

Evangelical Strength and the Representation of Women and Gays

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A woman's femaleness is by definition the potential for motherhood---the experience and relationship in which a woman normally finds a joyous and unique fulfillment. But she has no capacity within herself alone to realize that possibility. She needs her male companion for that. The male by his very maleness has the potential for becoming a father. In that experience and relationship, a man finds fulfillment like nothing else he will experience. But he, like his companion, has no capacity in himself alone to find that fulfillment. He needs her. Each has the capacity to confer upon the other the fulfillment of his masculinity or of her femininity...The historical significance to all of this must not be ignored. The very future existence of the human race and the fulfillment of the divine purposes for God's own creation hang on our sexual differentiation. (Kinlaw, 2005).

In the two decades since the publication of *The Restructuring of American Religion* (1988), Robert Wuthnow's argument that American society is sharply divided with religious traditionalists on one side and progressives (both secular and religious) on the other has been widely debated by academics.¹ Within the popular media, the culture war framework has been largely accepted, along with the depiction of a nation split between socially tolerant and secular blue states in the Northeast and West coast and the crimson colored American heartland, where traditional values predominate. Although there are many areas of disagreement between religious traditionalists and those holding more progressive views, differences in gender ideology are the central demarcation.²

¹ While a full examination of this debate is beyond the scope of this paper, the major point of contention between the two sides involves the extent to which the division is a mass or elite phenomenon. According to James Davidson Hunter (1991, 325), the most vigorous proponent of the "culture wars" thesis, there is a very real possibility of the two sides becoming so polarized that they will "kill each other over these differences." In contrast, other sociologists (Smith, Emerson, Gallagher, Kennedy and Sikkink 1997, 192) downplay the significance of cultural issues in the everyday lives of most Americans and posit that even at the elite level discussions of a culture war are "overblown." Political scientists, Fiorina with Abrams, and Pope (2006, 9), use election data to argue that the differences at the elite level are far greater than at the mass level and that "partisan polarization" should not be mistaken for "popular polarization."

² According to Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995, 16-17), people hold a coherent set of normative beliefs about what "constitutes masculine and feminine." In this paper, we label that system of beliefs as "gender ideology."

Although a full testing of the thesis that the major split in the United States is between religious traditionalists and progressives is beyond the scope of this paper, we will examine one important component of the debate. We test whether there is a relationship between the strength of politically mobilized socially conservative Protestants and the election of women and gays (two groups whose engagement in politics strongly violates traditional gender norms).³ If the difference in gender ideology is a central cleavage, we would expect areas of religious traditionalist strength to elect far fewer women and gays to political office than areas where they are weak. On the other hand, if gender ideology is not a major demarcation, we would not expect there to be a statistically significant difference between these areas.

In this research, we focus on the political mobilization of socially conservative Protestants rather than Catholics for two reasons. First, there has been a tremendous upsurge over the past thirty-five years in the political involvement of socially conservative Protestants.⁴ Moreover, as Marsden (2006, 5) has noted “The issues of family and sexuality proved the key to unlocking evangelical potential to become overtly political.” Second, we were able to develop a good empirical measure of the strength of the politicization of socially conservative Protestants, but do not have a comparable

³ Although we expect to find an inverse relationship between the strength of religious traditionalists and the representation of women and gays in elected office, determining exactly how this occurs is beyond the scope of this paper. There are a number of possible reasons---both supply and demand side factors. On the supply side, women and gays may choose not to run for office because they think they cannot win in these areas. Also women holding religious traditionalist beliefs are less likely to put themselves forward as candidates because they believe it is not appropriate, thereby decreasing the potential pool of female candidates. Also party leaders may discourage female and gay candidates, as well as erect institutional barriers to entry. Finally, voters may be unwilling to vote for candidates that do not conform to religiously based gender norms.

⁴ The Supreme Court’s decision in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) served as a catalyst, convincing many socially conservative Protestants that the nation was heading in the wrong direction and that protecting traditional morality and family values required political mobilization (Wilcox 1988, 668). Ronald Reagan’s victory in the 1980 presidential election was a direct outgrowth of this mobilization (Masci 2004, 14). In the 2004 presidential election, evangelical voters comprised more than one-third of all Bush voters (Pew Research Center 2005).

measure for distinguishing traditionalistic Catholics from more moderate/liberal ones. However, we do include Catholicism as a control variable in our models. These issues will be discussed more fully in subsequent sections.

Differences in Gender Ideology

Oldmixon (2005, 2) argues that the predominant political division in the United States is between “those who embrace religious traditionalism and those who embrace progressive sexual norms.” Gender ideology not only shapes beliefs about what it means to be biologically male and female, but also can be used to determine positions on a whole host of other issues (e.g., abortion, birth control, gay rights, same-sex marriage, home schooling, family values, pornography, sex education, HPV vaccinations, employment discrimination, welfare reform, and tax policy to mention just a few).

Religious traditionalists adhere to the belief that gender differences are God-given, immutable and a function of one’s biological sex. A recent article on the website of Concerned Women for America, a socially conservative Protestant women’s organization, informs readers that: “our sexual differentiation has overtones that are more than simply natural. It carries within itself something of the very imaging of God” (Kinlaw 2005). This association of biologically based gender identity with “imago Dei” leaves no room for those holding traditionalist Christian views to move outside of prescribed gender roles because to do so is to deny the deity’s plan for humanity. Through procreation, “He (God) has given to the human person the privilege, in union with another human that is different from herself or himself, the capacity to be part of the replication of what God himself did in Eden. We can bring into existence human souls the worth of which is defined for us by nothing less than Calvary itself” (Kinlaw 2005).

