a *PPF reduces* the likelihood of supporting democratic LSPs (*LSP Position* =4) by 25.9 percentage points (5% significance) from 56.6% to 30.6%. At the highest sample religiosity level (*Religiosity*=1.93), being a PPF reduces the likelihood of supporting democratic LSPs by 48.8 percentage points (1% significance) from 50.7% to 1.9%. Thus, only as *Religiosity* increases above the threshold does support for democratic LSPs decline. Furthermore, at an average religiosity level (*Religiosity*=.043), being a PPF *increases* the probability of supporting undemocratic LSPs (*LSP Position* =1) by 19.1 percentage points (5% significance) from 12.5% to 31.5%. Among highly religious politicians, being a PPF *increases* this probability by 70.5 percentage points (1% significance) from 15.8%

to 86.3%. Figures A8 and A9 in the supplemental appendix illustrate the same conditional marginal effects for *Religiosity* and *PPF* on a politicians' strong support for selection by party leaders (*LSP Position* =1). Collectively, these results suggest that being a PPF is associated with *reduced* support for democratic party-wide elections at higher religiosity levels. Finally, as expected, non-religious non-PPFs showing the highest level of support (.628).

Among the control variables, *Office Experience* and *Voter Contact* were positively and significantly associated with the likelihood of supporting democratic LSPs while % *Rural Constituency* was negatively and significantly associated with increased support. Since we cannot confirm causal effects here, we do not make causal claims but rather note the results as correlations between individual characteristics and party LSPs leadership selection preferences.

[Insert Figure 2 here]

Robustness Checks

We estimate a variety of robustness checks to ensure that our results are not spurious. First, we dichotomized our dependent variable by combining strong and moderate support and opposition into single categories and replicated models 1-3 as simple probit models. The results reported in supplemental appendix table A5, do not change significantly which suggests that degrees of freedom were not a constraint in estimating the full ordered probit models in the sample. Next, we conducted additional checks to explore whether the missingness in our sample was driven by systematic factors since the estimation sample dropped from 216 to 171 in model 2 and 151 in model 3 due to missing data.

While the survey was fully confidential and anonymous, it is possible that fear of party retaliation or norms against badmouthing ones' party may influence some politicians to avoid

responding to the dependent variable question. An examination of the data shows only 1 missing response on *Party Positions* suggesting that missingness is not being driven by these concerns. As supplemental appendix table A7 shows, missing observations are primarily due to non-responses across the 7 questions used to estimate religiosity. T-tests between sub-samples with and without religiosity scores (supplemental appendix table A8) show that the only significant difference is that respondents with missing responses are more likely to be from urban districts. Party-wise distributions (supplemental appendix table A7) show that HDP and MHP party members had a higher number of missing religiosity observations. Therefore, in order to test for potential response bias due to party affiliation and urban districts, we estimated selection models modelling the presence of a religiosity score as a function of *% Rural* and party dummies for the HDP, CHP, MHP and AKP parties in the selection stage and replicated the specifications of models 1-3 in stage 2. These estimates (supplemental appendix table A9) show that neither the party dummies nor *% Rural* are significant. The substantive results for *Party Positions* in stage 2 are largely unchanged in size and significance after controlling for party-specific unobserved factors.

Next, we estimated additional models using alternative measures of religiosity and party brand value. To test for potential confounding, we controlled for support for political Islam, support for neoliberal economic policy, and religious party membership. We also estimate heteroskedastic ordered probit specifications which allow for less preference ambiguity among long-time party members and experienced politicians. To save space, operationalization details of all additional variables, and results for these additional robustness checks are reported in Section IV of the supplemental appendix. Collectively, across these models (supplemental

appendix table A10), the conditional effects of *Religiosity* and *PPF* on *LSP Position* remain consistent in statistical and substantive significance.

