

To Guide Us in These Latter-days: When partisans disagree with the Church's guidance

A qualitative analysis of how Latter-day Saint Republicans and Democrats experience and justify disjunctions between religious and political beliefs differently

Kelsey Eyre, Jordan Gygi, & Kesley Townsend | Dr. Chris Karpowitz | Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy | Political Science Department
 kelseyeyre@gmail.com, gygijordan@gmail.com, kesley.townsend@gmail.com



Background

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teaches many distinct doctrines that have political implications. We examine whether Republicans and Democrats respond differently when their political and religious views do not align. To do this, we employ the "method of listening" used by Kathy Cramer (2016). This method allows us to identify the complex thought processes of members of the Church regarding these issues.

Methods

- Conducted 24 in-depth interviews spanning approximately 13 hours.
- Read Church Handbook statements about vaccinations and gay marriage to the subjects.
- Asked questions regarding subjects' feelings about the Church's guidance on these issues.
- Asked how they would respond to hypothetical situations that could arise from these issues:
 - Do you think an unvaccinated/gay member should be released from their calling?
- Systematically coded each response to measure levels of consistency across issues.

Implications

- Democrats and Republicans both struggle when Church policy contradicts their political beliefs, but it appears they react differently to that struggle.
- Republicans generally expressed support for church policy, but support was more conditional when the policy contradicted political views.
- Democrats appear to be better able to empathize with out-party members who may struggle with Church teachings.

Republicans More Consistently Support Church Policy (with conditions)

*Darker red indicates conditional support.

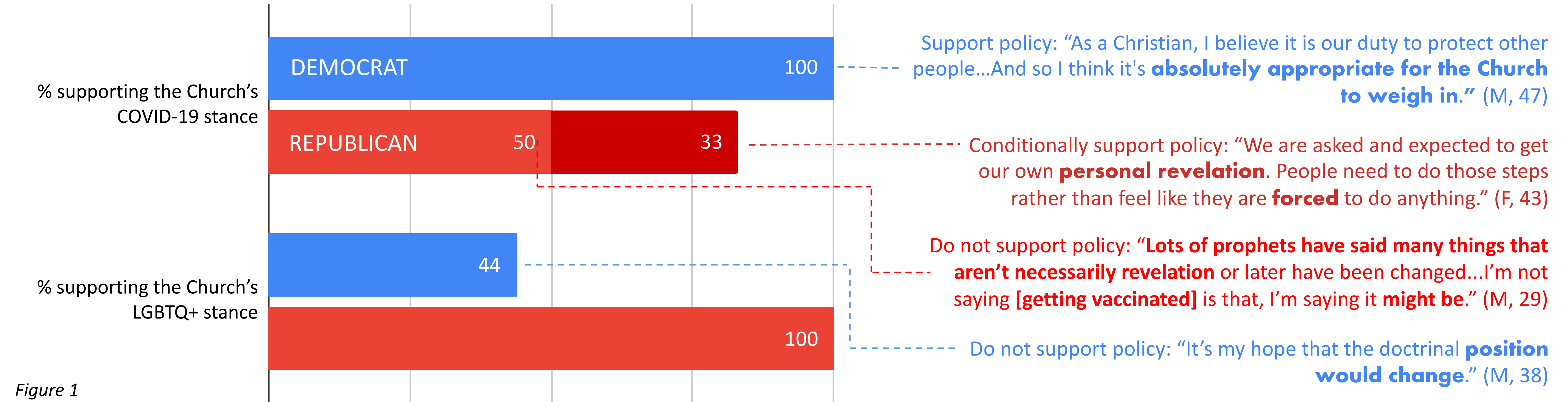


Figure 1

Democrats More Consistently Support Individuals who May Not Align with Church Policy

