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PROPHETS & PROTEST:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF U.S. CHRISTIAN ACTIVISM, 1960-2000

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PROPHETS & PROTEST:
THE TRANSFORMATION OF U.S. CHRISTIAN ACTIVISM, 1960-2000

by

Christopher Monroe Pieper, B.A.; M.A.

Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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Dedication

To my father and mother.

Thanks for all the books.

Thanks for all the tuition.

Thanks for all the good talks.

Thanks for all the prayers.

Thanks for teaching me about God.

Thanks for your constant love.

Thanks for giving me life.

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My interest in Christianity and politics had been latent throughout most of my life. Not until 1997 during my graduate study at UT Austin did they dovetail and truly emerge with any staying power. This was primarily due to exposure to Roman Catholic social teaching via the Social Justice Team at the University Catholic Center on the UT campus, under the guidance of Michelle Goodwin. For years, I had been struggling with how to reconcile my increasingly progressive political views with my faith life. Michelle and the SJT taught me that I didn't have to choose, and that perhaps the most radical politics I could adopt would be those taught by Jesus. Over the next fifteen years, my study and practice of Christian activism would only increase, culminating finally in this document. As Jerry Garcia might say, "What a long strange trip it's been . . ."

Academically, my most stalwart and inspirational partners on this journey have been my dissertation committee, consisting of Ari Adut, Mounira Maya Charrad, Sheldon Eckland Olson, John Higley, Lester Kurtz, and chaired by the tirelessly devoted Michael Young. To Prof. Young especially I express my deepest thanks and affection. Michael's intellectual genius is only exceeded by his boundless generosity, kindness, and humility. I can only hope to be half the sociologist and human being that he is.

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Growing up in a home where thinking and talking about current events was encouraged, and participating in educational opportunities a priority was a crucible for producing academics. My parents made two. I'm forever grateful for their example, nurturing, patience, and unconditional love. Thanks for investing in my future; I'm doing my best to yield big returns on it.

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Prophets & Protest:
The Transformation of U.S. Christian Activism, 1960-2000

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The second half of the 20th century saw the emergence of consequential and diverse social movements inspired by Christian moral commitments, from anti-communism and temperance to Civil Rights and fundamentalism. Few studies, however, have systematically analyzed this important sector of activism adequately, though it lies at the intersection of two vital sociological areas: the sociology of religion and political sociology. This dissertation is the first comprehensive study of Christian activist organizations, creating and analyzing an electronic database of approximately 500 unique Christian social movement organizations along nearly 50 variables including overall population changes, denominational variation, geographic diffusion, tactical repertoires, and issues engaged. Findings indicate that changes originating in religious demographics and culture preceded and led to related changes in American politics, overall in a conservative direction. At a macro level, data also consistently point to a homeostatic,

cybernetic effect generating medium-term cultural equilibrium between progressive and conservative Christian activists. At the micro-level, findings illustrate the essential role of cultural entrepreneurs motivated by religious values and identities in redefining, publicizing, and defending the moral boundaries which create and sustain social movements.

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"The church must speak with words and deeds . . . In times past this has meant leading the fight against child labor, slavery . . . and for prison reform, for the right of the working man to form unions . . . for complete racial equality, for the elimination of poverty and hunger . . . . Sometimes the church is wrong . . . but there is no way [it] can play it safe and be true to the Gospel . . . Whose job is it to cause society to 'repent' if not the church's? ***The role of prophet is active, often disruptive and always painful****. I know this, because, if the church today were to do its full duty, I would be among those called to repent."*

--- J. Irwin Miller, CEO, Cummins Engine Co., Reader's Digest, April 1972, pp. 207.

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

According to the founders of sociology, the forms of religious activism observed in the 20th century should not have emerged. Marx conceived of religion as little more than a transcendent means of social control, a product of capitalist relations of production designed to prevent the revolt of the oppressed masses. Weber's master narrative of rationalization predicted the inevitable conquest of the sacred by the secular, as science and reason gradually "disenchanted" the social world to make way for bureaucratic capitalism. Durkheim, though more charitable to religion, still foresaw its transformation into a largely egoistic, hyper-privatized phenomena with few effects on collective life – "the cult of the self." Though glimpses of each of these have certainly been observed since their original writing, the preponderance of evidence from the field of contentious politics suggests that religion is far from fading, and very far from dead. On the contrary,

the political story of the 20th century can scarcely be told without referring to the centrality of religion. Imagine any type of contention – war, revolution, movement, "culture war," terrorism, policy debate, etc. – and religion will be found in its midst.

The United States of America stands anomalously as at the same time the most developed yet most religious nation on the planet. In terms of economic wealth and power, the success of its secular democracy, and its techno-scientific level of advance, the U.S., for better or worse, has no peer. Yet, contrary to all sociological and political predictions, America is also the home of more religious diversity and faithful citizens than any place in the world. Though recent years have shown a slight decline in religiosity, for the vast majority of its 230-year history, the United States has demonstrated both "worldliness" and "godliness," a fact unmatched in scope by any other nation. As a result, a significant swath of U.S social features bears the imprint of these two interwoven facts. Historically, the most influential manifestation of high religiosity amidst high development has been the persistent role of faith, particularly Christianity, in politics. The most obvious sociological examples derive from electoral politics, whether in the form of political elites citing scripture or referencing faith in official rhetoric, or political parties actively cultivating the favor or religious groups, or vice versa. Instances of this type of interaction are familiar to most Americans and well-documented by social scientists and scholars of religion. The lesser-known story, but arguably more influential force, has been that of religiously-motivated social movements, or what I call throughout this paper, religious activism.

Religious activism is here defined as *collective action in the political, cultural, or economic spheres that is motivated by religious ideals and/or engaged in by people of faith.* In this dissertation, I restrict the analysis to instances of religious activism

connected to Christianity (as defined by adherents), the faith practiced by more than three-quarters of Americans.

Using a novel method cataloging every Christian activist organization existing in the United States from 1960-2000, I track the fascinating and powerful force of this often-hidden player in America's political and social history on events and topics as diverse as race, capitalism, gender, war, sexuality, poverty, human rights, traditional moral values, and abortion. In light of these data, I argue that religious activism has not been only a driving force of political events, but that, at a more tectonic level, religious activists – "prophets"—have reshaped the very moral schemas and cultural categories through which we view social life. Consequently, their influence, when exercised optimally, can hardly be exaggerated.

For the first seven decades of the 20th century, Christian activists were among the most public and reliable forces on the political left in American civil society. Significant numbers from a wide range of denominational and social backgrounds struggled against urban poverty, for an expanded welfare state, against war, for civil rights, and occasionally against capitalism entirely. Through the Social Gospel movement (roughly 1880-1920), Protestants mobilized at unprecedented levels through every sector of society – social service, education, public policy, health and sanitation, foreign missions and more -- to inaugurate a just "Kingdom of God." Later, the moral theology of the Social Gospel would find new life in the message and vision of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. Similarly, American Roman Catholics, whose numbers were swelling due to historic European immigration, were inspired by a series of papal encyclicals, which established both magisterial positions and the proper duties for the faithful on social questions. These included the rights of workers, the

authority and role of government, the use of violence, responsibility to the poor, religious freedom, and care of the environment. Lay movements, such as the Catholic Worker and Pax Christi, as well as individual clergy, such as the "labor priests," the Berrigan brothers, and Msgr. John Ryan buttressed these hierarchical efforts through their grassroots work. Despite their near-total marginalization from positions of societal power, American Catholics vigorously pursued their own vision of the just society, sometimes in tandem with progressive Protestants; at other times in icy antagonism.

The progressive, sometimes radical agenda of the Social Gospel and Catholic social teaching (and particularly Vatican II) had a divisive effect on both traditions, generating vocal, conservative counter-movements. In general, traditionalist, and fundamentalist movements were considerably weaker and barely visible within the national public sphere throughout the early 20th century, particularly after being culturally discredited during the infamous 1925 Scopes evolution trial. Yet neither the Protestant nor Catholic blocs were able to convert their discontent into mobilization at the level of their progressive counterparts. Traditionalist factions from the 1920s through the 1970s could best be described as "latent groups" (Olson, 1968), loosely connected through "submerged networks" (Melucci, 1989) and bounded through shared identity, values, and very often, social vision. Though it is now obvious that the anti-progressive Christian bloc is and was quite formidable in size and potential resources, for the majority of the 20th century this giant remained sleeping.

The last 30 years of the 20th century appeared to show a dramatic reversal of fortune in religious activism, as progressive movements retreated from dominance and conservative counter-movements rose to ascendancy, gaining unprecedented strength in the spheres of culture and institutional politics. Beginning in the 1970s, historians agree, a conjuncture of factors led to the swift conservative conquest of the political and cultural

space which progressive and mainline Christians had long dominated. First, networks of churches and parallel institutions, particularly through the South began to take advantage of advances in communication technology, particularly broadcast mass media, to extend their message and vision to an ever-larger audience (Diamond, 1998). Second, hubs of these networks became the focus of political entrepreneurial strategies from the state and non-profit sector, namely Nixon's famous "Southern Strategy" and the infusion of financial resources from sympathetic, though often, secular conservatives. Third, and perhaps most importantly, the 1973 *Roe vs. Wade* Supreme Court decision, which struck down state laws banning abortion, galvanized traditionalist Christians nearly overnight and spawned hundreds of "pro-life" organizations. It also exacerbated deep residual tensions in American culture regarding the "moral well-being" of the republic, which were first brought to the surface during the tumultuous 1960s. Since then, autonomous but allied groups have emerged to oppose sex education, combat secularization, protect the traditional family and its values, and fight for limited government, among other issues. Long-standing animosities between Protestants and Catholics lost saliency in deference to common moral visions found between the two faiths. Conservative Catholics and Protestants, in contrast to their counterparts only 30 years prior, are now strong allies on matters related to the family, sexuality, and gender. In fact, they often find more resonance and solidarity across these religious boundaries than within their own traditions (Hunter, 1991). The "Religious Right," as they have been dubbed in the popular press, or "New Christian Right" by academics, has also been remarkably successful in the realm of institutional politics. It has been argued that Presidents Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George W. Bush have all benefited from their activism in the last 25 years (Green & Guth, 1993; Rozell & Wilcox, 1996; Jacobs, 2006).

The specific internal dynamics of this sector of activism – which organizations were dominant or recessive in certain periods—as well as probable mechanisms underlying these changes are poorly understood by social scientists. Within the U.S. context alone, the national frame to which I confine the following analysis, religio-political activism is characterized by a dizzying degree of dynamism and diversity. As suggested above, it has featured prominently in movements to preserve the status quo and in struggles to create a new society. It has motivated radical innovations in social policy as well as the most fervent appeals for military intervention. And various interpretations of religious tradition have stood on both sides of heated debates regarding poverty, race, violence, abortion, and sexuality. Given such variation and inconsistency, it is not surprising that scholarly consensus in the sub-field is likewise sparse and generally incoherent.

Chapter 1: Objectives and Main Arguments

"It is one of the oldest of sociological generalizations that any coherent and viable society rests on a common set of moral understandings about good and bad, right and wrong, in the realm of individual and social action. It is almost as widely held that these, moral understandings must also in turn rest upon a common set of religious understandings that provide a picture of the universe in terms of which the moral understandings makes sense. Such moral and religious understandings produce both very basic cultural legitimation for a society which is viewed as at least approximately in accord with them, and a standard of judgment for the criticism of a society that is seen as deviating too far from them."

-- Robert Bellah, *The Broken Covenant*, 1975

THE PUZZLE

The research presented here is an attempt to contribute empirical and theoretical clarity to the sociological study of this fascinating and consequential field of political action. This objective consists of three interrelated empirical research questions, the first descriptive, the second and third, theoretical:

- What are the prevailing macro-level patterns and transformations in U.S. Christian activism in the second half of the 20th century?
- What explains these patterns? Are extant theories from social movement analysis, the sociology of religion, or political sociology generally adequate for making sense of the dynamics observed over the period?

And as a corollary:

- What *recurrent mechanisms and processes*, if any, govern the outcomes and forms of religious activism across the historical and social contexts considered (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001)?

Thus, while the first question is primarily concerned with the *dynamics* of movements (emergence, abeyance, and "waves," for example) within the larger socio-political environment, the last question concerns the often micro-level *processes* that occur within yet across movements to similar effect, regardless of context. Question one is therefore aimed at examining differences; question two, similarities. The combination of results generated from these two avenues of investigation offer significant promise for general theory-building.

In this dissertation, I focus exclusively on "Christian activist groups," which I define *as discrete organizations founded or containing members who identify themselves as Christian, involved in social or political action, and operate as a national organization within the borders of the United States*. Further detail on methodology and definitions are provided in Chapter 3.

SACREDNESS, SIN, AND THE CYBERNETIC CIVIL SPHERE

The descriptive portion of the analysis presented in Chapters 4 and 5 serve as the foundation for the postulation of explanations for the variety of phenomena observed. Based on these observations, I lay out an extended primary argument which places the concept of *threat* at the center of causal mechanisms observed in the four decades of data. Threat in this context is conceived as a real or perceived fear or feeling of anxiety regarding one or more external social or ideational entities in relation to a set of highly valued internal social or ideational entities. I argue, based on findings from a longitudinal organizational analysis of Christian activist groups, that threat to values or institutions held as "sacred" are a sufficient and recurrent mechanism leading to Christian activist mobilization. The transgression of sacred moral boundaries is often referred to as

"sin" in Christian discourse, and the designation of "sin" upon a practice or institution reliably indicates the workings of a threatened moral boundary. More importantly, this initial mobilization, --motivated by threatened values or institutions -- occurs within a sensitive social system known commonly as the *civil sphere*, which then frequently produces its own counter-mobilization. My findings indicate that despite the seemingly chaotic flux within the religious activist sector, an approximate balance or unintentional homeostasis between ideologically opposed groups is achieved at the population level at nearly year of measurement. As a result, I argue that a model of the civil sphere as *cybernetic* is both fitting and possibly necessary to account for the variety of phenomena observed therein.

Based on this new understanding of the Christian activist sector, I posit a new metaphor for the civil sphere generally; that of a *battlefield*. My findings suggest that, contrary to many renderings in prevailing literature, many activists enter the civil sphere not to calmly and deliberately engage in lively debate with rivals to arrive at optimal rational solutions to grievances (a la Habermas or to a lesser degree Alexander), but to drive rivals from the civil sphere entirely, to annihilate the opposition. The objective is not victory but extermination (Simmel, 1964) Mutual threats to sacred values drive this process, which over time ineluctably results in the generation of organizational actors competing for shares of sector dominance, members, resources, influence over public and elite opinion, access, and material gains. Clashes over these intra-sectoral features as well as ideological conflicts require careful strategizing and adaptive flexibility, akin to the type exhibited by military planners. However, unlike conventional battlefields wherein the slain are laid to rest never to return, frequently in the civil sphere, bested armies may simply retreat or lay in abeyance to fight another day, when advantage is on their side. My research documents multiple incidents of this phenomenon, and generally supports

the validity of the battlefield metaphor as more adequate for the Christian activist portion of the civil sphere, if not beyond.

At the foundation of this model of religious activism, which attempts to bridge the macro- and micro-levels of analysis, is the existence of a set of irreducible core values within human persons, arrayed in hierarchical fashion, which I term a "moral schema." Building on descriptions of the moral composition of persons from analysts such as Durkheim, Parsons, Christian Smith, Bourdieu, and Geertz, I posit that these schemas serve as indispensable socialized frameworks of evaluative meaning and orientation with respect to entities coded as "right" or "wrong." In agreement with such thinkers as Schopenhauer, Frankl, Maslow, Rogers, Blumer, Giddens, and Goffman, I contend that human beings have an inherent and irrepressible "need for orientation," a basic drive to map reality, reduce uncertainty, abate anxiety, and produce ontological security. This innate drive underlies the creation of moral schemas, which address the evaluative dimension of ontological security by dividing reality into simple binary categories, often unconsciously. I further posit that entities, practices, or persons located at the top of moral schema hierarchies are equivalent to "sacred" status, regardless of the individual or group's religious orientation.

Finally, I argue that for the largest proportion of Americans, the values at the top of these moral schemas are irreducibly religious in character; in a phrase, *their faith is their life*. As a source of ultimate meaning and orientation in the world, Christianity faces no trump. As a result, threats to their Christian identity and core values generate powerful and sustained aggregated responses, often in the civil sphere. At stake are the basic moral visions which structure the Christian life, and which many feel should structure social life as well.

"CHANGING THE WIND"

At a finer level of analysis, I advance the argument that religious actors play a unique, even indispensable role through their capacity as *prophets*. I define prophets here akin to the use of the term by Melucci (1996), Yoder (1994), and McLoughlin (1980): *those cultural agents who frequently herald –and actively work toward – the dawn of new social orders by calling attention to the gap between utopian visions and temporal realities*. The linkage to the macro-processes described above regarding threats to sacred values occurs through the prophet's unique ability to identify, label, and publicize incidents of moral transgression – "sin." Prophets also "speak before," in Melucci's terms, often dedicating their lives in service of causes others have long deemed lost. Prophets demonstrate congenital lack of regard for social norms and appear remarkably unconstrained by "instrumental rationality." They habitually put themselves at great material and social risk to achieve their aims. As a result, they represent enormous human stockpiles of political leverage for social movements, since a healthy concentration of just a few among the rank and file of a movement will work to resolve traditional collective action problems.

Perhaps more importantly, though, are the cultural – specifically the moral – consequences that prophets have on social movements. The findings and narratives detailed here illustrate time and again the significant power of committed moral actors – in this case those dedicated to interpretations of American Christianity – to shape the very cultural categories and moral boundaries upon which secular political activity is based. It has frequently been argued that American politicians and institutions are like weather-vanes, responding to prevailing currents of public opinion in order to ensure election or re-election. An apt illustration of this type of politician would be the official who steps outside onto his office porch each morning, wets his finger, puts it into the air to ascertain

the political winds of the day, and prepares to speak and act accordingly, guided by little if any internal conviction. If this metaphor obtains for U.S. politics in the last half of the 20th century, and it appears to do so at least partially, then the role of prophet as I outline them here is the one who, as Rev. Jim Wallis puts it, attempts to "change the wind." Prophets work at a rather deep symbolic, emotional, and moral level to subtly, gradually, but powerfully remold what is regarded in the society as permissible, taboo, sinful, encouraged, mandatory, and the like. When they are successful, the winds of political change begin to shift as well, often bringing with them full-scale tempests of social transformation. This dissertation demonstrates how prophets armed with Christian values, narratives, motivation, and institutions have been pivotal in bringing about these types of transformations, which have often, oddly, manifested in secular forms. Upon this basis, I argue that what begins in religion frequently ends in politics.

In what follows, I sketch the story of Christian activist groups in the United States from 1960 to 2000 from general to specific and back again. Chapter 2 thoroughly reviews the major scholarly literature on religious social activism, with a separate and closer focus on conservative and progressive Christian movements. Chapters 3 describes the analytical procedures utilized for the examination of the activist dynamics of the population from 1960-2000, including detailed description of the construction of the dataset and the methods employed. In Chapter 4, I present the quantitative findings from the longitudinal analysis, including results regarding changes in population dynamics, organizational mortality, membership dynamics, geographic distribution of organizations, and organizational resources such as budget, staffing, and federated branches. Chapter 5

summarizes findings of a more qualitative nature, including significant features of Christian activist organizations' ideological orientation, religious tradition, issues engaged, tactics used, and how these changed over time. Careful attention to possible exogenous causal factors, such as demographic, macro-economic, political, and religious changes, is provided as well in this chapter. Chapters 6 and 7 present the possible implications of these findings for sociological theory generally, with a focus on the recurrent mechanisms observed, specifically the mechanism of value-threat, and recurrent dynamics discovered, such as the shrinking of the Christian ideological "middle," and the proliferation of Christian activist groups committed to electoral political change, particularly on the ideological right. Chapter 7 elaborates the key theoretical ideas of *moral schemas*, and specifically the role of religion in their workings, as well as the idea of the *cybernetic civil sphere,* a term I used to describe the responsive, quasi-dialectic process that appears to govern the macro-level of the activist sector. Finally, in Chapter 8, I conclude with a discussion of the larger ramifications of these findings for the study of religion and politics specifically, as well as sociology generally. I close with a brief speculation on what the future of Christian activism might look like, given the findings of this research and current trends.

PART 2: THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVISM

Chapter 2: Review of Literature on Religious Social Movements

"Religion is the soul of culture and culture the form of religion. Every religious act, not only in organized religion, but also in the most intimate movement of the soul, is culturally formed. Religion as ultimate concern is the meaning-giving substance of culture, and culture is the totality of forms in which the basic concern of religion expresses. "

--- Paul Tillich, 1959

The majority view within the larger community of social movement scholarship appears to be that the religious character of faith-based movements is epiphenomenal to the "real" causes and outcomes of the effort. Religion, to paraphrase, may just as well be another form of movement ideology, tool for collective manipulation, identity exploiter, or means for legitimating political objectives. If this view is correct – and there are many who believe it is – religious social movements may be analyzed alongside and using the same theoretical perspectives as nationalist, fascist, Marxist, and racial/ethnic movements (as Blumer surprisingly did in *New Outline of the Principles of Sociology*). According to this school, "interests" should be the primary object of the analyst's investigation, these defined as the (typically material) demands of challengers and the various (typically resistant) configurations of members (Tilly, 1978; Skocpol, 1979). Thus, "contentious politics" may safely bracket out religious motives, discourse, feelings, narratives, and identity because, in the final analysis, what determines their emergence or outcomes are the results of history, political arrangements, and resource access. As a result, there is little need for the dedicated study of religious social movements. Likewise, it is implied that faith-based activism is susceptible to the assumptions and implications of accepted theories of contentious politics.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that scholarship in the sub-field of religious social movements has been heavily influenced by prevailing models from its parent field. In his otherwise brilliant introduction to *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism,* arguably the most comprehensive scholarly book on the subject, Christian Smith outlines the many "religious resources for activism." Showing the imprint of the Tilly-Tarrow-McCarthy hegemony, only three of the 21 resources he identifies are unique to religion; the rest are readily found in many secular movements of size and import, particularly the role of networks, resources, and charismatic leadership. Smith's own book on the rise and fall of liberation theology in Latin America is based on McAdam's political process model. Because the now-ubiquitous framing perspective was in its infancy when *The Emergence of Liberation Theology* was published, the book unfortunately relegated virtually all of the aspects of religious culture to the limited category of "cognitive liberation" (Smith, 1991). Such an approach seriously distorts the experiential and empirical reality of most faith-based activism by minimizing human agency and eliminating emotion and meaning (which, we are reminded, are doggedly "non-cognitive"). Similarly, most accounts of the ascendancy of the Religious Right in the U.S. are based either implicitly or overtly on a resource mobilization perspective – to the exclusion of other possibilities (Diamond, 1995; Goldberg, 2006).

What I term the "conventional model," consisting of political opportunity, resource mobilization, and some form of cognitive liberation, enjoys impressive intellectual dominance in some of the most cited and influential texts in religious social movement research. Smith's (1996) widely-read and methodologically innovative study of the U.S Central America peace movement is essentially an application of the political process model to a new empirical context. Not surprisingly, resource mobilization co-

founder Mayer Zald's (1982) consideration of religious social movements marginalizes religion to the point of insignificance. McAdam's classic study of black insurgency in the civil rights movement focuses on churches as a network base and producer of insurgent consciousness; little serious elaboration of the role of the sacred is attempted. The exception to this class, to some degree, is Morris' (1984) elegant and insightful work on the organizational foundations of the civil rights movement. While certainly informed by the conventional model, Morris' compelling interviews and sensitivity to the lived experience of the black church produces a more satisfying subjective grounding.

One example of recent scholarship that takes seriously the role of religious dynamics over time (yet with a clear eye toward religion-as-institution) is Billings & Scott's (1994) analysis of general trends in the study of religio-politics. Informed by religious history, denominational membership changes, and an interest in generating general theory, the authors place into debate the relevant works of Wuthnow (1988), Ammerman (1987), Hunter (1991) and Roof & McKinney (1987). Billings and Scott consider a question very similar to the one posed by this dissertation: the differential politicization of Christian factions since the 1970s, namely the largely effective mobilization of religious conservatives alongside the noticeable quiescence and de-politicization of religious progressives. Hunter's view is characterized by the authors as "culturalist," relying on essentialized and mutually exclusive moral visions ("orthodox" and "progressive") within American culture at large, irreducible to socioeconomic or other factors. In the same general category, Roof and McKinney stress changes in large-scale American values, namely a move toward post-materialism and a hyper-individualism which manifested in both religious affiliations and political engagement. Ammerman, on the other hand, explains the divergent politicization as a function of resource access and their activation, citing the successful mobilization of lower-education

and culturally threatened Southern Baptists as an example. Wuthnow seconds aspects of this analysis by pointing to the expansion of the state into the private realm as a catalyst for resistance, especially among Southern Protestants. This pattern of "lifeworld colonization/modernization" leading to traditionalist religious mobilization has also been confirmed by Keddie (1998) and Casanova (1994) in their cross-cultural work. I also foreground this mechanism as central to understanding the emergence and dynamics of Christian activist groups at the population level. In summary, Billings and Scott's treatment is praiseworthy and thorough, but lacks detailed longitudinal empirical evidence. This dissertation builds on their claims, filling in the evidentiary gaps.

Jacobs (2006) presents an alternative but equally outstanding historical examination of religious movement dynamics. In it, he ultimately explains the phenomenon through the decline of mainline Protestant denominations combined with religious conservatives and Republicans seeking each other out for mutually beneficial cultural and political gain. Such analyses, while satisfying at a superficial level, leave unanswered deeper questions regarding *causes* of mainline decline and bases for elective affinity between Republicans and religious conservatives, which has not been a historical constant. More importantly, it ignores the fact that much U.S. religious activism in the 20th century has not been directly tied to denominations or churches, but rather the work of para-church and semi-professional SMOs. Thus, though essential, denominational-based explanations are limited in their ability to explain the full range of activism and its dynamics. This explanation is engaged and countered in Chapter 5.

Similar analyses have been conducted in recent years to answer questions such as "Which traditions are most likely to generate activists?" (Regnerus & Smith, 1998; McVeigh & Smith, 1999) and "In what contexts will religious social movements emerge?" (Chaves, 1994). While employing very different methodologies and levels of

analysis, this cluster of research has generated a set of consensus findings: 1) variations in region, cultural tradition, and historical legacies have significant impacts on the probability of religious activism, even within the same country; 2) to the extent that a given region or denomination has experienced high levels of educational attainment and secularization, the probability of its involvement in religio-politics is *decreased*; 3) supporting the findings of Casanova, Keddie, Smith, and others, the most "stable" societies with respect to religio-politics are those in which the political and cultural leadership of the society matches the religious composition of the mass public. Similar to findings from the study of revolutions, large and persistent gaps between the elite and public on this measure invariably lead to widespread disenchantment, felt first usually in the lifeworld dimension, but quickly spreading to the political and economic. Such grievances may manifest themselves as anti-clericalism, a demand for return to "traditional values," or simply greater representation and recognition of the sacred in national life. These findings have been validated multiple times in contexts around the world, and figure prominently as well in my analysis of differential movement emergence in the 20th century U.S.

EMERGING PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE IN RELIGIOUS SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In recent years, an emerging generation of scholars has begun to challenge the adequacy of the "conventional model" for religious activism. In the mold of Michael Walzer's influential *Revolution of the Saints* in 1965, this paradigm envisions the cultural, social, psychological, and even spiritual facets of religion as topics worthy of sociological investigation in their own right. Beyond that, they describe the myriad, peculiar ways in which religion impacts the political realm. In so doing, such work

sketches a theoretical framework which maintains the incommensurability of religio-political action with other, conventional forms of contentious politics.

Walzer provocatively pioneered the ideational and organizational study of collective action with his highly influential 1965 work. In it, he argues that modern radical politics has its roots in the transcendentally motivated, disciplined, and highly independent "saints" of Puritan Calvinism. Despite having shed most of their religious regalia, Walzer further claimed that the Bolsheviks and Jacobins were successors of this general lineage and tradition. The "saint" can be seen as analogous to Weber's economic entrepreneur, but in the realm of politics and morality. The term is also conceptually equivalent to the "prophet" I use prevalently in this dissertation. According to Walzer, politics was re-imagined as an arena to be purified and populated by godly men for the glory of God. It was another realm of life in which the faithful were called to distinguish themselves from the sinful and prove their salvation, as Weber detailed in his analysis of the Protestant ethic. *This expansion of the zone of legitimated moral action* is reminiscent of the patterns observed by Social Gospel ministers in the 1890s, the Vatican in the 1960s, and the New Christian Right in the mid-1970s, as detailed below. A master work that deftly shows the connections between religious culture, ideology, and regimented organizations in historically significant insurgency, Walzer's early analysis stands as a model for any serious analyst of faith-based activism.

In fairness, Smith and his *Disruptive Religion* contributors, too, are quick to emphasize that faith-based social movements comprise a *unique species of collective action*, with exclusive claim to sectors of social and cultural life inaccessible to most others. These include sacred ritual, transcendent moral authority, and "culturally protected" civil space. It could also be argued that religious-based identities are as fundamental to many human beings as gender, sexual orientation, or nationality.

Furthermore, despite the onward march of Western secularization, religion – particularly members of the clergy –has always been afforded high degrees of legitimacy in civil society, especially politics.

Since the mid-1990s, one of the most prominent exponents of the unique contributions of religious culture to the political sphere has been Rhys Williams. In his excellent 1996 article, he dissects religion as a political resource, both as culture and as ideology, according to the Geertzian distinction. While both are "cultural systems," religion as culture is understood as a "web of meaning," consisting of symbolic worlds and the operant code system, which functions under normal conditions of stasis. Religion as ideology, on the other hand, (a la Swidler) is the ordered, explicit political understandings that emerge in times of system crisis. These, when examined alongside the previous hypotheses of religio-political movements vis a vis secularization patterns, provide a fairly detailed and falsifiable theory of religious activism emergence, along both structural and ideational dimensions. Williams also marshals Gramsci's rarely cited but rich writing on popular versus elite religion, and the significant role of "organic intellectuals." Billings (1990) likewise makes extensive use of the Gramscian framework in his analysis of oppositional versus quiescent religion among Appalachian mine workers, concluding that "Religion shapes the identity, the sense of solidarity, and the moral outrage that are central to social movement cultures."

A sizable literature has developed in the last decade centered on religious culture as a source of "repertoires," "tool-kits," or "schemas" for collective action. At the most macro level, studies have investigated various broad "styles" of engagement employed by movement actors (Hart, 2001; Wuthnow, 2002) In general, findings suggest that "elite" style of engagement correspond to religious cultures and denominations from comparatively higher socio-economic status, low levels of emotionality in worship, and

classical forms of liturgy. These include the mainline Protestant denominations and the majority of non-Hispanic Roman Catholic parishes. In contrast, the "populist" style of engagement is common found among marginalized socio-economic classes, particularly racial and ethnic minorities, as well as more charismatic and "subcultural" (Smith, 2000) evangelical Protestant traditions. My findings indicate that activism employing populist styles have more regularly experienced both political and cultural success than their elite counterpart (see Chapter 5).

Similarly, but at a finer level of analysis, researchers have begun to more precisely map the contours of various forms of religious culture, specifying and identifying its enabling and constraining properties. Using participant observation of four faith-based activist groups in California, Wood (2002) found that the worship style, emotional norms, and cultural stock available to congregations variously influenced their ability to organize for economic justice activism. In this fascinating study, though high-emotion, "gospel" churches readily produced the collective energy necessary for activism, their focus on personal salvation and "therapeutic" Christianity did not provide cultural anchors for the message of higher wages and better working conditions; it was not seen as an authentic, relevant extension of the scriptures. Whooley (2004) likewise investigated the boundaries of religiously-based frames, this time in the context of abolition. According to Whooley, a religiously-sponsored "good vs. evil" master-frame successfully mobilized thousands against abolition prior to the Civil War. During and after Reconstruction, however, the political and cultural context had grown excessively complex for this simple master-frame, and lost its ability to stimulate activism. The subsequent secular rights-based master-frame compromised the internal integrity of the movement, leading to abeyance. A very similar approach was undertaken by Mirola (2003) in his look at the role of religious frames in the 19th century Chicago labor

movement. Such outstanding research further underscores the significance of historicizing social movement analysis in order to tease out the variable outcomes possible under a variety of political and cultural contexts.

One of the finest examples of bringing together the insights of political sociology and cultural sociology in service of building theory is the recent work of Young (2002, 2006). In his impressive analysis of the origins, growth, and spread of the abolition and temperance movements, Young identifies the ways in which an intensive, resonant, and longstanding cultural schema – confession—was successfully employed by movement leaders to bridge religious, cultural, and regional differences and build the first national social movements in the United States. Apart from this significant contribution to recognizing the often-overlooked micro-mechanisms that are actually essential to movement outcomes, Young upsets conventional understandings of political action by arguing that this mode of engagement was a form of "life politics," typically conceptualized as a uniquely 20th century or post-materialist phenomena. For the purposes of this dissertation, a key insight here is Young's extensive attention to the notion of "sin" in religious activism and its unique capacity to motivate action and endow it with transcendent authority.

Delving even deeper into the micro-level, Sherkat and Ellison (1997) innovatively employed survey research to understand how actors construct meanings and connect them into semi-coherent beliefs and strategies of action. The authors impressively map the cognitive sub-stratum of cultural schemas, in their case, activist opposition to pornography among conservative Protestants. This avenue of research reinforces Sewell and Swidler's insistence that culture has a "dual citizenship." First, culture exists in the minds of actors, the particular forms of which are likely to be highly idiosyncratic based on its interaction with the actor's biography and biology. Second, culture also exists in

the external social world, from which culture ultimately originates and is shaped by history, agency, and to some extent, social structure.

In summary, the dedicated cultural analysis of religion and social movements has progressed significantly since the mid-1990s, motivated by the overall "cultural turn" in the social sciences. Many of the empirical and theoretical insights produced by this research have not only expanded our collective knowledge of this important strain of contentious politics, but have also substantially contributed to a more precise understanding of religious culture for the sociology of religion. What is needed, in my view, are more studies that bring together the insights from both perspectives, contextualizes them in specific historical periods, and earnestly attempts to explain tantalizing and difficult puzzles through the comparative method.

LITERATURE ON PROGRESSIVE CHRISTIAN ACTIVISM

The body of academic research on the Christian left *per se* is significantly smaller and less coherent than that of the Christian right, likely due to the latter's more visible entry into and effect on institutional politics, which has drawn the interest of political scientists, journalists, and scholars of religion, among many others. Another probable reason is the particular way in which progressive Christian activism has manifested itself in real movement settings. In the main, activist efforts typically identified in the literature as connected with progressive Christianity (Civil Rights, the peace movement, sanctuary movement, anti-nuclear groups, etc.) are understood to be *secondarily* Christian and *primarily* aimed at some specific social change. For example, the Civil Rights movement is inescapably steeped in Christian ritual, belief, and institutions, but few will argue that its main objectives were religious. Secular and non-religious people could and did

participate in the movement for African-American equality. As opposed to the Christian right, research on the Christian left is frequently characterized by carefully pinpointing and tracing Christian influence on movements which superficially may have very civil aims. The Christian left, for a variety of reasons, has never boasted the organizational and ideological coherence of the Christian right, particularly in its contemporary forms. Compelling proof of this fact is found in simple language usage; "the New Christian Right" (all capital initials, indicating a proper noun) is the most common identifying phrase, while "Christian left" or "Christian liberals" is typical for its counterpart.

An appropriate place to begin in mapping the progressive Christian terrain of activism is to ask, "Who are they?"; "How many are there?" and "What are their characteristics?" Using precisely targeted survey data Hall (1997) investigated how religious liberals differ from religious conservatives both demographically and psychographically. He found, similar to Hunter (1992) and Luker (1984) that these groups hold polar opposite worldviews despite similar positions in social structure. Hall concludes that these positions derive from divergent interpretations of scripture, although it is unclear how and why these opposite interpretations happen.

Stenger's (2005) regrettably under-noticed study on the *potential size* of a religious liberal socio-political movement found that despite the fact that most Protestants and Catholics do not readily adopt the "liberal" label (as the larger population does not), their *actual positions on issues* are far more liberal than they are conservative (26% vs. 6%, respectively). More importantly, though, she found that liberal religious interest groups were far less effective at connecting with constituents and mobilizing for policy action than conservative groups. In social capital terms, Christian left groups were adept only at "bonding" ties, while Christian right groups were skilled at both bonding and "bridging" ties (Putnam, 2000). As a result, Stenger concludes that, "there is a significant

population of Christians with liberal ideologies that could potentially be mobilized by liberal Christian interest groups" (p.399). Hall's and Stenger's methods and claims are validated and their ramifications elaborated in Chapter 9.

Certainly the largest corpus of research on the Christian left exists on the organizational manifestations of religious mobilization. Chronologically, the first (and largest) of these is the extensive historical literature on the Protestant Social Gospel movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. A series of excellent texts published mid-20th century (Hopkins, 1967; Handy, 1966; Carter, 1956; White and Hopkins, 1976) set the standard for historiography for this movement, and few contemporary works have improved upon them. One notable exception is Gorrell's (1988) work on the subtle interconnections between the Social Gospel and the greater Progressive Era political project. Though many of his predecessors hinted at such linkages in passing, Gorrell's analysis makes clear that the unprecedented torrent of reforms and policy innovations which famously characterize Progressivism was the "secular face" of a moral and ideological transformation flowing out of Social Gospel theology and disseminated by congregants and ministers incidentally located in socially powerful positions.

Some of the most exemplary research, not merely on the Christian left but on 20th century American social movements generally, has been conducted on the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The aforementioned work of McAdam and Morris has been widely influential, both as history and social movement analysis. Both stress the role of indigenous organizations such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Congress on Racial Equality, most sponsored or coordinated by black churches, as essential to the movement's success. Morris (1986) and Garrow (2004) also explore the powerful force of faith, specifically the compelling scriptural tradition of Old Testament Christianity as a source of "liberation narratives," and the identity-forging and

emotional energy of African-American ritual culture, particularly song and ritual. The commanding influence of charismatic leadership, in this case Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and his lieutenants, has been well-documented.