Finally, it is possible that religiosity primarily influences a politician's decision to join a religious or non-religious party and has no further effect on preferences once this effect has been accounted for. To address this concern, we estimated 2-equation conditional mixed process probit models. Equation 1 estimated the probability of membership in a religious party as a function of *Religiosity*, the share of district votes won by all religious parties in the previous elections, education, and age. Equation 2 simply replicated the specifications of models 1-3. The models in supplemental appendix table A11 present these estimates. As expected, high *Religiosity* predicts *Religious Party* membership (1% significance). After controlling for this, we find *Religiosity* is still associated with significantly reduced support for party leadership elections among *PPF* politician of both religious and non-religious parties but not among non-PPFs.

Discussion and Conclusion

This paper finds that religiosity is associated with increased support for undemocratic LSPs but only among PPFs. Religiosity's effect is therefore not uniform across all politicians. These results suggest that the political participation of entire families in highly religious developing countries is one reason why undemocratic LSPs are common there and, the growth of political families within religious parties (which tend to attract more religious individuals) may be particularly conducive to undermining democratic LSPs. Furthermore, these results add important nuance to the existing argument that PPFs oppose democratic LSPs (Chhibber 2011; Chandra 2016; Tadem and Tadem 2016) by showing how this effect varies across politicians

with different religiosity levels. Finally, these results contribute to the study of religion and politics by providing a rare study of how religiosity influences politicians' political preferences.

The most natural question that a single-country empirical study raises regards the scope of its findings, and how different conditions moderate them. The two basic factors at work here – elite religiosity and membership in political families– are common across countries in the developing world. Single-country studies document the considerable variation in PPFs found in different countries ranging from percentages in the single digits to the high seventies.[xxvii] Studies in countries belonging to different religious traditions also find that highly religious individuals are more likely to attend religious services and belong to religious social networks, in different political regimes and across the full battery of institutional designs (Yadav 2021; Spierings 2019; Everton 2018). These empirical facts suggest that the theoretical link between religiosity, political family membership and LSPs should be supported across different countries. Future research should therefore extend empirical testing to a broader set of countries.

We expect the strength of the relationships between religiosity, PPF status and support for democratic LSPs may vary systematically across countries based on certain factors. Institutions influence the incentives politicians face to defy or obey their party leaders (Carey 2007). Since Turkey has a party-centered institutional design, the next step should be to test this paper's argument for countries with individual-centered institutions to evaluate the extent to which their weaker incentives to follow party diktat strengthen the demand for undemocratic LSPs across different types of politicians.

Second, parties differ in how well-institutionalized they are within and across countries (Mainwaring 2018). If parties are deeply embedded in grassroots and citizen organizations, a key dimension of institutionalization, this may weaken the political leverage that PPFs gain from

their family networks, compelling them to rely more on their party to mobilize support. If so, highly religious PPFs in highly institutionalized parties could become more incentivized to build genuine party-wide support and consequently become less supportive of undemocratic LSPs.

Finally, countries differ in how much they regulate religion, particularly, the construction of religious establishments and[xxviii] the activities that religious organizations can engage in (Fox 2015). Since religious social networks form at religious establishments and through the interactions people have participating in activities and groups organized at these sites, differences in religion's regulation could influence the size and vigor of these networks. Future work should investigate the extent to which the effectiveness of religious social networks for political mobilization declines in highly regulated countries making religious politicians more dependent on party organizations and consequently more supportive of democratic LSPs.

Notes

[i] See Poguntke et al 2016 and Kenig et al 2013 for overviews of selection practices.

[ii] In this paper, we focus solely on party selection practices for filling party organizational positions. Primaries for selecting election candidates, but not party leaders, have become more common in some Latin American countries (Carey and Polga-Hecimovich 2006).

[iii] See footnote #1.

[iv] See Basedou 2018 and Beit-Hallahmi 2015 for recent reviews.

[v] See Geys and Martin 2017 for a recent overview.

[vi] For detailed definitions of and overviews on religiosity see Beit-Hallahmi 2015 and Basedou 2018.

[vii] See for example Schwarz and Huismans 1995, Saroglou et al 2004, Van Capellen et al 2011

[viii] See Dynes, Hassell and Miles (2018) for a summary of recent research on this.

