

2018

Evangelicals, Perceived Marginalization and Expressive Mobilization

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Evangelicals, Perceived Marginalization and Expressive Mobilization

by

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Bachelor of Arts
Clemson University, 2011

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

Political Science

College of Arts and Sciences

University of South Carolina

2018

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my work first to Jesus, my Savior. I know that without Him I could not have done any of this. Then to my wonderful parents who supported me and encouraged me throughout this grueling and wonderful journey, to my friends and pastors who were always there, and to my love, who didn't really know what he was getting into but loved me through it anyway.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I would like to thank all of the wonderful clergy members whose openness allowed me a glimpse into their lives. They were receptive, kind and happy to engage with me and help me with my project.

I would also like to thank my dissertation advisor Dr. Charles Finocchiaro of the Department of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma. The door to Dr. Finocchiaro's office was always open whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. He consistently allowed this paper to be my own work, but steered me in the right the direction whenever he thought I needed it.

I would also like to acknowledge the other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Laura Olson, Dr. David Darmofal and Dr. Doug Thompson. I am gratefully indebted to them for their very valuable comments on this dissertation.

I would also like to acknowledge Kenneth Johnson, a sophomore at the University of South Carolina, for being an invaluable asset and help in the data gathering and python programming required for one of my chapters.

ABSTRACT

Expressive forms of collective and individual mobilization of the evangelical population in the United States have been understudied in both social movement theory and religion and politics literature. While these forms of mobilization are not the only form of mobilization, they are important to understanding what specific issues evangelicals are feeling aggrieved about. Current research such as Wong (2018a; 2018b) and Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2018) have found that there is a growing sense of racial anxiety among the ranks of white evangelicals. Hence, it is likely that evangelicals, at least white evangelicals, are feeling a sense of marginalization.

I theorize that a growing feeling of social marginalization is driving evangelicals to mobilize using forms of expressive mobilization such as political consumerism and Twitter venting. These forms of expression help to alleviate their social strain and promote their Biblical values publicly as a way of “identity claiming”. I interview clergy in three different states, perform case studies, and analyze Twitter data to test this theoretical assertion. I find that, while evangelicals are demonstrating signs of social marginalization, they are only mobilizing under a very specific set of circumstances. Their proclivity towards individual salvation and otherworldliness hinders a sense of “collective identity” which is essential to collective action.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFA.....	American Family Association
GLAAD.....	Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
LGBTQ.....	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"I believe what the Bible says [about marriage], so I came out here to support Chick-fil-A and the movement," Chauncy Fields tells Fox News as he devours a hot tasty Chick-fil-A chicken biscuit (Roberts 2012). Another Chick-fil-A consumer echoes a similar sentiment but with a touch of exasperation, "He [Dan Cathy, the COO of Chick-fi-A] said the exact same thing that President Obama said, and he gets negativity and Obama gets positivity!" (2012). These two individuals, along with millions of evangelicals, conservatives and others flocked to Chick-fil-A on August 1, 2012, to consume chicken and publicly express their political and social positions by showing support for a company who shared those positions. These two men participated in a growing form of political expression: political consumerism. This particular movement happened for a reason and represented an area of religion and politics research that, until this dissertation, has been left derelict.

The Pew Research Group carried out the following thought experiment. If the United States only had one hundred people what would be the religious makeup of that group? There would be twenty-one Catholics, fifteen mainline Protestants, twenty-three unaffiliated, six Black Protestants and a handful of Mormons, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, other Christians, and other faiths. The group I am leaving out, of course, is evangelical Protestants. They hold the top position with twenty-five (Alper and Sandstrom 2016).

While it is true that religiously unaffiliated “nones” are a growing number in America today, it would be fallacious to assume that evangelicalism is dead and of little consequence. Religion and politics scholars have studied the counterintuitive (Durkheim and Lukes 2014; Parsons 1949; Weber 1978;) vibrancy of the evangelical population in America (Hunter 1992; Smith et al.1998), and have attempted to understand who they are, what they believe and how they operate within politics (Emerson and Smith 2000; Guth 1996; Jelen 1993b; Jelen and Wilcox 2003; Moen 1989; 1992; 1994; 1996; Oldfield 1996; Streensland et al. 2000; Wilcox 1986; 1989; 1990; 1996; 1991; Wilcox and Jelen 1990; Wilcox and Robinson 2010; Wuthnow 1988; 2014). Countless scholars show the influential importance of religion on various forms of political behavior along with the development of civic skills (Brady, Schlozman, and Verba 1999; Calhoun-Brown 1998; Campbell 2004; Chaves 2004; Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe, Neiheisal, and Sokhey 2017; Gilbert 1993; Green 1999; Green, Guth, Smidt, Kellstedt 1996; Harris 1999; Huckfeldt, Plutzer, Sprague 1993; Jelen 1991; 2001; Jennings 2005; Kellstedt and Green 1993; Kellstedt 1994; Kohut, Green, Keeter, Toth 2000; McKenzie 2004; Olson and Crawford 2001; Olson and Green 2006; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wald 2003; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). Thus, there is little argument that religion is not important to people’s political beliefs and behaviors.

