

AMERICAN CONSERVATISM: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF SOCIAL ISSUES IN AMERICAN POLITICS

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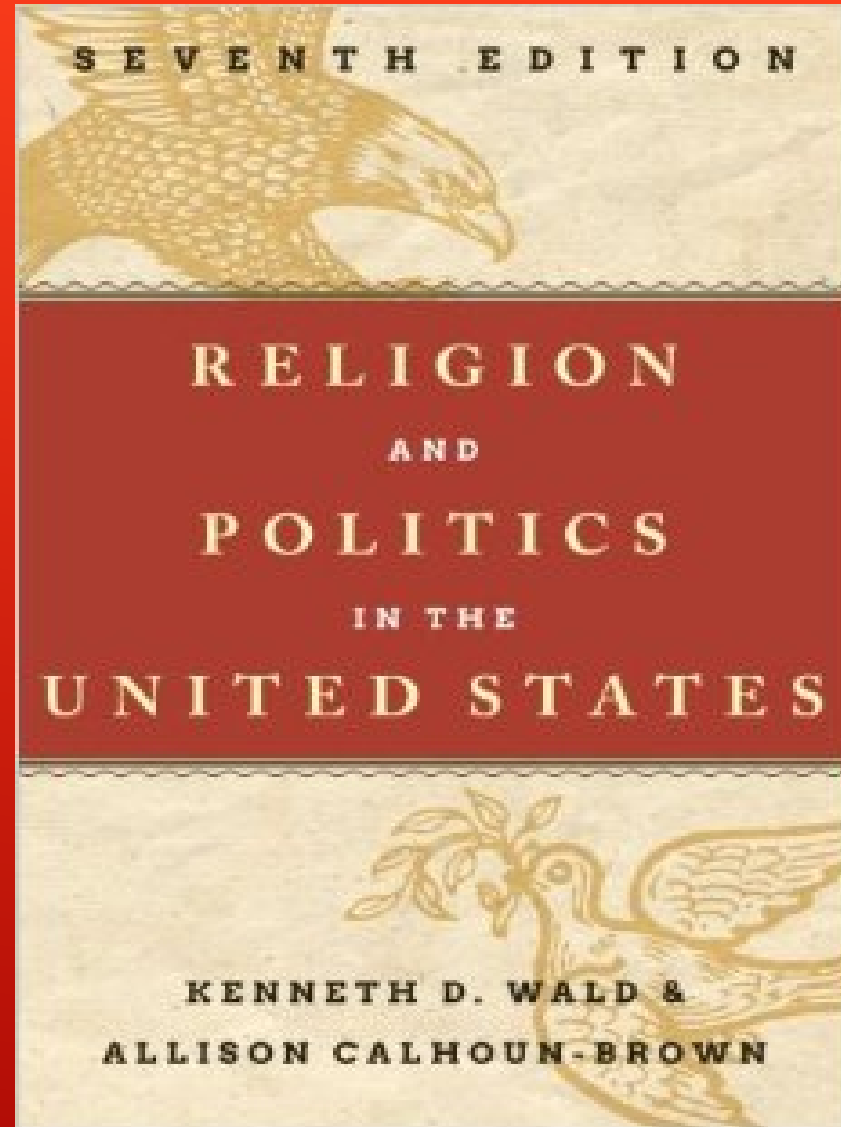
RESEARCH TOPIC

- ▶ My research question: Are conservatives today as concerned with social issues as they were roughly 35 years ago?
- ▶ Among the conservative base, the Religious Right is the most prominent group in opposition to these social issues



LITERATURE REVIEW

- ▶ *Religion and Politics in the United States* by Kenneth D. Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown (2014)
 - ▶ Used for research in American conservatism and religiosity
 - ▶ Extensive research updated regularly
 - ▶ "Work Hard, Trust in God, Vote Republican."
– On a banner in rural Florida, mentioned in Preface
- ▶ "Jerry Falwell, the Rise of the Moral Majority, and the 1980 Election." *Jerry Falwell, the Rise of the Moral Majority, and the 1980 Election* by Doug Banwart
 - ▶ Used to gather most of the information about Jerry Falwell and the influence of Moral Majority
- ▶ Gabriel, Trip. March 25, 2015. Unhappy With a Moderate Jeb Bush, Conservatives Aim to Unite Behind an Alternative. *The New York Times*.
 - ▶ Used to gather info on social conservatives and their future political agendas



LITERATURE REVIEW-POLITICAL MOBILIZATION

- ▶ Three factors for political mobilization:
 - ▶ Motivation
 - ▶ Means
 - ▶ Opportunity
- ▶ Used by any group of activists
- ▶ For instance, the Religious Right uses television, churches (local or “mega”), conventions, and political activity of religious politicians/clergymen to draw people together.