[ix] Intra-party democracy is a multi-dimensional concept and party leadership selection practices constitute one key dimension of this concept (Cross and Pilet 2016; Scarrow 2005). More democratic LSPs are consistent with higher intraparty democracy.

[x] Chandra 2016, Ahmad and Rehman 2019, Uysal and Topak 2010, Tadem and Tadem 2016, Purdey 2016 among others use this definition. Empirical studies sometimes focus on strict dynasties instead (Rossi 2017).

[xi] See footnote x.

[xii] See footnote x and Smith and Martin 2017, Cruz et al 2017.

[xiii] See Ahmad and Rehman 2019, Muraoka 2018, Cruz et al 2017, Chandra 2016.

[xiv] See footnote xiii.

[xv] See footnote xiii.

[xvi] Spierings 2019; Ciftci et al 2019, Bloom and Arikan 2012; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Djupe and Gilbert 2009.

[xvii] For example, groups may form to discuss scripture, run community kitchens and daycare centers, raise donations, renovate mosques, manage charitable endowments, organize festival celebrations, etc. See Berkley Centre 2019, Spierings 2019, Everton 2018, Putnam and Campbell 2010, Djupe and Gilbert 2009 for further details.

[xviii] See footnote 16.

[xix] Inglehart and Norris 2004; Djupe and Gilbert 2009; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Bloom and Arikan 2012; Lewis et al 2013, Everton 2018, Berkley Centre 2019, Yadav 2021.

[xx] In the late 1990s. the CHP and the MHP introduced primaries but *only* for selecting parliamentary candidates and party leaders largely ignored their results (Musil 2011; Sayari et al 2018).

[xxi] Seyhanli family details from Ilyas (2009) and Kavakchi-Islam family details from various news and election sources.

[xxii] Translation from Turkish by Caner Simsek.

[xxiii] See Supplemental Appendix *Section I* for technical sampling design and other details.

[xxiv] We do not believe that the results are influenced by the specific timing of the survey since most politicians at this time were also politically active during the 2008 soft-coup and had competed with prior versions of pro-Kurdish parties. Additionally, the AKP's decline into undemocratic behaviors had already begun in 2011 and continued at the time of the survey (Arat and Pamuk 2019).

[xxv] Beit-Hallahmi 2015, Koenig et al 2015, Basedau 2018 discuss measuring religiosity.

[xxvi] Furthermore, comparing data from the 2017 World Values Survey and 2013 Pew Survey to our politicians' survey, we can confirm that the correlation patterns between other religious beliefs and behaviors are similar among Turkish citizens and politicians. These data show that the same religious beliefs and behaviors that are significantly correlated with regular attendance at religious services at mosques among Turkish citizens (tables A13 and A15, Supplemental Appendix) are highly correlated with each other among politicians as well (A16). We therefore expect them to be significantly correlated with religious attendance among politicians too.

[xxvii] See note # x for examples.