The institutional representative of mainline Protestants in the political arena since the early 1900s has been the National Council of Churches. Founded as the Federal Council of Churches in 1908, the organization is a direct genealogical outgrowth of the Social Gospel movement. Over its 100 year history, the NCC has taken a variety of forms, from central planning, umbrella organization to protest and movement "midwife" to public policy lobbying group. As such, it potentially becomes a fascinating subject for social movement historical analysis. Unfortunately, to my knowledge there are only two studies that approximate this approach: Welch's (2001) examination of the World Council of Church's involvement in anti-racism and apartheid programs and Findlay's (1993) look at the NCC's role in the Civil Rights movement. Both reveal a level of ecumenical Protestant dedication to social reform far surpassing the academic attention the subject has received. Pratt's (1974) and Jenkins's (1977) studies of the NCC's organizational adaptation to external stresses complement these studies with a focus on internal dynamics.

On the Roman Catholic side, the academic literature on U.S activism is even less developed. Apart from a handful of primarily historical and biographical texts on the Catholic Worker (Piehl, 1982) and the impact of Catholic social teaching (Wald, 1992), precious little research has been conducted within the social sciences on U.S. Catholic social movements. The most prolific and insightful analyst on this topic has been Abell (1945; 1949; 1952; 1960). Well before the "cultural turn" and its emphasis on frames, discourse, and ideology, Abell wrote passionately and persuasively about the deep moral influence of Church teaching on social questions, both for the average lay Catholic and

for the formation of social movements. This tradition of research has been carried on and extended by Burns (1994), O'Brien (1989), and Mich (1998). These contemporary researchers add layers of sophistication to this area by situating social teaching and movements within the larger socio-political environment, paying close attention to the effects of religious competition, imperatives of organizational survival, and broader cultural trends, such as the status of women and ethnic minorities. Still, as with Protestants, the literature clearly points to a level of prophetic moral entrepreneurship that cannot be explained solely by rational choice or external structural changes.

LITERATURE ON CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN ACTIVISM

Sociological studies of the Christian right have been more voluminous and in-depth than those of the Christian left. Along with analyses of political Islam, this sector of research is what most scholars mean when they refer to "religion and politics," particularly in the last 20 years. Because of the high profile and wide influence of the Christian right in contemporary American politics, much of the discourse on the subject is non-academic, generated by journalists, religious leaders, and pundits, and a great proportion of this is scarcely more than diatribe. Therefore, what follows is a careful review of the mainstream scholarly literature on conservative Christian activism. Consideration of exceptional popular-press inquiry is made where warranted.

The origins of the Christian right (alternatively referred to here as "the New Christian Right") lie, observers agree, in opposition to the counter-culture and student movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Organizing and building infrastructure surreptitiously for decades, the political mobilization of the movement did not take place until the mid-1970s after the *Roe vs. Wade* decision, as described above. Since then,

various incarnations of Christian right activism, sometimes highly coordinated and strategic, at other times maverick and fractious, have been among the most energetic and influential forces in American politics. As many have emphasized, the movement's legislative successes are few – virtually none of its core issues have become law—yet in every decade since the 1970s, the NCR has proved itself remarkably proficient at galvanizing significant proportions of the population (as well as the electorate), and altering the direction and agenda of American policy, both foreign and domestic; the very definition of a successful movement.

Who is the Christian right exactly? Central movement organizations within this field have included: the Moral Majority, Eagle Forum, Concerned Women for America, the Christian Coalition, Operation Rescue, and Religious Roundtable. Most of these were founded in the mid-1970s or early 1980s and their strength has fluctuated over time considerably; several no longer exist as of this writing. Furthermore, it is important to stress that conservative Protestantism, fundamentalism, or Pentecostalism is not synonymous with support for or membership in the NCR, though the movement does draw disproportionately from those branches (Hood and Smith, 2002). Studies repeatedly confirm that the NCR is above all a socio-political movement, gathering members from the full spectrum of Christian sects and denominations, including increasingly, Roman Catholics. Similarly, support for the Christian left is not uncommon among members of theologically orthodox churches, not just mainline and liberal denominations. Research has even found that evangelicals often have more liberal views on economic issues than mainline Protestants (Iannaccone, 1993). Thus, the internal composition of the NCR is a significantly more heterogeneous than most would expect. Regarding the movement itself, Wilcox (1987) found that NCR activists tend to be Republicans with higher socio-economic status and higher than average political awareness. This is in contrast to the

self-descriptions offered by movement leaders such as Rev. Jerry Falwell, who have contended the New Christian Right is the modern successor to the early 20th century initiatives of Dwight Moody or Billy Sunday, known for their working-class appeal.

Less is known about the size of the Christian right, in large part due to differences in measurement technique. A growing consensus of scholars argues that the number who actually identifies as members of the NCR and could be expected to participate in social action is exaggerated (Mueller, 1983; Chandler, 1982; Atwood, 1990; Billings & Scott, 1994). Specifically, Kiecolt and Nelson (1988) report that leaders of the movement regularly overstate its following, confusing "subscribers" or "viewers" with mobilized members. They also found little ideological coherency among religious conservatives compared to religious liberals, bringing into question the degree to which the movement has been successful in advancing a collective vision and shifting cultural values. Notwithstanding these likely true measurement problems, it is beyond dispute that the current incarnations of the Christian right have an overwhelming human resource advantage over the Christian left. Findings presented in Chapter 5 provide further evidence of this disparity.

Finally, in an intriguing comparative study of movement tactics, Deckman (2001) found that the Christian Right employed a radically different collective action repertoire than did the Christian left, focused at changing outcomes in electoral politics rather than protests, boycotts, and sit-ins. Though intuitive at first glance, Deckman's contribution, echoed by other scholars below, is that this repertoire was not only a natural outgrowth of member's socio-economic position and sense of "proper democratic engagement," but a conscious strategic choice based on calculation of how to most efficiently achieve the social changes they seek. This finding, too, is considered and assessed in Chapters 5 and 6.

A thriving cottage industry has developed in the sociology of religion regarding the rise and emergence of the Christian right. Three main explanations divide the literature. The first, which I term "strictness," holds that, in keeping with the influential insights of Dean Kelley in his *Why Conservative Churches are Growing*, that in times of social anxiety and turmoil, institutions which offer uncompromising ideology and strict demands attract new members and resources as individuals seek simple, strong solutions to their chaotic surroundings. An exemplar of this research is Jacobs (2006), who combines this perspective with the declining membership of mainline Protestant churches during the period, as well as the proliferation of liberal theology, some of which was perceived as "heresy" by ordinary lay Protestants. This growing tension "between pulpit and pew," consistent with my findings, drove many families to conservative churches – and movements -- which offered not only relief from ideological dissonance, but social and cultural "tools" for managing real-life problems, almost entirely within the personal life-world sphere. The mainline churches, according to this view, were seen as morally nebulous and culturally irrelevant. In this sense, the "religious market" metaphor becomes very useful, and may be extended to politics as well.

The second, and most developed explanation of the rise of the Christian right is that of "status politics." Research on this theory is abundant, yet mixed in its findings. Status politics theory argues that the NCR largely attracted members from groups who were afraid of losing social position and their cherished lifestyles. A modified form of anti-modernism, this thesis paints the Christian right as a defensive movement, guarding against the juggernaut of secular, scientistic, and counter-traditional features of the post-1960s era. In its rawest form, this perspective holds that the NCR arose to protect privileged economic and social status. In its more nuanced form, culture and values play a more significant role. Unfortunately, status politics has been confirmed (Burris, 2001;

Wald, Owen, & Hill, 1989; Miller, 1989) as many times as it has been invalidated (Harper & Leicht, 1984: Moen, 1988; Billings & Scott, 1994) The most current research, however, is casting serious doubt on the perspective, based on evidence that as threatened social groups obtain higher social status, their support for the movements has not faded.

The third set of explanations, and the one with the fewest detractors, is based on resource-mobilization theory. This line of research argues that without the infusion of money, social networks, and communication technology, the emergence of the Christian right into national politics would have been impossible. Wilcox (1988) and Koenig and Boyce (1985) adopted a form of resource mobilization theory to track and describe the donor patterns of NCR political action committees, finding that donors have become more selective and strategic in their investments, focusing primarily on local and "winnable" elections. Hadden (1987) and Diamond (1995) explain the phenomenon as intimately connected with investment in and effective use of mass media and broadcasting. Similarly, Miller (1986) studied the establishment of parallel institutions and the forging of inter-church networks, particularly during the conservative church expansion years, arguing that these provided the "mobilizing structures" essential for political action. Again, resource mobilization theory is an essential component for understanding movement emergence and spread, yet inherently leaves central questions of motive and timing unaddressed. These concerns figure centrally in the explanations I offer in Chapters 6 and 7.

As conservative Christian activism has evolved and matured over time, another sector of research has formed, aimed at understanding its historical trajectory and adjustments. The most developed body of this literature compares the movement of the 1990s and beyond to its 1980s and earlier forms. Scholars agree, it appears, that the Christian right after 1992 was characterized by lower degrees of religious particularism –

internal doctrinal and denominational battles-- than that of the 1980s, to which leaders attributed their limited success in that period (Rozell, Wilcox, & Green, 2001; Wilcox, Rozell, & Gunn, 1996) The 1990s saw a noticeable shift in NCR strategy, both in the cultural sphere, with a renewed focus on *applications of Christianity* (in family life for example) and not on its doctrinal basis, which could fragment the bloc, as well as in the political arena, with greater attention to state initiatives and assisting modest conservative agendas at the federal level (Moen, 1994,1995; Atwood, 1990). Sociologically, it appeared the movement was becoming more akin to secular, conventional parties. Finally, trial and error proved valuable, as Billings and Scott (1994) observe. In their analysis of Christian right movement framing over time, they found that the most successful movements were those that had defined themselves as a unified whole --- "culture warriors" or "soldiers for Jesus," for example, thus lending support to collective identity and framing theory.

Perhaps the most fascinating phenomenon in recent years, from a historical point of view, is the increasing alliance between the primarily Protestant Christian right and Roman Catholics, particularly on the issue of abortion. From the perspective of political sociology, this new partnership suggests the higher saliency of political identity and values in the late 20th century over religious, doctrinal, and cultural identity, which had not only divided but generated open hostilities between the groups in previous decades. However, recent research suggests that this coalition is perhaps more superficial and politically strategic than most observers have implied. For example, Bendyna *et al* (2000, 2001) found that Roman Catholics, both individually and organizationally, may temporarily ally themselves with NCR groups for mutually beneficial political objectives, but few Catholics become members of such groups. Other researchers point to the often-overlooked fact that most Catholics still differ with the Christian right on an array of

other key issues, such as the death penalty, social welfare programs, and foreign policy, inhibiting the creation of a long-term, broad-based coalition (Atwood, 1990; Wilcox & Gomez, 1990) For me, these empirical findings illustrate the argument of Sewell (1985), Dalton (1994), and Zald (2000) that ideology is structured, collective, bounded, and yet constitutive of the social order. Thus, ideology must not only be conceived as a motivator of mobilization, as it generally is, but also as a constraint, limiting the realistic points of engagement and tactics that participants may partake of.

CONCLUSION: HOW RELIGION MATTERS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Across the array of theories, perspectives, and empirical cases examined above, a few points of consensus emerge. First, religion contributes powerful *identities and modes of solidarity* essential for social movement sustenance. These typically emerge from the shared experiences, rituals, and beliefs that co-religionists mutually recognize in each other. These identities often overlap and cross-pollinate with linguistic, geographic, or kin-based groupings, thereby intensifying their salience. Kurdish, Sunni, and Shia clashes, as well as the Catholic-based Polish Solidarity movement of 1981 are but two clear examples of this force at work in modern political orders (Wimmer, 2003; Osa, 1996). Second, religious cultures lend their *moral systems* to the sense of outrage, threat, desecration, or injustice necessary to *motivate* movement followers. This point is elaborated elegantly by Wald *et al* (2005) in their wide-ranging analysis of religion in political movements. Though essential for any movement, be they secular or faith-based, religion's contribution to motivation is genuinely unique, as the impetuses of religious protest are often "Weberian," in the sense of being value- or ideal-driven, rather than based upon raw means-ends rationality or utilitarian drives*, a la* Olson (Weber, 1968;

Olson, 1965. The motives of religiously-based actors by definition proceed from a deeply socialized moral habitus grounded in super-empirical or transrational concerns, such as eternal salvation, moral duty, divine love, or sacred commandment (Smith, 2003; Williams, 1996). Such ultimate values sustain religious actors and their movements through daunting obstacles in the political environment when strict rationality would dictate their capitulation. I argue this "transrational motivation" is a unique and powerful factor and central to religious social movements. I elaborate on the precise functions and contributions of this concept in Chapter 7.

Significant also are the highly structured and deeply imprinted moral codes inherent to most religions. These provide the very raw material out of which outrage, injustice, defense, repulsion, frustration and similar collective responses are made. Moral codes invariably separate sacred from profane and construct invisible but highly sensitive moral boundaries around their contents (Durkheim, 1995; Douglas, 1966; Lamont, 1992.) Transgression of these boundaries by in-group members results in sanction or banishment; transgression by outsiders can give rise to collective action, which readily carries over into public sphere engagement. This mechanism also proves as crucial to explaining the emergence, rise, fall, and interactions of Christian activist groups in the population analyzed.

Third, religions provide powerfully coherent *ideologies and cognitive frames* from their doctrines, teachings, and beliefs. These ideational components operate as internally logical schemas of interpretation which select, emphasize, diagnose, and prescribe action for social phenomena. Distinct from religious motivations and values, these cognitive cues guide religious actors in how (and indeed if) to think about given social facts by providing the mental boundaries within which perception and evaluation occurs (Snow & Benford, 1986; Goffman, 1974; Vaisey, 2008; Lukes, 2005; Steensland,

2006). Framing is well-established as an essential social-psychological task for movement recruitment and message-formation. However, religious social movements benefit in a distinct way from the rigorous process of ideological formation and refinement common to major religions. Faith-based activists generally borrow or directly employ existing, familiar, and well-vetted ideological codes and frames from the religious tradition (scripture, narratives, mental images, rituals, or invocations) which comes to them as relatively "pre-packaged" from generations of exegesis and application in diverse actualities (Zald, 2000; Gamson & Modigliani,1989). Such ready access to nearly limitless rich cultural stock affords them key strategic advantages in the discursive struggles that accompany all collective action.

Finally, and most peculiar to religious social movements is their ability to justify their aims and tactics through appeal to "*transcendent moral authority*" (Smith, 1996). This aspect is distinct from the aforementioned transrational motivation in that transcendent moral authority represents the "ethos" of ultimate legitimation for such drives as transrational motivation. The latter rests upon the former cognitively, emotionally, and morally.

The Calvinist "saints" examined so studiously by Weber, Walzer, and Gorski saw themselves as "tools" or "instruments" in the hands of God. They recognized no boundary between the will of God and their own volition. Similarly, Pentecostalism's increasing political profile is partly due to that tradition's belief that disciples are "vessels" to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and the work they do in the world is the action of that greater divine power (Cleary & Stewart-Gambino, 1997). The struggle, or *jihad*, in Islam is the believer's duty to combat the inner foe of selfish evil, the temptations of Satan, or the external opponent who offends Allah (Juergensmeyer, 2003). As a result of this total subordination of self to the authority of the divine, acts of supreme self-sacrifice

for the good of the religious group or larger community are commonplace in faith-based politics. Swidler's (1986) influential conception of culture as "tool-kit" that equips agents with strategies for achieving ends, rather than the source of those ends themselves, runs afoul of examples such as these. As Geertz (1973) so convincingly described, religion is a quintessential component of culture, and without question it provides strategies, solutions, explanations, and lenses with which to understand and engage problems in the world. But as Williams (1996) and Vaisey (2008) point out, religion is more than a phenomenally useful bag of cultural equipment. It is also a rich, enduring, and – for believers -- source of ultimate values which not only justify (as Swidler insists) but also motivate and endow meaning to action. More directly, religion is a key factor in *determining which tools, strategies, and interpretations are chosen from the "toolkit*" in the first place. In this way, at least for the devout, a better metaphor for religion is as "operating system;" or the master program which sets overall objectives, allocates capacities, and evaluates appropriate "applications" (Swidler's "tools") for addressing problems in the environment. I elaborate on this idea in Chapter 7.

Most studies of faith in social movements have regarded religion as a secondary feature of movements, an instrument or resource that is *used by* preexisting movements to carry out social change. Yet in many of the cases examined in this survey, religious forces acted as the central motivating *cause for* an insurgent consciousness.

PART 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND RATIONALE

Most previous studies of Christian activism, as in most social movement analysis generally, use a "thick description" or ethnographic approach, designed to reveal the rich interior life and meaning-making processes of sampled movements (See Erickson Nepstad, 2004; Smith, 1996; Wood, 2002). Almost all of the studies described in the previous section fall into this category. While strong in detail and peerless for drawing our attention to micro-mechanisms which frequently concatenate into larger causal structures, such idiographic approaches are of limited theoretical value if not linked to other similar or divergent cases with which they can be compared to make broader explanatory claims.

Less frequent but arguably of more significant theoretical contribution are the small-n comparative studies, which analyze a sample of movements that diverge along a given variable of interest. The researcher's task is then to determine, generally using a variant of Mill's Method of Agreement or Difference, which factor(s) are critical to generating the given outcomes. Excellent examples of this approach include Rucht, (1996), Joppke, (1993), and Della Porta (2006). From the perspective of theory-building, the small-n comparative design offers greater possibilities for identifying and refining general causal processes, while also potentially ruling out competing explanations. The limitations of this approach are comparatively few, and are related to problems with case selection (representativeness) and the tendency to downplay inter-movement dynamics as well as movement-environment interactions.

In order to best address the lack of accurate, comprehensive, longitudinal analysis of the entire Christian activist sector in the late 20th century, the research design of this project was aimed at documenting and understanding the macro-level dynamics of this

important field of contention. As a result, both case studies and small-n comparative designs were inappropriate. Instead, this research analyzed the entire population of Christian activist organizations as it was constituted each year from 1960 to 2000. In so doing, problems of case selection bias are avoided by definition. Second, the design of the study permits for the first time observation of the possible effects of internal as well as external factors *on the religious activist sector as a whole.* For example, research designs relying upon case studies or a handful of movements as a sample might register the effects of the Roe vs. Wade decision, but could not validly extrapolate the possible implications of the event beyond the cases examined. The design of this research avoids these limitations and allows observation of both meso- and macro-level processes and events originating within the population of organizations, as well as from the general socio-historical context..

The longitudinal design of the research is also novel for the study of U.S. Christian activism. Though previous studies have examined the dynamics and transformations of *specific* Christian movements over time, (Moen, 1992; Smith, 1991; Zald 1966), seldom are numerous activist organizations analyzed historically, and even fewer in a comparative fashion (see Kurzman (1996) and Wood (1994) for exceptional studies of this type). A longitudinal perspective allows analysis not only of Christian activist transformation over four decades, but period-specific and period-period comparisons. For example, we may wish to examine the common tactical repertoires of Christian peace activists in the 1970s, or compare the average membership size of all groups in the 1960s versus the 1980s, both of which are possible via the research design used here.

Chapter 3: Data and Methodology

DATA

Raw data for this study were compiled from volumes of the *Encyclopedia of Associations: National Organizations of the U.S.* (henceforth EoA) in alternating years from 1961 (the earliest year available) through 2000. The EoA is the most systematic and exhaustive source of basic organizational data on all American non-profit membership groups of national scope, containing detailed entries on over 22,000 organizations. Each EoA entry lists information regarding the organization's founding year, membership, budget, geographic location, professional staff, publications, and a brief description of its mission, history, and activities. Since nearly identical entry categories were used each year, and the volume has been published continuously for more than four decades, the use of longitudinal data analysis becomes a method of choice. Using the EoA as a dataset to study macro-level organizational phenomena is well-established in sociology. Analysis of women's rights and racial activism (Minkoff,1995), labor unions (Hannan & Freeman, 1987; Martin et al, 2006), lobbying organizations (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993), and the peace movement (Edwards & Marullo, 1995) have all employed sampling from the EoA to great effect.

Beginning in 1975, the *Encyclopedia of Associations* collected data from organizations annually, through prior to this data, publication and data collection was irregular. However, data was sufficiently complete to obtain nearly annual observations for the period 1961-1975, with only a gap between 1965 and 1967 remaining unobserved. Subsequent analysis revealed no reduction in data robustness as a result of these missing years.

Each year of publication, the EoA staff contacts organizations listed in the volume in the previous year, registers as defunct those organizations which have ceased activity, and also identifies and locates new organizations for entry. Because of the rapid expansion of this sector of activism, and the limited resources of the EoA staff, a lag of several months to two years between the actual founding of organizations and their entry in the *Encyclopedia* was commonly observed. As the original and accurate founding date of organizations is included in all entries, this lag did not significantly affect the validity of data analysis.

Three categories of organizations in the EoA were included for analysis: those coded as "Religious Organizations," "Public Affairs Organizations," and "Social Welfare Organizations." These categories were surveyed for appropriate entries due to the notable absence of key organizations in the Religious Organizations category. For example, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the most significant organization for African-Americans during the Civil Rights Movement, is not listed as a "Religious Association," but instead as a "Public Affairs" organization. Furthermore, only associations that were clearly identified by name or self-description as "Christian" were included. Next, religious associations which do not engage in some form of public, political, or social action was excluded; for example, organizations which engage primarily in charity, direct service, proselytizing, or religious instruction such as the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and Salvation Army would not be included. Finally, to be selected for the population, organizations had to have national reach and identity. Community, local, and state-based organizations, which also number in the thousands, were excluded from the analysis as not directly germane to the core research objectives.

The total population examined numbered 484 unique organizations, constituting 3,143 distinct data points over the 40 year time period.

EXOGENOUS FACTORS

Longitudinal data on an array of variables deemed in the literature to be commonly connected to activist dynamics and outcomes were collected as well. These included factors related to the external political environment, (such as party of the president; party of the majority in the House of Representatives, and voter turnout,) macro-economic factors (per capita income, unemployment rate, or period of recession), demographic changes (percent of the population with college education) and characteristics of the state (social welfare spending in constant dollars, public sector employment, and total government spending as a percent of gross domestic product.) Factors unique to the religious sphere were examined as well to determine their potential role in religious activist dynamics.

These data were compiled from conventional sources, such as government agencies or major research organizations, depending on the variable. Specific data sources are listed beneath respective tables and graphs plotting such exogenous factors.

METHODOLOGY

Electronic versions of the *Encyclopedia of Associations* data do not exist for the majority of the decades examined. Therefore, manual identification, selection, and entry of organizational records was necessary. A multi-stage procedure, after the entry of the initial year of data (1961) was implemented: 1) determining if entries from the previous year of observation appeared in the current year of the EoA; 2) updating of existing

entries with new data from current year of publication, if applicable; 3) Marking as defunct or inactive any organizations which disbanded in the current year of observation; 4) changing the name of the organization to match its name in the current year of observation, if applicable, and noting the name change event in the appropriate field; 5) identifying new organizations from the current year of observation and entering them into the electronic database.

The following data were collected directly from the EoA volumes for each year:

- Name of organization
- Headquarters (city and state)
- Date of founding
- Number of members
- Number of staff
- Number of regional branches
- Number of state branches
- Number of local branches
- Annual budget (collected after 1985)
- Description of organization
- Names and types of publications (newsletters, magazines, books, etc.)
- Frequency of publications

In addition to these data, I also coded each organization by three additional variables, each derived from the organizational description:

- Issues or causes that the organization in involved in (top five);

- Tactics used by the organization (top five);
- Ideological orientation of the organization.

Issues codes were generated inductively from the organizational database itself. A total of 82 possible issues were identified. Each organization was assigned up to five issue codes, corresponding to the five dominant causes they were involved in. Similarly, each group was assigned up to five codes describing the main activist tactics they employed. A total of 30 possible tactics were identified.

Ideological orientation of the organization was ascertained through a composite process consisting of close reading of the organizational mission /description provided by the group itself, examination of the issues engaged by the group, and attention to "keywords" often connected with a particular orientation (e.g. "social justice" among progressive groups, or "patriotic values" among conservative groups). Organizations were coded using a "fuzzy set" design (Ragin, 2000). Each group was assigned a numerical scale code ranging from 0.0 (most progressive) to. 1.0 (most conservative.) The precise coding rubric is as follows:

- Progressive: (0.0 -.30)
- Moderate to Progressive: (.35 - .45)
- Moderate: (.46 - .55)
- Moderate to Conservative: (.56 -.70)
- Conservative: (.75-1.0)

These custom variables were updated each year in the same manner as the data derived directly from the EoA.

PART 4: FINDINGS

Chapter 4: Quantitative Findings

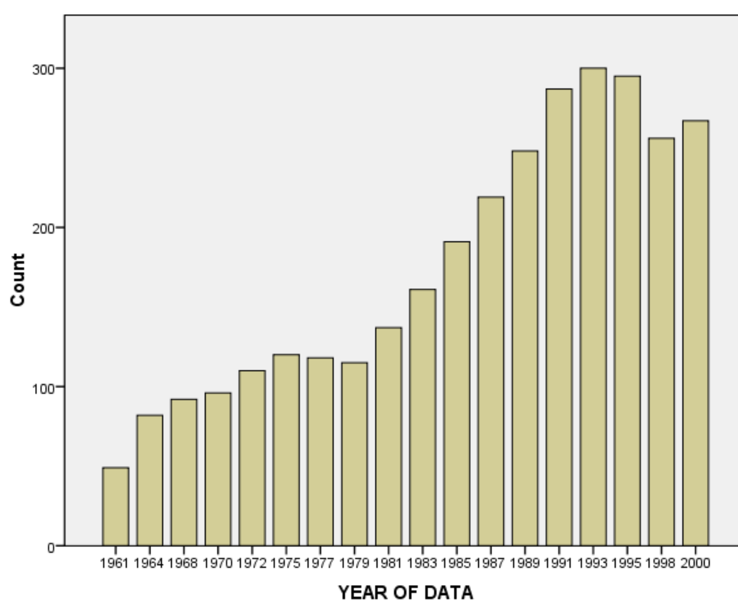
"Our informal social fabric and our romantic notions of the individual's sovereignty over his environment combined to permit awareness of evil to arouse in the public an enormous and unmanageable sense of guilt . . . thus the perception of injustice becomes a highly personal sense of guilt which, if unrelieved, can be intolerable . . . a burst of moral energy flares up, then dissipates because it fails to achieve structure or merely proliferates ineffectual ones."

--- G. Clarke Chapman, Jr., *The Christian Century*, April 12, 1972, p. 424

POPULATION DYNAMICS AND ORGANIZATIONAL MORTALITY

At the aggregate level, the overall population pattern of Christian activist groups from 1960 to 2000 is one of sharp linear growth (Figure 1). Though the population in 1961 consisted of a modest 51 organizations, this number had doubled within a decade and doubled again by 1985. The sharpest increase occurred between 1981 and 1991, when the population of Christian activist groups expanded at an average of 12.5 new organizations every year. The population reached its apex in 1993 with close to 300 active groups, a six-fold increase since the beginning of the time sampling frame.

Figure 1: Population of Religious Activist Groups, Actives Only – 1961-2000



The "lifespan" of activist groups is typically defined as the difference between date of disbanding –organizational "death" – minus the date of founding. Because the population data is right-censored (the timeframe ends at year 2000), calculating lifespan using a uniform method for all groups is impossible. For example, consider two groups both founded in 1970. The first disbanded in 2000 while the other survived to 2000 and perhaps beyond. Using the conventional calculation, the lifespan of both groups would be 30 years, yet this method obscures the death of the first group, thus skewing the overall picture of organizational mortality of the population. Therefore, for this measure, I use the term "duration," which permits an analysis of the longevity of organizations without necessarily implying any particular ultimate outcome, either disbanding or persistence.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Organizational Duration

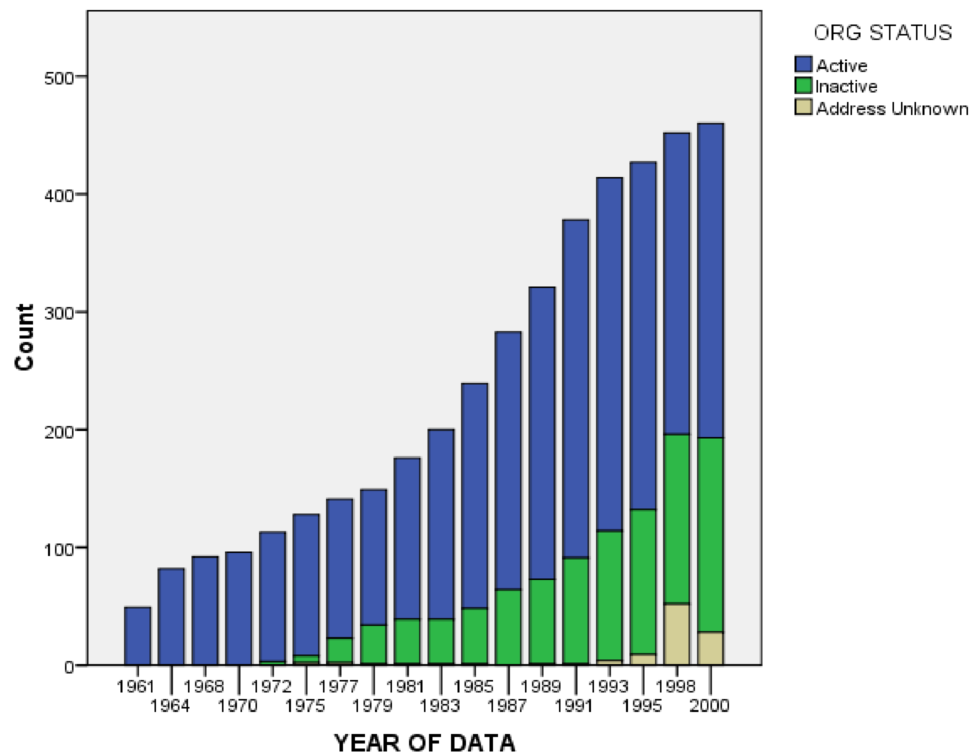
(All groups, 1960-2000)	
	YEARS
Mean	25.15
Mode	11.00
Minimum	4.00
Maximum	167.00

The average duration of Christian activist groups was surprisingly long, more than 25 years, or nearly a generation (Table 1). These findings confirm findings by previous research (Weber, Michels, Piven & Cloward) that once founded and a minimum bureaucratic structure established, organizations tend to persist and are difficult to

dislodge. Though the initial mobilization of resources necessary to found an organization may be challenging and difficult to prosecute, once founding is underway and ultimately successful, religious activist groups displayed remarkable staying power. In important ways, the most trying times for activism may be in this early period, but after achieving a degree of independence and locating a niche in the activist sector, evidence suggests the odds of survival are fairly high.

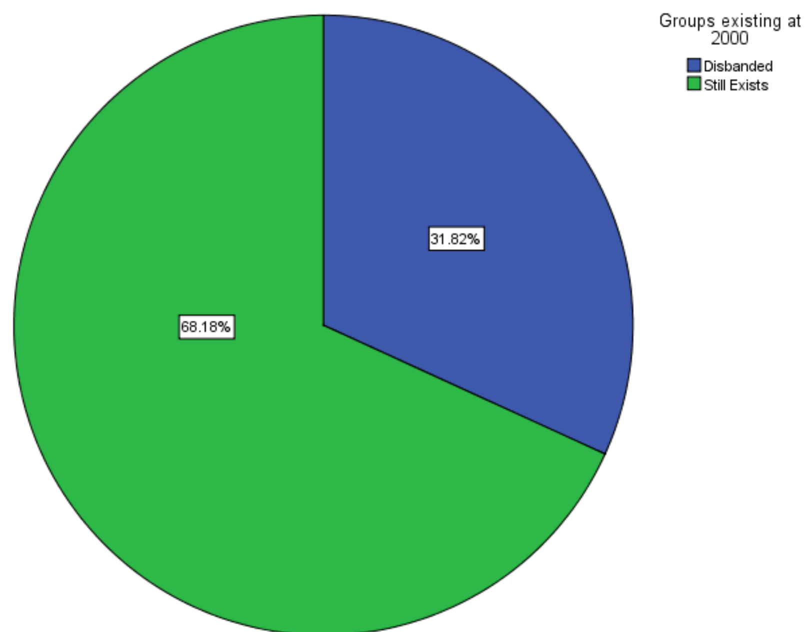
Figure 2: Count of Organizations by Status in Year of Data, 1960-2000

(active, inactive, or unknown address)



As the time frame moved forward, the inevitable decline and disappearance of Christian activist groups became a more common phenomenon. Remarkably, few organizations disbanded in the first 15 years of the period examined (1961-1976). Overall, the most significant pattern from this analysis was the parallel rate of growth and disbanding over time. With the exception of the first decade or so, in any given year of data observation, approximately 20 percent of organizations would be inactive, keeping apace with the gradual overall increase in the population over time (Figure 2) .

Figure 3: Proportion of Christian Activist Groups Surviving to Year 2000



Confirming the previous finding that once founded, organizations tend to persist, Figure 3 suggests that, *ceteris paribus*, Christian activist groups had nearly a 70 percent chance of survival to the year 2000.

Table 2: Lifespan Statistics of Defunct Groups

Cases	149
Mean	21.74 years
Mode	11 years
Minimum	4 years
Maximum	167 years

Even among Christian activist groups that disbanded prior to 2000, most experienced at least two decades of activity, again underscoring the durability of organizations in this sector of movement activity.

Figure 4: Founding and Death Dates of Christian Activist Groups by Decade

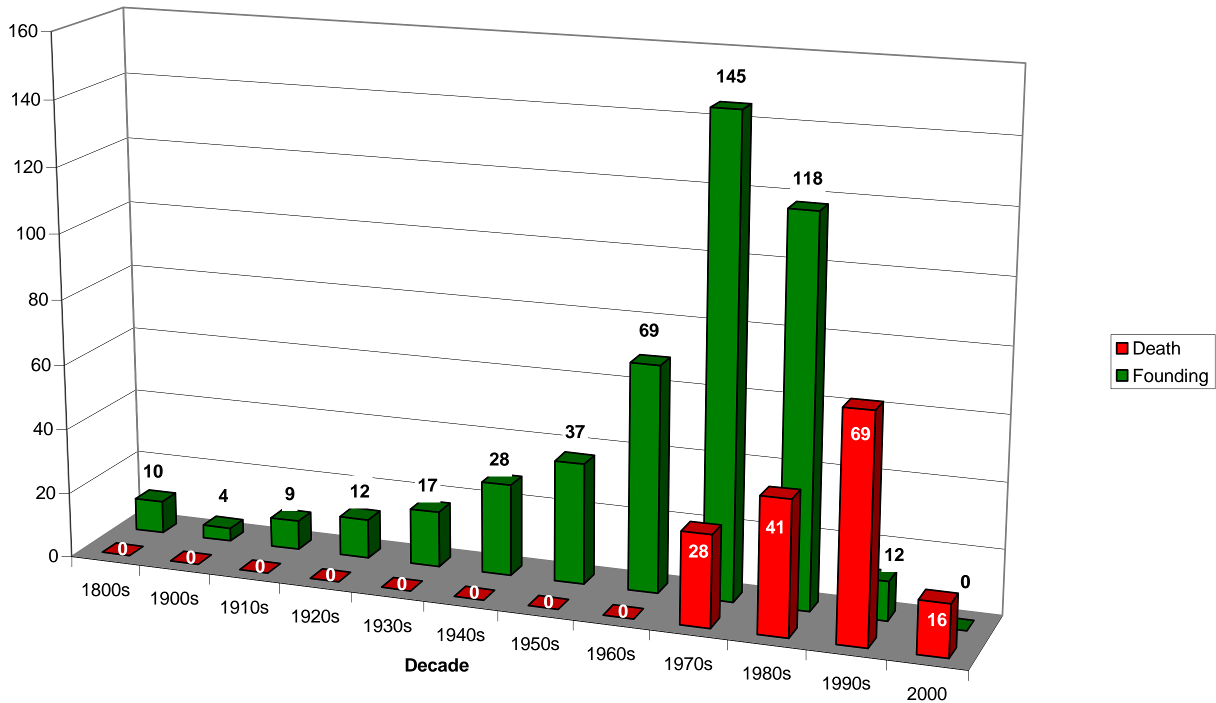


Figure 4 illustrates the discontinuous character of Christian activist group founding and mortality. The 1960s and 1970s featured the most activity in the religious activism sphere, validating previous qualitative social and historical accounts of that period. The number of Christian activist groups founded in the 1960s was nearly double the number founded in the previous decade, while the 1970s saw another doubling of groups founded. This pattern persisted though at a lower level of intensity through the 1980s, but then declined precipitously during the 1990s, when organizational disbanding far outpaced founding.

Complementary analysis detailed below indicates that a major contributing factor to the explosion of Christian activism in the 1970s is the creation of pro-life/anti-abortion and "traditional family values" organizations. Similar analysis found that a significant portion of the groups which disbanded in the 1990s were also pro-life groups, suggesting that both founding and death peaks observed in the above graph were due to processes within one or two issue sectors. It is reasonable to conclude that this pattern is the result of "niche-seeking" or "sector-flooding" activists seizing a widely recognized opportunity structure, then gradually being forced out or having to disband due to the limited carrying capacity of that issue sector, in this case pro-life activism.

Table 3: Lifespan of Christian Activist Groups by Ideological Orientation

		Lifespan in Years (constructed)		
		Mean	Median	Mode
Ideological Orientation		.	.	.
	Conservative	28	22	16
	Moderate/Conservative	40	27	11
	Moderate	34	21	12
	Moderate/Progressive	33	25	11
	Progressive	29	25	13

A common adage states that "the brightest flame burns the quickest." Persuasive evidence for this axiom is found in Table 3. Christian activist organizations located toward the middle of the ideological spectrum had a significant lifespan advantage over those at either the progressive or conservative poles. Specifically, organizations just right of center enjoyed the longest lifespans, with an average of nearly 40 years. Several possible reasons emerge for this finding. First, because of their "safer" ideological position, moderate organizations may find identifying and tapping long-term resource streams easier than their more extreme counterparts. Since many of these organizations were involved in fairly noncontroversial issues, such as anti-drug or anti-hunger campaigns, the probability of encountering robust opposition that would endanger their survival is lower. Second, because this table presents only cross-sectional data, it is possible that organizations incrementally moderated their missions and identity in a strategic manner in order to survive longer. It is also reasonable that prospective new

organizations "observed" anecdotally the higher mortality of more extreme groups and preemptively aimed their niches toward the middle of the spectrum to avoid rapid demise.