(Wald and Calhoun-Brown)



LITERATURE REVIEW-ANALYZING THE HISTORY OF CONSERVATISM IN THE US

- ▶ Has had great influence in US politics
- ▶ Can be traced back to the beginnings of the United States
- ▶ Just as any other political ideology, it goes through varying “phases” of leaders and concerning issues
- ▶ Concerning issues evolve and shift through time

(Wald and Calhoun Brown, Banwart 2013)



LITERATURE REVIEW-RIGHT WING CHRISTIANITY

- ▶ Considered a mass movement in the US
- ▶ Makes up a large part of the conservative base
- ▶ Fueled by evangelical institutions
- ▶ Successful in harnessing votes from white evangelical men and women
- ▶ Deal mainly with social issues.

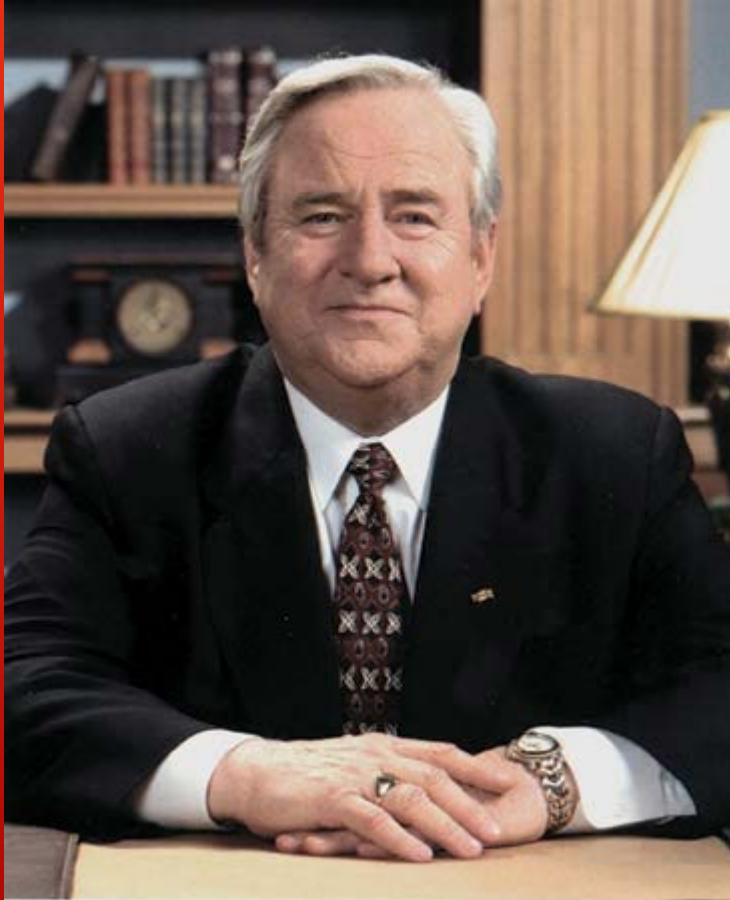
(Wald and Calhoun Brown)



LITERATURE REVIEW-JERRY FALWELL AND THE MORAL MAJORITY

- ▶ Born in Lynchburg, Virginia
- ▶ An elite political leader, pastor, and famous televangelist.
- ▶ His mission- keep religion and politics under the same roof
- ▶ Helped establish the Moral Majority
 - ▶ Political action group made up of evangelical Christians
 - ▶ Aim was to increase Christian influence in American politics
- ▶ Established a network of churches associated with the Baptist Bible Fellowship
- ▶ Moral Majority supported Ronald Reagan to victory in the 1980 presidential election

(Banwart 2013)



"We're fighting a holy war." - Jerry Falwell to his congregation in 1980

"When a group of nine idiots can pass a ruling down that it is illegal to read the Bible in our public schools, they need to be called 'Idiots'" - Jerry Falwell's opinion on the Supreme Court's ruling of school prayer is unconstitutional

(Banwart 2013)

CONSERVATISM AND THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT TODAY

- ▶ Leaders of the nation's Christian right/evangelicals do not believe in Jeb Bush, former governor of Florida
 - ▶ have mounted an ambitious effort to support a single social-conservative contender before the first primary votes
 - ▶ feel Republicans lost control of the White House because they are too moderate, don't excite the base enough
- ▶ One leader is Tony Perkins, President of the Family Research Council
 - ▶ A lobbying group that opposes abortion and same-sex marriage rights
- ▶ Many social conservatives are looking towards Ted Cruz to possibly rally the conservative base in order to gain presidency

(Gabriel, Trip. March 25, 2015)



DATA ANALYSIS

- ▶ Tested conservatives based on age with same-sex marriage, abortion rights, legalization of marijuana, gun ownership rights, and divorce restrictions.
- ▶ The dependent variables have been chosen because they are five examples of social issues that have been relevant of the last 35 years.
- ▶ Data Set Used- General Social Survey 2012 from the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago



DATA ANALYSIS-HYPOTHESIS

Hypothesis: Among conservatives, younger age groups will be more liberal on social issues than older age groups.



Age of conservative and their opinion of same-sex marriage.