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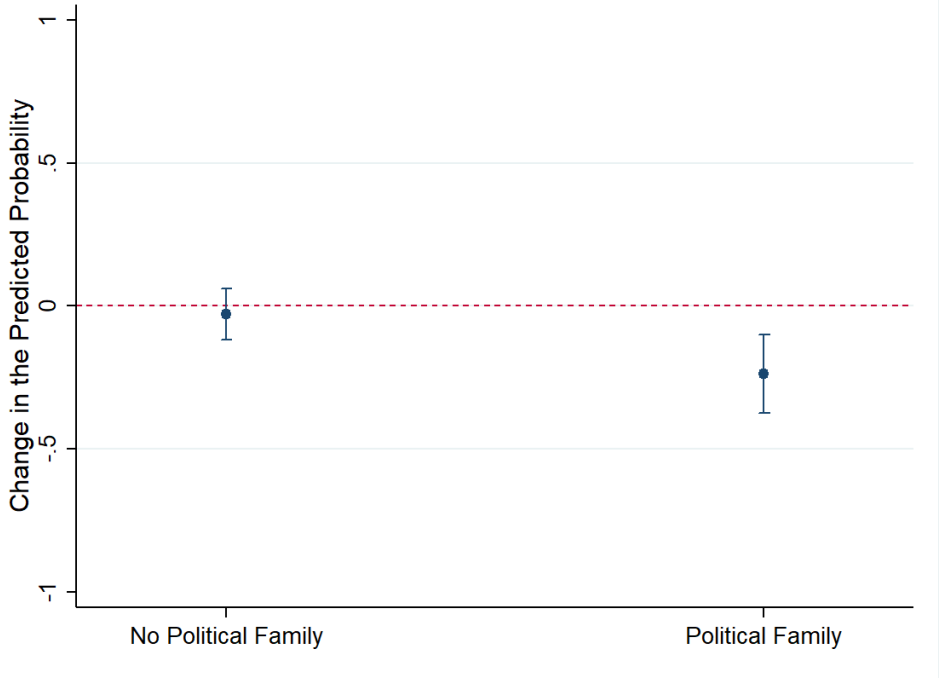
Figure 1: Marginal effect of Religiosity on Strong Preference for Democratic LSPs (*LSP Position* =4), *Conditional* on being a PPF