In contrast, progressives are more likely to consider a wide range of gender roles as acceptable and concur with Duerst-Lahti and Kelly (1995, 13) that “gender is the socially constructed meaning given to biological sex, especially sex differences. Gender is how we come to understand, and often magnify, the minor differences that exist between biological males and females.” While recognizing that only women have the physical capacity to bear children, proponents of this view do not believe that biological reality is paramount in determining one’s destiny. As such progressives tend to be much more accepting of a range of differing lifestyles, including homosexuality. Familial and work place roles and responsibilities are socially determined rather than innate.

According to Morgan (2006), the extent to which those work/family arrangements are the product of private decisions or influenced by activist state policies designed to support a particular gender ideology differs across societies. Governmental policies aimed at increasing gender equality in both domains are the norm in much of Western Europe, but not in the United States where the high level of religious practice and religious diversity has precluded the development of a coherent set of national policies regarding work and family (Morgan 2006, 53).

Even though roughly three-quarters of Americans in surveys indicate they endorse gender equality (Dolan 2005, 42), deviations from accepted gender norms, such as a girl trying out for a football team or a boy attempting to become a member of the pep squad, still seem unnatural and provoke feelings of discomfort. Many people, who espouse egalitarian gender roles, also believe that men and women are psychologically better suited for different tasks (Rashotte and Webster 2005, 630). These feelings often are

grounded in religious beliefs, as well as reinforced by a wide range of institutional structures and practices within society.

Socially Conservative Protestantism in the United States

Cross national researchers have found that religious beliefs, along with the level of economic development, plays a major role in determining the types of work and family roles suitable to men and women (Inglehart and Norris 2003; Norris and Inglehart 2005). Since traditionally religions have assigned a separate and subordinate role to women, secular countries typically have provided more opportunities for women than have highly religious countries (Swatos and Christiano 2001). For historical reasons, Protestant countries also typically have been more open to a range of gender roles for men and women (Inglehart and Norris 2003).⁵

The United States, however, is an outlier in terms of having a large portion of the population belonging to conservative variants of Protestant Christianity. Over the past thirty years, there has been a dramatic decline in the proportion of the population associated with more liberal Protestant sects and a commensurate increase in those affiliated with more socially conservative denominations (Maschi, 2004: 7).⁶ The 1998 National Congregational Study, (Chaves, 2004: 28) showed that 59% of congregations self identified as theologically “more on the conservative side” as opposed to only 11% self identified as “more on the liberal side.” The breakdown was similar when regular

⁵ The Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century undercut the Catholic Church’s claim to hegemony in Biblical interpretation. Over time, the many different branches of Protestantism developed their own distinct interpretations of Biblical text (Strong 1999, 207-208) Although Reformation theologians continued to uphold the “ideal of the family unit as represented by a male head of household,” Protestant churches provided many more opportunities for women to receive divine revelation (Yust 1999, 266). This history of greater religious opportunity for women helps explain why Protestant countries have generally had less rigid gender roles than Catholic countries, as well as those where Islam is predominant.

⁶ From the early 1970s through the late 1990s, the percentage of Protestants belonging to mainline denominations dropped from 57% to 47%, while those associated with conservative denominations increased from 43% to 53% (Chaves, 2004: 33).

attendance at religious services was studied, with 53% of regular attenders belonging to theologically conservative congregations and only 10% belonging to theologically liberal ones (Chaves, 2004: 28).⁷

These fast growing Protestant churches have a very conservative gender ideology. For example, the Southern Baptists, which has one of the highest growth rates, in 1998 revised their Baptist Faith and Message to read: “A wife is to submit graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ” and then went on to state that the wife “has the God given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing her household and nurturing the next generation” (Stammer 1998, A1, A28). Two years later at their convention, the Southern Baptists voted to limit church leadership positions to men (Mead and Hill 2001, 66).

With respect to homosexuality, researchers (Britton 1990; Button, Rienzo and Wald 1997; Haider-Markel and Meier 1996; Nice 1988; Wald, Button and Rienzo 1996) have consistently found that members of socially conservative Protestant churches exhibit far lower levels of social tolerance towards gays than do members of other Protestant churches and Catholics.⁸ Again, the Southern Baptists provide a good example of church teachings. The 1987 Southern Baptist Convention condemned homosexuality as a “manifestation of a depraved nature and a perversion of divine standards,” but their current web site has a more muted condemnation: “Homosexuality is not a ‘valid

⁷ Although the media plays up conflicts within mainline denominations that have resulted in congregations and members breaking away and affiliating with more conservative ones, the vast majority of the shift towards more conservative denominations is due to differences in fertility rates (Hout, Greeley and Wilde, 2001).

⁸ One survey of state and local elected officials found that political tolerance towards homosexuals was significantly higher among Catholics and Jews than among Protestants (Schroedel 1999).

alternative lifestyle.’ The Bible condemns it as sin. It is not, however, unforgivable sin. The same redemption available to all sinners is available to homosexuals” (SBC Position Statements-Sexuality, 2007).⁹

This promulgation of a religiously based gender ideology also occurs in social organizations that cut across denominational divisions. Since its founding in 1990, Promise Keepers has drawn more than five million men to its more than 170 stadium and arena events, as well as holding special conferences that have brought together 39,000 ministers, to hear their message about what it means to be “real men” (Gutterman, 2005, 95). According to Gutterman (2005, 102), Promise Keepers believe that the nation’s social problems are a direct result of the “breakdown of the traditional family” due to a “crisis in masculinity” brought about by “the confusing of ‘divinely ordained’ categories of sex, sexuality and gender.” The blurring of the traditional categories of male and female by feminists and homosexuals must be reversed by the re-creation of Biblically based masculinity.

Tony Evans in *The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper* (1994, 79-80) instructs men to reclaim their proper role within the family by telling their wives; “Honey I have made a terrible mistake. I’ve given you my role. I gave up leading this family and have forced you to take my place. Now I must reclaim that role” and then follows up with, “I am not suggesting that you ask for your role back, I’m urging you to take it back.”¹⁰ In a similar vein, Bill McCartney, the founder of Promise Keepers, was one of the main

⁹ In 1997, the Southern Baptist Convention voted to boycott Walt Disney to protest its sponsoring of immoral television shows, such as *NYPD Blue*, and hosting “gay days” at Disney World. Despite garnering a huge amount of media publicity, the boycott was a complete failure (Morone 2003, 450).