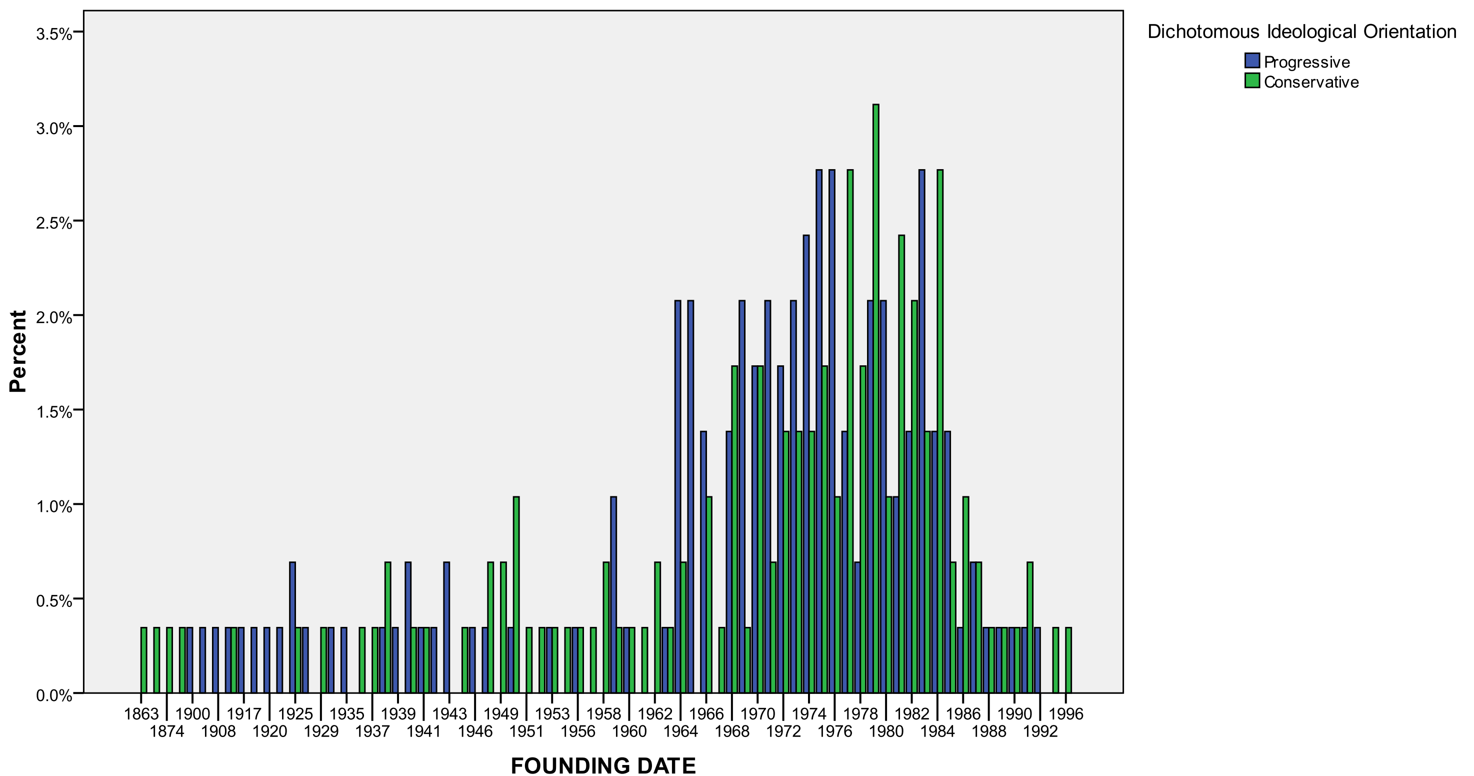
Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Founding Date of Christian Activist Groups by Ideological Orientation

Progressive Organizations			**Conservative Organizations**		
N	Valid	151	N	Valid	138
	Missing	7		Missing	12
Median		1973	Median		1975
Mode(s)		1973, 1975	Mode(s)		1979, 1984
Minimum		1900	Minimum		1863
Maximum		1992	Maximum		1996

Consistent with anecdotal interpretations and the initial hypothesis of this research, the data in Table 4 indicate that progressive Christian activist groups enjoyed a peak of organizational emergence nearly a decade prior to that of conservative groups. Given that organizational founding is always characterized by a time-lag relative to key historical events, it is important to stress that the likely causes for emergence -- to the extent that they are related to external events -- derive from conditions present one to three years prior to founding. Thus, in the case of progressive organizations, the escalation of the war in Vietnam in the early 1970s served as a general systemic force resulting in the mobilization of a significant number of peace, anti-war, and Vietnam-specific movement organizations. Similarly, the election of conservative icon Ronald Reagan to the presidency in 1980 ushered in an unprecedented number of traditionalist movements over the next five years, whose mission and agenda matched that of Pres. Reagan to a remarkable degree. Evidence of this effect is provided below in Figure 5. It is also essential to note the possibility that the conservative ascendancy of the 1980s was

directly related to the earlier surge by progressive groups a decade earlier. The visible and aggressive presence of oppositional forces – either progressive or conservative – is seen recurrently as a powerful trigger for counter-mobilization. A similar "pendulum swing" of counter-mobilization was observed after the election of Pres. Bill Clinton in 1992, and, though strictly outside the timeframe of this study, after the invasion of Iraq by Pres. Bush in 2003.

Figure 5: Founding Date by Ideological Orientation

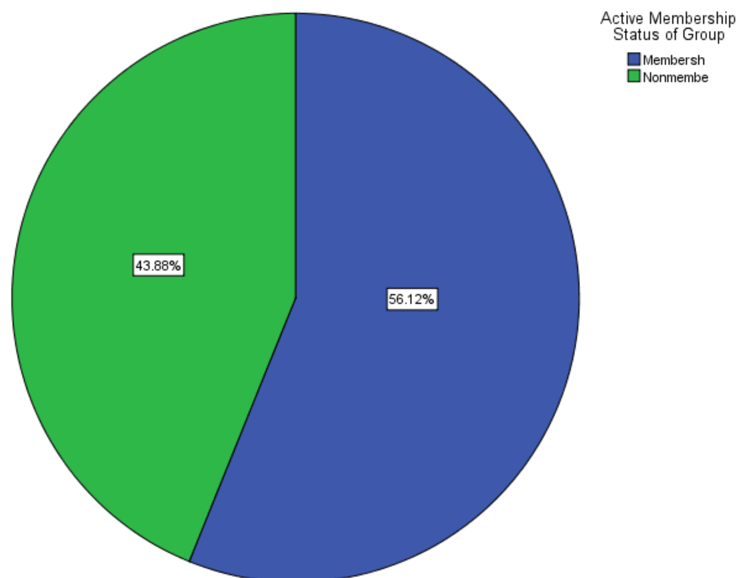


MEMBERSHIP

In Skocpol & Fiorina's influential *Diminished Democracy* (2000), the authors observe a general trend among 20th century American voluntary associations toward declining membership. This change has been accompanied by a related increase in "checkbook activism," consisting of advocacy, largely legislative or lobbying in nature,

directed by a very small group of leaders often concentrated in Washington, D.C. or New York and supported only financially by distant donors flung around the country. Skocpol's recent research suggests another variant of this trend, with "organizations" founded and managed by only one person, but which generate, through effective use of mass media and marketing, a sphere of cultural and political influence disproportionate to its tiny size (Skocpol, 1994). A fitting question then emerges: has this phenomenon held true for American Christian activism as well?

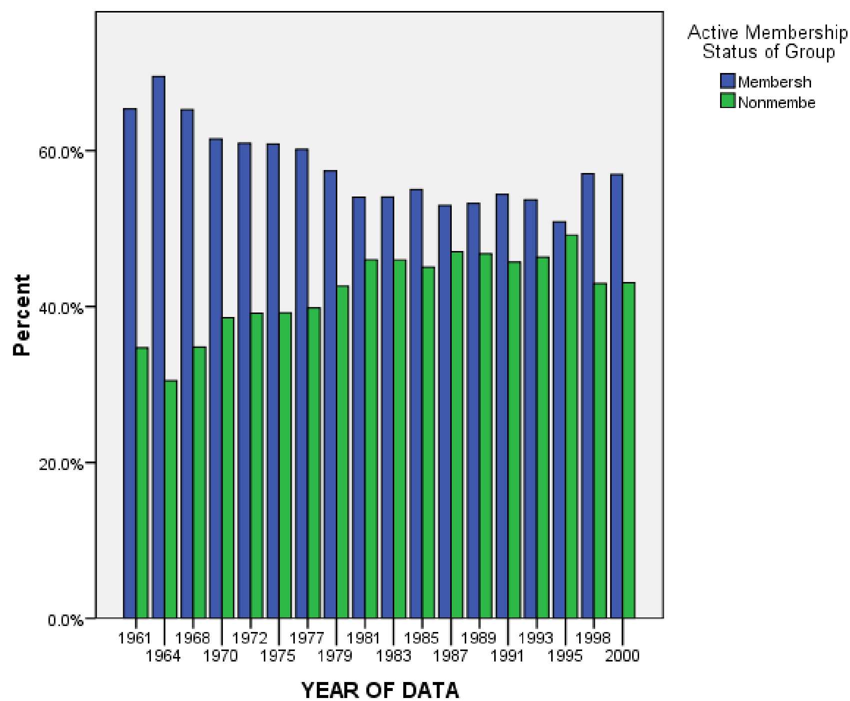
Figure 6: Proportion of Membership/Non-Membership Groups, Overall



Findings at the aggregate, cross-sectional level indicate that Christian activist groups with formal, counted memberships still constitute a numerical majority. However, when viewed longitudinally, it is obvious that the trend uncovered by previous

scholars was not an aberration. Between 1960 and 2000, the gap between membership and non-membership groups shrank substantially. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the discrepancy was at historic lows, with only a few percentage points separating the categories. Surprisingly, beginning in 1995, the gap widened again to levels approximating those of the late 1970s. Overall, though, the pattern originally described by Skocpol and Fiorina (among others) appears to be reflected within the Christian activist sector as well.

Figure 7: Membership Status of Christian Activist Groups Over Time



Findings indicating a decrease in the proportion of membership groups have important consequences for the scope of theorizing on this subject. A legitimate criticism could be levied that only groups with active memberships should be included in a valid

study of activism of any sort, on the basis that organizations without members (or at least without a listing of members) is not an organization in any meaningful sense. Furthermore, goes the argument, the increased ease with which citizens may found non-profit voluntary activist organizations, obtain tax-exempt status, and begin a modicum of socio-political advocacy greatly inflates the number of nominal organizations in the sector, and dilutes any analysis attempted on the population by filling it with "figurehead" and "checkbook" organizations, which are arguably not comparable to organizations comprising the majority, and fitting best with traditional social movement theory. This criticism is premised on the equation of "members" to "constituents" or "audience." Detailed scrutiny reveals this to be a false equivalency. For example, throughout most years of observed data, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and generally regarded as the central organizational actor in the Civil Rights Movement, listed only 247 members in EoA. Similarly, the Catholic Worker, likely the most significant Catholic activist group until the 1980s, listed no members – and quite correctly – for every year of data collected. In both cases, the recruitment and cultivation of "members" *per se* was not seen as vital to the mission and success of the organization. The SCLC's approach instead hinged on building a strong and far-flung network of African-American churches and community groups that could be activated with short notice for coordinated sit-ins, marches, demonstrations, or rallies. The Catholic Worker's audience was even more inchoate, consisting of hundreds of thousands of newspaper readers, commune workers, Houses of Hospitality residents, and ultimately thousands of young urban Catholics reared in the teachings and practice of Maurin and Day.

Table 5: Total and Mean Membership of Christian Activist Organizations, 1960-2000
(Active groups with members only)

Year of Data	Members	
	Sum	Mean
1961	63,476,910	1,983,653
1964	74,433,006	1,305,842
1968	77,563,450	1,292,724
1970	77,819,159	1,318,969
1972	67,079,498	1,001,187
1975	*81,042,675	1,356,749
1977	69,617,126	980,523
1979	80,419,185	1,218,473
1981	77,864,705	1,052,226
1983	78,228,917	899,183
1985	79,130,528	753,624
1987	76,851,655	662,514
1989	72,673,699	550,558
1991	76,684,234	491,566
1993	78,740,557	489,072
1995	78,122,913	520,819
1998	98,153,338	672,283
2000	*101,761,486	669,385

* Adjusted to reflect probable reporting errors or deliberation exaggerations

Dozens more cases akin to these abound throughout the data. As a result, it is difficult to find compelling merit in the argument that relative increases in non-membership groups indicates a deterioration in the vitality of the religious activist sector, or that the increased presence of unconventional organizational forms such as the kind identified by Skocpol and others creates an artificially large and invalid population. Rather, these changes merely point to the dynamic and fluid nature of organizational forms, which are constantly adapting to intra-sectoral and external pressures to survive and thrive. There is no simply no evidence to support the claim that religious activist organizations reporting no members (whether accurate or not) or a small number of

members have less influence, fewer opportunities, or greater challenges than conventional large membership-based organizations.

Between 1960 and 2000, membership in Christian activist organizations tended to hover around the 75 million mark, with periodic fluctuations of fairly large interval (Table 5). Closer examination reveals that most of these are due to unprecedented reporting of large membership by just a handful of organizations. For example, in 1975, the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, a group advocating Sabbath protection laws, reported membership of 18 million, up from 11,000 in 1972. Interestingly, the LDAUS had disbanded by 1977. As a result, I adjusted membership sums to realistic figures in such cases. However, 1975 also witnessed the legitimate entry of a large national membership organization, the National Temperance and Prohibition Council, reporting 10 million members. Subsequent membership numbers for NTPC suggest accurate counts and expected increases. In 1977, evidence of the *opposite* occurrence is seen, as one large national membership group, the International for Religious Freedom, based in Boston and boasting 10 million members, disappeared for a decade from the EoA database. When it returned in 1985, it had undergone significant re-organization of mission, scope, and direction, reporting membership of only 450. The other large increase in membership was in 1998. Deeper analysis established that these spikes originated also from valid new membership counts from the National Association of Evangelicals, reporting an increase from 15 million to 27 million members from 1995 and 1998, and the National Council of Churches, who reported a surge from 42 million to 51 million. Together, these constitute a 21 million member jump from 1995, completely accounting for the observed increase. Therefore, care must be taken to disentangle valid spikes in membership via organizational emergence into the population or valid new

counts from aberrant reporting by the organization. Table 5 denotes adjusted membership sums (*) where further scrutiny uncovered likely error of the second type.

The other noteworthy finding from the analysis of overall membership in this sector is the gradual decline in the average size of organizations over time. Though fewer organizations existed in the early years, those that did were fairly large, with memberships well above the 1 million mark. By the mid-1980s, a period that saw an explosion in the actual number of organizations in the population, particularly from conservative Christian corners, the average size of such groups fell to around a half-million members. These findings, together with related results on the characteristics and mission of groups during this time, indicate a general trend toward proliferation of smaller, grassroots-oriented groups with increasingly narrow issue-foci.

A more precise and insightful method of examining Christian activist membership dynamics, however, is to analyze the *characteristics of the largest organizations* synchronically and longitudinally. A number of valuable findings emerge as a result of this approach. Table 6 illustrates a sample of these. More importantly, this table demonstrates a crucial point for the overall project: viewing Christian activist dominance over time by only examining comparisons in *numbers* of organizations per ideological category or issue niche is essential and fruitful, but partial and potentially misleading if left as the only analytical perspective. When balanced by a look at the largest organizations, the primary issue engaged, their religious affiliations, and their ideological leanings, a different picture emerges.

Table 6: Twenty-Five Largest Christian Activist Groups by Significant Characteristics

Organization	Members	Issue Niche	Religious Affiliation	Ideological Orientation Score	
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.	52,000,000	Gen. Social Justice	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.35	
National Association of Evangelicals	27,000,000	Traditional theology	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.7	
National Temperance and Prohibition Council	13,000,000	Temperance	Roman Catholic	0.8	
National Right to Life Committee	12,000,000	Pro-life	Roman Catholic	0.75	
National Council of Catholic Women	10,000,000	Gen. Social Justice	Roman Catholic	0.4	
United Church Women of the NCC	10,000,000	Women's rights	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.45	
International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom	10,000,000	Religious freedom	Unitarian/Universalist	0.3	
Moral Majority	4,000,000	Moral decline	Unspecified 'Christian'	1	
Liberty Federation	4,000,000	Moral decline	Unspecified 'Christian'	1	
The Conservative Caucus	2,500,000	Traditional theology	Indeterminate	0.85	
American Council of Christian Churches	1,508,770	Anti-modernism	Unspecified 'Christian'	1	
National Office for Black Catholics	1,000,000	Civil Rights	Roman Catholic	0.15	
ABW Ministries	750,000	Women's rights	Baptist	0.45	
International Temperance Association	650,000	Temperance	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.7	
Concerned Women for America	600,000	Anti-feminism	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.85	
Human Life International	500,000	Pro-life	Roman Catholic	0.85	
American Temperance Society	400,000	Temperance	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.7	
Family Research Council	400,000	Moral decline	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.9	
Presbyterian Women	400,000	Women's rights	Presbyterian	0.3	
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights	350,000	Religious freedom	Roman Catholic	0.65	
Christian Voice	325,000	Moral decline	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.9	
			Mean	**0.668**	
			Mode	**0.7**	

First, it should be noted that this type of analysis exemplifies one of the hazards of strict reporting of membership data as collected by the organization itself, the method

employed by the EofA. Operation: PUSH, the broad-based advocacy organization formed by civil rights icon Rev. Jesse Jackson in 1985, reported no members until 1998, when the group began reporting 1 billion members. Clearly this is a case of public relations and image management; it is not possible that Jackson's Chicago-based organization rivals the global Roman Catholic Church in membership. Upon closer scrutiny, it is revealed that the actual membership of Operation: PUSH was nearer to 80,000-100,000, and the 1 billion figure was a deliberate rhetorical effort to include all those exploited and marginalized in the world ("the bottom billion) (Mjagkij, 2001; Collier, 2007). Therefore, in order to keep consistency with the method of only reporting and analyzing data as represented in the original source, I have excluded all organizations that demonstrate obvious manipulation of membership data for symbolic purposes, and adjusted membership data to reflect more realistic levels.

It is clear from this perspective that the largest groups across this forty year period were also among the more conservative ideologically. The mean ideological orientation score of the largest 25 organizations was .668 and the mode score was 7.0 on the .1 to 1.0 scale, where 1.0 is considered "totally conservative." Together, these scores would classify the overall orientation of the 25 largest organizations as "moderately conservative" using the fuzzy-set coding scheme devised for this study. Moreover, the range of primary issues engaged in by the largest groups is surprisingly narrow compared to the diversity represented in the population, featuring only 11 discrete issue niches, and obvious overlap or "family resemblance" between these (e.g. traditional theology and moral decline). Primary issues engaged by these largest groups are also decidedly more traditionalist in general character than a random sample of the overall organizational population would anticipate. Further support along this line is provided by Table 7,

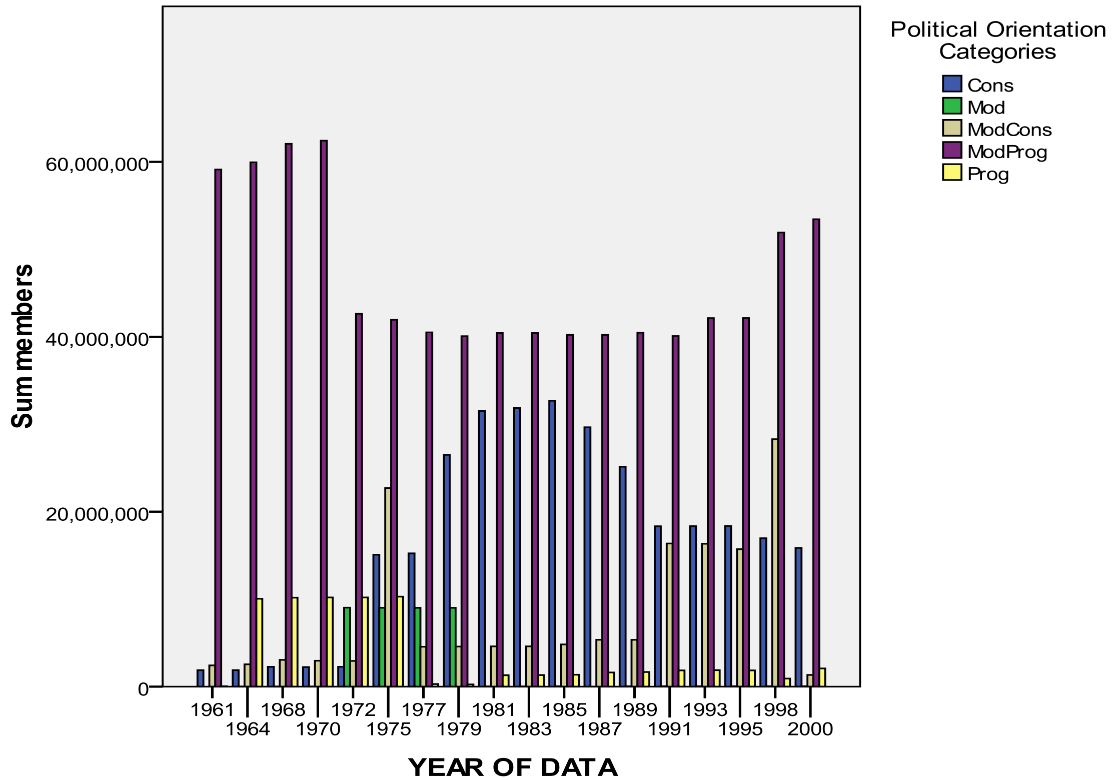
displaying the gradual conservative direction of the largest Christian activist groups over time.

Table 7: Ideological Orientation Scores of Largest Christian Activist Organizations by Decade

Decade	Mean Score	Modal Score
1960s	0.584	0.45
1970s	0.627	0.75
1980s	0.765	0.9
1990s	0.666	0.9

An obvious question central to the core concerns of this study that emerges when considering Christian activist membership over time is: approximately how many members belonged to progressive, conservative, and other ideological categories of Christian activist organizations per year? Such an analysis would offer needed balance to the population-level findings that dominate the organizational ecology literature, and which are presented elsewhere in this section. Without such a perspective, it would be reasonable to assume an equivalency between the number of organizations of a certain type in the population and actual relative dominance of this type in civil society as a whole. While this perspective is a valid – and perhaps even occasionally true – measure of the relative direction and tone of civil society at a given historical time, it will always only be incomplete if not coupled with data on *approximately how many actual people* were involved in the various organizations at given points in time.

Figure 8: Number of Members by Ideological Orientation (Active organizations only)



The analysis of membership by ideological orientation offers fascinating insight into precisely how different these two measures are. Figure 8 shows changes in membership for each ideological category from 1960-2000. Most obvious here is the startling and heretofore unseen strength of moderately progressive groups throughout the period. However, it must stressed the dominant organization in this category (contributing no less than 40 million members per year) was the National Council of Churches, whose consistent practice was to report as members of the NCC all congregants of partner denominations. Therefore, if one was a member of University Methodist Church in Austin, TX, for example, one was also counted as a member of the NCC, regardless of one's own commitment to the NCC mission. This method of counting

membership was generally not practiced by other Christian activist organizations, and thus should safely be viewed as anomalous. Though the NCC was indubitably one of the most influential and far-reaching Christian organizations in the 20th century, its power is not mainly related to its purported membership, but rather its subtle and gradual effects on theological method and prevailing Christian religio-political worldviews. Hence, conclusions about the overall relative power of moderate-progressive groups vis-à-vis membership must be constrained by these unusual reporting habits of major component organizations.

Looking past the moderate-progressive findings, the truly significant aspects of this analysis emerge, however. As predicted by the major hypothesis of this study, progressive organizations enjoyed healthy membership totals and a sizable advantage over all other ideological categories until approximately 1975 – the first year of data collected after the *Roe vs. Wade* decision. In that year, both moderately conservative and conservative organizations rocketed past left-leaning Christian groups in membership and never relented. In 1979, the founding of the Moral Majority and colleague organizations with large grassroots memberships, pushed the conservative constituent totals to unprecedented levels that they would maintain until the early 1990s. Throughout the 1980s, conservative Christian activist organization membership approached 35 million members and for the first time began to rival the NCC and other moderate-progressive groups in size. In contrast, progressive Christian groups shrank to historic lows from 1979 onward, and never regained their 1960s-70s era strength.

A useful complement to these findings is to examine the average size of organizations per ideological category and compare it to the number of such organizations in the population. This data is summarized in Table 8. We find, similar to the results regarding number of organizations, an approximate parity between

conservative and progressive Christian activist average membership. Most significantly, the findings indicate that even though there were fewer unique conservative Christian groups in the population, they did not lag far behind progressive Christian groups in terms of membership. This was especially true of "moderate conservative groups," who numbered only 28 organizations in the total population, but generated an average membership per group of more than 112,000. In conjunction with the findings from the above table on total membership trends over time, this data suggests that a relatively modest number of conservative Christian groups were able to generate very large and sustained member pools for more than a decade, a feat that was unmatched by their ideological rivals. *

Table 8: Mean Size of Membership vs. Number of Organizations Per Ideological Orientation

	Average Size of Membership	# of Organizations
Conservative	114,327	67
Moderate Conservative	112,461	28
Moderate	2,023	10
Moderate Progressive	939,964	64
Progressive	120,937	88

In summary, these membership findings provide a valuable contrast to the story presented by the analyses below based on number of organizations per ideological category or issue niche. A thorough discussion of these differences is offered in Chapter 6.

* Obviously, this type of pattern was also observed by the moderate-progressive category, but should be viewed skeptically because of the unusual membership reporting technique of the National Council of Churches, as noted in the main text.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Taken together, the maps below (Illustrations 1-5 and Tables 9-13) of the geographic dispersion of Christian activist group headquarters over the four decades point to three major findings. First, activist organizations tend to be concentrated in large urban centers, regardless of time period. The overwhelming majority of groups based their operations in a handful of major cities, namely New York City, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Boston, all of which are located in the Northeastern quadrant of the US. Second, the distribution of headquarters from 1960-2000 was gradually but definitely in a westward and southward direction, **following geographic trends at the general population level.** Third, *regardless of year*, Washington, DC remained among the most frequent location for organizational headquarters, indicating the recognition of the strategic value of proximity to policy-making power, even for organizations mainly focused on cultural change or public awareness. State-centered theorists have long emphasized the centrality of state growth and capacity as a crucial factor in understanding movement morphology and dynamics. However, this finding suggests that activist proximity to state power is a relatively stable feature of late 20th century activism. Finally, however, and in subtle tension with the previous finding, we observe a slow but visible diffusion of organizational headquarters *away from Washington, DC over the four decades*. This findings points instead to the rise of alternative power centers in the South (Arlington, VA; Louisville, KY; and Memphis, TN) and West (mainly Los Angeles, CA).

Illustration 1: Location of Christian Activist Group Headquarters, 1960s

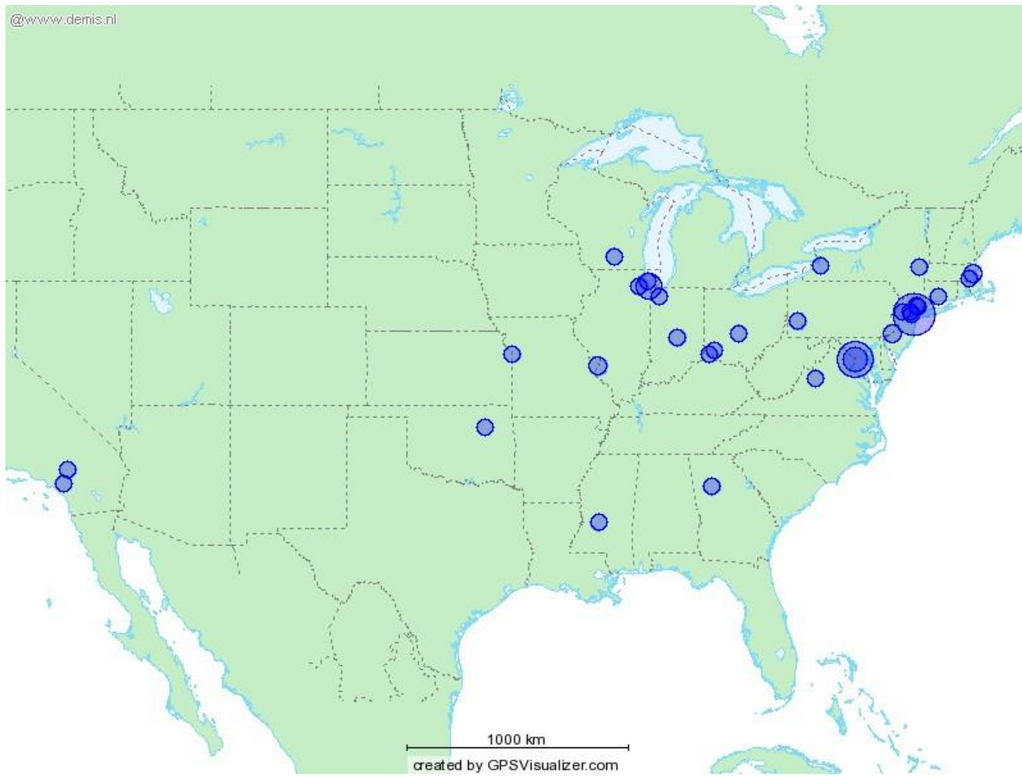


Illustration 2: Location of Christian Activist Group Headquarters, 1970s

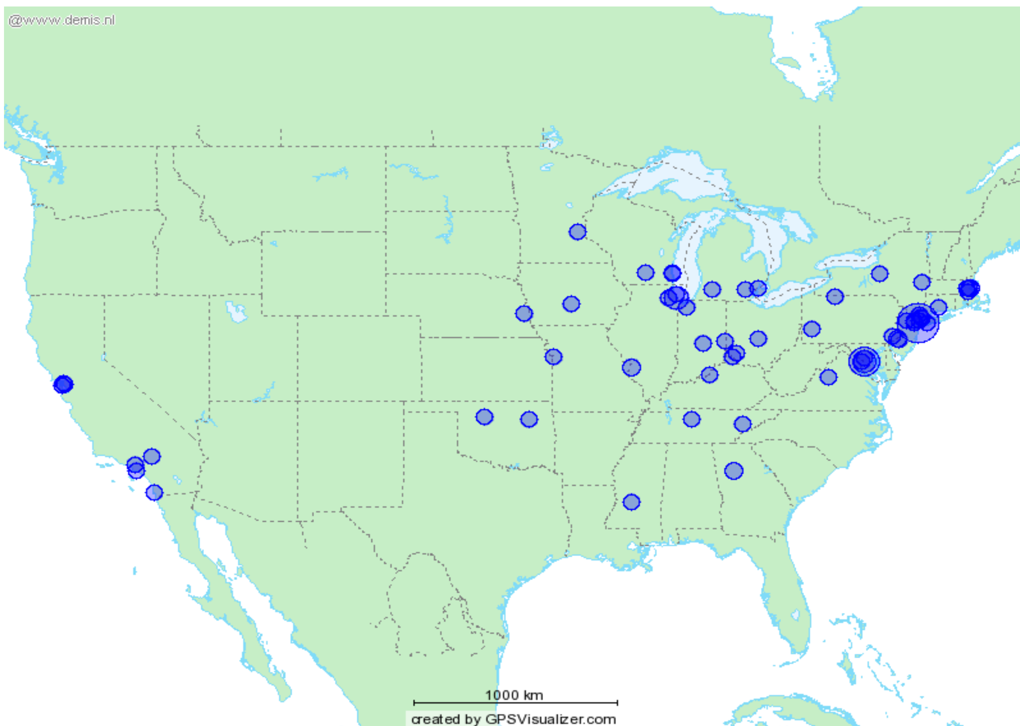


Illustration 3: Location of Christian Activist Group Headquarters, 1980s

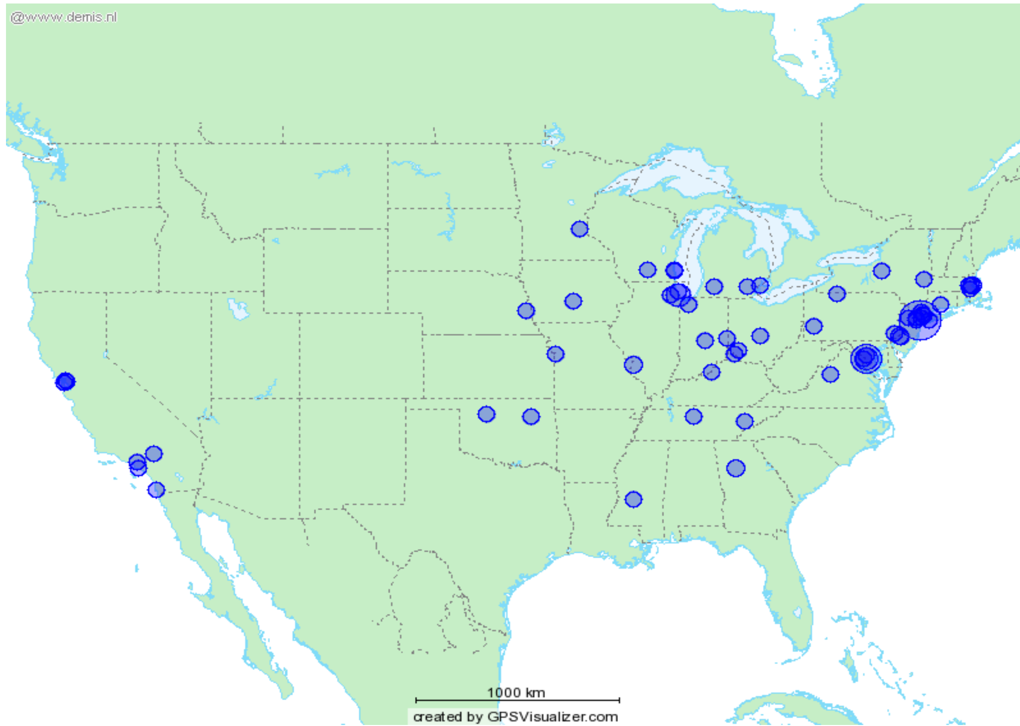


Illustration 4: Location of Christian Activist Group Headquarters, 1990s

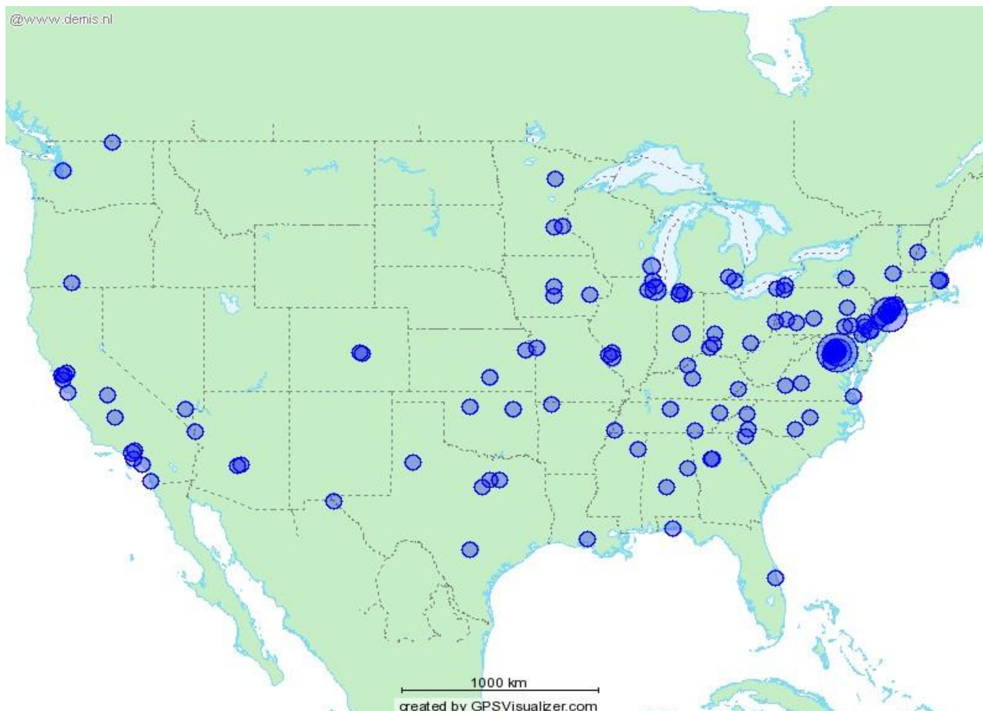


Illustration 5: Location of Christian Activist Organization Headquarters, 2000

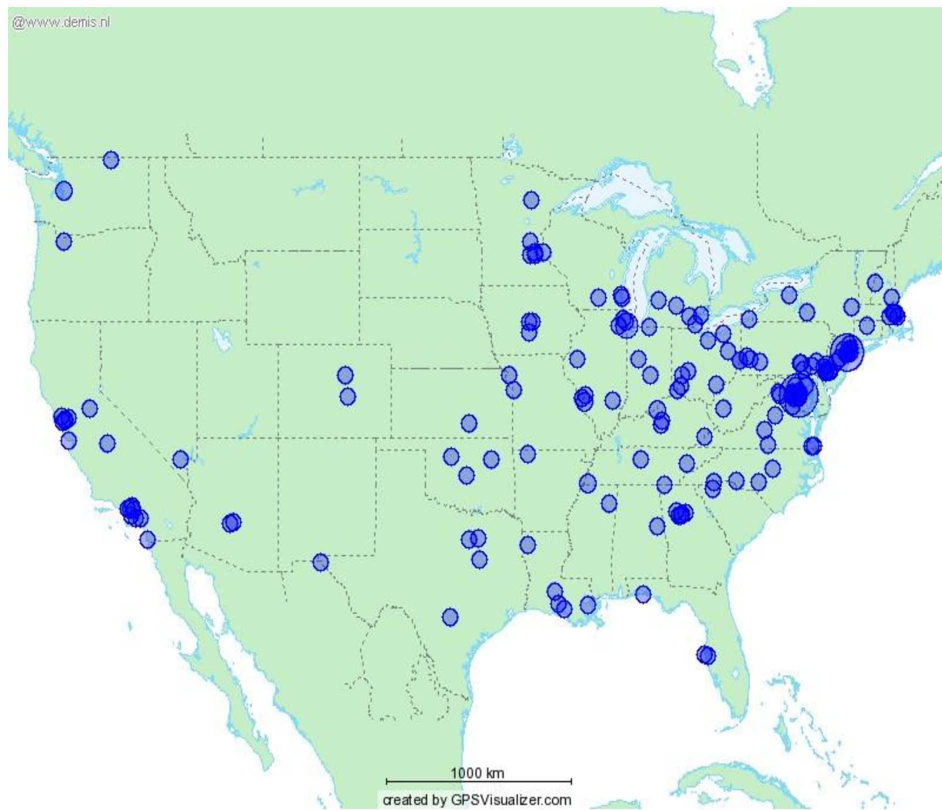


Table 9: Location of All Christian Activist Organization Headquarters (Cross-sectional)

LOCATION	PERCENT
Washington, D.C.	19.2
New York, NY	15.1
Chicago, IL	4.1
St. Louis, MO	2.1
Boston, MA	1.9
Address unknown	1.7
Los Angeles, CA	1.7
Philadelphia, PA	1.4
San Francisco, CA	1.4
Atlanta, GA	1.0
Indianapolis, IN	1.0
Cincinnati, OH	.8
Milwaukee, WI	.8
Minneapolis, MN	.8
Pittsburgh, PA	.8
San Diego, CA	.8
Seattle, WA	.8
Albany, NY	.6
Arlington, VA	.6
Bronx, NY	.6

Table 10: Top Ten Christian Activist Headquarters Locations, 1960s

LOCATION	PERCENT
Washington, D.C..	27.1
New York, NY	24.0
Chicago, IL	9.4
Boston, MA	3.1
Philadelphia, PA	3.1
St. Louis, MO	3.1
Atlanta, GA	2.1
Indianapolis, IN	2.1
Nyack, NY	2.1
Pittsburgh, PA	2.1

Table 11: Top Ten Christian Activist Headquarters Locations, 1970s

LOCATION	PERCENT
New York, NY	23.7
Washington, D.C.	19.9
Chicago, IL	8.3
Boston, MA	2.6
St. Louis, MO	2.6
Atlanta, GA	1.9
Philadelphia, PA	1.9
Cincinnati, OH	1.3
Collingswood, NJ	1.3
Indianapolis, IN	1.3

Table 12: Top Ten Christian Activist Headquarters Locations, 1980s

LOCATION	PERCENT
Washington, D.C.	22.6
New York, NY	12.2
Chicago, IL	3.8
Milwaukee, WI	1.7
Philadelphia, PA	1.7
St. Louis, MO	1.7
Boston, MA	1.4
Indianapolis, IN	1.4
Los Angeles, CA	1.4
Atlanta, GA	1.0

Table 13: Top Ten Christian Activist Headquarters Locations, 1990s

LOCATION	PERCENT
Washington, D.C.	17.0
New York, NY	11.6
Chicago, IL	4.7
Los Angeles, CA	1.7
Address unknown	1.4
Boston, MA	1.4
Arlington, VA	1.1
Louisville, KY	1.1
Memphis, TN	1.1
Philadelphia, PA	1.1

BRANCHES AND STAFF

Organizations may take many forms in the population, from local single-issue grassroots activist groups to far-flung federated organizations with dozens of subsidiaries around the country. Similarly, organizations may employ hundreds of staff or as few as one, as discussed in Ch. 6. These variations are important to consider as they may correlate with other significant organizational characteristics, such as ideological orientation, religious tradition, or success in promoting their issue agendas. The spread of organizations via regional, state, and local branches is also a valid indicator of the scope and reach of the group, as well as another measure of their total resources, a factor repeatedly cited in the literature as key to movement mobilization and goal achievement.