(a) Based on Model 2



(b) Based on Model 3

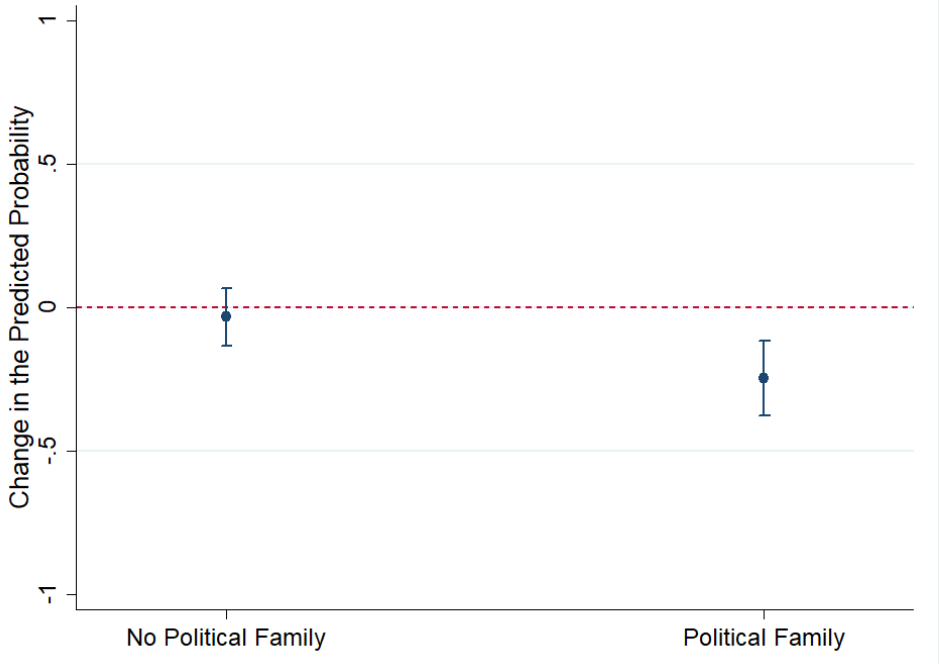
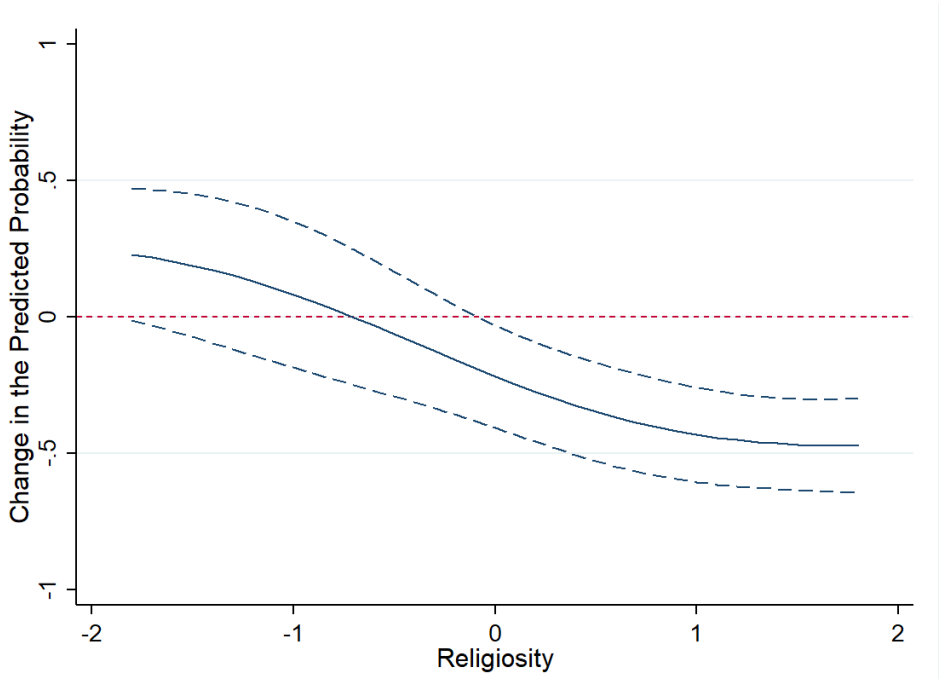
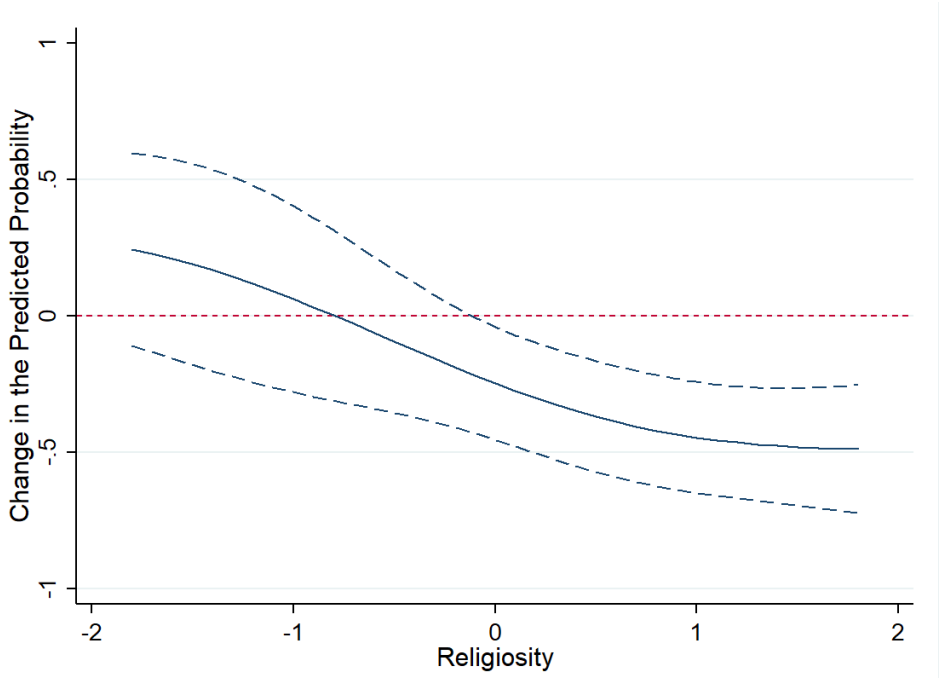


Figure 2: Marginal Effect of being a PPF on Strong Preference for Democratic LSPs (*LSP Position*=4), *Conditional* on Religiosity Level

(a) Based on Model 2



(b) Based on Model 3