Religion and politics scholars analyze religion’s influence on different forms of political mobilization such as voting, civic engagement, and racial empowerment (Calhoun-Brown 1996; 1998; Campbell 2004; Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe and Grant 2001; Wilcox 1990). Scholars initially looked at the one-dimensional relationship between religion and political participation and asked the question: does religious participation

stimulate political participation or does it suppress political participation? Calhoun-Brown (1998) contends that religion's impact on political participation cannot be stripped down to the simplistic relationship of stimulating or suppressing; instead, different dimensions of religion should be considered. Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) show how religious behavior in a religious institution develops civic skills and acts as a substitute for education. Other research shows how religious beliefs, clergy, church organizational structures, church community environment, available resources, and a well-developed group identity positively impact the political mobilization of religious groups. Sometimes these differing religious variables act as opiates to political action, while in other cases they positively influence individuals in ways that lead to political action (see Calhoun-Brown 1996). Others find that the environmental context also influences political engagement (Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe and Grant 2001; Olson 2000).

This research provides insight into the multi-dimensional and nuanced world of religion and political mobilization. However—though scholars such as Jasper (1997; 2008) in modern social movement theory have acknowledged it—only a few scholars in religion and political literature have realized that while rational behavior, resources, beliefs, group identity, organization and environmental context are all central to understanding the mobilization (or lack thereof) of the religious community, *emotions* cannot be ignored. Early social movement theorists argued that a feeling of marginalization and alienation was all that was needed to motivate a group into collective action (Arendt 1951; Buechler 1993; 1995; Kornhauser 1959). This simplistic view of collective action was soon replaced by a more sophisticated understanding of the specific mechanisms needed to stimulate and organize collective action (McCarthy and Zald 1977) but the importance of emotion to

collective action should never be lost in the array of new, sophisticated variables. Social movement scholars such as Jasper (1998; 2011) and Benford and Snow (2000) realized the importance of emotion and framing to collective action and therefore introduced a new theory, the theory of social constructionism. This theory maintains the rationality and practicality promoted by the resource mobilization model, but also accounts for the impact of emotion. Specifically, social constructionism contends that emotions are socially *constructed* by movement elites in order to stir up desired political behavior. Therefore, in this dissertation, I contend that emotion cannot be lost in the study of religion and political behavior.

What emotions brewing in the evangelical community might we, as scholars, be missing? Specifically, are evangelicals feeling a sense of marginalization by a changing society? Evangelicals have held a dominant position in society, and yet recent research shows that they are showing signs of perceived marginalization. What does it take for a dominant group in society to feel as though they are oppressed rather than the oppressors? Given the importance of marginalization to mobilization, if evangelicals are indeed feeling marginalized, are they responding with mobilization? Further, what kinds of mobilization are they willing to engage in as a result of these feelings?

Wong (2018a) finds that white evangelicals are struggling with demographic changes within their ranks. She shows that the proportion of Black, Latinx and Asian evangelicals have grown while the proportion of white evangelicals has decreased. She finds, however, that despite these demographic changes within the evangelical community, white evangelicals "appear to be supporting a political agenda that goes against the tide of demographic change in the United States" (88). These findings coincide with those of

Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek (2016; 2017; 2018) who show that white Americans are displaying signs of anxiety and even perceived marginalization because of demographic changes in society. Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek (2017) call this anxiety the “white identity” crisis and point out the uniqueness of a “white identity” crisis in a country that is primarily white. They attribute the recent surge of a “white identity” rhetoric in politics to the racial strain amongst whites in response to having an African American president coupled with Donald Trump’s use of “us” versus “them” rhetoric during his presidential campaign.

The demographic changes occurring within the evangelical population are a microcosm of what is happening in America at large. Further, there is a unique difference between white evangelicals and evangelicals of a minority race/ethnicity (Wong 2018a). However, it is important to note that social strain in the white evangelical population is likely connected to this broader sense of anxiety present amongst white Americans as they struggle with their looming “status loss” in society and loss of power in the political realm as a result of shifting societal demographics (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2017; 2018; Tesler and Sides 2016; Tesler 2016; Wong 2018a; 2018b). This literature finds that ethnic and racial identities played a tremendous role in the election of Donald Trump. Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2016; 2017; 2018) and Tesler (2016) found that divisions tied to race, immigration and religion were exacerbated due to the “us” versus “them” rhetoric used in the Trump campaign. Hence, Donald Trump’s election sheds light on an area of social and status anxiety simmering in the ranks of white America.

Thus, current literature shows that in the general white population there is social strain brewing, a strain that Trump was able to use to his advantage (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2016; 2017; 2018; Wong 2018a). Wong (2018a) points out that this strain is not associated

with economics—as many assumed—but rather to issues of race. White evangelicals are experiencing an even more substantial demographic shift in their community than whites in general. Their support for President Trump was substantially higher (80%) than that of their non-evangelical white counterparts (31%), indicating an even stronger emotional impetus for political mobilization (Wong 2018b). Wong (2018a; 2018b) explains that evangelicals are feeling a sense of marginalization based on racial prejudice and societal strain as their "us" versus "them" mentality is constructed and reconstructed for the benefit of Republican elites. This does not mean that evangelical marginalization is based solely on a "white identity" crisis but that it is a crucial factor that cannot be ignored.