Table 14: Proportion of Christian Activist Organizations Reporting Personnel and Branches

	PERCENT
Cases reporting "Staff"	12.9%
Cases reporting "Regional Groups"	2.9%
Cases reporting "State Groups"	2.4%
Cases reporting "Local Groups"	4.5%

Data from the *Encyclopedia of Associations* on organizational branches and personnel are scant, unfortunately, as represented in Table 14. As with all data from this source, it is unknown what proportion of the low yield on such variables reflects the reality of the population or simply noncompliance by the organization. For analytical

purposes, we can only assume that such errors, if they are errors, occur systematically across the population in an unbiased manner and do not skew the results unidirectionally.

Table 15: Descriptive Branch Statistics by Ideological Orientation

IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION		STATE GROUPS	LOCAL GROUPS
Conservative	Mean	33	464
	N	19	18
Moderate	Mean	1	8,400
	N	1	1
Moderate-Conservative	Mean	63	942
	N	4	7
Moderate-Progressive	Mean	23	439
	N	6	20
Progressive	Mean	35	57
	N	13	34
Overall	Mean	34	426
	N	43	80

Looking more substantively at these data cross-tabulated with ideological orientation, we find that moderate-conservative organizations enjoyed a significant advantage over all other ideological orientation groups in terms of the number of state groups (Table 15). This category includes such groups as Women Exploited by Abortion and the American Health and Temperance Society. Moderate organizations, interestingly, were the least likely to have state branches, while conservative and progressive groups reported near equal numbers of state branches. The number of local groups tended to average in the mid-400s, though one organization, the National Council of Catholic Men, was a serious outlier, reporting more than 8,000 local branches. In this

category, moderate-conservative and conservative organizations enjoyed distinct advantages over other ideological orientations, indicating an inclination toward grassroots-based activism and federated structures. The "planting" of local and state branches suggests, among other things, an interest on the part of the organization to enlist sizable numbers of the public in their efforts, and do so in a methodical and bureaucratic way, as opposed to conventional movement mobilization. Branches, then, have the ability to act on behalf of the parent organization in a variety of local contexts that strictly national groups would not. As a result, the probability of reaching a larger share of the mass public in a rather permanent way is increased dramatically, a fact which accrues mainly to the conservative side of the spectrum. To the extent that the outcomes of modern politics are increasingly determined electorally or through the action of interest groups, the ability of Christian activists to instantly draw on large sectors of the public in local communities on issues they are concerned about becomes crucial. Branches (organizational networks) provide the skeleton for this process. This data, then, provides one more corroborative perspective to illuminate the distinct tactical and organizational approaches used by various strains of Christian activists.

Analysis of organizational networks and personnel by religious tradition reveals fascinating findings that further elaborate results found in other pieces of the examination (Table 16). For example, non-traditional religious groups, such as non-denominational or unspecified "Christian" organizations, have more state, local, and regional branches than expected given their very recent entry into the population and the religious field. Conversely, mainline and well-known denominations such as the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist Churches had virtually no affiliated activist groups with branches. The Roman Catholic Church, by contrast, boasted sizable if not very large numbers of branches in all three categories. The strong organizational networks built by

Catholics and the non-mainline groups help explain the advantage they have enjoyed in membership, population presence, and overall success in the activist, particularly in the last 20 years.

Table 16: Branches of Christian Activist Groups by Religious Tradition

RELIGIOUS TRADITION	LOCAL GROUPS	STATE GROUPS	REGIONAL GROUPS
Indeterminate/Unknown	331	33	32,053
Roman Catholic	9,728	218	8,000,113
Lutheran	385	11	26
Methodist	.	.	.
Presbyterian	20	.	47
Episcopalian	117	.	12
Latter Day Saints/Mormon	12	23	12
Society of Friends/Quaker	10	9	12
United Church of Christ	.	.	.
Unitarian-Universalist	244	5	8
Non/Multi-Denominational	9,993	315	163
Mennonite/Church of Brethren	.	.	5
Unspecified 'Christian'	7,203	737	153
American Baptist	.	.	.
Southern Baptist	.	.	7
Pentecostal	6	.	.
Other	329	50	34

BUDGET

The *Encyclopedia of Associations* did not collect data on organizational budgets until the 1985 edition. Therefore, trend analysis for this variable will be severely truncated. In addition, many organizations (88%) did not report budgetary information, further limiting the generalizability of budget-related results. However, as these factors were distributed across the population in an unbiased fashion, the cross-sectional and interactional analysis remains valid within their inherent limits, and do reveal a number of noteworthy findings (Table 17)

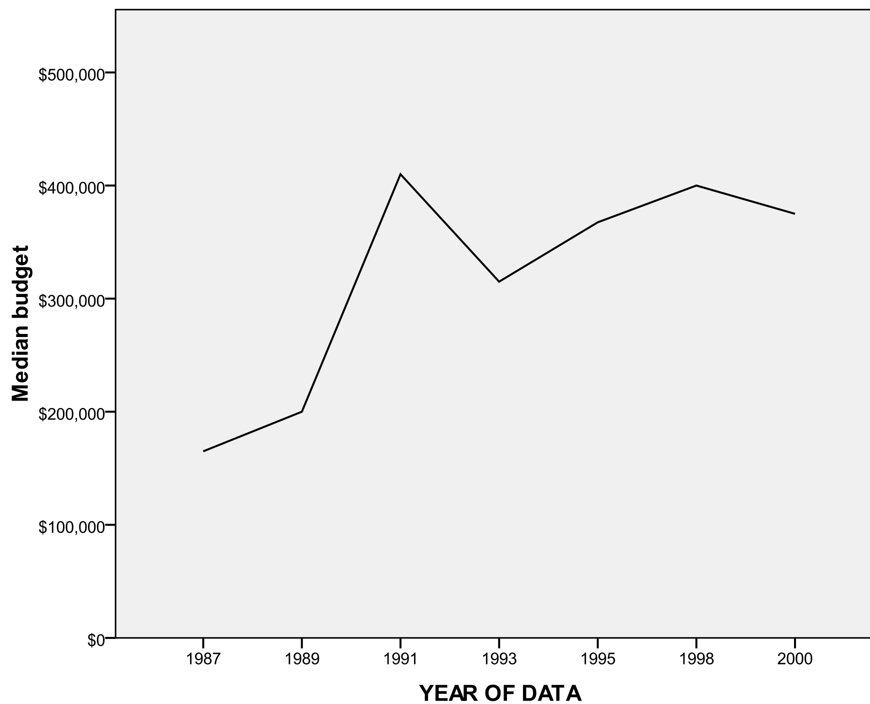
Table 17: Descriptive Budget Statistics for Christian Activist Organizations, (Cross-sectional)

N	682 / 12%
Missing	2461 / 88%
Mean	$4,802,072
Median	$350,000
Mode	$1,000,000
Maximum	$328,000,000.

First, we find that annual organizational budgets display wide dispersion, primarily due to the huge range in organizational size, differential access to church or denominational resources, variation in the number of local branches, and the presence or absence of paying members. National, denominational organizations, and especially those with international ties such as Roman Catholic groups, had a distinct advantage in budget size, as described in detail below. These were atypical, however. Most organizational budgets, as presented in the below table, were robust in size, with the median budget being $350,000 per year, and a typical Christian activist organization reported a budget of approximately $1 million.

Second, Christian activist groups demonstrated a gradual but steady increase in financial capacity over the 40 years examined (see Figure 9). After a rapid spike in the late 1980s, Christian activist median budgets basically plateaued at the $400,000 level for the remainder of the period. These findings suggest not only the rising costs of "doing business" in the sector, but also the general ability of activist groups to raise funds to match these costs. As demonstrated through other findings, these funds did not mainly originate from members, but increasingly through direct contributions from grant-making organizations or essentially inactive benefactors.

Figure 9: Median Budget of Christian Activist Groups, 1985-2000
(Budget data not collected prior to 1985)



Third, examined at the cross-sectional level of all organizations, the financial advantage of conservative groups is easily observed (Table 18). Conservative Christian activist organizations could expect a five-fold advantage in mean budget size in any given year. Groups contributing to this conservative lead include Focus on the Family and the Alliance Defense Fund, both of which are active on traditional morality and family issues. This fact indicates the high import family-oriented organizations place on fund-raising and resource-enhancement in order to conduct their work and achieve organizational and issue-aims.

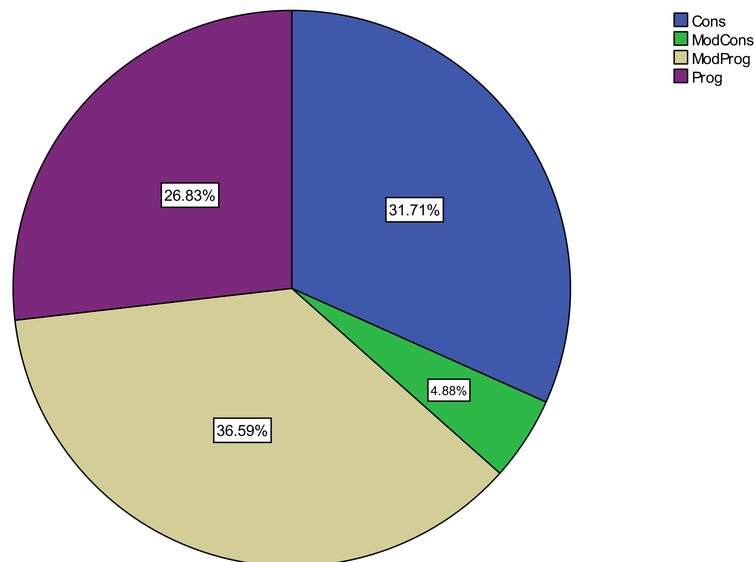
Table 18: Descriptive Budget Statistics by Ideological Orientation of Christian Activist Organizations

Ideological Orientation of Groups	Mean Budget	Minimum Budget	Maximum Budget
Cons	$5,725,015.00	$27,000	$93,000,000
Mod	$584,400.00	$60,000	$1,200,000
ModCons	$173,333.33	$50,000	$400,000
ModProg	$1,245,085.71	$1,000	$6,500,000
Prog	$1,571,785.71	$20,000	$20,000,000

Fourth, perhaps contrary to expectation, we find that moderate-progressive organizations enjoyed the largest stock of resources *among the forty Christian activist groups with the largest budgets (*Figure 10*).* Though the difference was not enormous (5%), the financial capacity of the moderate-progressives is disproportionate to their size in the population. In large measure, their budget vitality is drawn from the fact that many of the constituent organizations are connected to large denominational structures, such as the National Council of Churches and the US Catholic Conference, which greatly

augments their ability to raise dollars with relative ease. Also crucial, as mentioned above, is the likely intrinsic appeal of moderate groups in general to donors, as they represent a safe and often well-known bureaucratic middle position in contrast to more strident and 'riskier" organizations at the poles.

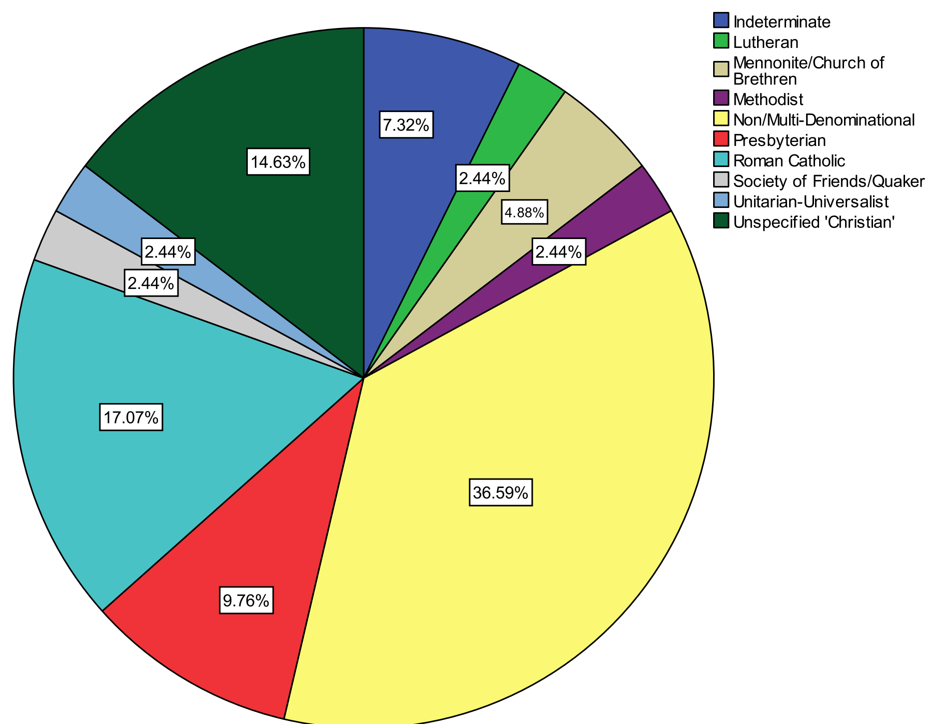
Figure 10: Distribution of Ideological Orientation Among Christian Activist Organizations with Forty Largest Budgets



Fifth, non/multi-denominational Christian Activist groups far outpaced all other religious traditions in terms of financial capacity (Figure 11). In part, this finding reflects the significant portion of the overall activist population from non/multi-denominational backgrounds. However, there is no necessary equivalency between mere predominance and budget size. These findings suggest that non/multi-denominational Christian activist groups operate with real substantial resource leads, irrespective of other factors. It is

likely that these greater money supplies are due in part to the large network of subsidiary members they may draw from, as in the case of the National Council of Churches, but also significantly result from the wider natural pool of constituents available by eschewing strict denominational categories.

Figure 11: Distribution of Religious Affiliation Among Christian Activist Organizations with Forty Largest Budgets



Greater detail on Christian activist budget dynamics is provided in Table 19, which focuses on the twenty-five groups with the largest budgets. I provide this table primarily to specify the organizations responsible for many of the findings seen via other

analyses. The most significant finding here is the high concentration of social welfare organizations, groups whose mission focuses on delivery or advocacy of direct services such as legal aid, food, clothing, as well as the sponsoring of other local community outreach groups. Most probably this finding derives from the significantly higher overhead of social welfare organizations, which includes the regular provision of goods and services, as well as large staffing requirements and the support of perhaps dozens of subsidiary branches.

Table 19: Twenty-Five Wealthiest Christian Activist Groups by Significant Characteristics

ORGANIZATION	BUDGET	RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION	IDEOLOGY SCORE
Catholic Relief Services	$328,000,000	Roman Catholic	0.3
Focus on the Family	$100,000,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.9
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.	$60,000,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.3
U.S. Catholic Conference Migration and Refugee Services	$32,000,000	Roman Catholic	0.3
United States Catholic Conference	$30,600,000	Roman Catholic	0.3
American Friends Service Committee	$27,661,703	Society of Friends/Quaker	0.1
World Concern	$21,000,000	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.3
Migration and Refugee Services	$20,000,000	Indeterminate	0.1
Family Research Council	$14,500,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.9
American Center for Law and Justice	$12,000,000	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.9
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches	$10,000,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.1
Christian Research Institute International	$8,000,000	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.9
Concerned Women for America	$8,000,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.9
Rutherford Institute	$8,000,000	Indeterminate	0.9
Campaign for Human Development	$8,000,000	Roman Catholic	0.3
American Life League	$6,900,000	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.7
Presbyterian Hunger Program	$6,500,000	Presbyterian	0.3

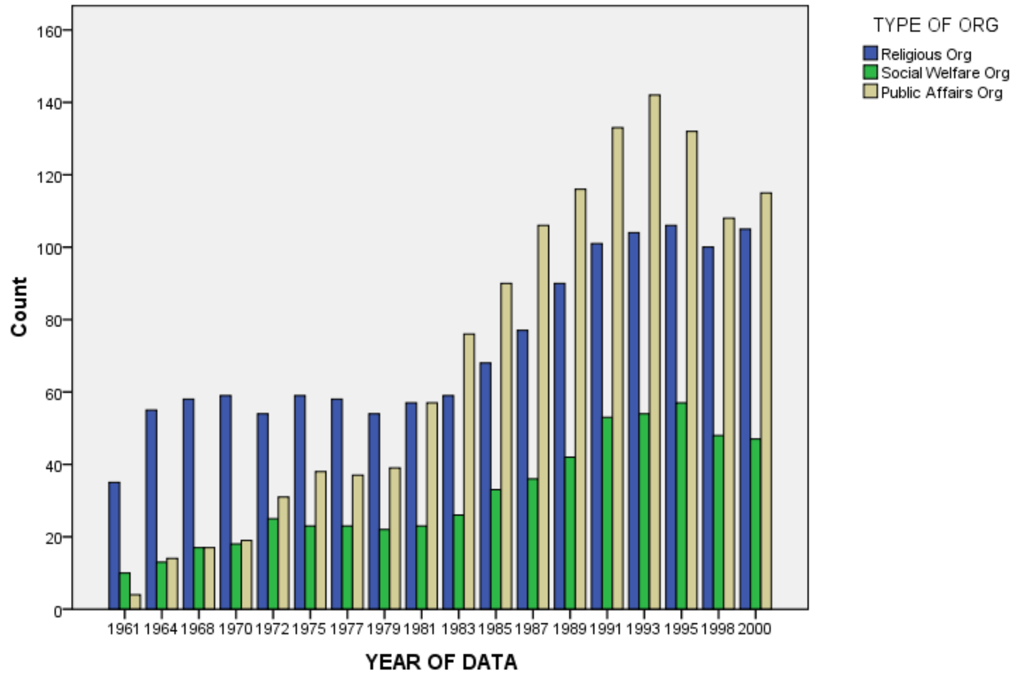
National Ecumenical Coalition	$6,000,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.3
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services	$5,572,200	Lutheran	0.3
Christian Research Institute International	$5,500,000	Unspecified 'Christian'	0.9
Free Congress Research and Education Foundation	$5,500,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.9
National Ecumenical Coalition	$5,500,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.3
Concerned Women for America	$5,400,000	Non/Multi-Denominational	0.9
United Presbyterian Women	$5,250,000	Presbyterian	0.1
		Mean	**0.492**
		Mode	**0.3**

Finally, we find a similar high concentration of activist groups from the ideological poles, rather than those in the middle. Naturally, this has the effect of producing a mean ideological orientation score very close to moderate, but this effect obscures the real underlying patterns. What explains this heavy representation of extremes? I argue that this finding also corroborates the general theory of civil sphere cybernetics which I outline in Chapter 7. In brief, this theory holds that an unintentional degree of homeostasis or ideological balance is achieved at nearly time period of measurement due to the triggering of delicate boundaries and feedback mechanisms built into the civil sphere. In this particular case, Christian activist groups enter and build capacity in response to threats directed at deeply held values, issues, or institutions. Often, Christian groups appear to emerge and engage in the civil sphere not only in order to protect and promote these agendas, but also to directly oppose the action of rival organizations. This "dance" or modified dialectic process is therefore driven both internally and externally, a dynamic heretofore little examined in the literature.

ORGANIZATIONAL TYPES

Though the concentration of Christian activist groups in Washington, D.C. declined over time, a substantial plurality of groups maintained and even strengthened their involvement in public policy and legislation, regardless of geographic location. Figure 12 provides evidence of this pattern. Beginning in the 1980s, roughly corresponding to the ascendancy of traditional family values and pro-life advocacy, Christian activist groups involved in direct public affairs lobbying increased at a much faster rate than organizations with either strictly religious or social welfare missions. Within 10 years, the number of groups in this sector had nearly doubled. This finding suggests not only a shift in the tactical repertoires employed by Christian activist groups toward the direct legislative process and away from more conventional "protest" oriented methods (detailed in the appropriate section below), but a shift in the very organizational morphology considered by prospective movement entrepreneurs. It is reasonable to conclude that activists pondering founding an SMO after 1981 perceived greater benefits and a higher probability of success through the launching of policy-oriented groups rather than through other forms, such as those targeting consciousness-raising, demonstrations/marches, or community organizing. Overall, this finding confirms the conclusions of state-centered theorists, stressing a gradual isomorphism between governmental and civil society structures.

Figure 12: Types of Christian Activist Organizations, 1960-2000



Chapter 5: Qualitative Findings

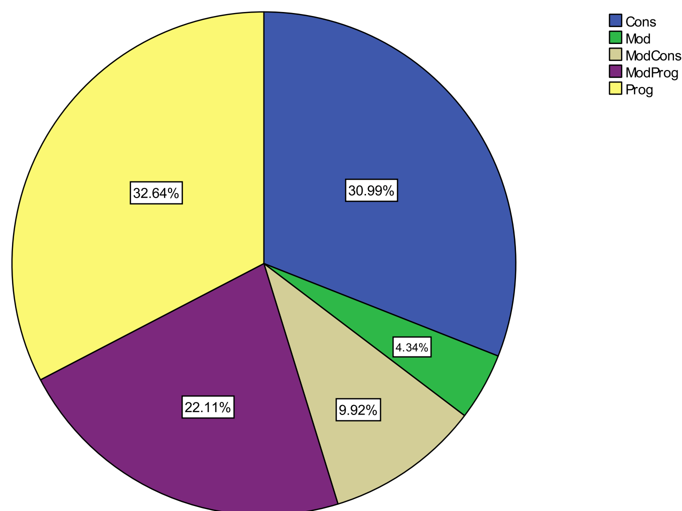
"Minds require eco-niches as much as organisms do, and the mind's eco-niche is its worldview, its sense of the whole of things."

--- Huston Smith, Why Religion Matters, 2001, p. 26

IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Viewed at the aggregate level irrespective of changes over time, the main pattern observed is the rather tight balance negotiated between the number of organizations at the poles of the ideological spectrum among Christian activist organizations. Though during any given historical period, one or the other ideological wings may hold relative sway, the overarching cross-sectional story is not one of clear dominance by any ideology, but a hard-fought equilibrium of sorts (Figure 13). This relative balance is neither intentional, predestined, nor necessarily functional.

Figure 13: Distribution of Ideological Orientation Categories (Cross-sectional)



Rather, it appears as the result of the aggregation of countless micro-level contests occurring in civil society over a myriad of controversial topics; a true emergent characteristic that cannot be reduced to the action of any sole actor or collection of actors.

I do posit, however, a set of recurrent mechanisms which appear to be essential to the emergence of this ideological equilibrium, and which indicate the process is not entirely random or spontaneous. There is a degree of rationality to the emergence of equilibrium, but it does not manifest in the order-dominated form postulated by Parsons (1982) and Luhman (1984). Instead, it is a inescapably messy battlefield of clashing normative commitments and socio-political resources, whose participants do not engage for the production of balance, but for final victory for their worldview.

Table 20: Number of Unique Conservative and Progressive Activist Groups by Decade

YEARS	% CONSERVATIVE	% PROGRESSIVE	DIFFERENCE
1960-1969	18.8	32.3	13.5
1970-1979	24.4	39.1	14.7
1980-1989	29.5	37.8	8.3
1990-1999	29.9	35.5	5.6
2000	30.5	34.6	4.0

In significant ways, these data paint the richest and most transparent picture of the prevailing dynamics in Christian activism since the 1960s. One of the central research questions of this study was to investigate the overall ideological trajectory of this social movement sector, specifically, whether the oft-cited but little proved decline of progressive activism was based in fact. As is often the case in social science, the actual evidence is far more nuanced than popular assessments can do justice to. For example, Table 20 provides a mixed picture of ideological outcomes. From 1960-1979, progressive organizations enjoyed a comfortable double-digit advantage over conservative groups in terms of raw count in the overall sector population. However, with the election of President Reagan in 1980 and throughout the next two decades, the share of progressive Christian groups shrank dramatically. By 2000, conservative groups had nearly eliminated the gap, with only a 4 percent disadvantage separating them from their ideological rivals.

Figure 14: Relative Distribution of Christian Activist Organizations by Ideological Orientation, 1960-2000

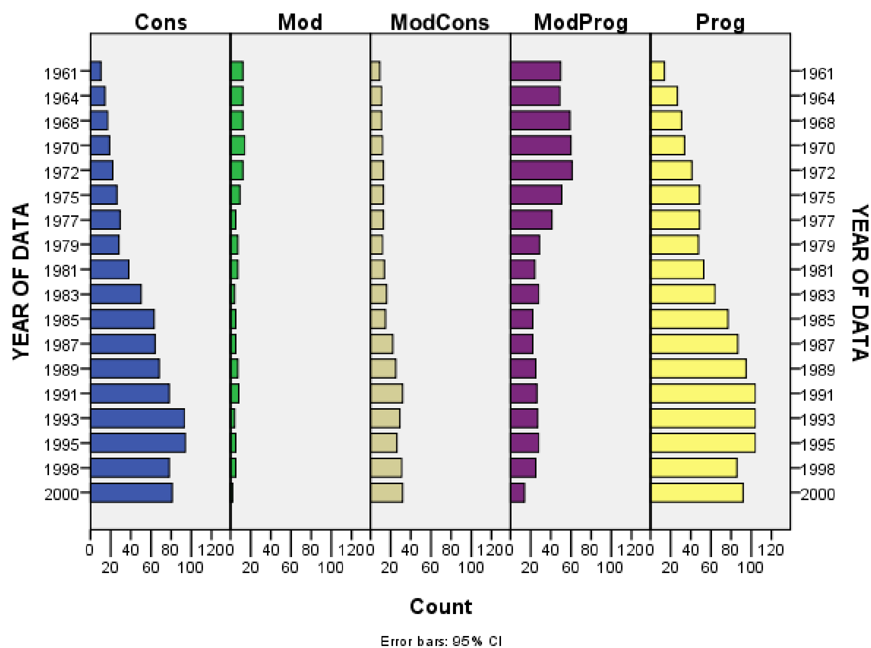


Figure 14 presents similar data in a more detailed fashion, focusing on the distribution of groups per ideological category by year. Again, during no year of observation do conservative Christian groups hold a numerical advantage (in terms of count of discrete organizations) over progressive groups. However, a few findings do suggest significant signs of increased Christian conservative power over time. First, progressive Christian groups reached their apex in share of the population in 1979 and have not remotely approached this high point since. In fact, the dominant trend among progressive groups since that year has been a steady, gradual decline in "sector share." Conservative Christian groups, however, have experienced two peaks of equal size – the first in 1984 and the second in 1994 – suggesting a more resilient resource or cultural foundation ("abeyance structures") upon which to rely in times of diminishing opportunities. Second, whereas the long-term pattern of progressive Christian activism appears to be one of slow decline, the data presented in this table suggest just the opposite for conservative Christian groups. Traditionalist, right-leaning Christian activists enjoyed a 100% increase in "sector share" during the sampled timeframe.

Figure 15: Distribution of Ideological Orientation of Christian Activist Groups, 1961-1969

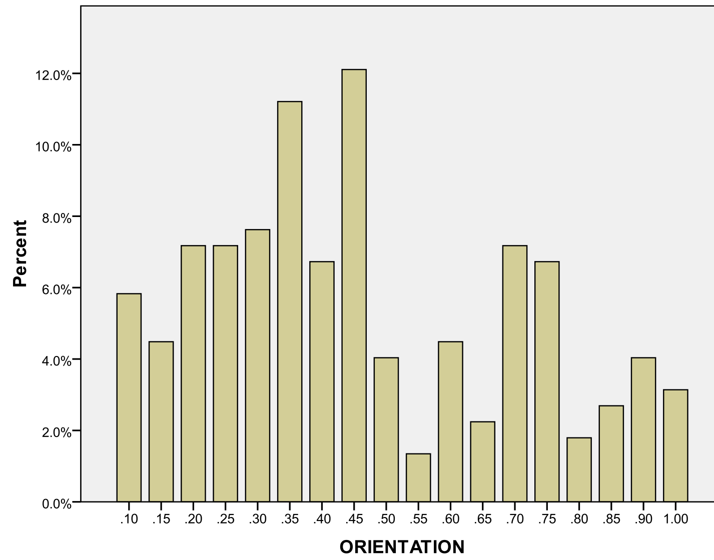


Figure 16: Distribution of Ideological Orientation of Christian Activist Organizations, 1970-1979

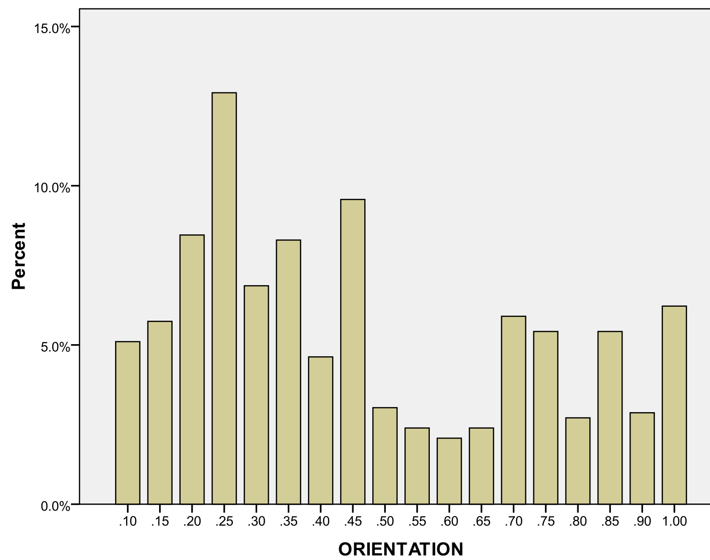


Figure 17: Distribution of Ideological Orientation of Christian Activist Organizations, 1980-1989

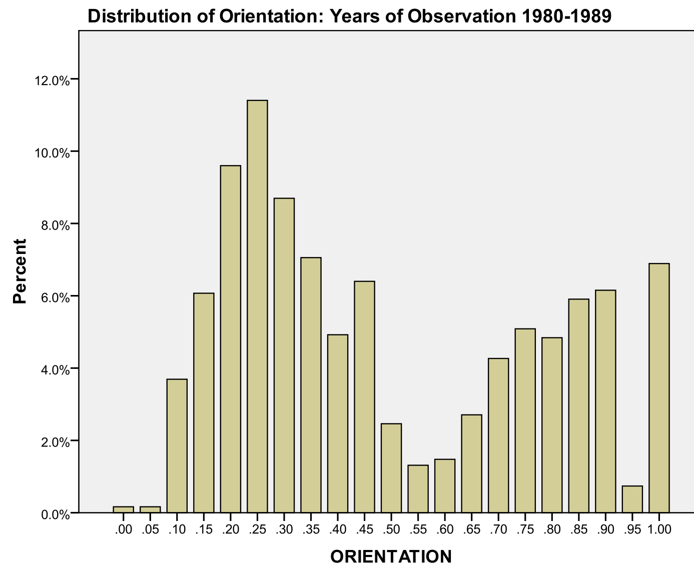
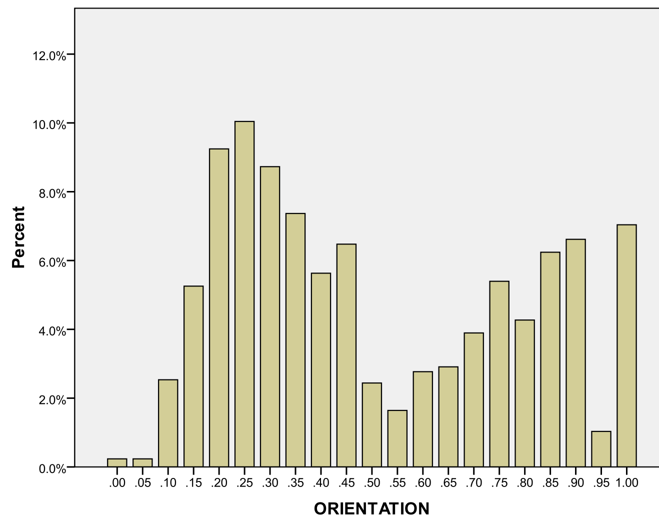


Figure 18: Distribution of Ideological Orientation of Christian Activist Organizations, 1990-2000



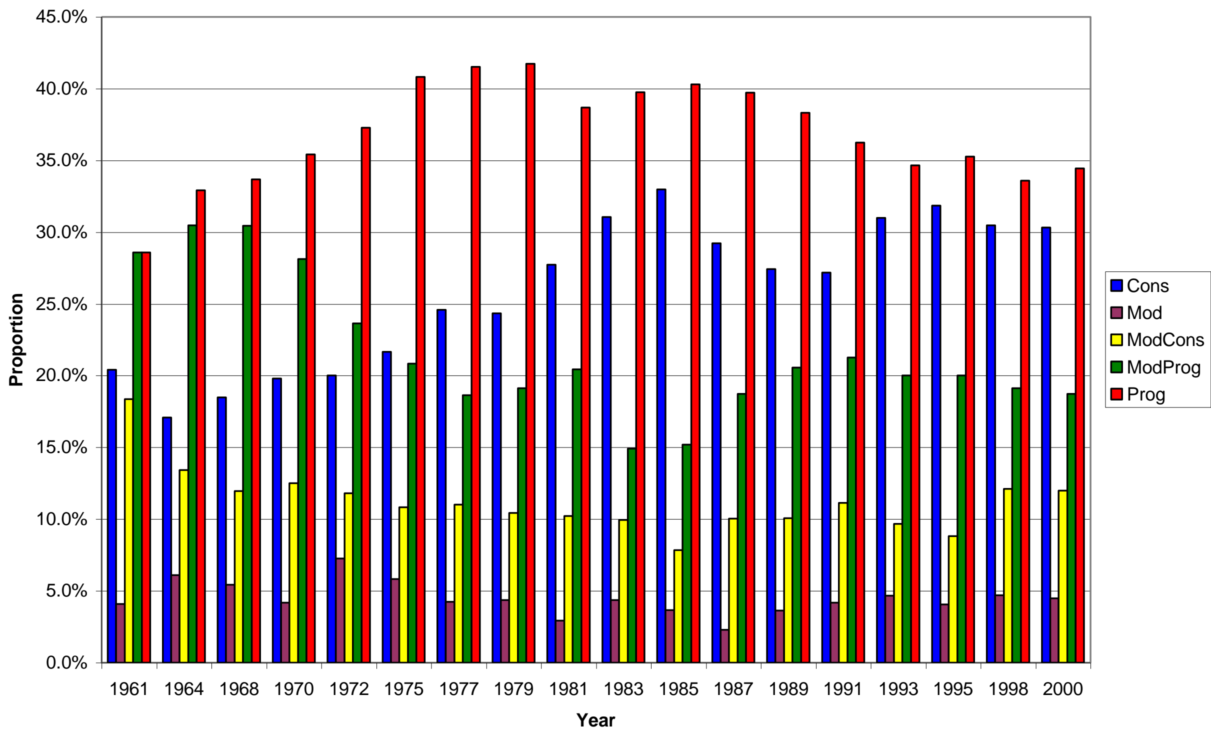
Examining the distribution of ideological orientation of Christian activist groups by decade also reveals telling patterns and confirms similar findings seen in other parts of the analysis (Figure 15). During the 1960s, according to this analysis, most Christian activist organizations clustered toward the left and left-of-center portion of the ideological spectrum. The modal ideology score was .45 during this period, corresponding to "Moderate-Progressive" in the fuzzy-set coding scheme. A decade later, Christian activism had lurched decidedly to the left (Figure 16). The modal ideology score during the 1970s was .25, a solid "Progressive" categorization. This finding roughly corresponds to most mainstream historical accounts of the period, which often portray the period as the nadir of American social movement activity. In statistical terms, Christian activism in the 1960s and 1970s exhibit a "unimodal" distribution in terms of ideological orientation; one peak in the distribution and that peak located consistently to the left of the political center.