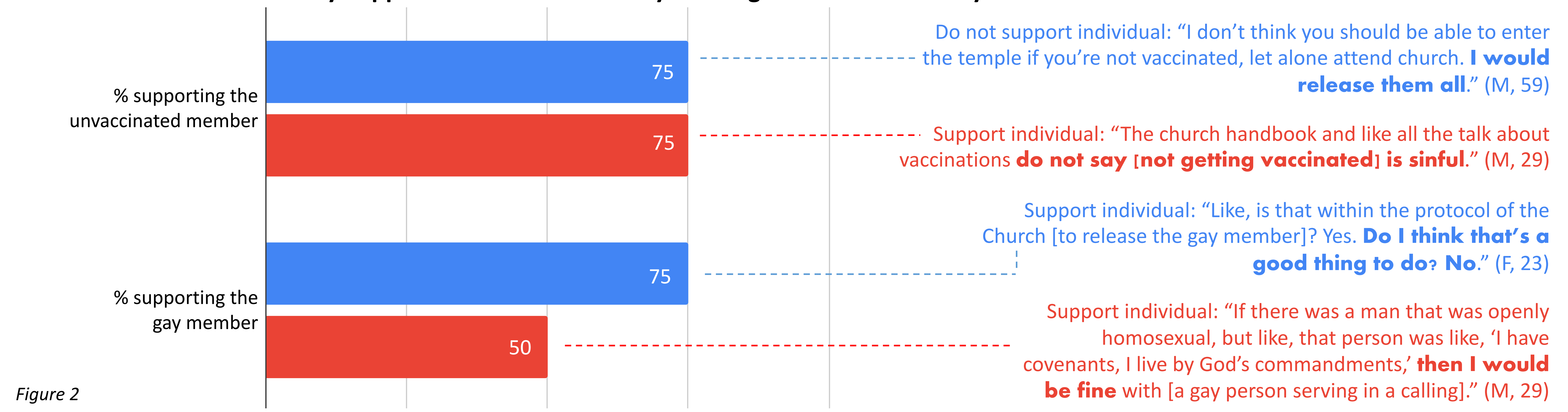


Figure 2

Republicans Emphasize Policy while Democrats Emphasize Individuals

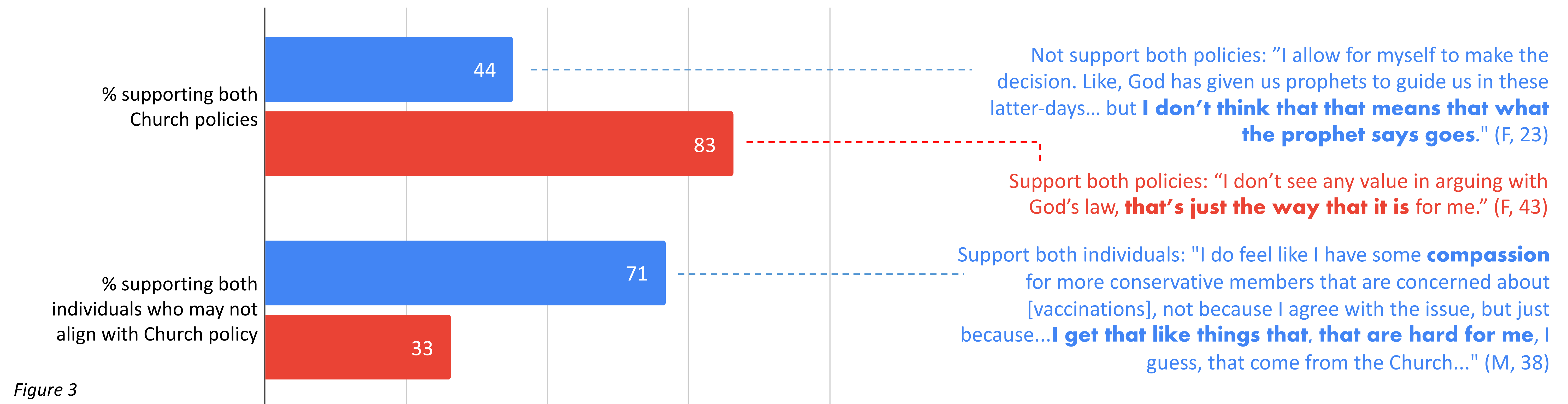


Figure 3