Many other factors are likely also contributing to feelings of marginalization. I will touch on these other possible influential factors throughout this dissertation. However, the purpose of this dissertation is not to uncover and assess *why* evangelicals are feeling marginalized but rather to look at how they are expressing themselves through *unconventional* forms of political mobilization as a result of this emotional impetus.

Both social movement theory and theories of political behavior acknowledge the importance of *expression* as a form of political mobilization (Jasper 1998; 2011; Theocharis 2015). Rojas and Puig-I-Abril (2009) explain that expression is the way that individuals can publicly *express* their political orientations; thus, it is an essential part of the mobilization process. Further, Charles Tilly (1978) calls this kind of expression "identity claiming." It is the simple act of expressing one's identity, one's collective "we" to the world. It is not an attempt to change the world as much as it is a form of expressing that one's perspectives, values, and identity still exist and "constitute a unified force to be reckoned with" (Tilly 1978, 184).

Evangelicals make up a sizable portion of the population and, as the Christian Right Movement taught political scientists, should not be underestimated or understudied (Moen 1992). Elites construct a “marginalized” collective identity to stimulate evangelicals into political participation. Given the latent civic skills (Campbell 2004) in the evangelical community, evangelical churches are ripe with powerful and skilled individuals who, on a moment’s notice, have the organizational capacity, civic skills, and resources to mobilize—they just need to emotional stimuli to push them over the edge.

While emotion is an understudied causal variable in the “religion” and “political behavior” relationship, there are some understudied forms of political behavior as well. The Donald Trump presidential election showed that evangelicals are willing to mobilize conventionally; however, conventional mobilization is not the only form of mobilization available to groups who feel aggrieved. Throughout history, marginalized groups have turned to extra-institutional forms of mobilization such as protests, marches, rallies, and boycotting. Might we find evangelicals utilizing such forms of mobilization as they adopt the marginalized label for themselves?

Expression is a form of mobilization. Are evangelicals motivated to express themselves using unconventional, extra-institutional forms of political mobilization? What other ways might evangelicals be *expressing* their feelings about society and politics? While voting behavior, lobbying, political donations, founding and funding pressure groups, writing members of Congress and any other form of conventional political participation are *essential* to understanding the mobilization of the evangelicals, there are other forms of *expressive* political mobilization that may be used to tell us more about the emotional context driving these individuals to engage in conventional political participation.

Evangelicals are still highly involved in forms of conventional political participation and continue to have an impact on the American political landscape (Wilcox and Robinson 2010). The Donald Trump presidential election is perhaps one of the most recent examples of evangelical political participation and influence. In this dissertation, I do not argue that forms of conventional political participation are irrelevant, nor do I contend that evangelicals are disengaged from these forms of participation. In fact, I argue the opposite. Evangelicals are quite willing to engage in conventional forms of political participation when they feel the need (Fowler et al. 2013; Smith 1998). Religion and politics scholars are keenly aware of this and the importance of understanding the ways that religion influences and informs such participation. However, there is scant research that studies how and why evangelicals engage in unconventional *expressive* forms of political participation such as marches and protests, boycotting, or online media expression. While these unconventional forms of political participation are by no means the only forms of participation, nor are they even the most important, they are and have played an essential role in many social movements in American history. Further, these forms of political mobilization are highly expressive and usually indicate the specific issues of social strain present in the aggrieved group.

Tilly (1978) discusses the “repertoire” of activities that aggrieved groups use to express themselves and their desires. The repertoire changes with the times. Forms of *expressive* mobilization are indicative of social strain and studying them provides a unique picture of evangelical social strain or lack thereof. We can better understand some of the issues and concerns present in the evangelical population by studying what kinds of issues they

express themselves for or against. Thus, studying unconventional political participation informs our understanding of conventional participation.

I also believe the research in this dissertation can lead to more research and greater insight into the political polarization literature and the presumed culture war (Layman 2001; Layman and Carsey 1998; Layman and Green 2005). Presumably, the more society embraces socially liberal norms, the more socially conservative norms will stand out. This is common sense, and would work in the opposite direction as well. The key here is the fact that these norms must be publicly expressed as still existent for them to "stand out." Evangelical expressive mobilization makes these views stand out.

There are only a select few groups left in the US who still hold certain "black or white" positions on social issues. Abortion, homosexuality, and sexuality are all highly divisive and invoke strong feelings (Hunter 1992). However, most groups, including evangelicals have become more open and accepting of forms of sexuality or homosexuality present in society (Pew Research Group 2016; 2017). A subset of "traditional values still persists" (Inglehart and Baker 2000). Thus, the idea that evangelical/conservative views on issues of sexuality are outdated swells until some form of outdated social expression reminds people that this view still exists. Hence, "there's still more work to do."

For example, the North Carolina school system recently removed the children's book "Jacob Wears a Dress" because of parental opposition. The authors of the book, disappointed by the reaction, said "Our hope, when we wrote this book, was that someday it would be considered quaint. We imagined future generations saying, 'What was the fuss about?' Clearly, there's more work to do." (Mele 2017). "Clearly, there's more work to do" implies that since socially conservative perspectives on human sexuality still exist,

these authors' job is not complete. This means that statements and expressions in favor of socially conservative norms likely stimulate progressives to fight harder for their end goals. I believe that this dynamic feedback loop between social perspectives is overlooked in polarization literature. Therefore, my dissertation's analysis of evangelical expression provides a critical missing piece for this otherwise complex puzzle of polarization.