¹⁰ A similar message is promulgated on religious television programming, such as *The Old Time Gospel Hour*, *The 700 Club*, *The PTL Club*, and *Hour of Power*, which mix religious evangelism with socially conservative politics (Jelen 1999, 241-242). Focus on the Family’s James Dobson’s daily radio broadcast is carried by more than 2,900 radio stations (Beck 1999, 79).

proponents of Colorado's Amendment 2, the 1992 ballot initiative to prohibit the "special rights" to homosexuals and referred to homosexuality as an "abomination against almighty God" (Abraham 1997, 25).

Politics and Gender Ideology

According to sociologist Acker (1992), institutional life is gendered, in that stereotypical expectations about men and women's attributes and behavior, the appropriate distribution of power, and organizational processes, are all designed in a way that privileges one biological sex over another. Structures, behaviors, formal rules, informal practices, and perspectives conform to the gendered expectations of the institution. Institutions become gendered over time, as one biological sex becomes associated with the activities and functions of the organization. The preferences of the founders become the norm and establish ongoing power relations (Duerst-Lahti 2005, 231). Although these power relations may erode over time, many are remarkably "sticky" and resistant to change. Some, such as the Southern Baptists, react to the erosion of traditional relations by replacing informal norms with statutory restrictions on who may serve in power positions.

Political institutions are no different than other social organizations, in that they reflect the ongoing gender power relations, and in fact, may be more resistant to change than most other social institutions (Duerst-Lahti 2005; Jillson and Wilson 1994).¹¹ After centuries of heterosexual white men (or at least ostensibly heterosexual men) serving

¹¹ At the time of the American Revolution no state explicitly prohibited women from voting, but very few women did so. However, as women became inspired by revolutionary sentiment and attempted to exercise the franchise, states responded by statutory excluding them. Within twenty years after the Revolution, every state excluded women from voting (Gertzog, 1990). During the colonial era, all of the states punished male homosexual acts with the death penalty; none of these laws were repealed in the post-Revolutionary War period (Katz 1976, 19-23).

almost exclusively in political office, it is not surprising that women and men, who do not conform to the expected gender norms, are outsiders.¹² On an emotional level, to many people their presence seems “wrong” or at the very least, not quite natural. Although non-traditional candidates have made in-roads into political office, the political system in both subtle and blatant ways is skewed against their participation.¹³ Moreover, social psychology studies (Hogg, 2005a; Hogg, 2005b) have found that the desire for a prototypical male leader is strongest during times of uncertainty and stress, such as is the case since 9/11 in the United States.¹⁴

Many religious conservatives use jeremiad language to claim that the United States is currently in just such a crisis, which necessitates a return to traditional family values---a short-hand for traditional gender roles (Gutterman, 2005; Morone, 2003). Yet even very socially conservative religious leaders recognize that gender relations in contemporary America are radically different than they were a generation ago. Marvin Olasky, an early advisor to President George W. Bush, admits there are instances when he might vote for a woman running for political office, but goes on to state “there’s a certain shame attached to it” and that these occurrences are likely to be the result of men

¹² There are no records of women serving in elected political office during the first 100 years of the country’s existence. In 1895, three women were elected to the Colorado statehouse and in 1917 Jeanette Rankin of Montana became the first woman elected to the United States House of Representatives. Since the founding era, more than 11,000 men have served in Congress, but only a couple hundred women (Schroedel and Mazumdar 1998, 204.) The 1974 election of Kathy Kozachenko to the Ann Arbor city council was path-breaking, in that it was the first time that an openly gay or lesbian was elected to political office in the United States (Singer and Deschamps 1994, 16). According to the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund (2006), only about 350 of the country’s 511,000 state and local elected officials are openly gay.

¹³ There are a number of electoral practices, which appear neutral on the surface, but which advantage traditional candidates. According to Darcy, Welch and Clark (1994, 169-171), women are much more likely to be elected if a state or locality uses a multi-member electoral system than if a single-member electoral system is utilized. At the national level, the biggest barrier to women’s electoral success is the power of incumbency (Darcy, Welch and Clark 1994, 176-177).

¹⁴ In a poll conducted one year after the 9/11 attacks, 61% of respondents indicated they believed that men were better suited than women at handling military crises. On specific questions related to fighting terrorism and the Middle East conflict, support for male political leaders was from 30-40% higher than it was for female political leaders (Lawless 2004, 484).

abdicating their rightful position as leaders (Wegner 1998, 5). Pat Robertson (1995, 163, 166) also has acknowledged that women are capable of doing virtually every task, including governing, as well as men, but goes on to argue that the very survival of the nation requires women to return to being “a wife, a mother and a homemaker.”

Previous Research the Electoral Prospects of Women and Gays

There is a sizable literature on the factors that affect the level of support given to women running for elected office and a much smaller literature on the determinants of voting or not voting for gay candidates. Some experimental studies have found that gender stereotypes influence vote choices in hypothetical elections (e.g., Eckstrand and Eckert 1981; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; Rosenwasser and Dean 1989; Sanbonmatsu 2002). Other research has shown that voters use the biological sex of candidates as an information shortcut, assigning to candidates attributes that are typically identified as “male” or “female” (McDermott 1997; McDermott 1998; King and Matland 2003), but most have not examined the impact of religion.

Over the past two decades, scholars have learned a great deal about the factors that increase the likelihood of voting for women candidates. Analyses of individual level data from congressional races have shown that being a woman, a Democrat, a liberal and supporting liberal women’s issues are associated with support for female candidates (Cook 1994; Dolan 1998; Huddy 1994; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993; McDermott 1997; McDermott 1998; Paolino 1995; Schroedel and Snyder 1994). Studies using aggregate state level data have identified socio-demographic measures, the state’s history of electing women to political office, institutional variables, the type of office, the pool of potential candidates, and aggregate partisanship as important indicators (Arceneux 2001;

Fox and Oxley 2003; Nechemias 1987; Norrander and Wilcox 1998; Rule 1981, 1990; Wilcox and Norrander 2005).