Age Groups by Year			Levels of Conservatism			Total
			Weak	Moderate	Strong	
Younger Age (18-49)	Should homosexuals have the right to marriage?	Strongly Agree	15 16.1%	5 5.7%	4 23.5%	24 12.2%
		Agree	32 34.4%	16 18.4%	1 5.9%	49 24.9%
		Undecided	16 17.2%	11 12.6%	0 0.0%	27 13.7%
		Disagree	14 15.1%	15 17.2%	4 23.5%	33 16.8%
		Strongly Disagree	16 17.2%	4 46.0%	8 47.1%	64 32.5%
		Total	93 100.0%	87 100.0%	11 100.0%	197 100.0%
Older Age (50+)	Should homosexuals have the right to marriage?	Strongly Agree	5 6.4%	7 6.5%	0 0.0%	12 5.7%
		Agree	13 16.7%	11 10.2%	3 12.0%	27 12.8%
		Undecided	15 19.2%	9 8.3%	1 4.0%	25 11.8%
		Disagree	26 33.3%	27 25.0%	0 0.0%	53 25.1%
		Strongly Disagree	19 24.4%	5 50.0%	21 84.0%	94 44.5%
		Total	78 100.0%	108 100.0%	23 100.0%	211 100.0%
Total	Should homosexuals have the right to marriage?	Strongly Agree	20 11.7%	12 6.2%	4 9.5%	36 8.8%
		Agree	45 26.3%	27 13.8%	4 9.5%	76 18.6%
		Undecided	31 18.1%	20 10.3%	1 2.4%	52 12.7%
		Disagree	40 23.4%	42 21.5%	4 9.5%	86 21.1%
		Strongly Disagree	35 20.5%	94 48.2%	29 69.0%	158 38.7%
		Total	171 100.0%	195 100.0%	42 100.0%	408 100.0%

Chi-Square: 29.819
 (Younger) 34.095 (Older)
 = 53.592 (Total)

Asymp. Sig.: .000
 (Younger) .000 (Older)

Cramer's V: .275
 (Younger) .285 (Older) =
 .256 (Total)

Approx. Sig: .000
 (Younger) .000 (Older)

Chi-Square: 14.713 (Younger) 3.198 (Older) = 16.555 (Total)

Asymp. Sig.: .001 (Younger) .202 (Older) = .000 (Total)

Cramer's V: .273 (Younger) .126 (Older) = .204 (Total)

Approx. Sig.: .001 (Younger) .202 (Older) = .000 (Total)

Age of conservative and their opinion on abortion.

Age groups by Year			Level of Conservatism			Total
			Weak	Moderate	Strong	
Younger Age (18-49)	Should women have the right to an abortion?	Yes	43 47.3%	18 20.5%	5 27.8%	66 33.5%
		No	48 52.7%	70 79.5%	13 72.2%	131 66.5%
	Total		91 100.0%	88 100.0%	18 100.0%	197 100%
Older Age (50+)	Should women have the right to an abortion?	Yes	26 25.1%	25 24.3%	5 20.8%	56 27.9%
		No	48 64.9%	78 75.7%	19 79.2%	145 72.1%
	Total		74 100.0%	103 100.0%	24 100.0%	201 100%
Total	Should women have the right to an abortion?	Yes	69 41.8%	43 22.5%	10 23.8%	122 30.7%
		No	96 58.2%	148 77.5%	32 76.2%	276 69.3%
	Total		165 100.0%	191 100.0%	42 100.0%	398 100%

Age of conservative and their opinion of legalized marijuana.

Age Groups by Year			Level of Conservatism			Total
			Weak	Moderate	Strong	
Younger Age (18-49)	Should marijuana be legal or illegal?	Legal	34 38.2%	36 43.9%	5 29.4%	75 39.9%
		Illegal	55 61.8%	46 56.1%	12 70.6%	113 60.1%
	Total		89 100%	82 100.0%	17 100.0%	188 100.0%
Older Age (50+)	Should marijuana be legal or illegal?	Legal	37 39.8%	29 29.0%	4 15.3%	70 31.4%
		Illegal	56 60.2%	71 71.0%	26 86.7%	153 68.6%
	Total		93 100%	100 100.0%	30 100.0%	223 100.0%
Total	Should marijuana be legal or illegal?	Legal	71 39.0%	65 35.7%	9 19.1%	145 35.3%
		Illegal	111 61.0%	117 64.3%	38 80.9%	266 64.7%
	Total		182 100%	182 100.0%	47 100.0%	411 100.0%

Chi-Square: 1.435 (Younger) 7.850 (Older) = 6.481 (Total)

Asymp. Sig.: .488 (Younger) .020 (Older) = .039 (Total)

Cramer's V: .087 (Younger) .188 (Older) = .126 (Total)

Approx. Sig.: .488 (Younger) .020 (Older) = .039 (Total)

CONCLUSION

As my data shows, younger conservatives are still concerned with social issues today as they may have been 35 years ago. Similar results are also present in the other tables. In the future, I plan to run more tests with these variables.