Beginning in the 1980s, however, the pattern shifted (Figure 17). Strictly speaking, the modal ideology score was still firmly located left of center, but a gradually emptying of the ideological middle is observed. This finding is consistent with the analysis of Hunter via the "culture wars" thesis, as well as the much-touted "polarization" of American politics discussed in the popular press and to a lesser extent, some scholarly circles. This hollowing out of the political middle over time produced a bimodal distribution of the ideology orientations of Christian activist groups, which clustering by 1989 at both the left and right ends of the spectrum. Polarization naturally also included a significant increase in the number of groups located at the far right (extremely conservative) pole, a phenomenon not seen in previous decades. Conversely, in the 1980s, radical left groups – the ideological mirror-images of the surging conservative groups – became virtually extinct. During the 1990s, this twin pattern of extreme

conservative increase coupled with the disappearance of moderate voices contributed to an overall climate of shrill moral conflict between Christians of opposite socio-political vision (Figure 18). The effect on electoral politics and cultural categories proved to be unprecedented and long-lasting.

Figure 19 presents the relative number of Christian activist groups per year by ideological orientation in one panel. At first glance, this graph appears redundant.

Figure 19: Distribution of Christian Activist Group Ideological Orientation, 1961-2000



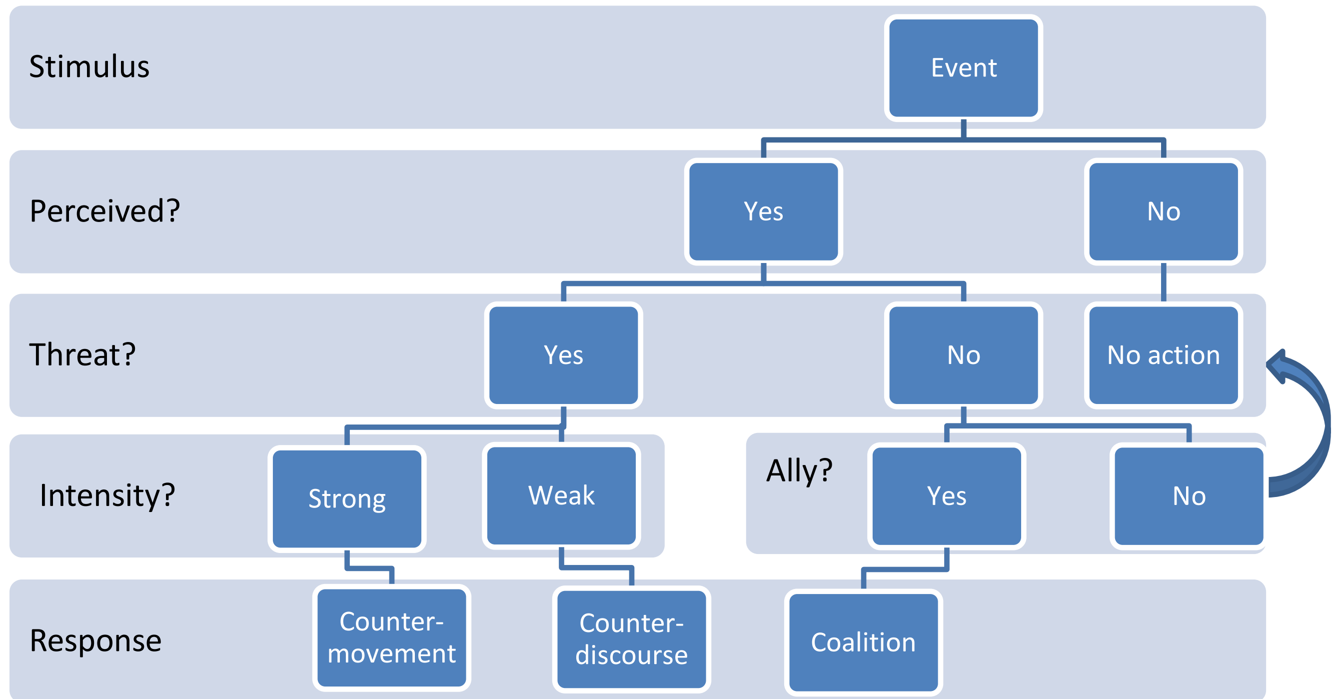
Careful examination, however, reveals a subtle but potentially significant finding. In the late 1970s, progressive Christian organizations surged in number and visibility. After a short-term decline, leftist religious groups resurged to a lesser extent, then began a gradual decade-long denouement that did not substantially abate. This story of rise and fall, however, is not as meaningful nor as significant as the overall ideological dance conducted between this cluster of groups and their polar Christian counterparts. The pattern for right-wing Christian organizations follows what natural scientists call a "phase shift." In laymen's terms, a phase shift refers to two identical frequencies of sound or light in which one of the two frequencies has been slightly displaced horizontally from its originally position. Using the current data, this phenomenon is observed in the rise-fall pattern seen among progressive groups from 1977-1998, which is phase shifted approximately four years to the left (earlier) relative to Christian conservative groups.

I interpret this finding as evidence of slightly time-lagged attempts by conservative Christian organizations to respond to actions perceived as threatening by progressive Christian groups. In some cases, this threat may have manifested as the transgression of moral boundaries or treasured norms held sacred by right-wing groups. In these cases, reactive action would have taken the form of groups founded to off-set the actions taken on specific issues; for example, the launching of anti-ERA groups by right-wing Christians to directly oppose pro-ERA groups founded by left-leaning Christian activists in the 1980s. In other cases, the response may have been far more general and inchoate. Responses of this sort might take the form of political and normative entrepreneurs founding social movement organizations to simply "balance the score" and prevent the further loss of ideological territory to one's opponent; a contemporary version of Gramsci's "war of position" (Gramsci, 1972).

No evidence is found in the current data for a phase shift in the opposite direction – a progressive response to conservative advance. A possible reason for this is that throughout the sampled period, progressive Christian groups maintained a healthy advantage over conservative Christian organizations, thus the urgency of recovering lost ground or dominating the sector was lower. Another possibility is that the time frame itself fails to capture the most historically significant loss of progressive dominance and their possible efforts to reclaim. After the election of Pres. George W. Bush in 2000, conservative Christianity enjoyed political access that it had not experienced in at least a generation, arguably never before. As a result, many observers of American and religion and politics, including sociologists, took note of a distinct panic on the part of progressive Christian organizations and denominations, who felt suddenly evicted from their positions of influence, and the direction of the nation "hijacked" by their opponents on the right. It is probable, therefore, that a phase shift toward the left was seen from 2001-2008, but simply fell outside the time frame sample of the current study. If such a leftward surge did occur during the Bush years, however, it would only provide more evidence of the sort of subtle signaling mechanisms described above

The general pattern of these mechanisms is as follows:

Figure 20: Threat-Response Process in Religious Civil Sphere



Political sociologists have repeatedly documented the sensitivity of social systems, especially the civil sphere, to apprehend at any given time the "zeitgeist" or prevailing ideological climate, and respond in kind, depending on one's moral or ideological commitments (Block, 1977; Sorokin, 1937; Luhmann, 1995). These subtle signaling and feedback mechanisms could serve a crucial but heretofore under-examined role in gradually generating an unintentional form of socio-political stability over the long-term, though certainly the short-term effects will be highly confrontational.

Table 21: Ideological Orientation of Christian Activist Groups by Organizational Type

	Conservative	Moderate/ Conservative	Moderate	Moderate/ Progressive	Progressive
Religious Org	23%	15%	3%	27%	32%
Social Welfare Org	31%	13%	7%	22%	27%
Public Affairs Org	38%	5%	4%	18%	36%

When considered in tandem with previous findings on the steady increase in the proportion of Public Affairs organizations compared to Religious and Social Welfare organizations, this table points to another path by which conservative Christian activist groups have subtly but firmly achieved greater shares of influence and penetration in civil society. Conservative organizations represented a disproportionate share – relative to their numbers in the social movement population -- of the Public Affairs groups regardless of the year of observation. This sector of organizations target their activity almost exclusively at legislative outcomes achieved through the action of the federal government. In this way, the Christian conservatives could still afford to count fewer total organizations on their side of spectrum, yet enjoy important political outcomes as a movement cluster due to their greater proximity to state power.

This somewhat differential comfort level with electoral and institutional politics could also be viewed as a difference in tactical preferences. Data presented below specifically addressing tactical repertoires finds additional support for the argument that conservative Christian groups displayed – or at least developed – a greater tolerance for legislative techniques compared to progressive groups.

RELIGIOUS TRADITION

Generally, denominational affiliations of Christian activist organizations closely tracked their distribution in the religious population. This is to be expected to a large degree. However, in a minority of cases, unexpected and telling deviations from this pattern emerged. Most significant was the large number of activist groups identifying as simply "Christian" – no other detailing descriptors offered – relative to Americans who self-identify using this generic label (Table 22). Findings indicate that this type of organization was the second most common denominational descriptor used, yet only approximately nine percent of respondents use "Christian" – and nothing else – to describe their religious tradition.

Closer reading of these cases finds that most organizations that use the generic "Christian" label do so for two primary reasons. First, the organization represents an umbrella or federation-type structure, comprised of a network of often-diverse and loosely allied smaller groups united around common aims or values. Because of the very general structure of the organization, the relatively non-controversial "Christian" moniker is adopted to speak to the common – though internally varied – religious values of the member groups. Second, and more significantly, the vast majority of organizations featuring the "Christian" generic label in its name or self-description were fiercely conservative, both theologically and politically. Conservative organizations tended to adopt and prominently feature the "Christian" part of their identity much more frequently than progressive groups. A reasonable surmise, supported by a close reading of the longer descriptions provided by the organizations is that conservative religious activists highlighted this aspect of their character as part of larger "authenticity battles" at play within the American religious sphere. The implication being, of course, that those groups

not featuring “Christian” in their titles were in some sense less authentically Christian, less proud of their heritage, or more adrift from the “true” meaning of the label. The choice to include ‘Christian’ within one’s title operates as another subtle cue or framing mechanism to potential recruits and other organizations as to the agenda,

Table 22: Distribution of Christian Activist Organizations by Religious Tradition

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Percent of Population (2005)*	Difference
Non/Multi-Denominational	122	26.5	15.1	**11.4**
Unspecified 'Christian'	107	23.3	8.8	**14.5**
Roman Catholic	91	19.8	21.3	-1.5
Unknown	55	12.0	n/a	n/a
Unitarian-Universalist	12	2.6	1.3	1.3
Presbyterian	11	2.4	4.1	-1.7
Methodist	9	2.0	10.1	**-8.1**
United Church of Christ	9	2.0	3.3	-1.3
Other	9	2.0	2.5	-0.5
Episcopalian	8	1.7	3.5	-1.8
Society of Friends/Quaker	8	1.7	<1	0.8
Lutheran	6	1.3	7.1	**-5.8**
American Baptist	4	.9	1.1	-0.2
Mennonite/Church of Brethren	3	.7	<1	0
Southern Baptist	3	.7	12	**-11.3**
Latter Day Saints/Mormon	2	.4	3	-2.6
Pentecostal	1	.2	1.5	-1.3
Total	**460**	**100.0**	**94.7**	

* Source: Baylor Religion Survey, 2005

Green denotes over-representation. **Red** denotes under-representation.

mission, and identity of the organization, as well as pointing up the conspicuous absence of the label among competing groups, particularly on the left.

The healthy percentage of religious activist organizations identified here as "non/multi-denominational" relative to their size in the population is largely explained by the large number of groups with ecumenical or cross-boundary missions. For example, frequently the largest or most successful organizations working on issues such as anti-war, hunger, temperance, or anti-apartheid were those for whom denominational origins were irrelevant. As a result, ecumenism in the social activism sector can safely be assumed as exaggerated, and bears only distal connections with actual religious ecumenism in the experience of American Christians.

Finally, the disproportionately low numbers of activist groups originating from America's second largest denomination, the Southern Baptists, is somewhat surprising. However, it is important to note, as observed by many previous scholars, that not all sociopolitical activism by religious groups – or even most recently –emanates strictly from denominational bodies or authorities (Wuthnow, 1989; Lindsay, 2007; Scheitle, 2007). Therefore, though the Southern Baptists exhibit only modest *official* expressions in this dataset, their actual representation through para-church organizations such as the National Association of Evangelicals and Focus on the Family is likely very significant, though neither group are officially affiliated with any denomination. As a rule, then, these denominational affiliation data likely systematically underestimate actual denomination activism in the religious sphere; the fact that the relative proportions between this dataset and the actual population remain robust is reassuring and even somewhat unexpected.

Table 23: Religious Tradition of Christian Activist Organizations by Ideological Orientation (Percent of each)

	Conservative	Moderate	Moderate-Conservative	Moderate-Progressive	Progressive
Indeterminate/Unknown	58.2	1.8	12.7	7.3	20.0
Roman Catholic	16.5	4.4	8.8	31.9	38.5
Lutheran	16.7	0	0	50.0	33.3
Methodist	11.1	0	0	33.3	55.6
Presbyterian	9.1	9.1	0	45.5	36.4
Episcopalian	12.5	12.5	12.5	25.0	37.5
Latter Day Saints/Mormon	0	0	0	50.0	50.0
Society of Friends/Quaker	0	0	0	0	100.0
United Church of Christ	22.2	0	0	33.3	44.4
Unitarian-Universalist	0	8.3	0	16.7	75.0
Non/Multi-Denominational	17.2	4.9	10.7	27.9	39.3
Mennonite/Church of Brethren	0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Unspecified 'Christian'	62.6	4.7	11.2	9.3	12.1
American Baptist	0	0	0	25.0	75.0
Southern Baptist	66.7	0	33.3	0	0
Pentecostal	0	0	0	0	100.0
Other	0	11.1	11.1	55.6	22.2

Table 23 rounds out the analysis of denominational affiliation by examining that variable through the lens of ideological orientation. Again, as mentioned above, most organizations that self-identify as generically “Christian” skew strongly toward the right end of the ideological spectrum, with nearly two-thirds of such groups coded as conservative or moderate-conservative. Contrary to recent trends and perhaps popular perception, findings indicate a strong leftward lean among Roman Catholic activist groups, likely due to their several-decade headstart on economic and peace issues. As noted in the peace activist literature, Friends/Quakers exhibited uniformly progressive stances on social issues, most notably their activism against violence and nuclear weapons proliferation.

If conservative Christian groups clung proudly to their faith label, as these data indicate, a near opposite dynamic is observed on the left: a tendency for progressive groups to eschew such exclusive categories in favor of the all-encompassing, ecumenical descriptions. Thus we find nearly two-thirds of organizations with non- or multidenominational identities clustered around the progressive and moderate-progressive ideological orientations. Closer examination reveals that these organizations are often indistinguishable from secular groups at first glance; it is only after careful reading of the mission and values of the group that one discerns their religious commitments. Also common among this category of organization is the subordination of religious identity (varieties of Protestantism, most often) to the issue objectives of the group. For example, Bread for the World is one of the largest and longest-lived Christian activist organizations working on food security and anti-poverty solutions in the U.S. Its membership represents the full diversity of American Christianity, and it has no denominational affiliation or majority. With no prior knowledge or without considerable research, however, it is difficult to discern that Bread for the World is not one of many *secular* anti-hunger organizations. This difference regarding the degree to which Christian activists publicize their faith identity emerges in several locations with consequence throughout this study.

The remainder of the findings from this table generally aligns with conventional expectations regarding the sociopolitical orientation of American Christian denominations.

ISSUES

Viewed at the highest level of generality and aggregation, the issues which Christian activist groups engaged is striking in their diversity, yet simultaneously, their divergence. At this level, we see firm evidence of what Martin Marty many decades dubbed the "two-party system" in American Christianity, or what Hunter nearly 20 years ago called "culture wars" – the stark bifurcation of the country's dominant religious tradition into camps clinging to "orthodoxy" versus some variety of "progressivism." In the coding procedure utilized in this research, I consciously reify this dichotomy, but not without empirical reinforcement. To a significant degree, it only stands to reason that a study of religious activists would display such diametric, strident ideologies. Holding such views, either individually or collectively, could be argued as a minimum entry fee to the field of social activism altogether. Prospective members or recruits to movements self-select on the basis of strongly convicted positions, which often cluster around the poles of opinion.

Table 24: Ten Most Common Issues Among Christian Activist Groups, 1960-2000

Issue	**Total**	**Approx. Orientation of Issue**
1. Peace/nonviolence/anti-militarism	469	P
2. Moral decline/traditional values/family preservation/anti-gay	299	C
3. Pro-life/anti-abortion/anti-contraception	227	C
4. General social justice/social action	120	P
4. Anti-racism/race relations	120	P
5. Direct service/charity	106	M
6. Women's rights/gender equality/pro-ERA/feminism	71	P
7. Gay rights and advocacy	69	P
8. Temperance/alcoholism	57	C
9. Ecumenism	37	M
10. Greater role of religion/theocracy	15	C

What is somewhat surprising about this data, however, is that the respective "families" of issues empirically represented are so divergent. The familiar pattern identified by Marty and Hunter maintains. On the one hand, nearly half of all Christian activist organizations examined are to some degree active on issues which have historically been categorized as "conservative," "traditionalist," or "orthodox." These include preservation of the traditional family and its values, the general decline of traditional morality, opposition to homosexuality and sexual freedom of many sorts, so-called "life" issues, such as anti-abortion, anti-contraception, and anti-euthanasia, the preservation of traditional gender roles and the defeat of gender equality policies, and the prohibition of intoxicants, particularly alcohol and illegal drugs. If a common thread may be woven through these groups it is the idea that morality is primarily a personal, individual, or "lifeworld-centered" concern. Sacred values, cherished practices, and significant modes of living are seen to emanate mainly from the formative, intimate, and primary social institutions of human life: sex, children, home, and family. Their defense, through religious activism if necessary, is judged to be essential for the maintenance of the civilization.

By contrast, another 40 percent of Christian activist groups engaged issues with very different origins and trajectories in the social milieu. Often termed "progressive," "liberal," or "modernist," these organizations were involved in social topics which clustered around a more "socialized" notion of morality. Issues typically identified with such organizations include: civil rights and race relations, anti-war and nonviolence, gender equality, gay rights, and what has come to be known as "social justice," an imprecise, catch-all term typically including redistributive social welfare policy, non-military foreign interventions, and more recently, ecological concern. Among so-called Christian progressive organizations, the truly urgent moral transgressions in the world are

those occurring generally remotely, what Boltanski called "suffering at a distance" (Boltanski, 2006). The problems considered are large in scope and complexity, have persisted for generations if not centuries, and generally involve massive social institutions with huge impersonal bureaucracies. Examples include the labor/capital problem, reduction of pollution and greenhouse gasses, political enfranchisement of marginalized social groups, or the prevention of total nuclear war. The key arena of moral action for leftist Christian groups, then, is more "system-centered."

This distinction, however, should not be overstated. Significantly, and not accidentally, the two sets of issues are set up as almost mirror images of each other. This is particularly true in the case of gender and homosexuality issues, and becomes more obvious in analysis presented below. It is imprecise, therefore, to state categorically that the two "parties" of American Christianity simply see the sociopolitical world differently and thereby generate very different expressions of social activism based on those paradigms.

A more accurate interpretation of the phenomenon, based on a careful examination of the data, is that these two very differently equipped branches of American Christianity are in a constant, iterative, and interactive dance. Frequently, organizational founding and emergence follows closely a perception of real or imagined threat to core values from the *external* environment, whether they be new laws or rulings, policies, or more informally, a feeling of increasing cultural endangerment. However, this data indicates that organizations may also emerge when they perceive that civil society, typically indicated by its discursive products, is becoming unbalanced by their ideological, political, or religious rivals. When confronted by the possibility that one's values, vision, or way of life might be drowned out by the action or speech of those who have already entered civil society – often in very public and influential ways – organized

religious action is likely to become more urgent. Seen in this way, “threats” must be defined as residing both externally in the general sociopolitical environment, and intra-organizationally (meso-level) within civil society itself.

The dance itself, then, emerges as a rather improvised, game-like interaction, characterized by organizations intermittently *cooperating and competing* within and across sectors of civil society. The dominant pattern regarding the topic at hand -- issue sectors-- is as follows:

Table 25: Sector Dynamics Matrix

	Within issue sector	**Across issue sector**
Cooperation	Rare	Common
Competition	Common	Rare

The findings provide very few instances of Christian activist groups cooperating across the ideological chasm that runs through the middle of American political culture, and described famously by Marty, Hunter, and others. This divide appears to be a durable, and I argue, even necessary feature of society and culture, though its specific location and boundaries shift dramatically over time.

Table 26: Change in Issue Dominance Among Christian Activist Organizations, 1960-2000 (Number of organizations, rank, and change in rank)

	1960s		1970s			1980s			1990s			2000		
ISSUE	# of Groups	Rank	# of Groups	Rank	Change in Rank	# of Groups	Rank	Change in Rank	# of Groups	Rank	Change in Rank	# of Groups	Rank	Change in Rank
Anti-communism	10	14	42	11	3	58	14	-3	0	21	-7	13	21	0
Anti-modernism//anti-secular/anti-atheism	9	15	54	7	8	97	5	2	89	10	-5	15	20	-10
Anti-poverty/urban renewal	0	21	22	20	1	0	21	-1	0	22	-1	10	23	-1
Anti-racism/race relations	37	2	100	2	0	69	12	-10	76	15	-3	19	11	4
Civil rights/racial justice	22	6	62	3	3	86	9	-6	82	11	-2	20	10	1
Conscientious objection/anti-draft	15	9	45	9	0	47	20	-11	0	23	-3	8	24	-1
Conservative/traditional theology, Anti-WCC	0	29	23	19	10	0	22	-3	0	24	-2	8	25	-1
Conservative: General/smaller government	0	22	0	21	1	0	23	-2	62	20	3	19	12	8
Direct service/charity, maternal support, childcare	14	10	45	10	0	75	11	-1	145	3	8	41	3	0
Economic development//foreign aid	7	19	39	12	7	0	24	-12	82	12	12	21	9	3
Economic justice/social welfare	12	12	26	16	-4	66	13	3	70	18	-5	16	18	0
Ecumenism	14	11	59	4	7	58	15	-11	81	13	2	18	14	-1
Foreign policy/foreign relations/trade	8	17	0	22	-5	49	19	3	92	9	10	17	17	-8
Gay rights and advocacy	0	23	0	23	0	51	17	6	75	17	0	19	13	4
Greater role of religion/theocracy	20	7	50	8	-1	93	7	1	105	6	1	29	6	0
Human rights/anti-torture/POWs/amnesty	0	24	0	24	0	90	8	16	99	7	1	24	8	-1
Latin America/Central America/land reform	0	25	0	25	0	0	25	0	68	19	6	12	22	-3
Missions/evangelism	9	16	28	15	1	0	26	-11	0	25	1	8	26	-1
Moral decline/traditional family preservation/anti-gay	27	3	56	6	-3	121	2	4	183	2	0	52	1	1
Nuclear arms/disarmament	0	26	0	26	0	56	16	10	81	14	2	16	19	-5
Obscenity/anti-porn/decency	7	20	0	27	-7	0	27	0	0	26	1	7	28	-2
Peace/nonviolence/anti-militarism	50	1	126	1	0	157	1	0	191	1	0	44	2	-1
Pro-life/anti-abortion/anti-contraception	0	27	0	28	-1	116	4	24	141	4	0	40	4	0
Religious freedom/church-state boundary	11	13	26	17	-4	50	18	-1	76	16	2	18	15	1
Sabbath protection	8	18	0	29	-11	0	28	1	0	27	1	3	29	-2
Social action: General/Social Justice	25	4	58	5	-1	121	3	2	127	5	-2	30	5	0
Social teaching dissemination/CST	24	5	35	13	-8	81	10	3	0	28	-18	18	16	12
Temperance/alcoholism	19	8	35	14	-6	0	29	-15	0	29	0	8	27	2
Women's rights/feminism/ERA	0	28	25	18	10	97	6	12	97	8	-2	28	7	1

This rather intimidating table (Table 26) requires substantial explanation and summation. It displays the relative prevalence of the top 29 issue niches among Christian activist organizations that were active during each of the four decades examined. The table permits a longitudinal snapshot of how many religious activist groups engaged each

major issue per decade, and how these patterns shifted over time. Rank ordering of groups-per-issue was used in order to provide a standardized measure of dominance, as group frequencies alone would be unadjusted for the growing overall size of the activist population.

We observe four major trends in issue niche data from 1960-2000. First, as confirmed using other indicators, peace, anti-militarism, and nonviolence was until very recently the issue most engaged by Christian activist organizations. Its prevalence remained high, steady, and generally far ahead of the nearest issue niche. Part of the reason for its popularity no doubt stems from the issue's ability to syncretically fit in rather seamlessly with other similar issues, such as economic justice or race relations. Second, several issue niches did not exist for all practical purposes in the activist sector until the 1980s, such as anti-nuclear, pro-life, gay rights, and human rights activism. After the 1980s, these niches solidified their position and never faded from the top ranks. This sudden appearance of these rather large activist sectors roughly corresponds to events in the external political environment, but not perfectly. As Goodwin & Jasper (1999), Benford & Snow (2000), Sewell (2005), and Becker (1995) have observed, there is nothing automatic about the translation of objective historical events, such as the increase in stockpiled U.S. nuclear weapons, into social movements. This complex cultural process requires the active and often emotional engagement of human actors transforming "happenings" into "outrages" and "transgressions." That is, it is nothing less than the artful rendering of subjective *meanings* around inert objective *things*, the essence of human cultural activity.

Third, a number of issue niches which began the 1960s atop the activism rankings ended the 20th century near the bottom, or heavily compromised. This pattern was true for civil rights and race relations, ecumenism, missions, social teaching dissemination,

and temperance. The reasons for these declines are diverse; no underlying cause explains them all. However, a few major factors appear to account for most of the declines. One of the most significant reasons is also one of the most unlikely: success. In the case of civil rights, and ecumenism, the achievement of many of the explicit aims of the movements, such as the passage of federal laws and the reduction in many forms of intrareligious animosity, led to the natural decline in support for related enterprises and groups. Another major reason for the gradual erosion of these niches is what is colloquially referred to as "withering on the vine" referring to a slow, but willful neglect of the niche by resource-suppliers. For example, the dissemination of social teaching, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, was for 30 years a central mainstay feature of the mission of the American Christian churches. After the 1970s, funds, personnel, and facilities were removed from social teaching formulation and dissemination per se and rechanneled into purposes seen as higher priority. For the Protestant churches, this higher priority was frequently membership retention and facilities maintenance. For Catholics, it was often support for the incipient right-to-life movement, either through official church or para-church outlets. For temperance, the dynamic at play is the polar opposite of that seen in the civil rights case. Whereas the work of the SCLC and other Christian groups active on race relations had succeeded in gently aligning the moral compass and symbol system of the mainstream political culture with their own, slightly newer and more inclusive definition of equality and freedom, the anti-intoxicant movements of the 20th century found few takers for their moral vision. If anything, the profoundly anti-establishment era of the 1960s-1970s ushered in an age when experimentation with altered states of consciousness was not only commonplace, but welcomed, even expected. More importantly, anti-intoxicant reformers of the 20th century were burdened by the failures of their Prohibition-era predecessors, and had not substantially innovated their "ban it"

approach to the new powerful drugs of the time. As a result, their overall influence within the Christian activist sector of the late 20th century was a mere shadow of their sway in the 19th.

Finally, and contrary to some popular descriptions, activism around moral decline and traditional values has been a regular and dominant feature of American Christian activism since at least the 1960s. The main change over the period has been the gradual increase in the sector share of this niche, emerging finally as the top ranked issue by the year 2000. But there is no evidence that concern about the traditional family, sexuality, and a nebulous erosion in moral codes is a product of only the last approximately twenty years, when Christian conservatives achieved unprecedented visibility and influence in electoral politics.

Further supports for these findings are provided through the supplemental analysis below:

Table 27: Five Most Common Issues Among Christian Activist Organizations, By Decade

1960-1969

Issue	Frequency
1. Peace/nonviolence/antimilitarism	46
2. Anti-racism/race relations	37
3. Temperance/alcoholism	22
3. Moral decline/traditional values/anti-gay	22
4. Greater role of religion/theocracy	15
5. General social justice/social action	12
	154

1970-1979

Issue	Frequency
1. Peace/nonviolence/antimilitarism	114
2. Anti-racism/race relations	83
3. Moral decline/traditional values/anti-gay	38
4. Ecumenism	37
5. Temperance/alcoholism	35
	307

1980-1989

Issue	Frequency
1. Peace/nonviolence/antimilitarism	145
2. General social justice/social action	108
3. Pro-life/anti-abortion/anti-contraception	99
4. Moral decline/traditional values/anti-gay	79
5. Women's rights/feminism/gender equality/pro-ERA	71
	502

1990-1999

Issue	Frequency
1. Peace/nonviolence/antimilitarism	164
2. Moral decline/traditional values/anti-gay	160
3. Pro-life/anti-abortion/anti-contraception	128
4. Direct service/charity	106
5. Gay rights and advocacy	69
	627

Table 28: Proportion of Christian Activist Groups Per Issue Niche by Decade

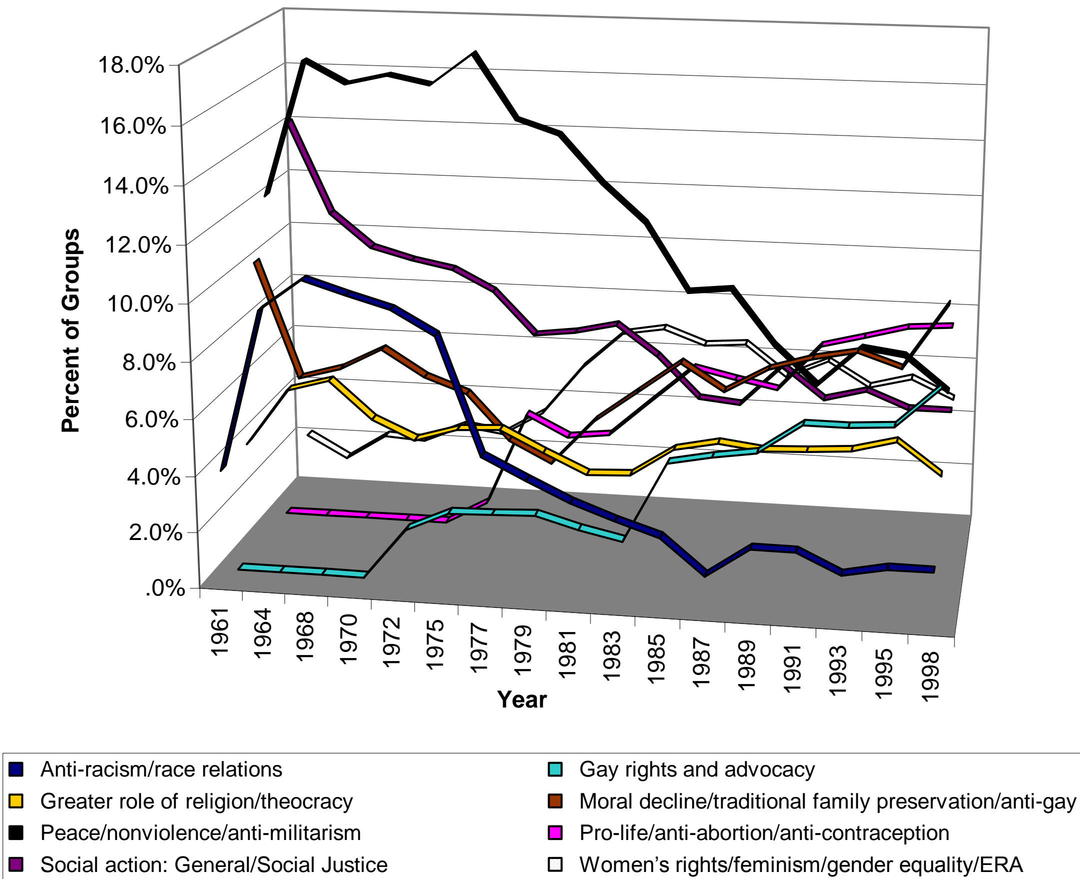
	1960s*	1970s*	1980s*	1990s*
Anti-modernism/fundamentalist/anti-secular/anti-atheism	3.7%	4.4%	5.3%	2.9%
Anti-racism/race relations	8.2%	7.8%	3.5%	2.0%
Civil rights/racial justice	2.9%	5.1%	4.1%	3.4%
Gay rights and advocacy		1.9%	3.5%	6.7%
Greater role of religion/theocracy	5.6%	4.8%	4.5%	4.9%
Moral decline/traditional family preservation/anti-gay	7.6%	5.4%	6.3%	8.3%
Peace/nonviolence/anti-militarism	15.2%	16.1%	11.3%	7.0%
Pro-life/anti-abortion/anti-contraception		1.7%	4.7%	7.8%
Religious freedom/church-state boundary	3.8%	3.6%	4.0%	4.5%
Social action: General/Social Justice	11.7%	8.1%	6.2%	4.9%
Social teaching dissemination/CST	5.9%	3.5%	3.1%	2.3%
Temperance/alcoholism	7.6%	5.4%	3.3%	2.4%
Women's rights/feminism/gender equality/ERA	1.8%	3.2%	5.8%	5.3%

*Rolling averages

Tables 27-28 and Figure 21 are particularly useful in summarizing the relative distribution of Christian activist groups among the major issue niches over the four decades examined. Many of the patterns here confirm findings from previous analysis, such as the fairly stable presence of peace activism, as well as the precipitous decline of civil rights and temperance activism. Prominent in this table, however, is the fact that the two largest issue niches in the 1990s– moral decline and pro-life activism – come from the conservative side of ideological spectrum. Thirty years prior, that statement could not be made, as the sector was dominated by peace groups, general social justice activists, and those struggling for better relations between the races. The "public agenda" of religious social activists changed significantly in these four decades, and with it, the

concomitant relative influence of groups distributed at different points along the ideological spectrum.

Figure 21: Changes in Issue Niche Among Christian Activist Organizations, 1960-2000



Also significant, and most obviously displayed in Figure 21, is the trend toward issue diversification over time. Whereas a handful of issue niches such as peace, general social justice and moral decline dominated the Christian activist sphere in the 1960s, together representing more than 35% of all Christian activism, by the 1990s, a greater

diversity of niches was present, the dominance of the Big Three having been diluted among several smaller, more focused, and more post-scarcity/lifeworld concerns than in prior decades.

Table 29: Twenty Most Prevalent Issue Niches Among Christian Activist Groups Formed 1975-1985

Issue Niche	Percent
Moral decline/traditional families/anti-gay	12.7
Pro-life/anti-abortion	7.7
Gay rights and advocacy	7.2
Latin America/Central America	6.6
Peace/nonviolence/anti-militarism	6.6
Religious freedom/church-state issues	5.0
Women's rights/gender equality	3.9
Greater role of religion/theocracy	3.3
Human rights/amnesty/POWs	3.3
Civil rights/racial justice	2.8
General conservative/smaller government	2.8
General social justice	2.8
Anti-modernism/anti-secular	2.2
Creationism	2.2
Hunger/food safety	2.2
Media reform/media violence	2.2
Anti-communism	1.7
Korea/Taiwan/Philippines	1.7
Nuclear arms/disarmament	1.7
Prison reform/criminal justice	1.7

Figure 21, a chart displaying founding dates of organizations by ideological orientation shows a significant spike in foundings between 1975 and 1985. What kind of organizations were these? Why so many at this time?

Table 29 assists in answering these questions. One of the major hypotheses of this research was that ideologically-inflected Christian activism – here defined as progressive or conservative –would anticipate rather than follow larger trends in American politics. The above table also provides one strong piece of evidence to support this hypothesis.

There is wide consensus amongst political scientists and comparative political sociologists that the 1980s represents one of most conservative periods in American political history, both fiscally and socially. The election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, the full implementation of neo-liberal economics and aggressive privatization, a full-bore attack on obscenity and intoxicants, and an unabashed linking of American destiny with Christian themes were central features of this period, which lingered well into the early 1990s as well.

The data above indicate that seeds for this epochal transformation in institutional politics may have begun in the civil sphere, led by Christian activists. Thirty-seven percent of all Christian activist organizations formed between 1975 and 1985 were either active on moral decline/traditional values or pro-life issues. Given that the Reagan administration made both of these issues cornerstones of both rhetoric and policy during its tenure, it is reasonable to conclude that the heavy preliminary activism conservative Christians in civil society some five to eight years prior was instrumental in cultivating the *electoral* political environment conducive to his victory. In so doing, they not only created tactical political opportunities for their own immediate movement ends, such as increasing awareness about the decline of the traditional family, or protesting abortion clinics, but also created longer-term strategic opportunities *vis a vis* greater access to institutional power in the federal government. A political exchange had occurred: Christian conservatives mobilized to ensure that the best representative of their political

vision was elected president, greatly expanding and improving the efficiency of the grassroots political campaign. In exchange, representatives of major conservative Christian groups would expect and receive unprecedented access to the halls of power once Reagan was elected. Lindsay (2008) describes a similar process occurring preceding and during the George W. Bush administration as well, though by that time, two decades later, the diversity, size, and durability of religious-political networks had increased dramatically.

TACTICS

The analysis of tactical repertoires is essential for any serious investigation of social movements. One of the fundamental lessons of 20th century collective action research was that transitions in the tactics employed by activists represent key moments in evolution of the movements involved, but also relate to larger social forces (Tilly, 1975). As such, these tactical shifts can be seen as markers or shortcuts permitting analysts to better contextualize and understand macro-historical conditions of the period. The longitudinal design of this research and its careful measurement of tactics employed by each organization allows for clear insight into these shifts and what the might indicate about the changing political landscapes of each era.