With respect to the impact of religion on the propensity to vote for female candidates, the research is mixed. An early experimental study (Ekstrand and Eckert 1981) did not find significant bias against female candidates among white Fundamentalists. In another more recent experiment, Sanbonmatsu (2002) did not find that religiosity had a significant effect on an individual's propensity to vote for the female candidate. Conversely, Dolan (1998) found that in 1992 those with higher levels of religiosity are less likely to vote for female congressional candidates. With respect to studies at the state level, Norrander and Wilcox (1998) demonstrated that the proportion of Catholics in a state had no effect, while the proportion of Fundamentalists and Pentecostals had a positive effect on the proportion of women in state legislatures. They attribute this curious finding to Republican recruitment efforts in some states during the year they examined. However, Vandenbosch (1996) showed that the percent Christian had a negative effect on the proportion of women in state legislatures using data from 1991. She found that this effect was even more pronounced among non-egalitarian Christian denominations.

Until very recently, there was a dearth of empirical research dealing with gay politics (Cook 1999, 679), including the determinants of voting for gay and lesbian candidates. Some of the most interesting studies have involved experiments, where respondents were asked to evaluate hypothetical candidates running for political office. Researchers (Golebiowska and Thomsen 1999; Herrick and Thomas 1999) found that evaluations of hypothetical gay and lesbian candidates are influenced by group

stereotypes and the political context. Social traits also were identified as affecting evaluations of hypothetical candidates. When participants were asked whether they were likely to vote for hypothetical candidates for city council seats, researchers found that those holding ideologically conservative political beliefs and members of conservative Protestant churches were significantly less likely to support hypothetical candidates perceived to be gay (Herrick and Thomas 1999).

The most significant empirical analysis of community receptivity to gay candidates was conducted by Button, Wald and Rienzo (1999) as an extension of their much larger study (Button, Rienzo and Wald 1997) of gay rights politics in 126 cities and counties.¹⁵ Among this atypical sample of communities, the authors found that population size, the percentage of non-family households (a proxy measure for gay density), electoral rules and resource mobilization are significant predictors of gay electoral activity, and to some extent gay electoral success. Somewhat surprisingly, they did not find that political opposition from socially conservative Christian groups was a factor (Button, Wald and Rienzo 1999, 203).

As is evident from this survey of the literature, there is no consensus on whether religion exerts a significant impact on the propensity to vote for female and gay candidates. We believe the contradictory findings in the extant literature are due to limitations in the research design. The one important empirical study of gay and lesbian candidates was limited in that its sample consisted of the most pro-gay communities in country. The more extensive literature on voting for female candidates also has

¹⁵ The authors (Button, Rienzo and Wald 1997) chose cities and counties, which had adopted anti-discrimination legislation that provided legal protection to gays, so their sample is likely to be the most favorable climate for gay candidates. These communities constitute only 1% of all local governments in the United States.

limitations. First, of the few studies that have looked at the relationship between religion and the propensity to vote for women, many use a rough proxy for socially conservative Protestants, usually one that includes only Fundamentalists, Baptists and/or Pentecostals (Norrander and Wilcox 1998), or one that breaks denominations into egalitarian and non-egalitarian denominations (Vandenbosch 1996). Second, of the studies at the aggregate level, only two have explicitly examined this relationship, and they have only used one year of data. Since the results of these two studies were mixed, more research is needed to understand the relationship between religion and women in elected office. Finally, most aggregate studies only look at state legislatures, and do not examine other levels of state office (exceptions include Fox and Oxley 2003, 2004). We try to overcome some of these limitations by developing a more theoretically grounded measure of socially conservative Protestants, testing this measure at the aggregate level for more recent data, and using a composite indicator at the state level that incorporates different levels of office.

Methodological Considerations

The uneven distribution of socially conservative Protestants across the country permits the use of state level data to test our hypotheses. As we indicated earlier, Norrander and Wilcox (1998) and Vandenbosch (1996) employed a similar method and included measures of the proportion of different types of denominations in a state.¹⁶ The former study used a dummy variable for Fundamentalists/Pentecostals as a proxy for socially conservative Protestant denominations.

¹⁶ Another approach is to develop measures of religious practice, but survey respondents tend to give socially appropriate responses rather than necessarily accurate ones. For example, Hadaway, Marler and Chaves (1993) found that church attendance figures were massively over-reported when compared with actual bodies in pews. We try to avoid these difficulties by developing a denomination measure that is directly linked to political engagement.

While Fundamentalists and Pentecostals are clearly socially conservative Protestant denominations, there may be many other Protestant churches that fall into this category. According to Mead and Hill (2001), there are more than 250 different Protestant sects within the United States. For this reason, we needed a broader measure of the political mobilization of socially conservative Protestants. Devising such a measure was methodologically challenging. Because not all socially conservative Protestant denominations encourage their members to become involved in the affairs of the world, we could not simply use membership in evangelical churches as a measure of the political impact of socially conservative Protestants. Yet we did not want to ignore the importance of the church community in shaping political behavior by simply focusing on individual factors in defining socially conservative Protestants.

In order to identify traditionalist Protestant denominations that engage in worldly activities, we turned to the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). This association is comprised of 49 socially conservative churches, and is an activist organization that lobbies government on a wide range of social and political issues (Schultz, West and Maclean 1999, 322). We calculated the percentage of individuals belonging to NAE affiliated churches for each state using church membership data obtained by the 2001 American Religion Identification Survey of 50,281 residential households in the continental United States (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001, 6). The percentage of a state's population belonging to the churches affiliated with the NAE ranges from 3% in Utah to 61% in Mississippi, with a mean of 20.08 and a standard deviation of 14.22. This variable serves as our measure of the proportion of mobilized socially conservative Protestants in each state.