Why should we care then about how evangelicals are expressively mobilizing in support of their values and identity? Numerous scholars already agree that religion's impact on political behavior cannot be overstated; thus, understanding the impact of emotions on the expressive mobilization of one of the most significant religious populations in the United States is essential to understanding political behavior in the United States. If we choose not to care, we may yet again be blindsided by future election results or befuddled when evangelicals engage politically in something we never saw coming.

These expressive forms of mobilization act as proxies for what is going on in the hearts and minds of evangelicals and provide insight into their feelings of social marginalization. I theorize that the higher their feelings of social strain, the more they will engage in these forms of expressive mobilization. This allows them to, at the very least, express their thoughts and feelings on issues they about which they feel strongly. Studying why and how they maintain their religious vitality, or what kinds of evangelicals are out there, or even studying the Christian Right's political participation, will never allow us to fully understand the dynamics and nuance of the evangelical population and what levels, if any, of marginalization they may be feeling. Further, it misses how this marginalization is affecting their behavior now and may affect their behavior in future or current elections.

Summary

This dissertation is about perceived social marginalization and subsequent expressive mobilization of evangelicals in America. Do evangelicals, regardless of ideology, race, age or political persuasion, feel marginalized by society and/or government? Given the Donald Trump presidential administration, is it possible for them to feel a sense of political efficacy while still possessing a sense of marginalization? Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2017) show that social strain was and is present among the ranks of white Americans surrounding issues of race, immigration, and religion. Thus, if evangelicals do feel marginalized how does this perceived marginalization cause them to express themselves through unconventional political participation? The Donald Trump election is evidence they are willing to engage in conventional political participation; but, in what ways have they attempted to relieve their perceived social strain through alternative forms of political mobilization? Does an increase in feelings of marginalization cause them to mobilize expressively? I argue that evangelicals when they do mobilize, are *counter-mobilizing* since mobilization is the attempt to *change* the societal status-quo and counter-mobilization is the attempt to stall or maintain the *challenged* status-quo.

Evangelicals are just one of many groups in the United States fighting to make their voices heard. All groups are important to the political and social process of any democratic country, and every group uniquely influences society and politics. Evangelicals' zero-sum understanding of morality is another reason I am interested in evangelicals in the USA. They are one of only a few groups left in the United States that adamantly claim that their way (belief system) is the *only* way, while the societal zeitgeist is that everybody's way is

the *right* way. Given this current societal trend, I believe that it is important to understand how evangelicals are feeling in response to societal change and if they are mobilizing in kind.

Evangelicals are not a homogeneous unit. This means there is likely not one universally shared feeling. African American evangelicals may be responding and/or mobilizing differently than white evangelicals. Younger evangelicals may have different feelings in than older evangelicals. These are differences that I intend to unravel and better understand while writing this dissertation. Unfortunately, due to data limitations, I cannot unravel the answers to all these intricacies, but I can begin shedding light on them.

I expect to find that evangelicals are becoming increasingly frustrated with the direction of the country and thus perceive themselves to be *socially* marginalized. Ergo, in this dissertation, I theorize that, based on social movement theory, one-way evangelicals will express their displeasure with the feeling of marginalization is by expressively mobilizing. Assuming evangelicals believe they have lost some of their political and social influence, I posit that they will use different forms of *expression* as their form of mobilization. I use political consumerism and social media venting as indicators of this expression. These are not the only two forms of unconventional political participation. Other forms of political participation include protests, marches, picketing, violence, and rioting. I focus primarily on political consumerism and social media venting for two reasons: political consumerism is now one of the most frequently used forms of political participation (Michelletti 2003); social media venting is a growing forum for political participation (Theocharis 2015).

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant literature. I spend most of the chapter summarizing the literature on evangelicals, their history, their philosophy and beliefs, their place in

society, and their relationship with marginalized groups such as African Americans and those in the LGBTQ community. Much of the chapter is spent unraveling the many different interpretations and definitions of "evangelical." I also use a good portion of this chapter to review social movement theory and political efficacy.

I set up my theory and establish the assumptions for my theory of *social* marginalization and subsequent mobilization in the third chapter. Broadly, my theory can be applied to all groups who feel a sense of marginalization. However, since I am looking specifically at evangelicals, I narrow my theory to fit some of their idiosyncrasies. I use the final portion of Chapter 3 to spell out my hypotheses and the implications of my theory that I intend to analyze in this dissertation.

Chapter 4 is the first of my empirical chapters. It is an exploratory chapter and focuses primarily on the "marginalization" portion of my theory. I analyze findings from qualitative field research. I discuss findings from interviews with different evangelical pastors from three different states. These interviews provide much-needed insight into the individual thoughts and reactions that evangelical clergy are experiencing in response to changes in society. I can confirm my original assumption that evangelicals are indeed *feeling* marginalized, while also uncovering some of the differing reasons for this feeling of marginalization, across race, age, region, and denomination. The findings presented in this chapter are insightful, while also, at times, surprising. I find that evangelical pastors, for the most part, even though they displayed a high sense of societal marginalization, are *not* expressively mobilizing individually or collectively.