Table 30: Frequencies of Tactics Used by Christian Activist Organizations, Cross-Sectional

TACTIC NAME	**FREQUENCY**	
Public awareness, consciousness raising	1822	
Legislation/public policy	943	
Church outreach	766	
Research	732	
Training/leadership training/workshops	684	
Lobbying	534	
Seminars/conferences, forums	523	
Federation/central organization/coordination	506	
Coalition building	466	
Speakers	391	
Media outreach	380	
Community organizing/grassroots organizing/civic engagement	351	
Publications, clearinghouse	302	
Litigation/legal defense/legal support	237	
Political organizing/political action	225	
Advocacy	217	
Direct action/boycotts/civil disobedience	184	

Youth outreach/youth training/youth ministry	168	
Protest/rallies/marches	162	
Media ministry	137	
Financial support/grantmaking	122	
Prayer	121	
Mobilization	84	
Technical assistance	84	
Official resolutions	82	
Retreats	61	
Parallel institutions	40	
Vigils	28	
Divestment	21	
Fasting	18	

Table 30 shows the overwhelming use of what I termed “public awareness and consciousness-raising” tactics by Christian activist groups. The tactical category included any effort to educate, inform, alert, or raise visibility of the main issue or causes of the organization. In an important sense, this is the minimum criterion for any social movement. No awareness, no activism. As a result, almost every group included this tactic within their repertoire.

Somewhat surprising, though, was the next most used tactic, that of legislative and public policy engagement. This tactic includes bill tracking and monitoring, legislative analysis, and calls to action directed at constituents. Such a high level of interest in and activism directed toward governmental decision-making supports the general arguments of state-centered theorists, and in conjunction with other findings below regarding the decline of conventional protest tactics, suggests a fundamental transformation in the way American Christians directed their activism during the last four decades of the 20th century. The general trend appears to be toward the support and maintenance of a small, bureaucratized class of professional activists, often located in Washington, D.C., who focus their energies on the creation and promotion of public

policy that is in line with the moral vision of constituents (Skocpol & Fiorina, 2000). Organizationally, the outcome is often groups in which the obligations of membership are little more than making annual donations to support the expert legislative analysis conducted by a handful of professionals. These experts may or may not share the religious views of the sponsoring organization. More significantly, the emphasis on direct action, grassroots mobilization, and local involvement is gradually if not radically vanished. Social-structurally, the final result is a high degree of isomorphism between the federal state and civil society (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983). Further analysis reveals that these processes did not happen uniformly, however, and the internal tactical variations within the sector correlated with greater or lesser success in the larger political sphere.

Another significant feature in Table 30 is the rather frequent use of church outreach, which I defined as efforts by Christian activist groups to deliver their sociopolitical messages to individual houses of worship, with the intent of winning their support either as a church or as individual members. Church outreach may be seen as a uniquely religious form of grassroots mobilization in which persuasive and recruitment oriented messages must be framed in resonant Christian symbols and values. Typically church outreach occurs within fairly homophilous religious families; Roman Catholics, for example, are not likely to conduct outreach to Southern Baptists because of numerous theological and sociological barriers made more impassable by history. Church outreach may also be viewed as a religious mode of social networking. In the last ten to 15 years, social movement scholars have recognized the central role of network structures as the very nerve fibers that give rise to and animate collective action. In the field of religious social activism, the nodes (or neurons, keeping with the organism metaphor) are churches. Interconnected churches sharing information, personnel, values, and a utopian vision appear at the core of each instance of successful religious activism, such as the

Civil Rights movement and the New Christian Right. Such church networks are also often in the midst of successful activism of any sort, such as the triumphs of the Industrial Areas Foundation and the United Farm Workers of America in the 1970s and 1980s.

Table 31: Ranked Frequency of Tactics with Changes in Rankings, 1961-2000

ISSUE NAME	1960s Rank	1970s Rank	1980s Rank	1990s Rank	2000 Rank	Variance	Pattern
Legislation/public policy	2	2	2	3	3	0.3	
Public awareness, consciousness raising	1	1	1	1	1	0	
Research	13	9	3	2	2	24.7	+
Speakers	20	18	12	8	7	34	+
Seminars/conferences, forums	5	11	6	6	6	5.7	
Training/leadership training/workshops	6	5	5	5	5	0.2	
Media outreach	18	6	8	13	14	23.2	+
Media ministry	19	19	19	21	19	0.8	
Publications, clearinghouse	9	15	14	11	11	6	
Coalition building	4	4	10	10	10	10.8	-
Church outreach	3	3	7	4	4	2.7	
Community organizing/grassroots organizing/civic engagement	8	7	11	12	13	6.7	-
Political organizing/political action	16	17	13	15	17	2.8	
Financial support/grantmaking	7	22	23	17	21	43	-
Federation/central organization/coordination	10	8	9	9	9	0.5	
Protest/rallies/marches	22	20	15	18	23	10.3	+/-
Direct action/boycotts/civil disobedience	11	13	18	20	20	17.3	-
Advocacy	14	14	20	14	12	9.2	-/+
Litigation/legal defense/legal support	15	12	16	16	16	3	
Youth outreach/youth training/youth ministry	17	16	17	19	18	1.3	
Lobbying	12	10	4	7	8	9.2	+
Mobilization	24	24	21	25	22	2.7	
Divestment	26	29	26	29	30	3.5	-
Official resolutions	21	25	22	26	27	6.7	-
Prayer	25	21	24	22	15	15.3	+
Vigils	27	27	28	27	28	0.3	

Fasting	28	30	29	30	29	0.7	
Technical assistance	23	23	27	23	24	3	
Retreats	29	28	25	24	25	4.7	+
Parallel institutions	30	26	30	28	26	4	+

Using a slightly different technique, Table 31 shows the change in aggregate tactical preferences over the four decades examined. It also reports a measure of variance across the years, and an indication of general pattern, if one was observed. Outstanding in this table is the extraordinary growth in popularity of research and media outreach as activist tactics. Why might these have increased? One reasonable hypothesis is that the overall level of societal penetration by mass media increased dramatically during this period, particularly by broadcast media, thus necessitating that Christian activist groups adapt their repertoires by adding press relations departments, developing media kits and press releases, and incorporating media framing as part of their everyday routines. Failing to accommodate to such changes as cable television, 24-hour broadcasting, and the Internet would result in certain decline in influence relative to those organizations which did adapt. The explanation for the expansion in research as a tactic fits hand in hand with this hypothesis. In addition to providing the raw material needed for the first and most important tactic of Christian activist groups – public awareness – research conducted by the organization provides it with enhanced access to media outlets through the provision of objective information. Reports, books, fact sheets, "report cards," raw data, and surveys may be released to news organizations as background for communications designed to also enhance the public visibility and influence of the activist group. Such information may also be used as direct communication or premiums to members,

constituents, and potential recruits. Through the rise of tactics such as media outreach and in-house research, and the decline of civil disobedience and direct action (which plummeted nine points in the ranks from 1960-2000), many Christian activist organizations took on the character of think-tanks rather than protesters in the years after 1985.

Finally, what of the specifically religious character of these organizations? Included in the list of tactics are approaches and techniques that a social movement analyst would not find in the repertoire of a garden-variety protest group. These include: prayer, fasting, retreats, vigils, media ministry[1], and youth ministry[2]. With the exception of church outreach, none of these uniquely religious tactics registered in the top half of frequency of use among all Christian activist groups. Conventional, tried-and-true tactics commonly found amongst similar secular activists, such workshops, community organizing, and lobbying dominated the repertoires of this population of religious activists as well. Unmeasured through the methodology of this study, however, is the high probability of the religious *inflection* of otherwise secular tactics. For example, the specific content of leadership training sponsored by a Christian activist group such as Pax Christi may take on a "discipleship" motif, which would entail different emotional and symbolic resonances than a similar training held by Amnesty International, which does not as easily elicit feelings of sacred duty, even though many secular activists may also be privately religious. My preliminary analysis of organizational descriptions provided by the *Encyclopedia of Associations* suggests that the fusion of religious language and

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[1] A "media ministry" is defined as mass media outlets owned and operated solely by the Christian activist group, such as television and radio stations, or Christian-oriented film and audio-cassette manufacturing facilities.

[2] "Youth ministry" is defined as Christian-oriented outreach to people under the age of 18, usually with an explicit purpose of influencing their moral and ethical values. Subtle sociopolitical messages are often included as well.

symbolism with tactics shared with secular activists is widespread, if not pervasive. Thus, the actual level of "religiousness" of tactics used by Christian activists is likely under-estimated when measured though raw frequency counts of manifest tactics.

Table 32: Tactical Preferences of Christian Activist Groups by Ideological Orientation, Cross-Sectional

	Conservative	Moderate-Conservative	Moderate	Moderate-Progressive	Progressive
Legislation/public policy	10%	13%	0%	8%	11%
Public awareness/consciousness raising	24%	19%	24%	20%	22%
Research	6%	10%	10%	6%	10%
Speakers	1%	8%	0%	3%	3%
Seminars/conferences	5%	4%	5%	5%	4%
Training/workshops	4%	6%	10%	9%	5%
Media outreach	8%	4%	10%	3%	1%
Media ministry	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Publications/clearinghouse	3%	0%	5%	2%	0%
Coalition-building	1%	0%	10%	5%	5%
Church outreach	1%	10%	5%	8%	4%
Community/grassroots organizing	3%	0%	5%	3%	4%
Political organizing/political action	5%	0%	5%	2%	1%
Financial support/grantmaking	0%	0%	5%	2%	3%
Federation/coordination	7%	2%	5%	11%	4%
Protest/rallies/marches	2%	0%	0%	2%	3%
Direct action//civil disobedience	2%	2%	0%	1%	6%
Advocacy	0%	2%	0%	2%	3%
Litigation/legal defense	1%	8%	0%	2%	1%
Youth outreach/youth training	2%	0%	0%	0%	2%
Lobbying	8%	4%	0%	0%	6%
Mobilization	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Official resolutions	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Prayer	2%	4%	0%	3%	1%
Technical assistance	0%	0%	5%	2%	1%
Retreats	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Perhaps the most telling findings relate to the distribution of tactics across the ideological spectrum, displayed in Table 32. Supporting the findings of Diamond (1995) and scholars from the resource mobilization school is the significant investment in communications-related tactics by conservative Christian activists, especially when examined in comparison to their ideological counterparts. Right-leaning groups had a ten-fold advantage over progressive activists in media outreach, while media ministry was unknown amongst left-leaning Christian organizations. Part of this cluster of findings can be explained by the long tradition of effective use of mass communications by traditionalist and evangelical Christian groups, be they political or merely religious. Evangelism is a "ministry of the Word," and the word cannot be conveyed without an adequate medium. Over the course of the 20th century, this medium has taken the form of prevailing technologies of the period: leaflets, tracts, radio, record albums, and more recently, television and digital media. The considerable communications infrastructure set in place for evangelistic purposes was readily adapted for sociopolitical activism as the need presented itself during moments of mobilization.

Also apparent from this table is the significant preference for political organizing among conservative Christian groups compared to progressive groups. Such a willingness to engage in traditional institutional political methods – voter registration, candidate forums, and even the occasional risky endorsement – is a relatively recent phase in the relationship between traditionalist Christians and the state. More significantly, this bolder posture toward the political process greatly facilitated the efforts of parties and candidates to cultivate this large and attractive voting bloc, a strategy which began in earnest in the late 1970s, and to great effect.

In contrast to this more electoral-focus of political action, progressive Christian groups displayed much higher use of conventional direct action tactics, including civil

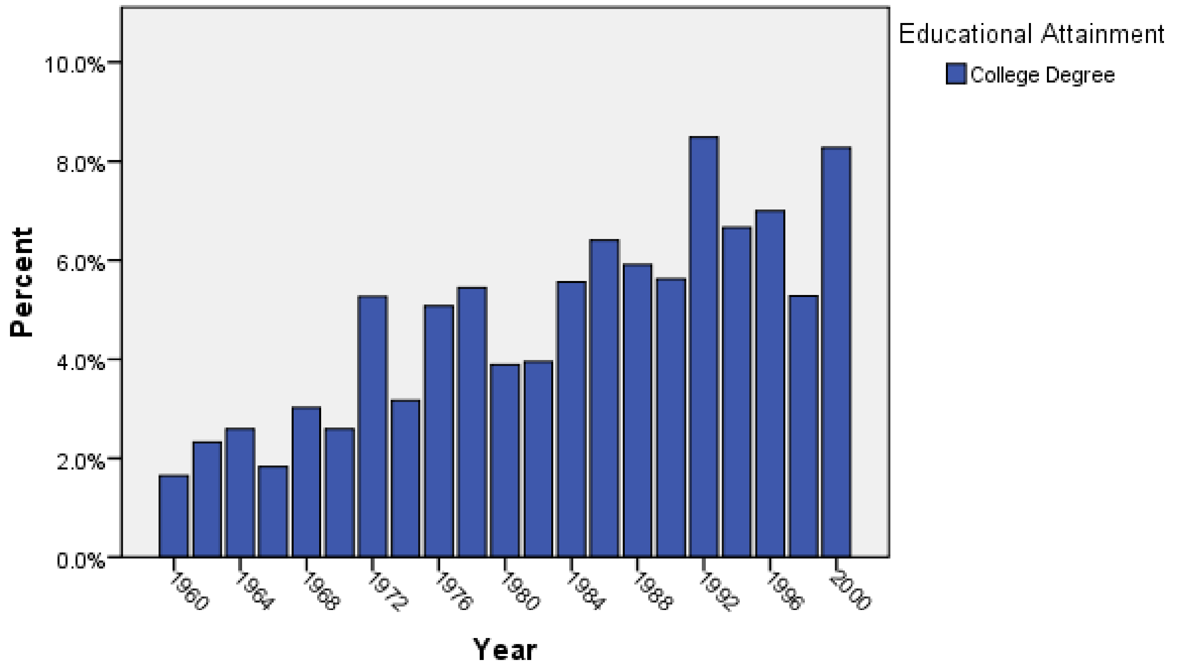
disobedience, boycotts, and strikes. As noted above, the general trend toward a "professional lobbyist" model in Christian activism affected both ends of the ideological spectrum fairly equally. However, these additional findings taken as a whole indicate that progressive groups maintained more of a connection to conventional street-level, public tactics than their conservative rivals, while conservatives continued their established commitment to mass communication and outreach, though repurposed for partially political ends. In summary, both trajectories point to a type of path-dependent process in which present and future tactical repertoires are constrained to some degree by their own idiosyncratic yet explicable past incarnations.

EXOGENOUS FACTORS

Social movements, including those motivated by religious conviction, do not occur in a hermetic environment, sealed off from forces and influences at play in the general social system. Quite the opposite, in fact; social movements could be argued to be among the most reactive and quickly responsive of social phenomena. In fact, the entire perspective that has come to be known as "structuralism" in political sociology is based on the premise that causes of collective action are rarely found within the mechanisms and dynamics of civil society per se, but rather naturally emerge as the consequence of forces of much larger scope and longer duration. These are usually found in demographic patterns, long-term economic changes, international relationships, or dramatic shifts in elite political arrangements.

In order to determine if the changes in Christian activism described above could be related to such "structuralist" factors, I obtained data measuring the more common exogenous explanations. These include such general demographic changes such as educational attainment in the society; macroeconomic conditions such as recession, political environment variables such as voter turnout; political party of the President, state factors such as amount of spending by and personnel employed by government, and religious factors such as changes in Christian denominational membership over time.

Figure 22: Proportion of Americans with College Degree, 1960-2000



(Source: American National Election Study cumulative file, 1948-2004)

EDUCATION

Educational attainment is one of the few exogenous variables that appears to correspond well with the general linear increase in the Christian activist organization population from 1960-2000, as depicted in the first table in this section. Specifically, social movement scholars, particularly those from the resource mobilization school, have emphasized the importance of college education in the emergence of social movements in the modern era (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Melucci, 1980). Universities, they argue, provide both the intellectual fodder, tight-knit, easily-mobilized social networks and concentrated physical environments which have time and again been instrumental in the

formation of large-scale activism around the world. The Paris uprisings in 1968, Prague Spring, and the U.S. anti-war movements are but a few significant examples of this process in action.

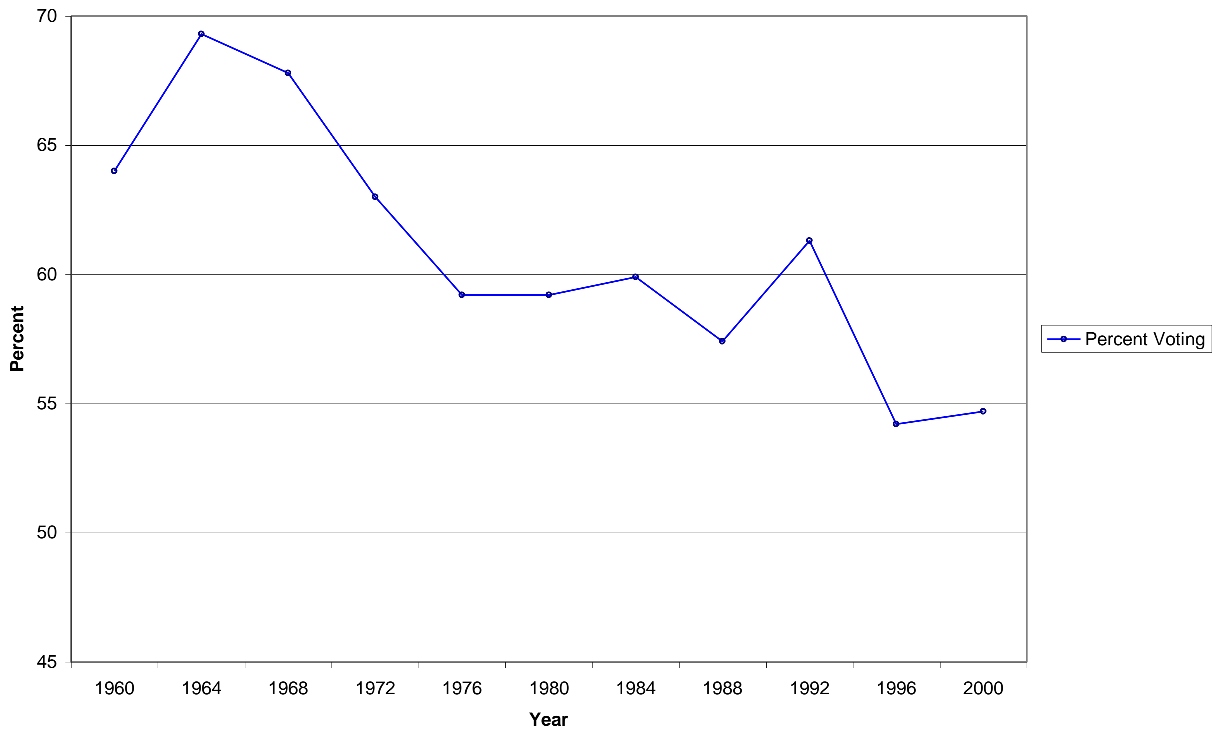
Even with education, however, the match is only approximate. The percentage of Americans with a college degree doubled quickly in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, no doubt partially a lagged consequence of the draft for the Vietnam War. However, at the dawn of the 1980s, the proportion of American with a bachelor's degree fell again and did not rise dramatically again until the early 1990s. In contrast, the 1980s was a period of explosive growth in the population of Christian activist groups. Overall, therefore the patterns between the two phenomena are roughly congruous, the educational attainment pattern is more discontinuous, showing more frequent volatility.

EXTERNAL POLITICAL STRUCTURES

Factors related to the institutional political environment have also frequently been theorized as important in the emergence and character of social movements, particularly from those stressing political opportunity structures (Tarrow, 2011; McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996; Skocpol, 1979). The general thrust of these arguments is that popular discontent alone is relatively constant and nonetheless insufficient to bring about collective action. Favorable configurations of the national government, civil society as a whole, or the global political arena, among other entities, provide movements the structural opportunities they require to achieve any measureable degree of success and sustained influence. Frequently mentioned in this list of political institutional factors are party control of the federal legislature or presidency, voter turnout, and state capacity and

reach, measured in employed personnel and spending. Findings related to these factors are summarized in the tables and paragraphs below.

Figure 23: Voter Turnout, 1960-2000



(Source: Current Population Survey Historical Time Series Tables, 2008)

As Figure 23 illustrates, voter turnout over the period examined has steadily declined, though for the two general elections since 2000, it has increased to over 60% among the voting-eligible population. Nevertheless this pattern is directly opposite that of the Christian activist population, which saw linear, if not meteoric growth during the

period. During the years when most Christian activist groups were founded and expanded – the late 1970s to early 1980s – voter turnout was unremarkable and even in slow decline. These findings find no support for any positive linkage between willingness to participate in the electoral process through voting and the emergence of Christian activist groups in civil society. In fact, more support is found for the reverse hypothesis, whereby general dissatisfaction with the mainstream political process results both in low voter participation and willingness to found or join social movements, including those with a religious orientation. In this way, activism could truly be described as "politics by other means."

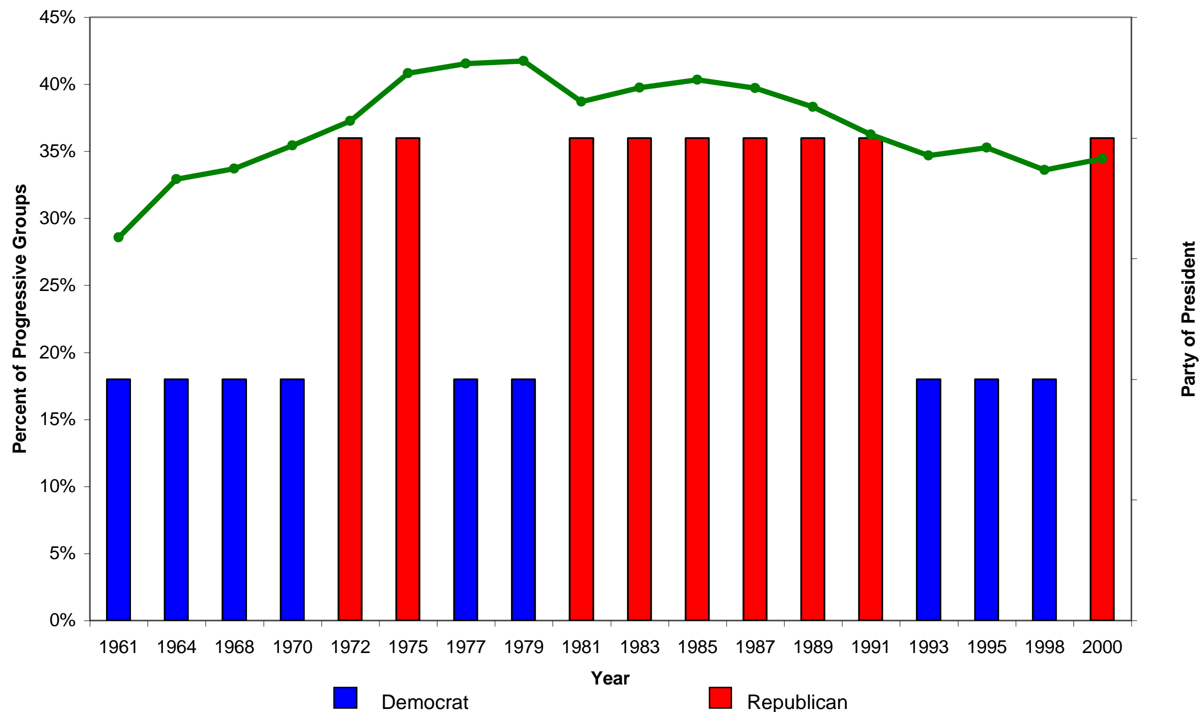
One of the more precise measures of political opportunity structures is ascertaining which political party holds the office of the Presidency (Amenta, 2000; Meyer, 2004). The background hypothesis here is that political opportunities will increase for social movements whose agendas, ideologies, and visions most closely align with this party, despite considerable variation between individual presidents of the same party. Thus, generally in the United States, conservative or traditionalist social movements would be expected to prosper under Republican presidents, while liberal or radical movements should experience expanding opportunities under Democrats.

Figures 24-25 display the percentage of progressive and conservative Christian activist organizations over time (green line) in relation to the political party of the sitting president (red or blue bars). The vertical dimension of the bar is merely an artifact of the dichotomous coding system, and has no quantitative meaning.

Overall, progressive Christian activist organizations showed a steady share, approximately 33% of the total religious activist sector, regardless of the party of the president. Findings indicate slight peaks of about 5 percentage points in the early 1960s, coinciding with the Kennedy administration, and in the mid-1970s during the Nixon

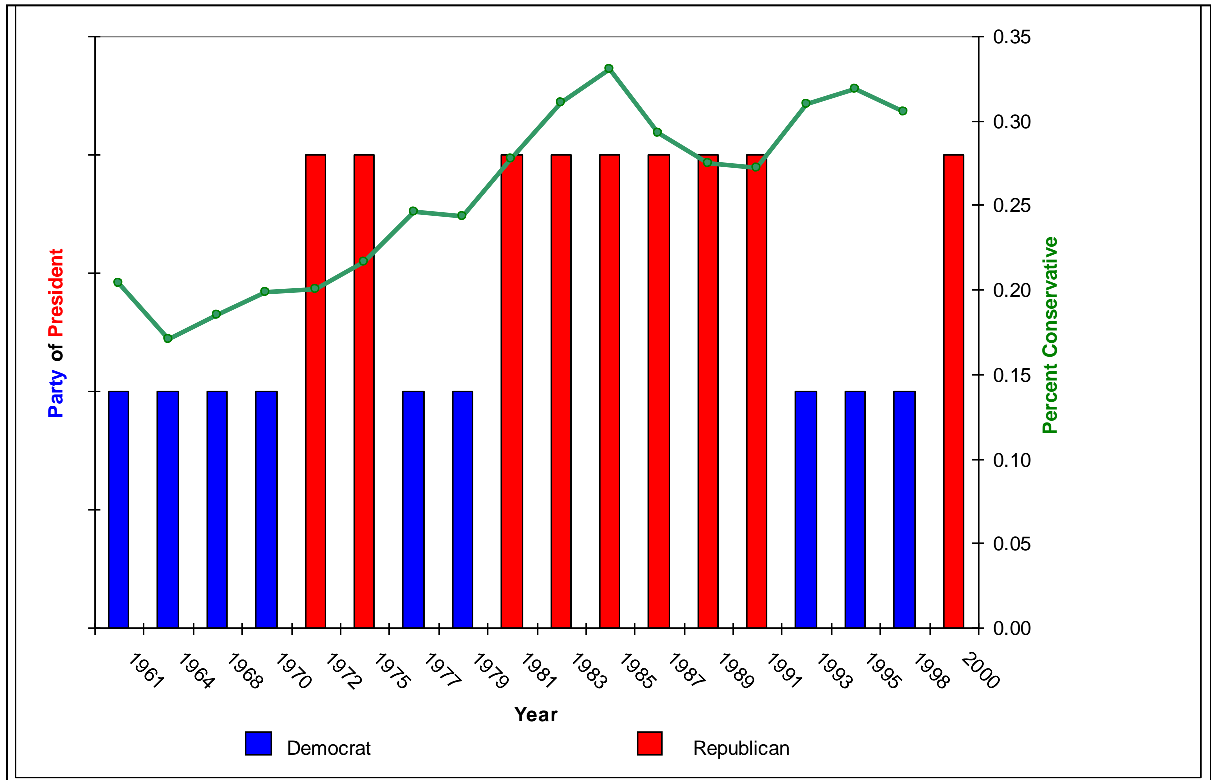
administration. The apex of left-Christian activism occurred during the Carter-Ford years of the late 1970s. Beginning with Reagan and through George H. W. Bush, progressive Christians experienced a gradual decline in share. Somewhat surprisingly, the lowest percent of progressive Christian groups since 1961 was in 1998, during the sympathetic President Clinton's administration. As a result, it is difficult to identify clear, consistent evidence for the party of the president assisting or hindering the relative prevalence of progressive Christian activists. A more defensible hypothesis is that a third variable, the overall political mood of the electorate/mass public during given periods, was influencing both religious activist fortunes and presidential choices. However, there is some

Figure 24: Proportion of Progressive Christian Groups by Party of President



evidence that sustained periods of presidency control by one party affects religious activist mobilization in predictable patterns, as seen during the Democratic party dominance of the 1960s corresponding to progressive Christian growth, and the Republican control during the 1980s correlating with a slow decrease in left-leaning Christian activism.

Figure 25: Proportion of Conservative Christian Activist Groups by Party of President



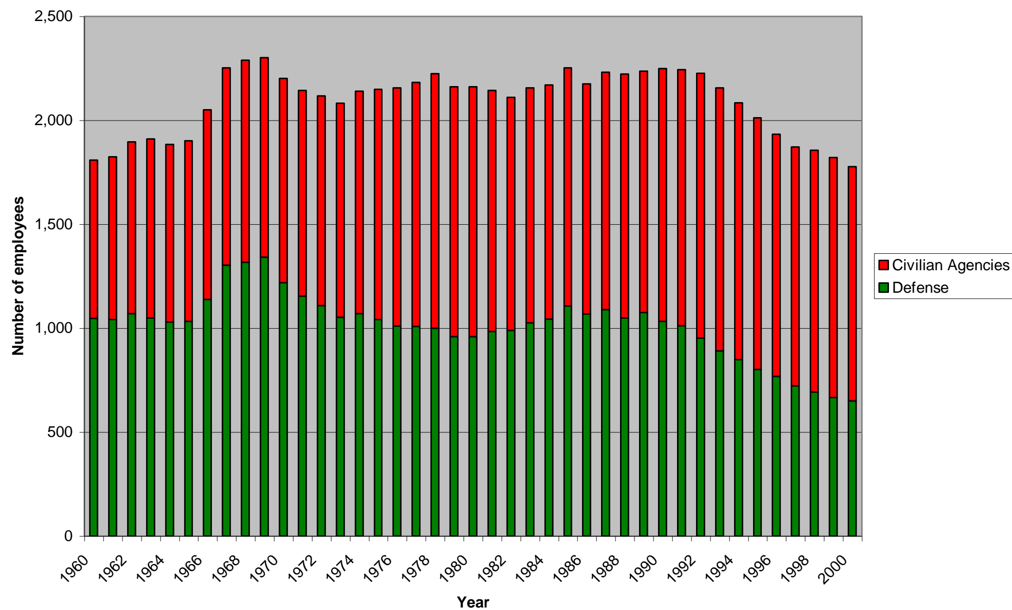
Conservative Christian activists, on the other hand, displayed greater levels of volatility in sector share with respect to party of the president. Whereas the general pattern among progressive Christian groups has been stability, the pattern for their counterparts on the right has been linear growth. This overall and consistent increase among conservative groups held true regardless of party of the president. The most remarkable feature of this data is the explosive increase in sector share corresponding with the "Reagan Revolution." It is crucial to notice that the growth began *well before*

the actual election of Reagan in 1980, in the 1978-1979 period. This finding is in concert without the results of previous scholars who have argued that the Reagan election would have been impossible with the unprecedented grassroots political mobilization of millions of conservative Christians beginning in the late 1970s (Johnson, 1982; Diamond, 1989). The contribution of this present study to that line of analysis is to specify exactly *which groups* were instrumental in this mobilization, what *tactics* were deployed to affect the successful outcome, and to suggest a general theory that religious activist action may frequently precede and assist in large scale political transformations such as this one. Interestingly, the second most dramatic upsurge in conservative Christian activism occurred with the election of Democrat Bill Clinton in 1992. This phenomenon, in contrast to the previous upsurge corresponding to a sympathetic political party, appears to point to *political or ideological* threat being equally as important in mobilizing religious activism. In this instance, however, there is no evidence that conservative Christian groups began to mobilize at a greater level of intensity prior to Clinton's election, as observed prior to Reagan's election. As a result, the late 1970s mobilization can best be interpreted as not mainly an effort to create a groundswell voting bloc sufficient to elect Reagan, but instead as a *cultural and religious counter-movement* to what traditionalist Christians perceived to be a 20 year assault on their most cherished moral values and institutions. The effects in electoral politics were significant and enduring, but I argue, quite incidental to the original aims of the mobilization. In this way, then, both the Clinton-era peak and the pre-Reagan peak are best interpreted as threat-motivated responses, I argue, rather than opportunity-motivated responses, as claimed by mainstream structuralist theory (Tilly, 2001).

SIZE OF THE STATE

Political sociologists have also maintained that movements within civil society may be a reflection of forces and processes occurring within the state itself. These "state-centered" theorists argue, in a manner similar to structuralists generally, that the opportunities for movements to emerge and

Figure 26: Government Employment by Sector, 1960-2000

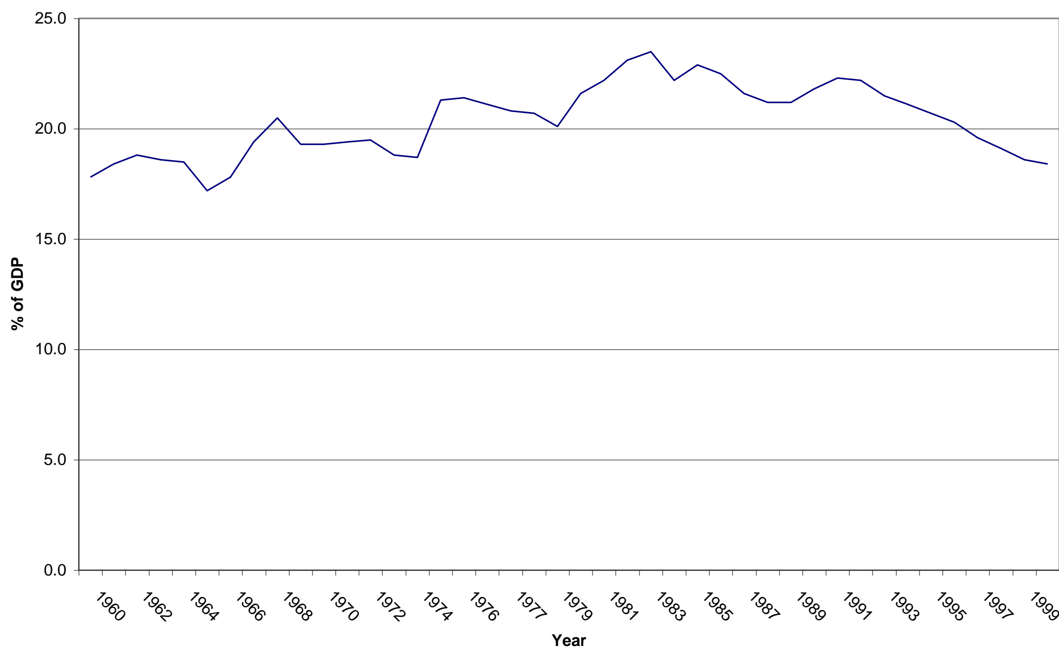


Source: 1940-2002, Office of Management and Budget, *Budget of the United States Government, Historical Tables,* annual.

succeed will depend on the capacity, size, and character of political structures at any given moment (Rueschemeyer & Skocpol, 1985; Skowronek, 1982; Tilly, 1978 Furthermore, it is maintained that the relative strength or reach of the state itself contains "structural biases" for certain brands of movements. For example, we would expect

conservative movements of any strain --including Christian activists-- to emerge and prosper during times of state shrinkage, and progressive activists to flourish when state capacities or expenditures are growing.

Figure 27: Government Spending as Percent of Gross Domestic Product, 1960-2000



Source: 1940-2002, Office of Management and Budget ,*Budget of the United States Government, Historical Tables,* annual

Figures 26-27 above illustrate two measures of state size and capacity from 1960-2000: number of government employees (civilian and military) and government spending per year as a percent of gross domestic product. Putting aside linkages to religious activism briefly, both display a surprising degree of stability in the size of the state over the four decades examined. Though the 1960s and 1970s have a reputation of being

highly progressive, "spend-thrift" periods, the data indicate their levels of spending and employment were roughly equivalent – adjusted for inflation -- to that of 2000, the beginning of the conservative-themed Bush II administration. It is also surprising to note that the most sustained and significant declines in state size occurred during the supposedly "liberal" Clinton administration.

Only two rough and imprecise correspondences between Christian activism and state size may be inferred from these data. First, the stability of progressive Christian organizations in the sector approximates the pattern in government employment over time, with peaks in the early 1970s and slow declines during the mid-1990s. Again, given the divergent agendas of state-interventionists *per se* and left-leaning Christians, it is difficult to conclude direct connections between the two patterns. However, one reasonable surmise would be that the overall high and even level of progressive Christian activism throughout the period acted as a civil society "buffer" against forces both within the state and amongst counter-activists to shrink government to levels regarded by these Christians as immoral, inhumane, or unjust.

Second, another approximate match can be observed between the generally linear but volatile increase in government spending and the sector share of conservative Christian activism at any point in time. The most notable exception to this pattern is the tapering down of government spending during the 1990s while right-wing Christian groups flourished. As a result, only hesitant support can be offered for this correspondence. However, to the degree that traditionalist Christian groups perceived that increased size of government in the form of more spending also threatened their way of life and core values, as it did amongst their secular, fiscally-oriented brethren, a stronger case may be made that two patterns are linked in a more causally significant way.

On the whole, however, the longitudinal patterns regarding state capacity and the fortunes of Christian activism are excessively distant, both on conceptual and empirical grounds, to be able to assert strong causal links between the two. Further study examining the specific bidirectional mechanisms connecting Christian movement activity – such as the emergence of pro- or anti-government issue groups and their efficacy, as well as state dynamics influencing the opportunities for Christian groups – is necessary to establish less ambiguous explanations. Such research is beyond the scope of the current work, but would be a valuable and salutary future enterprise.