To measure a state's propensity to elect women to political office, we use a composite variable constructed by the Institute for Women's Policy Research for 2004. The Institute for Women's Policy Research constructed the composite variable of women in elected office by determining the proportion of women in five types of elective office in each state for the given year: state representatives, state senators, elected state executive officers, members of the U.S. House of Representatives, and U.S. Senators. For each type of office, a state's observed value was then divided by the highest value for all of the states. Then the scores for each office in each state were adjusted to take into account the differences in the degree of political influence wielded by individuals in each office: 1.0 for state representatives, 1.25 for state senators, 1.5 for statewide executive officers other than governors, 1.5 for U.S. representatives, and 1.75 for U.S. senators and state governors. The weighted scores for each office were added together to reach a composite score for the state (Institute for Women's Policy Research 2004, 61). The resulting scores range from a low of 0.78 in Mississippi to a high of 4.38 in Washington. The mean score is 1.93, with a standard deviation of .837.

It was a bit trickier to construct a similar measure for gay elected officials. For one, it is only possible to obtain data on openly gay elected officials. Second, there are not that many gay elected officials at the state and national level. For example, there are only 3 openly gay U.S. House members and no openly gay U.S. Senators or Governors. Thus, we decided to extend the analysis of gay elected officials to the local level. We were able to obtain current data on gay elected officials at the local, state, and national level from the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and Leadership Institute. We then

constructed a composite score similar to the way in which the IWPR constructed the composite measure for women in elected office. For each type of office, a state's observed value was then divided by the highest value for all of the states. Then the scores for each office in each state were adjusted to take into account the differences in the degree of political influence wielded by individuals in each office: 1.0 for all local offices, 1.25 for state house, 1.5 for state senate, and 1.75 for U.S. house. The weighted scores for each office were then added together to reach a composite score for the state. The mean value on the composite measure is only .633, while the standard deviation is .918. The resulting score ranges from a low of 0 in 9 states, Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, North Dakota, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and West Virginia, to a high of 3.44 in California.

Descriptive Data

Before turning to multivariate analyses, we plot the data to see whether there is initial support for an inverse relationship between the NAE measure and the women in elected office and gay in elected office composite scores. Figure 1 presents the scatter plot for the women in elected office composite score, while Figure 2 presents the scatter plot for the gay in elected office composite score.

[Insert Figures 1 and 2 about here]

In Figure 1, we see an inverse relationship between membership in mobilized socially conservative Protestant churches and women's representation in electoral office, providing some initial support for our hypothesis. In Figure 2, we also see an inverse relationship between the NAE measure and gay elected officials across states. While religious factors may indeed be a strong predictor, we also find some states that are low

on the NAE measure and are also low on the women in elected office and gay in elected office composite scores, such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania. This suggests that factors other than NAE strength may also be important. For example, some states may impose institutional barriers that work against female and gay candidates. Alternatively, the strength of the Catholic Church in New Jersey and Pennsylvania may also affect the number of women and gays in elected office.¹⁷ In the next section, we turn to a more rigorous test of our hypothesis by controlling for other variables that may influence the proportion of women and gays in elected office.

Analysis

Given that our dependent variables are continuous, we use the method of ordinary least squares. We retain the women in elected office and gay in elected office composite scores¹⁸ as the dependent variables and the NAE measure as our key independent variable. Drawing upon research by other scholars (Norrander and Wilcox 1998), we also include the proportion of Catholics in a state, as well as the proportion of nonevangelical Protestants. This data is from the same source as the NAE measure. We expect a negative sign for the former, while we are agnostic about the latter.¹⁹

Second, we control for the general socioeconomic context of a state. From the U.S. census, we collected data on the percentage of the state that lives in urban areas, the

¹⁷ Although Catholics comprised a key part of the Democratic Party's New Deal coalition, they have become a swing part of the electorate. Traditionalist Catholics have formed anti-abortion alliances with socially conservative Protestants. In the 2004 election President Bush used agreement on moral issues to aggressively court the Catholic vote, which he carried by a narrow margin (Oldmixon 2005, 109-112).

¹⁸ Since we combine different levels of office, we do not include institutional controls that are specific to a given type of office.

¹⁹ Although Reynolds (1999) found predominantly Catholic countries to be as open to women in elected office as Protestant and secular countries, other comparative scholars did not. Not much has been done in this domain with respect to gay elected officials. As stated earlier, Norrander and Wilcox (1998) found that the Catholic measure had no effect. More recently, however, ties between leaders within the Catholic Church and Republicans have increased. President Bush has sought support for his conservative social policies from Vatican officials and Catholic bishops. He also has discussed "moral" issues with leaders of the Knights of Columbus (Oldmixon 2005, 110).

percentage of individuals with a college degree, the unemployment rate, the percentage of owner occupied housing and the Gini Coefficient, which is a standard measure of economic inequality.²⁰ Due to the high correlation between many of these variables, we use the method of principal component factor analysis and two factors have eigenvalues over 1. The percentage urban, the percentage with a college degree, and the percentage of owner occupied housing load highly on the first factor, which we label economy 1.²¹ Based on previous research (Rule 1981; Nechemias 1987) showing that urbanized states and those with higher levels of education are more open to women candidates, we expect there to be a positive coefficient for this variable. We would also expect a similar effect for gay elected officials. The percentage with a college degree, the percentage unemployment, and the Gini ratio, load highly on the second factor, which we label economy 2.²² This latter factor appears to relate to the concept of income inequality and we expect it to have a negative coefficient, since higher values indicate more inequality (Paglin 1975).