In Chapter 5 I perform a case study analysis of collective evangelical mobilization through political consumerism. Though evangelical elites and some evangelical

organizations have been very loud in recent history, there are limited instances of collective evangelical political consumerism that do not stem from these organizations. I use this chapter to analyze one organized boycott and one organized buycott. I use the rest of the chapter to focus on what moving parts are sufficient to motivate evangelicals who are *not* part of these organizations into collective action.

In Chapter 6, I analyze individual evangelical mobilization via Twitter. Twitter is a handy source of individual public expression. I analyze the differences in how evangelicals mobilize by looking at a little over 17,000 evangelical Twitter users and the proportion of tweets that are political versus mundane or spiritual. Further, I analyze the sentiment of the tweets and compare them to the sentiments expressed by a control dataset of randomly selected Twitter users.

In Chapter 7, I conclude and establish this dissertation's place in the literature and discuss plans for future research. This dissertation is just the starting point of a wealth of further research that explores corporate politics, polarization and public opinion, and a more in-depth analysis of evangelical marginalization and mobilization.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: EVANGELICAL WHO?

"If ideological leaders warn darkly of the dangers of the forces of liberalism, and stir up hatred towards gays and lesbians, feminists, secularists, and others with whom they do not agree, the movement will constitute a divisive force in America that threatens the lifestyles of many citizens" (Wilcox 1996, 150). Wilcox, a prominent religion and politics scholar, warns of the dangers of a healthy and unified Christian Right. Many religion and politics scholars have studied the motivations and movements of the Christian Right (Leinesch 1982). They delved into the psyche of its members and tried to understand the motivations and reasoning behind their beliefs and political actions. However, most religion and politics scholars who study evangelicalism focus almost exclusively on the Christian Right.

While there is much to learn and understand about the Christian Right, there is also much missed by focusing exclusively on this extreme ideological portion of evangelicals. Evangelicals, in total, are much more nuanced and diverse than this ideological branch of the *Christian Right*. Evangelicalism, at its core, is not a race, it is not a political ideology, nor is it a political persuasion, it is a set of Biblical, theological beliefs. I am interested in the perceived marginalization and expressive mobilization of *evangelicals* whether they be conservative or liberal, black or white, young or old, southern or northern, rich or poor, educated or uneducated. However, it behooves my research to briefly overview the

previous research, debates, definitions and findings on the Christian Right, or in rare cases, *all* evangelicals.

Firstly, I am interested in understanding the inter-workings of one specific group; the evangelical Christian base in America. They are an unconventional crowd, mainly because of the division and disagreement amongst their members. Evangelicals tend to be content not conforming to the social zeitgeist and many have been reticent to engage in overtly political behavior (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Campbell 2004; Djupe, Neiheisel, Sokhey 2017; Green 1999; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2000; Olson 2000) even though they have chosen to engage in political behavior under specific circumstances (Green 1999; Green, Guth, and Hill 1993; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2000; 2003; Jelen 1991; Leinesch 1982; Wald 1989; Wilcox and Robinson 2010). Evangelicals are steadfast and devout in their adherence to their doctrines and beliefs regardless of the way society may or may not be trending. Further, evangelicals baffle the minds of scientists who argue that modernization should and usually does result in the extinction of religion.

There is quite an abundance of literature that says that religion and modernization cannot and do not coexist. This is the secularization/modernization hypothesis. Emile Durkheim and Steven Lukes (2014), Max Weber (1978) and Talcott Parsons (1949) formulated the theory of modernization. Modernization posits that advances in technology, education, communication and urban growth enlighten the human mind. These advances convert society from beliefs in the spiritual to beliefs in science. This conversion is the direct result of science answering previously unanswered life questions that were once answered by spirituality.

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1964; 2011) introduced a similar theory with their class conflict model. They argued that members of society in power used religion to dumb down the minds of the oppressed. They postulated that religion appeased minds and provided an explanation *for* oppression and an escape *from* oppression. Thus, once communism/socialism and modernization brought about an equal and fair society, religion became unnecessary and irrelevant.

The modernization of European countries has affirmed these theories; however, the United States, one of the leading industrialized and modernized societies, has not followed suit. As one political scientist states, “American religion, like Mark Twain, has obstinately refused to comply with reports of demise” (Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2018, 8). Further literature has shown that not only is religion still present, it is highly influential on political behavior (Calhoun-Brown 1996; 1998; Djupe and Olson 2007; Djupe and Gilbert 2008; 2006; Djupe and Grant 2001; Guth 2001; Guth, Kellstedt, Green, and Smidt 2002; McKenzie 2004; Smidt 2016).

Against standing theory then, religion, and specifically American Christianity, is relevant, both socially and politically. Despite Christianity’s persistent relevance, scholars agree that the study of religion and its followers, in the context of politics, suffers from a lack of scholarly attention (Vitz 1985). While there is a small niche within political science that devotes attention to religion and politics, the niche is not a completed collection and still has room for exploration.