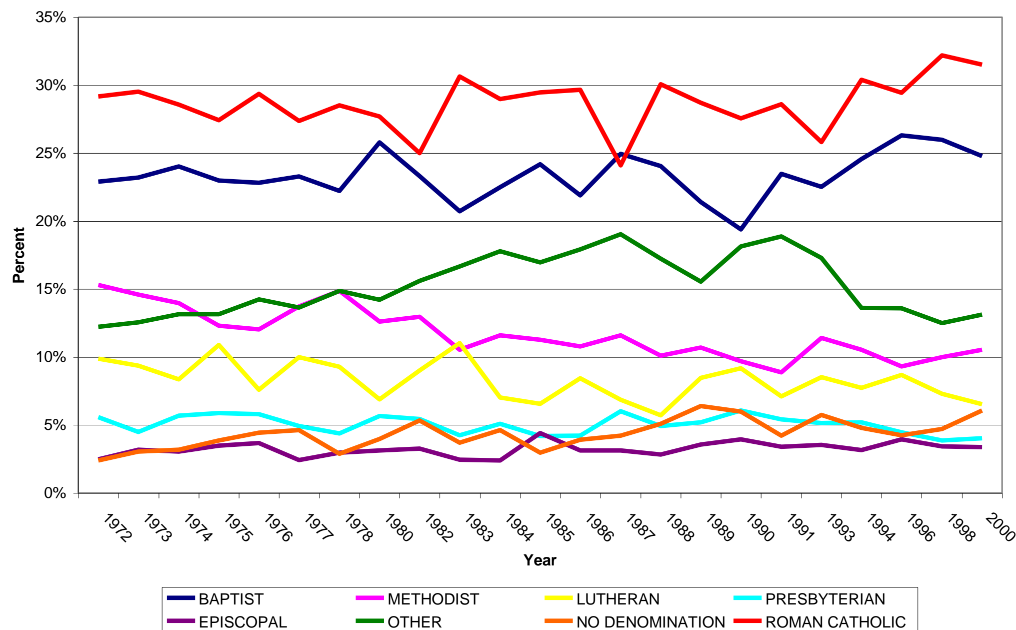
RELIGIOUS FACTORS

Central to any exploration of exogenous factors responsible for the dynamics observed in the Christian activist sector must be a consideration of activity within the religious sphere *per se*. One compelling hypothesis offered by scholars is that religious activism is primarily a function of the variable fortunes of Christian denominational membership. That is, the rise, fall, success, disintegration, and other outcomes observed in the lifespans of religious activist groups follow the more general ups and downs of related denominations. The operative logic in this hypothesis precedes from the premises that 1) a sizable proportion of Christian activism is connected to or sponsored by traditional denominations (e.g. Roman Catholics, NCC-member churches), and 2) as these denominations gain or lose relative strength in terms of members or resources, connected SMOs will also.

Figure 28 depicts changes in denominational membership since 1973. Consistent data for 1960-1972 is not available, so direct year-to-year comparisons to religious activist dynamics is not possible. However, the three decades visible here still provide a

basis for insightful trends and comparisons. First, a brief look at Figures 28-29 indicate that, in the main, Christian activist dynamics do not closely track denominational membership trends. For example, while Roman Catholic membership has hovered somewhat erratically around the 30% mark for 40 years, the number of Roman Catholic activist groups increased dramatically over the period, particularly after the 1975 *Roe vs. Wade* abortion decision. Second, as discussed in Chapter 5, a significant portion of Christian activism was sponsored by non- or multi-denominational organizations, a fact which is corroborated by findings presented in Figure 29. The share of non/multi-denominational groups doubled between 1960 and 2000, though the growth was discontinuous.

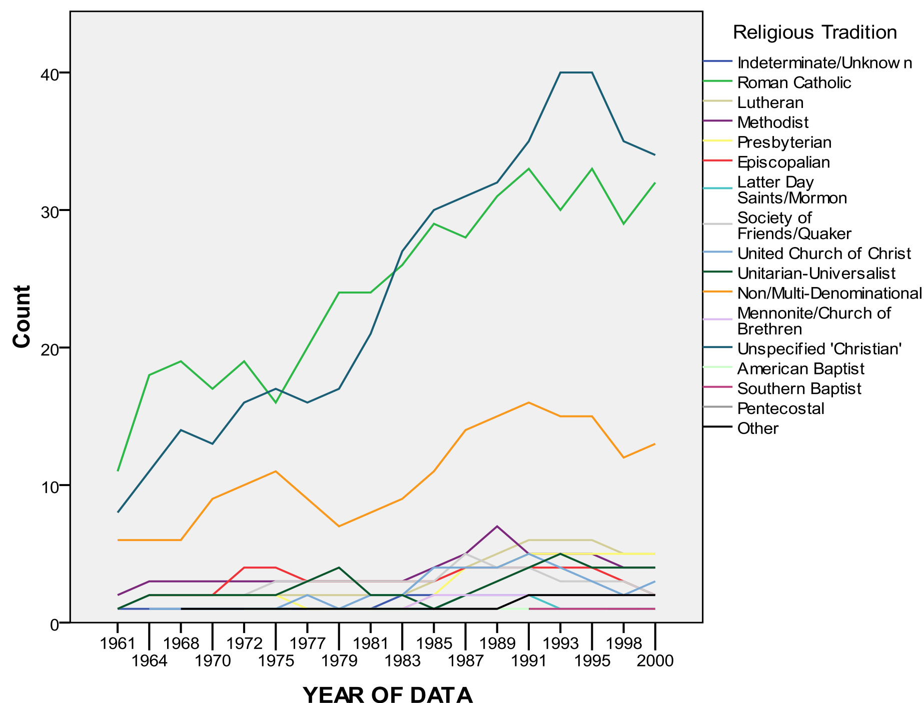
Figure 28: Christian Denominational Affiliation, 1972-2000



Source: General Social Survey Cumulative Data file, 1972-2008 (Abridged)

Meanwhile, the number of Christian activist groups sponsored by mainline denominational families such as the Lutherans or Methodists started low and remained thus for the majority of the four decade period. A slight burst of organizational emergence from mainline Protestant churches did occur in the mid-1990s, primarily in response to programs and opportunities created during the Clinton administration. Finally, it becomes clear through these findings that the importance of "para-church" organizations working outside the auspices of denominational structures are absolutely central to the vitality and even presence of most Christian activist groups (Scheitle, 2007; Green, 1993). We do not observe strong correlations between changes (mostly declines) in denominational membership and changes in Christian activism originating from those denominations. The much touted and real declines in membership do not appear to lead to declines in sociopolitical activism.

Figure 29: Change in Number of Christian Activist Groups by Religious Tradition, 1960-2000



However, certainly the most startling finding emerging from these data is the explosive growth of "unspecified Christian" organizations over the time-frame, a group which is not represented equivalently in the denominational membership data. The "Other" designation is the closest proxy. For the "Other" designation, we observe robust growth from 1960- to the mid-1990s, followed by a noticeable decline thereafter, which appears to be the result of gains among Baptists and Roman Catholics. Nonetheless, the "Other" group remains a distant third in terms of overall membership by 2000. In contrast, the number of groups identified as "unspecified Christian" far outpaces the "Others," being the source of the most Christian sociopolitical activist organizations beginning in 1981 and leading until the terminal year of 2000.

Given previous findings that the vast majority of these "unspecified Christian" organizations were conservative overall in ideological orientation, and given the dramatic surge in their prominence in the early 1980s, it is reasonable to conclude that these patterns, too, corroborate the general increase in dominance by traditionalist Christian activist organizations beginning in the late 1970s-early 1980s and persisting without large interruptions until the early 21st century. This finding is now confirmed via multiple measures and indicators throughout this study including Chapters 4, 5, and 6, as well as minor instances in the remainder of chapters.

PART 5: SYNTHESIS

Chapter 6: Discussion of Major Descriptive Findings

"Many good people, in their own spiritual cycles, have moved beyond concern for 'institutional sin' and into the charismatic of Jesus movements which often lack a 'social passion.'"

--- National Catholic Reporter, January 31, 1972, p. 10

In the introduction, I indicated that the research questions motivating this project were descriptive, theoretical, and mechanism-focused, respectively. The first of these, the descriptive task, aimed to surface valid narratives for the dramatic rises, falls, and transformations witnessed among Christian activists in the last half century. Another major objective was the testing of various "armchair" declarations, hypotheses, and explanations of these religio-political changes offered by observers both within and without academia. This task is crucial for properly understanding the basic empirical landscape of the phenomenon, which serves as the foundation for plausible explanations of these processes. The findings from the previous section fortunately answer with new clarity and validity a substantial number of these initial questions of "what happened?," "who did it?," and "how did it happen?" As is often the case, these results simultaneously introduce *new* questions that also bear speculation and further study. In this chapter, I summarize and elaborate in detail the major clusters of new knowledge gained through the diverse empirical investigations conducted, and suggest their significance for larger questions regarding the fluid nature of social movements, civil society, and American Christianity. Broadly, the major descriptive clusters are: 1) dynamics at the population ecosystem level; 2) strong evidence of conservative Christian ascendancy and probable causes; 3) "elitization" of Christian activism; and 4)

miscellaneous sector-wide transformations, such as polarization, causes of group decline, and factors unique to religious groups.

POPULATION ECOLOGY

Viewing the sector of Christian activism from the most macro-level perspective and across time, a number of intriguing patterns emerge. These patterns basically confirm predictions from the field of *population ecology*, the academic sub-discipline most concerned with examining the interaction, internal dynamics, external forces, and mechanisms governing large numbers of social organizations with a bounded space (social or physical) (Hannan & Freeman, 1977; Abbott, 1988). Population ecology assumes an essentially Darwinian, survival-driven environment modeled explicitly after the natural world. In this realm, social organizations are born, nurtured, seek resources for survival, compete against other entities for sustenance (including rival and in-group organizations), have a life cycle, and may die. A central tenet of population ecology, as in natural ecology, is that of *carrying capacity*. Carrying capacity refers to the total ability of a given environment to support a number of dependent organisms before exhaustion. The entire organizational sector in a given society has a certain carrying capacity, according to population ecology, but sub-sectors or issue-specific sectors have their own unique carrying capacities as well, all of which vary and are generally unknown in advance.

Specifically, I found that the Christian activist sector displayed at least two features suggesting the effects of a carrying capacity-type natural limit. First, at any given point in time, approximately 20 percent of Christian activist groups were inactive, irrespective of organizational characteristics. This fact suggests that processes internal to

the sector, including differential resource acquisition strategies, niche fit or saturation, or inter-sector competition (among others) operated to limit in a consistent and uniform manner the total number of active organizations in the sector, regardless of year. It was rare that more than 85% of total organizations listed were active at any point in time. Despite sometimes rapid and explosive growth in certain periods, such potential expansions in the sector were invariably offset by organizational disbandings, thus maintaining a sector-wide population limit, governed by forces which seem to emanate emergently from the population level, rather than from the self-conscious activity of member organizations.

An example of this process in action was found during the 1990s among pro-life groups. The total number of pro-life groups grew consistently through the 1980s, driven by historical events such as the Roe v. Wade decision, and the receptive audiences found among Christians disenchanted with a perceived general decline in mainstream morality, particularly on issues related to life and traditional values. However, beginning in the 1990s, data indicate a sudden and dramatic decline in this population sub-sector. Given the limited supply of organizational resources available for pro-life organizations, alongside the emergence of a few dominant players skilled at resource-acquisition and hoarding, opportunities for relatively redundant or poorly adapted pro-life groups shrank abruptly. In a phrase, the carrying capacity for this organizational niche had been exhausted, and the process of selecting those groups with the (temporarily) most adapted traits for survival had begun. Alternatively, smaller organizations on the precipice of extinction often sought or accepted mergers with larger, more established organizations in order to survive in some form. These merger and/or schism events were tracked in the data collection process as well.

Second, as is often discovered in population ecological studies, I found strong evidence of inter- and intra-sectoral dynamics which support the fundamental principles of organizational ecology. Competition and cooperative dynamics are the two key processes at play in these contexts, according to the literature. My findings indicate, as mentioned above, a durable process of *competition within issue sectors* (such as struggles among multiple anti-poverty organizations within a relatively tightly bound sub-sector wherein mutual monitoring is quite feasible); and processes of *cooperation across issue sectors* (such as anti-pornography groups forming alliances with anti-gay organizations, even regardless of religious or theological differences). Strategic advantage and advancement in the context of scarcity is the operative logic here. Few exceptions to this pattern were observed. Within similar issue sectors, Christian activist groups, like most other social organizations, repeatedly exemplified instances of imitation of form, content, name, mission, or tactics in attempts to attain greater niche dominance and eliminate rivals. Conversely, organizations with sufficiently dissimilar missions and agendas frequently forged strategic relationships in order to complement respective strengths or weaknesses, thereby broadening their overall appeal to Christian constituencies. In both situations, the objective is organizational survival, even if this means reluctant reformulation of one's agenda, tactics, or internal structure, which occurred dozens of times to Christian activist groups of all ideological stripes and backgrounds.

EVIDENCE OF CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN SURGE

For decades, sociologists of religion, political scientists, and lay observers have asserted, with scant or dubious evidence, the ascendancy of conservative or traditionalist Christian activists. Under closer examination, much of this rhetoric is found to pertain to

the undoubtedly more influential role of conservative Christian groups in *electoral* politics, evidenced primarily by their success in propelling into visible high office politicians promoting an agenda focused on "life-world" concerns – sexuality, intoxicants, abortion, etc. -- considered threatened by encroaching post-modern values and institutions. What has been less clear throughout this period, however, are systematic, empirical measurements of their *actual* relative population in the civil sphere, a composite sketch of their internal variation, their general modes of operation, and overall, an attempt to establish the validity of the many unquestioned assumptions about conservative Christian activism in the last half century.

In general, my findings suggest that not only was there a real, measureable increase in conservative Christian activism since 1975, but also point to how and why this transformation occurred. First, simple population-level counts of conservative versus progressive groups since 1960 indicates a steady and significant increase in the real number of conservative Christian organizations in the population over time, such that the two groups were nearly equal in size by 2000, an event unprecedented in 40 years of observation. Second, as indicated in Chapter 5, *the fastest period of organizational growth for Christian groups* was seen between 1981 and 1991, during the Reagan presidency and a favorable political environment for conservative Christian organizations. Finer-level analysis shows that most groups formed just prior to this period, from 1975-1985, and were either pro-life or traditional values/moral decline-oriented groups, suggesting that the most decisive mechanism for the political advancement of Conservative Christian agendas did not begin in institutional politics, but in civil society through grassroots and local organizing. Furthermore, conservative organizations surpassed progressive organizations in terms of total members in 1975, just after the Roe vs. Wade decision and a flurry of vigorous grassroots mobilization by pro-

life and traditional values organizations. The conservative membership surge is even more remarkable in light of the fact that, throughout this entire period, the *number* of progressive Christian organizations was still significantly greater than the number of traditionalist organizations. This organizational-membership divergence is one of the more fascinating results of the data analysis portion of the study. Nonetheless, the conservative membership advantage held steady until the early l990s when it appears the total carrying capacity for pro-life and traditional morality groups began to buckle. Additionally, the election of President Bill Clinton, certainly the most polarizing executive to appear in the period of data collection, appears to improved the political environmental conditions for progressive Christian groups organizing on agendas sympathetic to that of the president, thus balancing, at least temporarily, the membership disparity.

Despite the boost offered to progressive Christian organizations by the Clinton presidency, these data show that, throughout the 1990s, the two issues most frequently worked on by any Christian organization—irrespective of ideological orientation – were moral decline and pro-life. In all likelihood, this fact speaks to the significant threat posed by Pres. Clinton's agenda, widely perceived by conservative Christians as an attempt to impose values from the errant 1960s on families of the 1990s, in addition to a tarnished personal history, which included both real and fabricated sexual and financial scandals. In an paradoxical way, Clinton's biography and political objectives could be seen as the force that launched a thousand movements – though in two opposite directions.

Finally, as further evidence for the reality of the surge in conservative Christian activism, on the "denominational/religious affiliation variable," the population-level data show a huge increase in "unspecified Christian" groups since 1975. Closer examination

of the self-descriptions offered by these groups in the *Encyclopedia of Associations* established that the vast majority of them scored extremely high on the ideological conservatism scale. In itself, this finding is merely a novelty, and corroborates other findings in the sociology of religion regarding the decline of denominations broadly. In the context of the other Christian activist findings, however, this result provides one more plank of support to buttress the overall argument for the empirical validity of a significant, unprecedented, and highly influential increase in conservative Christian activism, both at the organizational population and the membership level.

WHY CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN ACTIVISTS SURGED

In addition to the historical events acting as exogenous triggers for the rapid and dramatic increase in conservative Christian activism demonstrated in this study, it is also necessary to determine as much as possible the organizational level peculiarities and specific mechanisms whereby these groups were able to achieve such historical levels of influence. Put another way, what tactics, orientations, assumptions, or structural advantages did conservative Christians enjoy that other Christian groups did not?

The findings strongly suggest fundamentally different basic approaches to activist organizing between conservative and particularly progressive Christian groups. First, as stated briefly above, while the total number of progressive organizations in the population was larger at any point of observation, the *number of members per progressive group was fewer* than among conservative Christian groups. Several reasons may explain this divergence. Key among them is that, consistent with the increasingly complex nature of post-modern life, the total "population of grievances" of a social order, if you will, is constantly increasing. Injustice, unfortunately, is in no short supply, and its

manifestations continue to diversify and mutate across history. Progressive Christian activists operate by moral schema which sensitize them to a wide panoply of issues generally related to varied incarnations of injustice (ecological, military, criminal, economic, gender, children, health, etc.). My findings show that since 1960, the agenda of issues engaged by Christian activists of all ideological backgrounds has expanded both in number and variety. The overwhelming majority of this growth has been through the gradual – and generally pro-social— redefinition and subsequent enlargement of what is considered "unjust," "unacceptable," "immoral," "outrageous," and "sinful" – typically by progressive activists. As a result, citizens with orientations attuned to such concerns were compelled to mobilize their moral outrage, often through the founding of activist organizations rooted in forms of Christian morality. However, these organizations were often tiny, composed of a handful of steadfast moral soldiers, each of whom performed multiple roles within the organization. The end result is the proliferation of flourishing justice-oriented progressive Christian groups each with a modest number of members or constituents. The overall character of this sub-sector naturally became disjointed, uncoordinated, over-broad, and occasionally fractious.

In contrast, these same findings indicate that conservative Christian groups enjoyed the largest memberships, and were even able to recruit equivalent or larger memberships than progressives with fewer numbers of activist groups. A substantial reason for this is derived from a related finding: conservative Christian groups had far more local branches of their federated organizations than any other ideological orientation cluster. Through the use of state, regional, and local branches, activist organizations may make use of the well-known efficiency advantages of economies of scale and bureaucracy, greatly reducing "costs" – both material and ideational – related to organizational founding. By founding one central organization near a metropolitan area,

for example, and “planting” (akin to church planting in the neo-evangelical tradition) subsidiaries in smaller cities, strategic state capitals, or cultural hubs, activist organizations not only increase the overall geographic reach of a single organization, but dramatically increase the likelihood of higher membership numbers accruing to the original central association. Perhaps most importantly, organizational planting of this sort also cultivate seeds for future success in mainstream electoral political organizing. As a significant number of scholars of the Religious Right have observed, the careful fertilization of tiny grassroots groups throughout the South and Midwest, often led by churches and clergy, served as the “ground forces” for the several instances of conservative Christian electoral success witnessed since the late 1970s. This method was in stark contrast to that embraced (at least unconsciously) by progressive Christian groups, which was characterized by marked inter-organizational independence and almost total absence of local organizational branching, motivated in part by the (perceived) priority placed on identifying, publicizing, and countering through direct action the ever-mounting supply of diverse injustices demanding response in civil society.

Resource-mobilization scholars and the Tilly-school of social movement analysis would demand that we likewise examine the specific material, personnel, organizational, and tactical characteristics of conservative Christian activist groups that might explain their rise to power in the last three decades. These findings show that with respect to financial assets, conservative groups enjoyed significant resource advantages over competitors. Regardless of group size or duration, the average conservative Christian activist group had larger organizational budgets than moderates, progressives, or other types. Such greater resources empowered them not only to persist in the activist sector with greater security, but also to diversify their organizational and tactical repertoires,

hire professional, permanent staff, including paid lobbyists and researchers, locate in strategically valuable (yet often pricey) headquarters, and most importantly, develop sophisticated multi-media communications networks to extend and deepen their reach. Uniquely religious and cultural factors may also play a role in the greater financial assets available to conservative Christian groups. The evangelical fervor channeled into socio-political activism, with its emphasis on conversion and interpersonal contacts, is a powerful cultural schema easily transmuted into secular tasks such as fundraising, forming networks, and other needs related to persuasion. A century ago, Weber recognized the elective affinity between temporal work, the Christian calling, and ultimate salvation. This potent mixture continues to find ample applications in post-modern contexts, including religious activism, and bolstering the resource bases which support it (Diamond, 1995; Lindsay, 2007; Young 2006; Smith, 2000; McLaren, 2007).

Another reason for the surge in conservative Christian activism in recent decades is the ease with which they have engaged mainstream electoral politics since the 1975. Unlike their progressive counterparts, findings from this analysis strongly indicate that traditionalist Christian activists, likely spurred by the unacceptable life-world threats posed by the Roe v. Wade decision, mobilized forces aimed directly at political offices. These findings have been corroborated by a number of previous scholars, and the real-world effects quite obvious (Wilcox, 2010; Diamond, 1989; Liebman, 1983). However, this analysis is the first to isolate with clarity the precise historical moments of this tactical shift, as well as significant gap between this change in tactics by conservative Christians and the virtual absence of such a shift among progressive Christians. This transformation is especially noteworthy given the previous attitude of conservative Christian groups toward overt political action, which ranged from apathy or futility to a

convicted sense of contamination as a result of mixing too intimately with temporal forces.

The reason for this recent tactical shift toward electoral engagement and political organizing relates directly to the institutional origins of the sacred value threats perceived by conservative Christians. The Supreme Court decision in Roe vs. Wade awakened in traditionalist activists the urgency of "changing the wind" in Wallis' terms; instigating local, grassroots mobilization -- often led by churches and para-church groups -- to gradually transform the hearts of minds of individual citizens regarding the pro-life issue. No longer, they believed, could the political sphere be ignored or eschewed as simply "unredeemable territory." Threats from the state had to be countered by mobilization aimed squarely at the foundations of state power. The end result of this new approach, it was hoped, would be a fundamental cultural and ideological shift, measurable in terms of public opinion, which would then force political leaders ostensibly accountable to such shifts, to change their voting and rhetorical stances. Led and inspired by veteran political operatives such as Paul Weyrich, Ralph Reed, and Richard Viguerie, conservative Christian activists began to find common cause with essentially secular conservatives motivated by concerns over the growth of the interventionist state, particularly with regard to tax policy (Williams, 2010; Noll, 1989; Diamond, 1995). In other instances, conservative Christian political organizing manifested in activists themselves becoming political entrepreneurs, contesting local offices, particularly in school board, city council, and similar posts with better odds of election. Throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s, conservative Christian activists adopted grassroots electoral engagement and political organizing with great zeal, stealthily building an effective political network. This network was further buttressed by submerged networks of unelected activists, perpetually

primed to respond to emergent threats and initiate rhetorical, organizational, and religiously-based mobilization efforts without hesitation.

Progressive Christian activists, on other hand, exhibited no such tactical shift toward electoral engagement and direct political organizing during this period. Findings indicate that instead, progressive activists continued to expand their collective though uncoordinated agendas of *substantive concerns*, expanding into areas such as apartheid in South Africa, anti-nuclear proliferation, homelessness, and homosexual rights. As mentioned above, the progressive Christian response to the emergence (and indeed active moral-based identification) of new and urgent societal challenges appeared to be one of frenetic organizational and moral hyperactivity, generating an ever-growing catalog of hyper-focused associations with little or no interconnection or coordination. This is in sharp contrast to the behavior of their traditionalist counterparts, who began to strategically constrain their issue agenda to essentially three interrelated concerns: abortion, defense of the traditional family unit, and declining moral values. As a result, a kind of tactical, substantive, and strategic discipline emerged on the Christian right, ultimately creating a formidable unitary political force. To outside observers, conservative Christians by the mid-1980s resembled a sub-political party, with enviable geographic reach, deep moral-ideological commitment, ample financial resources, and a remarkable yet unofficial hierarchical structure which worked efficiently to order and strategically oversee political and cultural engagement efforts. Tactically speaking, the religious left exhibited no similar grassroots political organizing effort aimed at electoral victories or national cultural value shifts led by local moral entrepreneurs. To the extent that moral and political outcomes were increasingly being determined by state political actors *vis-à-vis* conventional electoral processes -- as postulated by state-centered

theorists --(as opposed to the conventional social movement tactics of the 1950s and 1960s), progressive Christian organizations found themselves unknowingly at a significant disadvantage, not only in terms of realizing sociopolitical goals, but also with respect to losing cultural and ideological visibility in the civil sphere conversation.

"ELITIZATION:" THE DECLINE OF MASS MEMBERSHIP ACTIVISM?

Since the 1990s, sociologists and political scientists have postulated the decline of various forms of associational life in the United States. Notable among these are Skocpol's *Diminished Democracy* (2003), wherein the author observes a shift from active, embodied membership in civic associations to a mere token "checkbook advocacy," in which "members" largely outsource their activism to professional staff, such as lobbyists, researchers, or spokespersons. Robert Putnam (2000) likewise notes similar declines in an array of voluntary associations, though his analysis is decidedly less political in tone and purported consequences. More recently, Kretschmer & Meyer (2007) have identified another variant of the "de-membership" phenomenon: "platform leadership," in which often a single individual serves as organizational leader, spokesperson, and fundraiser for a social movement organization, with no effort at grassroots mobilization. They argue that this type of structure is only possible through the dramatically enhanced role of mass media in social activism, with television and radio now identified as the sole and sufficient target of some movement organizations with limited material resources, but near boundless moral fervor.

The analysis of Christian activist organizations since 1960 basically confirms these general observations, which I have termed "elitization." Population level findings indicate increases in non-membership groups overall, regardless of issue type, ideological

orientation, or religious affiliation. We also observe a general transformation in the sector from a relatively few number of large organizations in the early years to the proliferation of a greater number of smaller activist groups in the later years. This finding may be interpreted in several ways. First, the civil sphere could be operating by a process parallel to that observed in modern societies generally: differentiation and specialization. This is not only logical, but probable given the already established increased number and range of social problems confronting the civil sphere over the four decades observed. Specialization and division of democratic labor, so to speak, is a rational and efficient method of managing such emergent complexity. Second, and more specific to the internal processes of the civil sphere, it appears likely that activist organizations made use of "feedback" and isomorphic mechanisms which over time selected smaller and more adapted non-membership, advocacy oriented groups over larger, conventional membership organizations for the successful achievement of movement goals. Such a process would especially be true in a changing socio-political environment in which highly specialized legal, political, and technical knowledge would be essential for the passage of certain legislation, for example. My analysis of the geographic shifts in movement organization headquarters also corroborates the basic outlines of the elitization phenomenon, demonstrating a steady move away from headquarters of convenience, such as the home cities of moral entrepreneurs or religious centers, toward centers of political and cultural influence, such as New York City, Los Angeles, and, most importantly, Washington, DC. As Skocpol, Fiorina, Putnam, and Meyer point out, as a result of these organizational and environmental transformations, "members" largely become synonymous with "patrons" or "supporters," whose obligations rarely exceed making donations or contacting elected officials. Active, embodied, participation in local or

national movement activities of the sort common in prior decades is decreasingly demanded.

Further support for the process of elitization is found in results showing significant increases over time in the number of organizations classified by the *Encyclopedia of Associations* as “Public Affairs Organizations.” Closer analysis shows that most of these organizations were located in Washington, D.C., and focused their efforts on changing policy through advocacy and lobbying. Interestingly, most of the growth in this public affairs sector occurred after 1981 with the election of President Reagan, and cross-tabulation analysis reveals that the vast majority of these organizations were conservative in ideological orientation. These findings provide additional corroboration for the aforementioned tactical preferences of conservative Christian activists, but more importantly suggest that the elitization process, though general in its sector-wide application, was not strictly uniform in empirical observation. It appears conservative Christian organizations responded first and most aggressively to this new mode of organization, and were clearly the first to reap its rewards through legislative and policy victories throughout the 1980s.

SECTOR-SPECIFIC DYNAMICS: POLARIZATION, CAUSES OF DECLINE, AND RELIGIOUS FACTORS

Beyond strong, diverse empirical evidence of a real surge in conservative Christian activism, and equally strong and varied evidence for the phenomenon of elitization, another cluster of important though harder to categorize findings deserve elaboration as well. These include ideological polarization, causes of organizational decline, and phenomena unique to religion itself which had intriguing effects.

Polarization

This analysis shows that by the 1980s, the number of Christian activist groups representing the political middle – moderates, moderate-conservative, and moderate-progressives, had virtually disappeared. Instead, groups on the extreme Christian right increased dramatically, while their rivals on the extreme left had become virtually extinct. In previous decades, representation from each ideological group had been far more even, with healthy numbers from groups with moderate orientations. By the 1980s, a noticeable "hollowing out" of the middle had occurred, producing a much more polarized ideological civil sphere, analytically if not in actuality. In addition, this uneven polarization resulting from a loss of Christian groups on the extreme left, effectively shifting the entire ideological center of gravity to the right. Moderate-progressive groups now served as the new Christian left, a position they were prepared for neither ideologically or strategically. Additional evidence of this general polarization process is observed in the fact that, over time, most issues engaged by Christian activist groups were found at the poles of the ideological spectrum (gay rights, anti-militarism, abortion, for example) rather than issues located nearer the middle (hunger, foreign aid, etc.). As a group, these findings support the general outlines of a widespread process of political and discursive polarization noted by a number of scholars of the civil sphere, mass media, and electoral politics since the early 1990s (Hunter, 1991; 1994; 2006; Baum and Groeling, 2008; Baldassarri and Gelman (2008).

Causes of Christian Activist Group Decline

As Gamson observed in his classic *The Strategy of Social Protest*, it is often equally instructive to know when, how, and why social movements disintegrate (or at

least disband) as how they emerge. The latter topic permeates the literature on collective action, but much less is known about the other end of the "life course" of social movement organizations. Findings from the Christian activist sector partially illuminate these dark areas of knowledge. Most importantly, and yet also most surprisingly perhaps, is the fact that many activist groups fade or disband due to *success*. This is especially true of groups formed to achieve very specific, often measureable goals, such as the passage of legislation, the repeal of amendments, or the granting of new rights. Two prominent though imperfect examples of this process include the civil rights movement and the ecumenism movement. Though certainly the legacy and momentum of the civil rights movement born in the late 1950s lives on through a number of important SMOs, most scholars concede that the movement receded in national visibility and energy after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. After this landmark achievement, many civil rights SMOs declined in membership, dramatically reconfigured their mission and agenda, or disbanded entirely. My findings indicate that by the year 2000, the number of organizations dedicated to civil rights and race relations had declined from nearly 150 to less than 40.

During the 1960s and 1970s, many Christian activists, particularly of moderate to progressive orientation, were engaged in a variety of programs designed to increase ecumenism and improve interfaith relations. In the decade 1970-1979, ecumenism was the fourth most common issue engaged by Christian activists, and the ninth most common issue engaged across the entire time period. By 2000, however, only 18 activist organizations were working on ecumenism, and the issue had slipped to eighteenth in overall frequency. Without the aid of historical narrative, it would be easy to assume that interest in ecumenism had simply been the victim of natural decline, or perhaps that it had proven impossible to achieve. In fact, the very opposite is accurate. Due to the

consistent efforts of Christian activists such as those identified through this research, relations between denominations, clergy, and parishioners improved enormously. This steady effort ultimately made the explicit project of ecumenism appear commonplace and a regular, integrated feature of much church activity. Such efforts also made possible the now-highly influential and fascinating Catholic-Protestant alliances around issues of common moral concern, which would have been nigh unthinkable just a few decades prior. Akin to civil rights, the widespread acceptance of ecumenism led to its diminished visibility as a discrete focus of activist engagement.

Some activist groups, however, do not have the good fortune of such peaceful deaths. Two other causes of organizational decline or disbanding appear in the findings as well. First, given the constantly competitive and crowded ecosystem of organizations even within one sub-sector, it is inevitable that groups that either fail to adequately replenish or wisely use resources will decline. Conventional social movement theory is on solid ground with this axiom. However, my findings also suggest a more dynamic and agentic process occasionally underlying such resource-acquisition problems, originating in the active withdrawal of support from sponsoring or parent organizations. This "wither on the vine" phenomenon occurs primarily when parent organizations with finite resources must make strategic re-allocations based on the perceived priority and efficacy of subsidiary groups. A version of the same process may also occur when parent organizations fundamentally shift their own mission and activist approach, occasionally rendering some sub-projects irrelevant or anachronistic. The clearest example of this process in these data is found in the remarkable decline in the dissemination of social teaching, primarily by Roman Catholics but also by Presbyterians, Methodists, and other mainline Protestants groups, over the time period. In the 1960s, for example, nearly six percent of all Christian activist groups were engaged in dissemination of social teaching,

three times the proportion working on civil rights at that time, and ranking as the fifth most common issue engaged. By 2000, less than three percent of organizations reported the dissemination of social teaching. Previous related analysis of the 2004 budget and organizational plan for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops indicated a disproportionate allotment of funds to policy-related "respect life" activities relative to traditional official social teaching dissemination. For example, the budget of the Office of Pro-Life Activities was twice the size of the budget for the Office of Social Development and World Peace. Without explicitly terminating social teaching efforts, parent organizations with limited resources presented with new, urgent priorities were often forced to reallocate those supplies, in effect allowing such projects to wither so that other projects or organizations deemed central might thrive.

The other major category of organizational decline is more familiar, straightforward, and consistent with political process theory. Every social movement arises (or fails to, as the case may be) in the context of a political opportunity structure, an arrangement of institutional and historical facts that favor or constrain collective action emergence. An appropriate metaphor for the political opportunity structure of a given period is that of a window. Particular concatenations of historical events, prevailing cultural schemas, or state structures may produce conditions propitious for the emergence of movements previously in dormancy, or may similarly prevent other types of movements. Although opportunity structures are typically recognized as objective and static, their realized effect on actual movements is highly dynamic, depending on the proximity of the movement to the state as its target, the objectives of the movement, and the ideological character of the opportunity structure, among other factors. Findings from the Christian activist sector establish the validity of this general process stressing favorable external conditions. For example, early in the time sample, a number of

organizations existed oriented around the goals of temperance, protection of the Sabbath, and the defeat of communism. With the passage of time, shifting cultural values such as the greater acceptance of alcohol in mainstream social situations, often themselves the outcomes of other social and cultural movements; macro-historical processes such as widening secularization; and discrete historical events such as the demise of the USSR in the 1990s, combined to present unique and insurmountable exogenous challenges to these Christian organizations. Together with cumulative failures such as the inability to pass and stabilize key legislation (as with blue laws), or the lasting sting of the repeal of Prohibition, Christian activists from groups such as these found themselves unable to secure niches or constituencies large enough to justify continued activity. Oddly then, both failure and success were just as likely to spell the end for Christian activist organizations

Religious Factors

Apart from original descriptive results relating strictly to sector-wide dynamics, organizational characteristics, and outcomes; that is, findings relevant to social movement analysis generally, the analysis also produced a number of surprising findings primarily relevant to the sociology of religion. For example, in the previous chapter in the discussion of denominational factors, I identified the unusually high number of activist groups coded as "unspecified Christian," a term applied when the group name or self-description offered no alternative denominational cue, but still indicated clear Christian heritage and identity. Further analysis revealed that the vast majority of "unspecified Christian" groups were also ideologically very conservative. More importantly, progressive Christian groups almost systematically avoided group names or

self-descriptions that foregrounded their Christian identity in explicit ways. A few examples from the 2000 *Encyclopedia of Associations* illustrate this point well:

> *Conservative Organizations*
>
> "*Christian Crusade (CC)*: Christian educational ministry whose purpose is to safeguard and defend the conservative Christian ideals upon which America was founded, to protect our cherished freedoms, heritage of every American; to oppose any person or organization whose words or actions and doors or parallel the philosophies of leftists, socialists, communists, intentionally or otherwise; to expose publicly the infiltration of such influences into American life, and to defend the gospel of Jesus Christ."
>
> "*Christian Research (CR)*: Works to serve those who do not trust the media or the US educational system, both of which the organization believes are "controlled." Distributes Christian literature, produces tracts, conducts and encourages Bible research and study. Emphasizes obedience to God and His Word; upholds the Constitution as it was originally written but advocates subjugation to God's law, not man's, if the two should conflict. Opposes Zionism, communism, income taxation, and the UN; supports historical revisionism regarding the Holocaust. Maintains library of 900 books and booklets; bestows awards."
>
> "*Christians United for Responsible Entertainment (CURE)*: Grassroots org to give a united voice of protest to the violence on TV and the showing of adult films to children. Main concern is for children who are taught few values at home and have no church affiliation, maintains that their attitudes are largely provided by TV. Sends petitions to networks requesting decrease in violence and showing of more character building programs, and elimination of adult movies from TV. Boycotts."
>
> *Progressive Organizations*
>
> "*Unity Fellowship Church Movement*: Christian gay and lesbian individuals interested in the teachings of liberation theology from the King James version of the Bible. Conducts special programs for imprisoned people and youth."
>
> "*The Other Side*: Individuals committed to peace and justice through Christian discipleship. Seeks to link Third World people and North Americans in a common struggle for a social and spiritual transformation to alleviate the oppression of hunger, war, and injustice throughout the world. Provides support,

encouragement, and assistance to the oppressed worldwide. Educates Americans on oppression in foreign countries and operates overseas ministries for justice. Grant-making; anti-militarism; International development; nonviolence; human rights; support to Filipino demonstrators."

"*Coordination in Development* (CODEL): Protestant and Roman Catholic churches, Christian-related organizations and mission-sending societies committed to providing assistance to development activities among the socioeconomically disadvantaged in primarily Third World countries. Offers consultative services, network building, and resources for the planning and implementation of community based project. Does not seek not out projects, but responds to requests for assistance with the view that people have the ability to find their own solutions but often lack the resources needed to achieve their goals. Encourages cooperation between private and public sectors in development work. Negotiates with project holders regarding the frequency and format of progress, financial, and audit reports; encourages self-monitoring. Requires project presenters to specify the degree of participation in a project's identification, implementation, and resultant benefits. Conducts Development Education and Ecumenical Relations Program to encourage global development education and ecumenical cooperation in development programs; sponsors Environment and Development Program to assist and conduct workshops in implementation of agricultural and environmental projects; operates seminar program to provide a forum for discussion of issues concerning development activities of members. Maintains liaison with the United Nations and the US government.