Second, we include several political control variables that have been used in previous studies. First, we control for baseline partisanship and ideology, using the variable created by Erikson, Wright and McIver (1993).²³ Using national polls conducted

²⁰ The most recent state level data on the Gini Coefficient is from 1999 (United States Census Bureau 2004). The Gini Coefficient is a measure that plots the cumulative share of total income earned by households ranked from the top ten percent to the bottom ten percent of the population. It is based on the Lorenz curve and scores typically range from 0 to 1.0 with a score of 0 indicating perfect equality while a score of 1.0 corresponds to perfect inequality (Kawachi 2000). We rescaled the Gini Coefficient to run from 0-100.

²¹ The loadings for the rotated factors are as follows: percentage urban, .852; percentage of owner occupied housing, -.861; and, the percentage with a college degree, .587.

²² The loadings for the rotated factors are as follows: unemployment rate, .819; Gini ratio, .688; and, the percentage with a college degree, -.681.

²³ Several papers on women in elected office use some form of Elazar's (1966) political culture measure as a control variable (e.g., Fox and Oxley 2003; Nechemias 1987; Norrander and Wilcox 1998). This measure, as well as Sharkansky's index (1969), was highly correlated with our NAE measure, so we could

by CBS and the *New York Times*, they created a measure of mean party identification by state, which is coded such that higher values are more Republican, and a measure of mean ideology by state, which is coded such that higher values are more liberal. We use the latest year available, 1999.²⁴ We are uncertain about the direction of the effect for mean party identification because studies have found mixed results for women in elected office (Arceneaux 2001; Nechemias 1987; Rule 1990). However, we would expect a positive coefficient on the mean ideology variable, since studies have shown that more liberal states have a significant positive effect on the proportion of women in elected office (Norrander and Wilcox 1998). We would expect a similar effect with respect to gay elected officials since studies show that conservative individuals are less supportive of gay elected officials in hypothetical races (Herrick and Thomas 1999).

Third, we include a few variables that are more specific to women and gays running for office. With respect to women in elected office, we control for the pool of potential female candidates (Arceneaux 2001; Norrander and Wilcox 1998; Rule 1993; Wilcox and Norrander 2005). Based on previous research (Norrander and Wilcox 1998; Wilcox and Norrander 2005), we include measures of women's economic status in each state and perform factor analysis on the measures. According to a principal components factor analysis on these variables, two factors with eigenvalues over 1.0 emerge. We label the first factor women status 1 and four of the variables load highly on this factor: the percentage of women in the labor force, the percentage of women with health insurance, the percentage of women with a college degree, and the percentage of women

not include them in the analysis. This is not surprising in that these measures are partially created from religious indicators; our data is more up to date with respect to religious identification.

²⁴ The data were obtained from McIver's web site, <http://socsci.colorado.edu/~mciverj/wip.html>, accessed on October 28, 2005.

living above the poverty line.²⁵ This first factor seems to tap into women's overall socioeconomic status in a state. We label the second factor women status 2, and four of the variables load highly on this factor: the earnings ratio, the percentage of women in managerial or professional occupations, the percentage of women with a college degree, and the percentage of women owned business.²⁶ This latter factor appears to fit better with the concept of the pool of potential female candidates in that it is an indicator of women's success in professional roles. Overall, we expect a positive sign on both factors. Finally, following Fox and Oxley (2003), we develop a measure, labeled average, of the state's history of electing women to statewide legislative office. The measure is the average percentage of women holding office in the state legislature over the past twenty years. We expect this to have a strong positive coefficient, as it indicates that the state is more likely to elect women to office (Rule 1990).

For the analysis of gay elected officials, the census does not yet collect detailed data on gay owned businesses and the percentage of gays in the labor force, since it does not ask individuals for their sexuality on the census forms. However, scholars have been able to at least approximate the proportion of same-sex households from the census forms since they can match whether respondents indicate that they have an unmarried partner and whether that person's sex matches the respondent's sex. Of course, such a measure is imperfect in that it under-estimates the proportion of homosexuals in the population in that it only counts those who live together and indicate that they are partners. While

²⁵ The loadings for the rotated factors are as follows: percentage of women in the labor force, .873; percentage of women with health insurance, .824; percentage of women with a college degree, .529; and, the percentage of women above the poverty line, .872.

²⁶ The loadings for the rotated factors are as follows: earnings ratio, .613; percentage of women in managerial or professional occupations, .795; percentage of women with a college degree, .725; and, the percentage of women owned business, .772.

imperfect, such a measure can at least give us a sense of the proportion of gays in a given state. The specific measure we employ is the gay and lesbian index, which is a measure of how concentrated same-sex couples are in a given area. The measure is a ratio of the proportion of same-sex couples living in a region to the proportion of households that are located in the region. More simply, it gives a sense of whether same-sex couples are over or underrepresented in an area relative to the population. A value of 1.0 means that a same sex couple is just as likely as a randomly picked household to live in a certain area, while a value of 2.0 indicates that same-sex couples are twice as likely to live in a certain area relative to a randomly picked household (Gates and Ost 2004). Thus, as this ratio increases, we expect it to have a positive effect on the gay elected official composite measure. In the dataset, it ranges from .48 to 1.43.