Evangelical Vitality

There is a subset of religion and politics research that focuses exclusively on religious vitality in America, specifically, evangelical vitality in America since evangelicalism has

maintained its vitality against the odds (Hunter 1981; 1992; Smith et al. 1998). There are two primary schools of thought that attempt to unpack this evangelical anomaly. James Davidson Hunter (1981; 1992) introduced the idea of a "culture war." He claimed that the resurgence of conservative religion during the 1960s through the 1980s was a defensive maneuver in response to the increasing forces of modernity. He states that religion has two choices when faced with modernity: resistance or accommodation. He finds that evangelicals have chosen to resist. They distance themselves from the "evil devices" of modernity by creating social boundaries for themselves. This intentional distancing preserves and strengthens their vitality (Hunter 1981; 1992). He concludes that evangelical vitality is due to their geographic and social distance from modernity (Hill 2004).

However, years later, scholars began to reject the idea that modernity and secularism were the leading causes of evangelical vitality and resurgence. One scholar, Smith et al. (1998), posited the subcultural identity theory, which gives a different reason for religious vitality. He found that self-described evangelicals were more highly educated than all their religious and non-religious counterparts, save for mainline Protestants. Further, the evangelical's average yearly income was higher than most every other form of Christianity, and they were also less likely to live in rural America than other Christian persuasions. Hunter's assertion that evangelical vitality is due to their geographic and social distance from modernity is less plausible given Smith et al.'s (1998) findings about evangelicalism. Smith offers his answer for continued religious vitality. He says that modernity, instead of threatening to evangelicals, is stimulating to them. That is, secularism/modernity helps to re-establish an in-group, out-group mentality for evangelicals (see Jelen 1991). This mentality stimulates and re-invigorates them religiously. Thus, interaction with and

proximity to out-groups renews the groups' distinction from other groups. He defines subcultural identity: "In a pluralistic society, those religious groups will be relatively stronger which better possess and employ the cultural tools needed to create both clear distinction from and significant engagement and tension with other relevant outgroups, short of becoming genuinely countercultural" (Smith et al. 1998, 118-119).

These two analyses on evangelical vitality agree on very little. However, one aspect is similar between them; both studies use either the basic doctrinal definition of evangelical or self-identification to select their evangelical subgroups. This is unique since much research on evangelicals focuses on the Christian Right or the conservative aspect of evangelicals. However, these two scholars only analyze *how* and what stimulates religious vitality. That is secularism either drives evangelicals to create more boundaries to shut themselves off from the world, or pushes them to a greater in-group homogeneity and out-group alienation. With this dissertation, I research the flip side of this. What stimulates doctrinal evangelicals to interact and express themselves and their perspectives to the world? Many scholars have answered this question, but few have addressed how *emotion* affects unconventional expressive mobilization (see Christian Smith 2014).

The gap I intend to fill concerns *all* evangelicals and not just members of the Christian Right. I endeavor to uncover truths about evangelical *feelings* and how those feelings manifest in forms of expression. How do evangelicals feel about the trajectory of society? Have these feelings affected their political and social involvement? How do the recent trends in society towards secularization, especially in sexuality, cause evangelicals to *feel*? Are evangelicals feeling a sense of marginalization, and if so, is this causing members to engage in politics and society differently? Do they feel that they are experiencing a societal

attack on their convictions or are they more concerned with the possibility of a loss of social status and power position in government (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018)? Based on prominent research on mobilization and counter-mobilization, evangelicals, equipped with a unique set of civic skills (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Campbell 2004), if they are indeed feeling marginalized, are likely to respond both conventionally and unconventionally.

Is there a shared feeling of marginalization between African American evangelicals and white evangelicals or is the marginalization felt by white evangelicals exclusive to white evangelicals? According to the literature on race and religion, African Americans and evangelicalism have a complicated past and present relationship (Day 2012; Harris 1999; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). The African American religious community has a unique set of experiences that set them apart politically from white evangelicals (Calhoun-Brown 1996; 1998; Emerson and Smith 2000; Harris 1996; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990); however, Black and white evangelicals share the same perspectives on many social and doctrinal issues. Are there any feelings of marginalization that are tied explicitly to the perceived marginalization of religious values and if so, does this form of marginalization cross racial lines? If these feelings of marginalization *do* cross race lines, does it invoke similar forms of mobilization or varied forms of mobilization?

Evangelical Who?

According to the Pew Research Group, Evangelical Christians make up 25.4% of the Christian population in American while Mainline Protestants make up 14.7% of the Christian population in America (2015a). Evangelical denominations usually include the Southern Baptists, Independent Baptists, Assembly of God, Church of God, and some

Presbyterians (Brint and Abrutyn 2010; Goren and Chapp 2017).

While the research of religion and politics is a small niche in political science, there has been a good deal of research done on Mainline Protestantism, Catholicism, the evangelical Christian Right and their respective relationships to politics. However, most scholars' struggle defining and identifying evangelical. Hence, one of the most researched and debated topics in religion and politics research centers around what evangelical *means*. There is no easy answer to this question, and there is no scholarly consensus or agreement on precisely what evangelicalism is (Burge and Lewis 2018; Ethridge and Feagin 1979; Hackett and Lindsay 2008; Hunter 1981; Streensland et al. 2000; Warner 1979). At their core, evangelicals are a subset of Protestants who believe in the need to proselytize or evangelize. The word evangelical is a derivative of the Greek word *euangelion*, which means "gospel." Evangelicals are keenly concerned with spreading the "good news" of the Christian gospel message. Further, it is reasonably safe to say that since evangelicalism is a Protestant phenomenon, Catholics and Jews are automatically excluded (Hunter 1981). Scholars agree that beliefs in the divinity of Christ and personal faith for salvation are also vital to evangelicalism (Ammerman 1982). Beyond that, however, evangelicalism is poorly defined (Hunter 1981).