I argue that these differences derive from two primary motivations. First, strategically, the use of the term "Christian" in an organizational name has a polarizing effect on recruitment efforts, depending on the aims of the organization. Groups with strong ideological or religious commitments to the "Christian" label and identity, as many conservative organizations have, may insist on using the term to convey their loyalty to that heritage, and to attract members who self-identify as Christian and similarly value the distinctiveness and special meaning of the Christian tradition. Conservative groups may also proudly use the term in their name to highlight their difference from secular or even progressive Christian organizations which do not feature "Christian" in the name as a way of furthering "witnessing" to a world in need of

salvation. Similarly, progressive Christian groups, who rarely used the term in their organizational names, likely avoid it because of the same polarization effect as their conservative counterpart, only for the opposite reason. Progressive Christian activists, as demonstrated in Ch. 5, displayed a significant tendency toward coalition-building, even across religious and denominational lines. Many progressive groups, in fact, regularly partnered with secular organizations in common cause. From their point of view, therefore, drawing attention to the group's Christian origins may have negative effects on the ability to attract recruits, make alliances, and achieve shared objectives.

When progressive organizations become more secular, they necessarily must cater to and attract a numerically smaller group as the number of Americans who are strictly secular is much smaller than those who hold some sort of religious orientation. They are in a sense ceding this religious activist group to the religious right or to no one in particular; that is, this group of religiously-identified citizens, who already express some interest and involvement in civic matters, has few or no religious outlets to help voice their perspectives in the public square. They then appear invisible when in fact they are arguably as large or larger than the religious right.

The other possibility of course is that as some religious SMOs secularize they actually bring their constituents with them, so there is no abandonment of religious progressives or moderates. What actually happens can be ascertained empirically, of course.

What is clear, however, is that progressive religious SMOs had a much higher probability of secularizing than did their conservative counterparts. Could it be that for religious progressives political positions and ideologies are more important than the fact that they are religiously oriented? In other words, are they more willing to sacrifice

religious identification for political/activist effectiveness? Could it be that their attitude toward religion and spirituality – ecumenism, inclusion, openness, etc. – also extends to their political and activist memberships, in the sense that they are willing to make coalitions with those of different and even no religious background, even if that means the gradual dilution of that religious orientation?

Chapter 7: Theoretical Implications

"Everywhere society's health depends on the simultaneous pursuit of mutually opposed activities or aims."

-- E.F. Schumacher*, A Guide for the Perplexed,* 1977, p. 127

"No man ever believes that the Bible means what it says: He is always convinced that it says what he means."

--*George Bernard Shaw*

The accumulation of such a rich and diverse set of empirical findings creates challenges for theory-building and the identification of durable mechanisms. Nevertheless, along this exploratory, fact-finding mission, a number of plausible explanations for the transformations seen in the sector of Christian activism have been uncovered and validated in multiple instances. In this chapter, I advance a set of middle-range theories that provide at least tentative answers to the questions posed at the outset of this research. As a reminder, they are:

- What are the prevailing macro-level patterns and transformations in U.S. Christian activism in the second half of the 20th century?

- What explains these patterns? Are extant theories from social movement analysis, the sociology of religion, or political sociology generally adequate for making sense of the dynamics observed over the period?

- What *recurrent mechanisms and processes*, if any, govern the outcomes and forms of religious activism across the historical and social contexts considered?

The answers to the first question, which is descriptive in mission, are provided concisely in Ch. 6 and in detail in Ch. 5. These patterns and transformations prompt and provide the empirical foundation for the construction of answers relevant to the second and third questions, which are explanatory in mission.

THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Civil Society:

Throughout this study, I have argued that religious activism is a valid approach to "sample" civil society as a whole due to the fact that most social issues at play in 20th century America was touched by religious activists. As a result, many of the empirical findings and theoretical claims may approximate similar patterns in civil society generally, though with differing scopes of exceptions made for religion-specific elements. Nevertheless, viewing Christian activism as a representative subset of civil society at large featuring functional equivalents of the general level processes. In this chapter, I will present a number of arguments based on the empirical findings that I believe have significant implications for theories of civil society, social movements, and religion. However, in order to recognize the contribution of these implications for broader theoretical concerns, we must first modify our image of what civil society is. I propose two preliminary paths in this direction. First, representations and theories of the civil sphere must align with the actual internal dynamics and long-term patterns of the civil sphere observed in representative empirical contexts. Second, models of the civil sphere which postulate static features or normative ideals must be augmented with models that illustrate how the sphere changes over time and explain why it must.

The most significant work on the realm of social life found between markets and the state --where these Christian movements appear, engage each other, and attempt influence the other two spheres – is *The Civic Sphere* by Jeffrey Alexander. Alexander's tome is encyclopedic and theoretically pioneering. Grounding his approach unapologetically in the Durhkeimian tradition of binary social categorization, Alexander teases out the subtle and myriad manifestations of cultural boundary issues in American civil society. The metaphor employed by Alexander in this elegant work is that of a stage or forum, wherein cultural contestants (social movements, public figures, political entrepreneurs, intellectuals, citizens, mass media, etc.) enter, arguments and discursive techniques in hand, to rationally deliberate the concerns of the day. This civic engagement serves to both produce a robust intellectual climate, and create a platform from which sound social and political solutions may be generated and applied in the other two spheres of social life, or beyond.

This model, while valuable and doubtless accurate in many respects, remains inadequate in terms of accounting for many of the processes and phenomena observed in the present study of Christian activism in recent U.S. history. Alexander's highly ordered, sanitized, and normative view of the civil sphere is at great variance with the portrait painted by the last 50 years of Christian engagement in public affairs. Instead, I contend that the civil sphere, far from resembling a safe cultural space within which sensible citizens may work to shape their democracy, is more akin to a battlefield, particularly in late-20th century US political culture.

The Cybernetic Civil Sphere

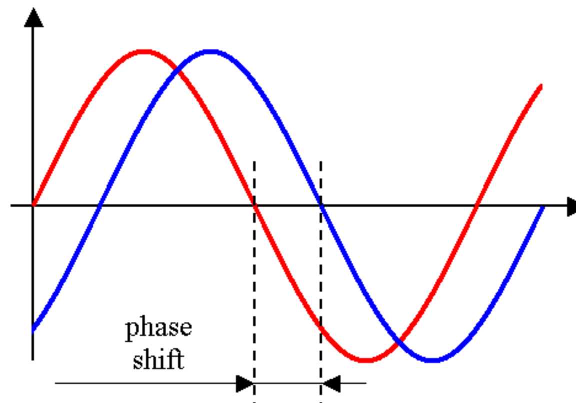
When viewed from a sufficient analytical distance, the pattern that emerges from this enduring conflict is the accidental but significant creation of a kind of ideological balance in the civil sphere. Christian groups certainly did not enter the public sphere to produce compromise, tranquility, or détente. In truth, their primary motivation was quite the opposite: they wished to weaken or annihilate their moral contraries. Nevertheless, the aggregated result of this recurrent action has been the production of an approximate political equilibrium within and across time periods.

A summary of key results from the analysis provide insight into the mechanisms responsible for this outcome. The longitudinal dynamics between conservative and progressive Christian activist groups presented in Chs. 5 and 6 indicate that in most years, the number of members in progressive and conservative groups were roughly equivalent. Similarly, the number of progressive Christian activist groups was virtually identical to the number of conservative Christian activist groups across time. Given that there is no natural or expected cause for this finding, a plausible explanation must be offered. To better ascertain possible causal factors, a focus on time order and reflexive processes is required. Temporally speaking, each case points to a lagged increase in the number of conservative groups. That is, surges in conservative membership and number of activist groups followed prior increases in groups or members by progressive Christian activists. Previously, I referred to this phenomenon as a type of "phase shift," a term borrowed from physics to describe the relative frequency of two waves of equal amplitude. If

number of organizations and members is substituted for amplitude, with higher values being equivalent to higher amplitude and vice versa, and time substituted for frequency, then a classic phase shift pattern is observed (see example below). Using the image below, the red line would correspond to progressive Christian activity and the blue line with conservative Christian activity.

This "lagged surge" among conservative Christian activists suggests responsive attempts to follow or unseat progressive Christian groups experiencing higher levels of these quantitative

Figure 30: "Phase Shift" as An Illustration of Religious Civil Sphere Response Mechanism



indicators of success. Such a pattern found consistently over a four-decade period points to sensitive and rapidly responding interactive forces between the two Christian factions. In systems and cybernetic theory, such dynamics are referred to as feedback mechanisms.

Feedback mechanisms are not only responsive and rational, but are generally self-regulating and generate homeostasis.

Further evidence of the existence of cybernetic processes at work in this portion of the civil sphere is the persistent display and indeed deepening over time of bifurcation and polarization among nearly all issues engaged by Christian activists. More precisely, polarization of issues is a natural result of ongoing moral boundary battles resulting from threats to sacred values and the inevitable response from the rival faction. Over time, this threat-response-equilibrium dialectic tends to force marginal, apolitical, and moderate Christians to the poles through negative feedback, effectively hollowing out the middle. Findings presented in Figures 13 and 14 are further evidence of this cybernetic process.

Finally, taking all of these facts and reformulations together, I assert that, "what begins in religion, often ends in politics." Put more formally, this evidence corroborates the hypothesis that changes in *religious* belief, institutions, and practice often have important and traceable effects on *secular* political developments. Although not designed as a study in American politics *per se*, or an attempt to reduce explanations in larger political trends to religious developments, a number of patterns emerged from the data that point to partial explanations for phenomena and forces observed in the general context of American political activity.

In the spirit of the American idiom, "the brightest flame burns the quickest," this study clearly establishes that groups with a moderate ideological orientation enjoyed the longest organization lifespans. More extreme ideological Christian groups often had

significant short-run impact, but had stunted lifespans. Over time, the moderate advantage in lifespan translates to greater probabilities of recruiting members and for longer periods of time.

Ironically, even though moderate Christian groups persisted in the population longer than their more extreme counterparts, the total number and proportion of moderate groups in the population declined dramatically from 1960-2000. A theory advanced by Berger, Hunter, and Smith – and with which I agree—helps establish, though indirectly, a plausible explanation for this phenomenon. According to this perspective, the relative weakening of the left/liberal/progressive political ideology in the US is due to the widespread perception of it being effectively secularized. By this I mean the public belief that the left is political realm hostile to religion, relativistic on moral values, permissive on individual behavior, and inclined instead to a thoroughgoing Enlightenment, rationalistic ethos. Part of this perception is no doubt due, with ample justification, to the legacy of the 1960s. However, a significant, if not primary, cause is the rise of the Religious Right, which itself was largely a counter-movement to the perceived excesses of the student movement, counter-culture, and "hippie" lifestyle. The result is a greatly delimited range of political options for moderate Christians to navigate. On the one hand is the political left, which has thoroughly and effectively portrayed as the group unfriendly toward, uninterested in, and occasionally actively resisting people of faith and their sectarian morality. On the other hand, is the party which actively welcomes and even seeks out people of faith and proudly proclaims its Christian identity, values, and constituency. The result is a menu of political/moral choices which

represents only the extremes of American religious and social values, leaving moderate Christians with no obvious good option. This polar-dialectic dynamic over time has only accentuated and deepened the extremity of each side to the point of caricature.

The unfortunate (but sociologically interesting) side effect of this process is the nearly total abandonment of the vast middle distribution of American opinion, practice, and preferences, where most citizens live; culturally, politically, ideologically, and religiously. Because of the absence of a viable moderate representation, a party or political organization that "looks like them," moderates have largely been forced to pick awkwardly from those tiny pieces of each extreme that best approximate their values, lifestyles, preferences, and practices.

Another strictly religious hypothesis also offers a plausible explanation for the decline of the religious left, as well as the depolitization of religious moderates. As denominations and religious groups struggled to survive through the 1960s and 1970s, their primary intent and focus became attracting and retaining members. Like any marginal organization, accommodation to the needs, wants, and preferences of majorities become paramount, if not necessary. In many cases, this need resulted in the moderation of prophetic stances and a *de facto* privatization of the religious group. In the US, particularly among nondenominational and evangelical free traditions, this tendency culminated in a kind of spiritual narcissism focused on self-help, psychological counseling, financial advice, and family support. An important secondary feature of these communities is the emphasis on entertainment, particularly music and video, modeled on mainstream secular mass media. To the extent that these religious groups center their

attention on the individual and his or her psychology, they necessarily exclude the possibility of community, social and global awareness. Such individualistic values also dovetail fortuitously with the utilitarian, libertarian worldview of modern global capitalism and its attendant consumerism. Thus, the likelihood of meaningful critique of the socio-economic structure by such religious groups is decreased dramatically.

PROPHETS: THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGIOUS MORAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Social movement theory is generally pitched at a macro-structural level of analysis, describing rather impersonal large-scale forces such as mobilization of resources, relational networks, organizational framing, and historical political opportunities. These are clearly crucial and valuable perspectives, validated by hundreds of studies and immeasurably useful in movement analysis at the macro level. A growing body of literature, however, argues that a focus solely on so-called "structural" causal factors will ultimately prove inadequate for producing a theoretical picture of social movements that truly approximates their manifestations in actual, lived experience. In contrast to Skocpol's famous summation that revolutions "are not made; they happen," I assert, in concert with many sociologists of culture, phenomenologists, ethnographers that attention to the individual, micro-mechanisms of movement-building is essential, and heretofore under-valued. Alongside these respected structural frameworks, these scholars contend that a focus on exactly who, why, and how movements are built fills out blind-spots and actively ignored aspects of theories of contentious politics. Such approaches locate themselves doggedly at the personal, even biographical level, and provide much

needed theoretical specification upon which macro-level theories are built, and indeed depend.

Consequently, I argue here that actors within religious organizations attempting to gradually redefine, relocate, or revive the boundaries of morality in civil society constitute the primary micro-level catalysts by which religious (and many secular) movement organizations work in everyday life. In the tradition of Walzer, Melucci, and West, I term these actors "prophets," invoking both their location within religious traditions and moral schemas, and its use to describe individuals articulating alternative, often radical visions of a new social order (Walzer, 1982; Melucci, 1996; West, 1993). Prophets in this sense have played pivotal though often overlooked roles in most instances of sociopolitical change in US history. Most originate in activist organizations, many of them religious. Prophets may be seen as a species of the "moral entrepreneur" genus elaborated by Becker (1995), Adut (2004), and Goode (1994). The unique characteristics of prophets, however, complicate traditional models of collective action. These traits demonstrate the unusual and disproportionate power and durability of religio-political activism. Prophets generally operate according to trans-rational logic and motives, are unattached to the outcomes of movements, and frequently put the movement before their personal well-being. Since they are so often unconstrained by limitations normally seen among conventional activists, their "per unit" value to movements may be disproportionate to their numbers, and when compared to typical rank and file participants.

To put it in a phrase, religious activism works by harmonizing a moral habitus (set of abstract personally-held values, practices, and identities) with a set of empirical actualities found in the external social world, particularly politics, economic, and cultural events. It is the task of religious activists, both individually and organizationally, to demonstrate why "the world out there" should be of interest to the identities and values of religious people. This is chiefly accomplished by linking the moral schemas of the religious group to instances of moral transgression on the part of society or a social group. Put simply this is the task – and expertise – of the prophet.

As shown throughout this study, prophets, particularly those in religious contexts, translate objective facts into subjective meanings through strategic manipulations of cultural categories and moral schemas. In the case of political effects, religion and religious groups influence social transformation most often by modifying the prevailing definitions of right and wrong – moral schema – which undergird political action and indeed many arenas of social life. Practices, beliefs, policies, and groups which were formerly seen as morally indifferent – or not problematized normatively at all -- are re-categorized as good or evil, evil may be transformed into good, or vice versa. These are the elementary mechanics of social change.

Evidence of this process can be found in the sudden birth of new social issues for religious activism in the 1980s, as demonstrated in Ch. 5. These include the anti-nuclear movement, pro-life mobilization, gay rights activism, and an enormous embrace of human rights as a target of collective action. Each of these cases, emerged virtually *de*

novo during this period as a direct result of religiously inspired prophets translating objective external happenings into subjectively meaning, relevant, and morally-grounded outrage. Further evidence of this process is observed in the significant spike in the number of conservative Christian activist groups between 1975 and 1985 on issues of moral decline and opposition to legal abortion, which prefigured later large-scale changes in electoral political activity, leading eventually by 2000 to conservative Christians capturing the presidency via George W. Bush. It is difficult to plausibly imagine how this political achievement could have been attained without the sustained cultural activism by these Christian groups. This case is a particularly clear illustration of how significant transformations in the political and historical realm often have their origins in the religious civil sphere. In this particular case, religious activists "seeded' the electoral ground at the local level several years prior to major electoral shifts favorable to their work.

Chapter 8: Future Projections

Humans have an absolute need for an interpretation of life."

---Arthur Schopenhauer, On Religion: A Dialogue, 1871, p. 96

Religion is important for a great number of sociological topics because it is one of the most enduring of cultural forms. It is a cultural system, a reservoir of values, ultimate meanings, ethics, and authority. For nearly as long as humans have walked the earth, religion has walked alongside them. Therefore, in situations of certainty, when guidance with respect to ethics, morality, or ultimate ends are considered, religion is frequently called upon, even in the modern, developed and highly educated United States. This dissertation has argued that not only has religion been an essential player in the history of American civil society, but also that it has had large-scale and consequential effects on the general political landscape, which often manifests as strictly secular outcomes.

The future, however, is not as clear. Not only are a variety of religious activist groups in abeyance, with uncertain trajectories, but the traditional religious communities and denominations from which they emerged are in decline. Sociologists of religion have recently observed the growing proportion of Americans who describe themselves as having "no religious affiliation," informally referred to as the "nones." At present, approximately 14% of Americans identify themselves with this label. A large proportion of this group are not atheist, agnostic, or strictly secular, but "SBNR" –"spiritual but not

religious." This new term was introduced by adherents to further specify and qualify their religious beliefs and practices.

Given the seemingly unbounded ascendancy of this group alongside the decline or depolitization of mainline denominations, I anticipate that the future of American religious activism will belong to the "nones." In the short term, denominational Christianity may play middling roles, but the major social movements of the 21st century –to the extent that they are populated by people of faith and their values – will be led by the spiritual, all encompassing, universal yet transcendent vision of non-exclusive religion.

If this comes to pass, it will not simply be because extant religious organizations have failed to connect with young people, the middle class, the disenfranchised, racial minorities, or because they have failed to modify their theology or political expressions to make them more relevant to the unchurched of the day. Neither will it be because religious organizations cannot get along or overcome serious disagreements either internally or with rival churches. The problem with religion is not differences and internal fragmentation based on ideology but the fact that the groups in question fail to engage in meaningful, respectful, and constructive communication with one another. The field is bereft of sharing of concerns, dialogue, even confrontation -- except at a distance through battle. The result is more separation, mistrust, ignorance and silence, a kind of religio-political apartheid.

This fact would be disturbing on its own, but is compounded by the fact that these rows map nearly exactly processes playing out in the political realm generally. A

convincing case that the latter is a result of the form cannot be made. But given that, as I have demonstrated in this dissertation, religion is the most important source of moral schemas in the U.S., that these moral schemas have been locked in bitter warfare at least since the 1960s, that moral schemas undergird political values and ideologies, and that the American political landscape is riven with seemingly intractable ideological combat, it is not farfetched to conclude that "what begins in religion, ends in politics" is not only corroborated, but being played out daily before our very eyes.

Appendix A.

Numerical Codes for Issues in Religious Activism Database

1. Africa
2. Aging
3. Agriculture
4. Animal rights
5. Anti-Catholic
6. Anti-communism
7. Anti-death penalty
8. Anti-drugs
9. Anti-ERA/anti-feminism
10. Anti-gun control
11. Anti-modernism/fundamentalist/anti-secular/anti-atheism
12. Anti-poverty/urban renewal
13. Anti-racism/race relations
14. Anti-Religious Right/Anti-New Right
15. Anti-Vietnam War/S.E. Asia
16. Arts
17. Black nationalism
18. Civil liberties
19. Civil rights/racial justice
20. Community development
21. Conscientious objection/anti-draft/conscription
22. Conservative: General/smaller government
23. Corporate responsibility/investments/divestment
24. Creationism
25. Direct service/charity, maternal support, childcare
26. Economic development/International development/foreign aid
27. Economic justice/social security/welfare rights/redistribution/basic needs
28. Ecumenism
29. Education/education reform
30. Energy
31. Environment/ecology
32. Farm workers/migrants
33. Federal budget/military budget/taxes
34. Foreign policy/foreign relations/trade
35. Gay rights and advocacy
36. Internal church reform, rational funeral practices
37. Greater role of religion/theocracy
38. Health/health care

39. Housing
40. Human rights/human trafficking/anti-torture/POWs/amnesty
41. Hunger/food safety
42. Immigration
43. Korea/Asia/Taiwan/Philippines
44. Labor/(un)employment
45. Latin America/Central America/land reform
46. Liberal/liberation/black theology
47. Literacy
48. Media reform/media violence
49. Middle East
50. Missions/evangelism
51. Moral decline/traditional values/traditional family preservation/anti-sex education/anti-gay
52. Nuclear arms/disarmament
53. Obscenity/anti-porn/decency
54. Patriotism/pro-military/militarism/anti-UN
55. Peace/nonviolence/anti-militarism
56. Political corruption
57. Prison reform/prisoner support/criminal justice/juvenile justice
58. Private schools/parental rights
59. Pro-business/free enterprise
60. Pro-choice
61. Pro-democracy
62. Progressive: General
63. Pro-life/anti-abortion/anti-contraception
64. Pro-UN/United Nations advocacy
65. Refugees
66. Religious freedom/church-state boundary
67. Sabbath protection
68. Safety
69. School prayer
70. Sex education
71. Social action: General/Social Justice
72. Social teaching dissemination/CST
73. Socialism
74. South Africa/Anti-apartheid
75. Temperance/alcoholism
76. Voter registration/citizenship
77. Women's rights/feminism/gender equality/ERA
78. Conservative/traditional theology, Anti-WCC, Anti-mobilization, Anti-social action
79. Anti-gambling

80. Anti-immigration
81. White supremacy/racial purity
82. Ireland

Appendix B.

Numerical Codes for Tactics in Religious Activism Database

1. Legislation/public policy
2. Public awareness, consciousness raising
3. Research
4. Speakers
5. Seminars/conferences, forums
6. Training/leadership training/workshops
7. Media outreach
8. Media ministry
9. Publications, clearinghouse
10. Coalition building
11. Church outreach
12. Community organizing/grassroots organizing/civic engagement
13. Political organizing/political action
14. Financial support/grantmaking
15. Federation/central organization/coordination
16. Protest/rallies/marches
17. Direct action/boycotts/civil disobedience
18. Advocacy
19. Litigation/legal defense/legal support
20. Youth outreach/youth training/youth ministry
21. Lobbying
22. Mobilization
23. Divestment
24. Official resolutions
25. Prayer
26. Vigils
27. Fasting
28. Technical assistance
29. Retreats
30. Parallel institutions

Appendix C.

Alphabetical List of U.S. Christian Activist Organizations Analyzed

ABW Ministries
Academic Freedom Legal Defense Fund
Action for Interracial Understanding
Affirmation/Gay & Lesbian Mormons
Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian/Gay Concerns
Africa Faith & Justice Network
African People's Christian Organization
Agape: Gospel of Life Disciples
AIDS National Interfaith Network
Alcohol Education for Youth and Community
Alliance Defense Fund
Alliance to End Repression
American Baptist Peace Fellowship
American Baptists Concerned
American Catholic Committee
American Center for Law and Justice
American Christian Action Council
American Christians for the Abolition of Torture
American Citizens Concerned for Life
American Coalition for Traditional Values
American Coalition of Unregistered Churches
American Collegians for Life
American Constitutional Rights Association
American Council of Christian Churches
American Council of Christian Laymen
American Council on Alcohol Problems
American Family Association
American Family Communiversity
American Forum for Jewish-Christian Cooperation
American Friends Service Committee
American Health and Temperance Society
American TFP
Americanism Foundation
Americans Against Abortion
Americans for Decency
Americans for God
Americans United for God and Country
Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Anglo-Saxon Christian Patriot
Appeal of Conscience Foundation
Archbishop Romero Relief Fund
Armageddon Project
Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace
Association for Public Justice
Association for Religion and Intellectual Life
Association for the Advancement of Family Stability
Association of Black Catholics Against Abortion
Association of Urban Sisters
Axios USA
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
Baptist Peace Fellowship
Baptist Students Concerned
Baptists for Life
Benedictines for Peace
Bible Holiness Movement
Bible-Science Association
Biblical Institute for Social Change
Biblical Witness Fellowship
Black Methodists for Church Renewal
Board of Church and Society of the United Methodist Church
Bread for the World
Brethren Peace Fellowship
Brethren/Mennonite Council for Gay Concerns
Campaign Against Investment in South Africa
Campaign Against US Bases in the Philippines
Campaign for Human Development
Canon Law Society of America
Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation
Care Net
Carnegie Council on Ethics and International Affairs
Catholic Association for International Peace
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Catholic Central Verein of America
Catholic Central Youth Union of America
Catholic Charities USA
Catholic Committee of Appalachia
Catholic Committee on Urban Ministry
Catholic Council on Civil Liberties
Catholic Council on Working Life
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
Catholic Parents Network

Catholic Peace Fellowship
Catholic Relief Services
Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America
Catholic Women for the ERA
Catholic Worker
Catholics for a Free Choice
Catholics for Christian Political Action
Catholics Speak Out
Catholics United for Life
Catholics United for the Faith
CAUSA USA
CCCO, An Agency for Military Draft Counseling
Center for Community Change
Center for New Creation
Center for Religion, Ethics, & Social Policy
Center of Concern
Center on Conscience and War/NISBCO
Center on Law & Pacifism
Center on Religion and Society
Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors
Chicago Religious Task Force on Central America
Children of War
Children's Legal Foundation
Christian Action Council
Christian AIDS Service Alliance
Christian Amendment Movement
Christian Americans for Life
Christian Anti-Communism Crusade
Christian Anti-Narcotic Association
Christian Citizens' Crusade
Christian Coalition
Christian Communications, Inc.
Christian Crusade
Christian Defense League
Christian Family Life
Christian Family Movement
Christian Family Renewal
Christian Feminists
Christian Focus on Government
Christian Forum Research Foundation
Christian Freedom Foundation
Christian Government Movement
Christian Heritage Center

Christian Ireland Ministries
Christian Law Association
Christian Law Institute
Christian Liberty Association
Christian Life Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
Christian Patriots Defense League/Citizens Emergency Defense System
Christian Research
Christian Response International
Christian Solidarity International, U.S.A.
Christian Urgent Action Network for Emergency Support Philippines
Christian Voice
Christian Women's National Concerns
Christians Associated for Relationships with Eastern Europe
Christians for Socialism in the U.S.
Christians in Crisis
Christians' Israel Public Action Campaign
Christians United for Responsible Entertainment
Christians, Inc.
Church Coalition for Human Rights in the Philippines
Church Committee on Human Rights in Asia
Church League of America
Church of God Peace Fellowship
Church Peace Union
Church Women United
Churches Center for Theology & Public Policy
Churches' Committee for Voter Registration Education
Churchmen's Commission for Decent Publications
Citizens Council of America for Segregation
Citizen's Crusade Against Poverty
Citizens for a Better America
Citizens for Decency Through Law
Citizens for Decent Literature
Clean Up TV Campaign
Clergy and Laity Concerned
Coalition for a New Foreign and Military Policy
Coalition for Better Television
Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras
Coalition on Southern Africa
Coalition on Women and Religion
Coalitions for America
COAR Peace Mission
Commission for Racial Justice
Commission of the Churches on International Affairs

Commission on Family Ministries and Human Sexuality of the NCC
Commission on Marriage and Family Life of the NCC
Commission on Religion in Appalachia
Committee for Nonviolent Action
Committee in Solidarity with Latin American Nonviolent Movements
Committee of Concern
Committee of Concerned Catholics
Committee of Religious Concern for Peace
Committee of Southern Churchmen
Committee on Social Development & World Peace of the USCC
Community Creativity, Inc.
Concerned Women for America
Conference for Catholic Lesbians
Congress of National Black Churches
Congress of Racial Equality
Conservative Majority for Citizen's Rights
Coordination in Development
Corpus Christi Campaign
Council of Bible Believing Churches
Council on Christian Unity
Council on Religion and International Affairs
Council on Religion and the Homosexual
Courage
Creation Health Foundation
Creation Research Society
Creation Social Science and Humanities Society
CREED
Crusade Against Corruption
Crusade for Decency
Debt Crisis Network
Defenders of the Christian Faith
Denominational Ministry Strategy
Department of Family Life of the NCC
Dignity/USA
Disciples Peace Fellowship
Division of Christian Social Concern of the American Baptist Convention
Eagle Forum
East-West Bridges for Peace
Eco-Justice Working Group
Ecumenical Committee on the Andes
Ecumenical Program for International Communication and Action
Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean
Eleventh Commandment Fellowship

Episcopal Churchpeople for a Free Southern Africa
Episcopal Pacifist Fellowship
Episcopal Peace Fellowship
Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity
Episcopal Women's Caucus
Episcopalians and Others for Responsible Social Action
ESA
Eternal Life
Ethics & Public Policy Center
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention
Evangelical Women's Caucus
Evangelicals Concerned
Evangelicals for Social Action
Exodus International - N. America
Family America
Family Cause
Family Defense Council
Family Life Bureau
Family Life Division
Family Protection League
Family Research Council
Family Research Institute
Family Rosary
Fellowship of Concern
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Fellowship of Reconciliation Task Force on Latin America and Caribbean
Feminists for Life
Focus on Micronesia Coalition
Focus on the Family
ForLIFE
Foundation for a Christian Civilization
Foundation for Moral Restoration
Foundation for Religious Action in Social and Civil Order
Free Congress Research and Education Foundation
Free the Fathers
Freedom Fellowship Foundation
Freedom of Faith: A Christian Committee for Religious Rights
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Friends Committee on War Tax Concerns
Friends Coordinating Committee on Peace
Friends for Lesbian & Gay Concerns
Friends of Families
Friendship House

General Board of Christian Social Concerns of the Methodist Church
General Commission on the Status and Role of Women
Genesis Institute
Gloria Dei Press
Golden Rule Society
Grail Movement
Grailville
Grey Nuns
Groundwork for a Just World
Happiness of Womanhood
Helpers of God's Precious Infants
Holy Innocents Reparation Committee
Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services
Human Life Center
Human Life International
Humanitarian Law Project-International Education Development
Impact
Infact
Institute for Creation Research
Institute for Peace and Justice
Institute of Women Today
Institute on Religion and Democracy
Institute on the Church in Urban-Industrial Society
Integrity
Intercessors for America
Interfaith Action for Economic Justice
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
Interfaith Center to Reverse the Arms Race
Interfaith Commission on Marriage and Family
Interfaith Committee on Social Responsibility in Investments
Interfaith Council for Human Rights
Interfaith Hunger Appeal
Interfaith Impact for Justice and Peace
Interfaith Impact Foundation
Interfaith Movement
Interfaith Office on Accompaniment
International Association for Religious Freedom
International Christian Youth
International Christians for Unity in Social Action
International Council for Christian Leadership
International Council of Christian Churches
International Grail Movement
International Health and Temperance Association

International Human Rights Program of the Christian Church
International Justice Network
International Life Services
International Network for Religion and Animals
International Relief Friendship Foundation
International Religious Liberty Association
International Society for Animal Rights
International Temperance Association
Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization
Inter-Religious Task Force on Central America
Interreligious Taskforce on US Food Policy
Interweave
Jesuit Refugee Service/U.S.A.
John Calvin Society for Racial Theology
John T. Conner Center for East/West Reconciliation
Jubilee
Justice Fellowship
Justice for Women
JustLife
Keston USA
Korea Church Coalition for Peace, Justice, and Reunification
Korean American Peace Institute
Las Hermanas
Last Harvest
Laymen's Commission of the American Council of Christian Churches
Laymen's League
Laymen's National Bible Association
League of Housewives/Happiness of Womanhood
League of Pace Amendment Advocates
League to Uphold Congregational Principles
Legatus
Liberty Federation
LIFE
Life Action Ministries
Lord's Day Alliance of the United States
LOS PADRES
Love in Action
Lutheran Coalition on Latin America
Lutheran Human Relations Association of America
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services
Lutheran Peace Fellowship
Lutherans Concerned/North America
Lutherans for Life

Media Action Research Center
Mennonite Economic Development Associates
Metanoia Ministries
Methodist Federation for Social Action
Methodist Peace Fellowship
Methodists for Life
Micronesia Coalition
Midwest Migrant Health Information Office
Migrant Health Promotion
Migration and Refugee Services
Moms in Touch International
Moral Alternatives
Moral Majority
Moral Re-Armament
Morality in Media
More Light Presbyterians for Lesbian,Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Concerns
Mormons for ERA
Movement for a Better World
Mt. Diablo Peace Center
NARMIC/American Friends Service Committee
National Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression
National Association of Evangelicals
National Association of Laity
National Association to Keep and Bear Arms
National Bible Association
National Black Catholic Clergy Caucus
National Catholic Action Coalition
National Catholic Coalition for Responsible Investment
National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice
National Catholic Rural Life Conference
National Catholic Social Action Conference
National Catholic Society for Animal Welfare
National Catholic Welfare Conference
National Catholic Women's Union
National Christian Action Coalition
National Christian Leadership Conference for Israel
National Citizens Action Network
National Coalition Against Pornography
National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families
National Coalition of American Nuns
National Committee for a Human Life Amendment
National Committee for the Prevention of Alcoholism
National Committee of Black Churchmen

National Committee of Religious Leaders for Safety
National Conference of Catholic Charities
National Conference of Christians and Jews
National Council of Bible Believing Churches
National Council of Catholic Men
National Council of Catholic Women
National Council of Churches
National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
National Ecumenical Coalition
National Education Program
National Episcopal Coalition on Alcohol and Drugs
National Farm Worker Ministry
National Federation for Decency
National Federation of Laymen
National Forum Foundation
National Impact
National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors
National League for Separation of Church and State
National Liberal League
National Migrant Workers Council
National Namibia/Southern Africa Concerns
National Office for Black Catholics
National Office for Decent Literature
National Organization of Episcopalians for Life
National Pro-Family Coalition
National Pro-Life Religious Council
National Reform Association
National Right to Life Committee
National Safety Council's Conference for Religious Leaders
National Service Board for Conscientious Objectors
National Temperance and Prohibition Council
National Temperance League
National Traditionalist Caucus
National Women's Christian Temperance Union
National Youth Pro-Life Coalition
Nationalist Observer
Network
Nevada Desert Experience
New Call to Peacemaking
New Ways Ministry
New York CIRCUS
Nicaragua Interfaith Committee for Action
North American Christian Peace Conference

North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea
North Conway Institute
Now Christian Freedom International
Office for Church in Society- UCC
Office of Family Ministries & Human Sexuality: NCC
Operation PUSH
Operation Rescue
Order of Seville
Order of the Cross Society
Outpost
Panel of American Women
Parents' Alliance to Protect Our Children
Pax Christi-USA
Peacebuilder Movement
Pentecostal Coalition for Human Rights
People for Life
People's Christian Coalition
Plowshares Institute
Presbyterian Hunger Program
Presbyterian Interracial Council
Presbyterian Women
Presbyterians for Democracy and Religious Freedom
Presbyterians for Lesbian/Gay Concerns
Presbyterians Pro-Life
Priests for Equality
Prison Fellowship International
Pro Media Foundation
Pro-Family Forum
Professionals-Nicaragua
Project Equality
ProLife Direct Action League
Protect America's Children
Protect Life in All Nations
Protestants and other Americans United for Separation of Church and State
Public Advocate of the United States
Puebla Institute
Quest for Peace
Quixote Center
Reasons to Believe
Recovery Ministries
Refugee Voices
Regeneration
Regional Conflicts Program

Religion and Ethics Network
Religion and Labor Council of America
Religion and Socialism Commission of the Democratic Socialists of America
Religion in American Life
Religious Activities Committee, National Safety Council
Religious Coalition for a Moral Drug Policy
Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
Religious Committee for the ERA
Religious Heritage of America
Religious Leaders Division, National Safety Council
Religious Network for Equality for Women
Religious Roundtable
Religious Task Force
Religious Task Force on Central America and Mexico
Rock is Stoning Kids
Rockford Institute Center on Religion and Society
Rosary for Life Organization
Rutherford Institute
Seamless Garment Network
Servants in Faith and Technology
Set the Date Now
Seventh Day Adventists Kinship International
Shepherd's Fold Ministries
Society for Animal Rights
Society for the Family of Man
Society of St. Stephen
Sojourners
Southern Africa Network
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
Southern Mutual Help Association
St. Joan's International Alliance
St. Martin de Porres Guild
Starthrowers
Stop ERA
Students for America
Summer Community Organization and Political Education Program
Sunday League
The Committee -- Witness to Reconciliation
The Conservative Caucus
The Freedom Council
The Nationalist Movement
The Other Side
Third Continental Congress

U.S. Catholic Conference Migration and Refugee Services
UCC Coordinating Center for Women in Church & Society
Unitarian Laymen's League
Unitarian Universalist Association Black Concerns Working Group
Unitarian Universalist Fellowship for Social Justice
Unitarian Universalist Jubilee Working Group for Anti-Racism
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
Unitarian Universalist Society for Alcohol and Drug Education
Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation
Unitarian Universalists for Black and White Action
Unitarian Universalists for Lesbian/Gay Concerns
United American and Captive Nations Patriotic Movement
United Black Christians
United Black Church Appeal
United Church of Christ Coalition for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Concerns
United Church of Christ Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society
United Church of Christ Ministers for Racial and Social Justice
United Church Peace Fellowship
United Church Women of the NCC
United Families of America
United Lesbian and Gay Christian Scientists
United Parents Under God
United Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
United Presbyterian Women
United States Catholic Conference
Unity Fellowship Church Movement
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches
US Interreligious Committee on Peace
US-USSR Bridges for Peace
UU Association of Congregations -- Washington Office for Faith in Action
Value of Life Committee
Voice of Liberty Association
Wanderer Forum Foundaiton
We the People, United
Witness for Peace
Women Affirming Life
Women Church Convergence
Women Exploited by Abortion
Women for Faith and Family
Women of Color Partnership Program
Women of the Church Coalition
Women's Advocacy Office
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual

Working Group on Domestic Hunger & Poverty
World Concern
World Conference on Religion and Peace, US Section
World Federation of Methodist Women, North America
Young Christian Movement
Young Christian Workers

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