The OLS results for women in elected office are presented in Model 1 of Table 1. Turning to the first column of results, we find that our key variable of interest, the NAE percent, is significant and negative, as expected. Thus, as the NAE percentage increases in a state, the composite women in elected office variable decreases. While -.032 may not look like a large substantive effect, it is sizable when compared to the scale of the dependent variable, which only ranges from .78 to 4.38. For example, a state at the mean NAE percent (20%) would drop .64 points on the scale, which is fairly substantial. The comparable effect with the maximum NAE percent (61% in Mississippi) is a drop of almost two points on the scale (1.95), which is very large. Thus, we receive strong support for our hypothesis. These results are also in line with findings by Vandenbosch.²⁷

²⁷ There are several possible reasons why we find the hypothesized effect, while Norrander and Wilcox found the opposite effect. We have a different dependent variable, analyze different years of data, do not

[Insert Table 1 about here]

With respect to the other religious measures, the Catholic variable is significant and negative, while the nonevangelical Protestant measure is insignificant. Thus, as the proportion of Catholics in a state increases, the composite score of women in elected office decreases. The substantive effect of the Catholic variable is a bit weaker than the NAE measure, at $-.030$. The first economic factor is insignificant, while the second one, which is an indicator of inequality, is significant and positive. This suggests that states with higher levels of income inequality are more likely to elect women to office. The two women status factors are in the expected positive direction, though only the second measure is significant. This finding is consistent with those of Norrander and Wilcox (1998), who also found that increases in women's status led to higher levels of women in state legislative office. The state's history of electing women to office, party identification and the ideology measures are all positive, although none are significant. Finally the overall model performs fairly well, with an R squared of $.316$.²⁸

The results for the gay elected official composite measure are presented in the column labeled Model 2 in Table 1. Again, we see that the NAE measure is significant and negative, with a coefficient of $-.023$. While this appears small, recall that the gay elected official composite measure only ranges from 0 to 3.44. For example, a state at the mean NAE percent (20%) would drop $.46$ points on the scale, which is fairly substantial. The comparable effect with the maximum NAE percent (61% in Mississippi)

have all of the same control variables, and use different indicators of the presence of socially conservative Protestants in a state.

²⁸ If we remove the highly insignificant variables, the p-value gets much smaller on the N.A.E. measure ($p < .035$, two-tailed). We do not include a control for the South because it is highly correlated with the N.A.E. measure, $.82$. Furthermore, if the South is included as a dummy variable, it is not significant ($p = .458$), though the p-value for N.A.E. does increase as we would expect given the high correlation.

is a drop of 1.4 points on the scale, which is very large. Thus, we receive strong support for our hypothesis with respect to gay elected officials. The only other significant variable in the model is the gay and lesbian index. The substantive effect of this measure is very large: a one unit change in the index leads to a 1.96 increase in the composite score. The mean value on the measure is .912, thus the average increase would be about 1.79.²⁹

Overall, our findings are supportive of our arguments. As the percentage of mobilized socially conservative Protestants increases in a given state, the proportion of female and gay elected officials declines.

Discussion and Conclusions

At the beginning of this paper, we argued that the central demarcation between religious traditionalists and those holding more progressive views lies in differences in gender ideology. Religious traditionalists believe that gender differences are a function of one's biological sex and are God-given, while Progressives view gender roles as socially determined rather than innate. These differences in gender ideology influence preferences over familial, and work place roles, as well as preferences with respect to political figures. In order to test this argument, we looked at one important component of the more general debate, support for women and gays in elected office. We claimed that if differences in gender ideology constitute a central cleavage, then we should find an inverse relationship between the strength of politically mobilized socially conservative

²⁹ As with the women in elected office model, the p-value on the N.A.E. measure gets much smaller ($p < .02$, two-tailed) if we remove highly insignificant variables. We again do not include a dummy variable for the south because it is highly collinear with the N.A.E. measure. However, if we include a dummy for the South in the condensed model, the N.A.E. measure remains significant ($p < .10$, one-tailed), while the South dummy is highly insignificant ($p = .878$).

Protestants and the proportion of female and gay elected officials, since such groups in positions of political power may violate the gender ideology of religious traditionalists.

To test whether socially conservative Protestants exert a dampening effect on the ability of females and gays to achieve elective office, we collected data on the percentage of the population belonging to NAE affiliated churches. As our dependent variables, we used a state level composite measure of women in elected office in 2004, which was developed by the Institute for Women's Policy Research, and a state level composite measure of gays in elected office in 2006, which we developed with data from the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund and Leadership Institute. We found support for our hypothesis in our regression analyses. As expected, the impact of the NAE measure on women and gays in elected office was statistically significant and negative, with the effect a bit more substantial with respect to women in elected office. The fact that the relationship held up, when other social, political and economic factors were included in the model, is strong confirmation of our basic hypothesis. In short, religion does appear to have a strong impact on the political empowerment of women and gays in the United States. We also found evidence of a dampening effect of Catholicism on women's political empowerment, perhaps an indication of the success of Republicans in using "moral issues" to mobilize traditionalist Catholics. However, Catholicism did not have a significant effect on the proportion of gay elected officials. With respect to positive indicators, the pool of potential female candidates and areas with higher levels of inequality had a significant impact on the proportion of women in elected office, while a higher concentration of same-sex households had a positive effect on the proportion of gay elected officials.

Substantial numbers of Americans have belonged to conservative Protestant denominations throughout the country's history, but the key difference at this historical moment is their growing numbers and re-engagement in politics. The political and policy implications of these changes are just beginning to be understood. Although many pundits have commented on the growing importance of the political mobilization of socially conservative Protestants, this study suggests that the phenomena is likely to have a dampening effect on women and gay's political empowerment. Our use of the NAE variable to measure the strength of this political mobilization is an important innovation, in that it allows one to distinguish between politically mobilized and non-mobilized denominations.

While the findings of the study are strong, they suggest avenues for future research. First, our NAE measure was an attempt to take into account factors beyond denomination, such as theological differences within Christian denominations and political activism. While not perfect measures, they are the only ones available for aggregate analysis. Future research can explore more closely the relationship between different theological beliefs and support for women and gays in elected office by looking at individual level data. Second, another interesting feature in the U.S. case to explore is that there is heterogeneity with respect to conservatism and progressivism within denominations. The root of these differences lies in different theological beliefs. Future research may look more closely at some of these theological differences. Finally, we have only looked at one component of the more general debate on the culture wars. Future research may look at whether differences in gender ideology also account for other components, such as preferences over public policy.