Another, perhaps less agreed upon indicator of evangelicalism is biblical inerrancy. While most scholars agree that biblical inerrancy is key to evangelicalism (Gorsuch and McFarland 1972; Maranell 1974), others (Ammerman 1982; Quebedeaux 1974) question its place within the operationalization of evangelicalism. Ammerman points out that the inerrancy of the Bible (at least in the early 1980s) became a topic of contention within evangelicals ranks. Biblical inerrancy, she explains, is where fundamentalism and

evangelicalism split. Fundamentalists have a unified belief in the inerrancy of the Bible while evangelicals do not.

However, for this dissertation, I consider Biblical inerrancy central to my definition of evangelical for two reasons. First, evangelicals tend to use inerrancy as a descriptor for themselves when explaining why they are evangelical; second, the *prevailing* scholarly opinion is that Biblical inerrancy is a crucial part of what makes someone evangelical versus any other kind of Christian persuasion (Emerson and Smith 2000; Hunter 1981; Wilcox 1996; Wilcox and Robinson 2010).

Scholars also disagree on the parameters used to define evangelicalism. Hackett and Lindsay (2008) identify three distinct ways of defining evangelicalism: denominational affiliation, identity, and beliefs. Using all three forms of evangelical measures, the total population of evangelicals is scaled down from over 40% of the US population to 2% of the population (2008). The benefit of using self-identification is that political scientists can capture political movement adherents as well as doctrinal or denominational evangelicals (2008). Some survey respondents may identify themselves with an "evangelical movement" even if they would not fit into the doctrinal or denominational standards of evangelicalism. However, I am not interested in individuals who identify with a movement but rather individuals who theologically fall in line with evangelicalism (Smith et al. 1998).¹

¹ This leads to more questions; what is more important, whether a person self-identifies as evangelical or whether they subscribe to a specific set of beliefs that scholars have defined as evangelical? For my study, does it matter whether they fall into the defined category if they think of themselves as evangelical? Presumably, if someone considers themselves evangelical and they believe evangelicals are being marginalized, they would fit into my analysis. Further, can someone go to an evangelical church and not be evangelical themselves or, in contrast, can someone go to a church that is not evangelical but be evangelical themselves?

Denominational categorization, when utilized correctly, simplifies the categorization process. However, Ammerman cautions that in categorizing by denomination “we must be extremely careful not to repeat past mistakes by trying to assume individual behavior or attitudes from association with a larger structure” (1982, 171). Moen (1989) categorizes fundamentalists, Pentecostals and charismatics separately, highlighting their slight differences. Scholars provide no consensus whether to categorize fundamentalists, Pentecostals and charismatics as mere *versions* of evangelicalism or as separate entities. While Moen tends to conceptualize evangelicals, fundamentalists, Pentecostals and charismatics as distinct from one another, other scholars conceptualize fundamentalists, Pentecostals and charismatics *as mere subsets of the “evangelical” Christian Right* (Wilcox and Robinson 2010). Hence, much of the difficulty inherent in defining evangelicals is the lack of coherency in the group itself.

Burge and Lewis (2018), in a recent analysis of evangelicals and their support of Donald Trump, find that self-identification and denominational identification end up identifying approximately the same number of evangelicals. This means that these two measures may not be as distinct from one another as previously assumed.

Wilcox (1991) addresses some of these conceptual issues inherent in defining evangelicals. He divides evangelicals into three different categories: doctrinal evangelicals; denominational evangelicals and denominational/doctrinal evangelicals. In his book *God’s Warriors*, he researches the detailed intricacies that differentiate the three types of evangelicals. Generally, he finds that doctrinal evangelicals are more religiously committed and more politically conservative than denominational evangelicals. However, denominational and doctrinal evangelicals are more nuanced. In some cases, these hybrid

evangelicals were more religiously committed and more conservative, while in other cases they were not. The concluding assumption, then, is that doctrinal evangelicals are more fervently committed than denominational evangelicals.

Hunter uses the doctrinal approach when analyzing evangelicals. His qualifications turn up one of the lowest rates of evangelicalism available (Hackett and Lindsay 2008). Hunter encapsulates the concept of evangelicalism with three conceptual requirements.² First, an individual must believe in the inerrancy of the Bible.³ Second, the individual must believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ, and finally, he or she must believe that salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ and not of works. Doctrinal evangelicals are highly focused on individual salvation and otherworldly concerns (Hunter 1981; 1992).

When possible, I use these *doctrinal* qualifications for my research data. *Doctrinal*, not ideological, qualifications are essential to my research since I am not interested in studying the Christian Right but rather doctrinal evangelicals. By using only theological and doctrinal qualifications to define evangelicals, I can more clearly analyze the evangelical base with all its diversity or lack thereof. I do not use any political or ideological qualifications to select my evangelical base. Instead, I attempt to analyze how politically engaged the evangelical base is by avoiding any political identifiers in my qualification process.