Table 1: Regression on Women in Elected Office and Gay in Elected Office Composite Measures

<i>Variable</i>	<u>Model 1</u>	<u>Model 2</u>
	<u>Women in Elected Office</u> <u>Composite Score</u>	<u>Gay in Elected Office</u> <u>Composite Score</u>
	<i>Coefficient</i> <i>(Standard Error)</i>	<i>Coefficient</i> <i>(Standard Error)</i>
<i>NAE</i>	-0.032** (0.018)	-0.023* (0.016)
<i>Catholic</i>	-0.030* (0.019)	0.001 (0.017)
<i>Nonevangelical</i>	-0.007 (0.022)	0.006 (0.019)
<i>Economy 1</i>	-0.124 (0.285)	0.012 (0.072)
<i>Economy 2</i>	0.466* (0.330)	-0.088 (0.151)
<i>Mean PID</i>	1.622 (1.474)	-1.504 (1.365)
<i>Mean Ideology</i>	1.104 (1.943)	-0.368 (1.851)
<i>Women Status 1</i>	0.152 (0.342)	-----
<i>Women Status 2</i>	0.371* (0.254)	-----
<i>Average</i>	1.753 (1.486)	-----
<i>Gay Lesbian Index</i>	-----	1.962*** (0.853)
<i>Constant</i>	3.512*** (1.000)	-0.976 (1.340)
<i>N</i>	48	48
<i>R²</i>	0.316	0.413

*** = p < .05 (two tailed) ** = p < .10 (two tailed) * = p < .10 (one tailed)

Figure 1: N.A.E. and Women in Elected Office

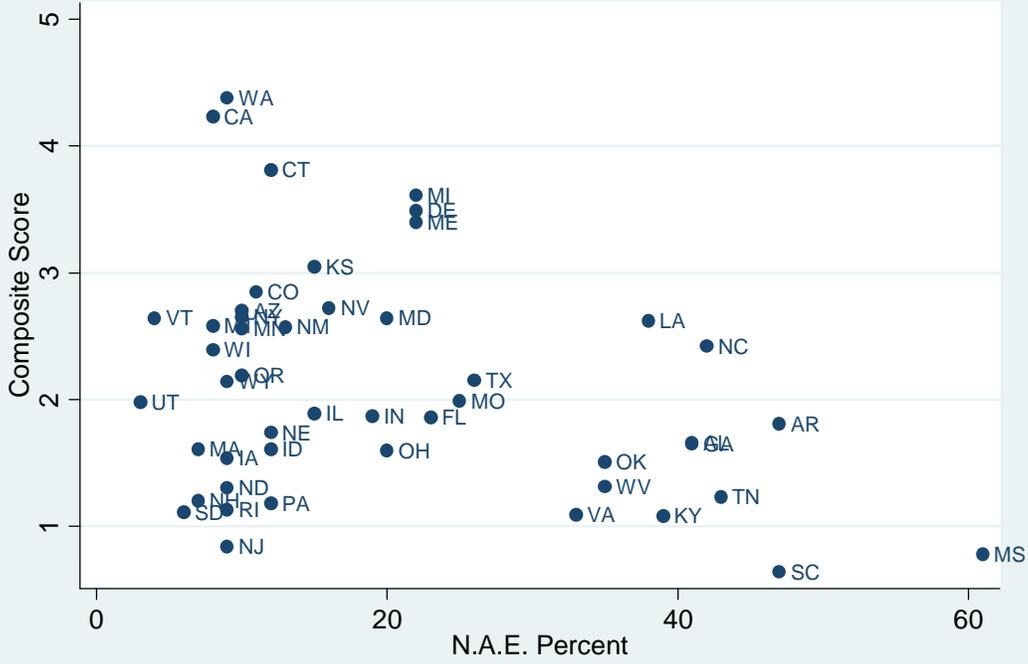
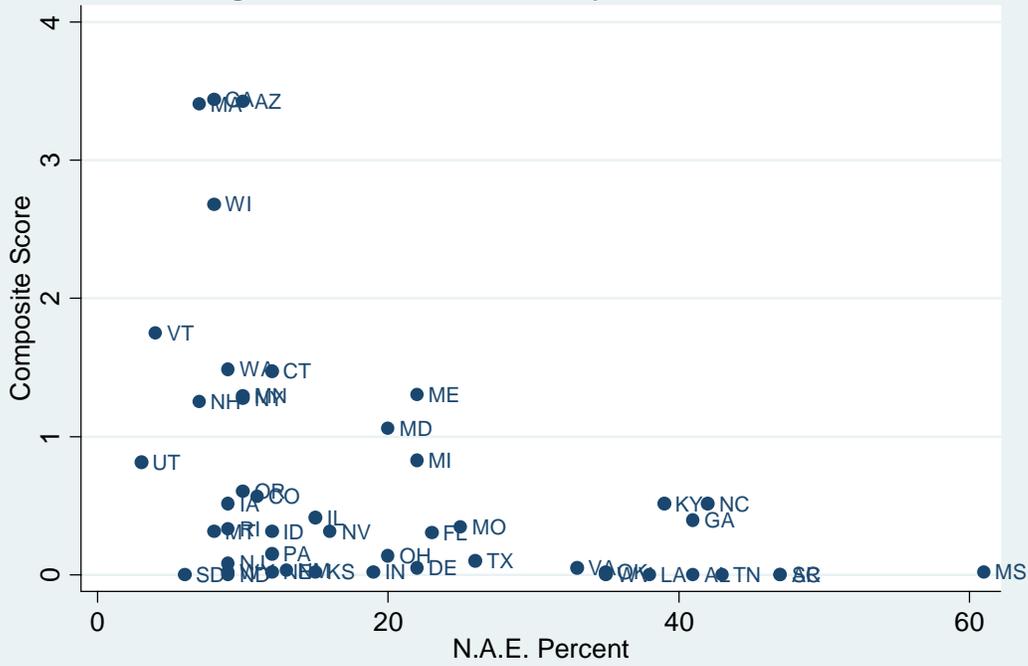


Figure 2: N.A.E. and Gay Elected Officials



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