These doctrinal evangelical groups all share the fundamental belief of the inerrancy and supremacy of the Bible and profess a “born again experience”; yet, they still disagree about additional details. These disagreements have led to significant divisions among professing

² Smidt and Kellstedt (1992, 332) define evangelicals by three similar criteria: Christianity plays an essential and defining role in an individual’s life; the individual has had a “born again experience”; he/she sees the Bible as God’s inerrant Word.

evangelicals. Fundamentalists and Pentecostals, specifically, have a unique relationship within evangelicalism, one that is riddled with disagreement (Smidt 1988; 1989; Wilcox and Robinson 2010). Beliefs in pre-millennialism and post-millennialism are at the root of the disagreement. Pre-millennialists (primarily fundamentalists; their belief in pre-millennialism is essential to the formation of fundamentalism and has a notable impact on their identity) believe that the world is supposed to worsen socially and politically before Jesus comes back to take all the “born again” Christians home to heaven (Sandeem 1970). This is in stark contrast to post-millennialism. Those who believe in post-millennialism believe that Jesus will not come until a thousand years of peace on earth have passed.

These diverging beliefs have significant political consequences. If Christ cannot come until after a thousand years of perfect peace, Christians have a meaningful and critical role in politics to bring about perfect peace. Therefore, post-millennials possess a considerable internal and spiritual motivation to involve themselves in politics to bring about peace on earth. Pre-millennials do not own this same urgency since they believe the world is supposed to perish and be in darkness before Jesus returns. In this case, the Christian's calling is only to save as many, spiritually, as they can. Human and political involvement is temporary and futile (Wilcox and Robinson 2010).

In sum, who evangelicals are and how they have maintained their vitality are areas of research that are fraught with debate. I utilize different portions of Hunter's theory and Smith et al.'s theory to build my theory about doctrinal evangelicals and their expressive engagement. My concern is less how these evangelicals are still thriving; instead, what are they doing with themselves since they are thriving?

The Historical Context of Evangelicals and Conservatism

Religious mobilization spans the centuries (Smith 2014) with every religion mobilizing at different times and for different reasons. Fowler et al. (2013, 1) say "It would be very difficult to understand American politics today without knowing something about American religion." Since the inception of the country, religion has played an influential role in American politics and society. Puritanism was central in shaping American civic institutions and gave the United States a "sense of national mission" (2010, 2). Initially, most colonies installed state churches that eventually devolved, but the tendency to include religion in government persisted. Although the United States is growing in religious diversity, with a growing percentage of Muslims and Jews, America remains decidedly Christian, with one in four Americans identifying as such (2010).

There are four dominant forms of Christianity in the United States: Catholicism, evangelicalism, mainline and African American Protestantism (2010). Mainline Protestant clergy "have argued that Christians must address the world's injustices not merely by individual charity but by collective efforts to change societal structures" (2010, 37). This "theological liberalism" has influenced Mainline Protestant clergy and parishioners towards liberal political activism. During the mid-1900s, Mainline Protestant churches were the dominant force in American religion and were "well entrenched" (2010). Mainline Protestant clergy participated in and promoted many of the social movements during the 1960s and embraced issues such as poverty, racism, sexism, and oppression (2010). They lent their voices, their money, and their activism in support of righting these "unjust structures" (2010, 38).

In recent decades Mainline Protestantism has faced a steep decline in membership. Fowler et al. (2013) contend that despite this decline in numbers, "mainline churches still possess a wealth of inherited capital in the form of buildings, institutions and endowments, as well as the loyalty of lay members. Local churches continue to operate a host of food banks, meal programs, homeless shelters, clothing closets, and day care centers, and national organizations operate large hospitals, charitable agencies, and highly respected international development organizations" (39). In short, Mainline Protestants have been and still are publicly involved with "the world." They are willing to engage in conventional and unconventional political participation and tend to do so in support of "theologically liberal" issues.

Catholicism is also closely connected to politics. Throughout world history, Catholicism has played a pivotal role in many governments, particularly in Europe where the church was "deeply enmeshed in statecraft" (Fowler et al. 2013, 41). However, some Americans tended to look at the Catholic church with suspicion. In time, the Catholic church evolved into a bridge of sorts between evangelical Protestantism and mainline Protestantism because of its uniquely liberal *and* conservative positions on critical political issues in the United States (Fowler et al. 2013).

Evangelical Protestants' relationship with government and public activity is different from both mainline Protestants and Catholics, and, as I address in another section of the dissertation, African American Protestants. While Catholics and Mainline Protestants are happy to engage in political participation and public action, evangelicals' otherworldly orientation and concern for individual salvation have made subsets of evangelicals politically and socially reticent (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Djupe, Neiheisel, and Sokhey 2017,

Campbell 2004; Green 1999; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Green, Roxell, and Wilcox 2000, 2003; Olson 2000; but see Jelen 1991; Chaves 2004). However, portions of the hitherto politically inactive coalition of evangelicals have mobilized (Burge and Guth 1996; Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Moen 1989; Oldfield 1996; Steensland et al. 2000; Wilcox 1991; Wilcox and Robinson 2010; Wuthnow 1988).

Evangelicals have entered the world of politics on some occasions. The "crusade against slavery" was one of the most notable religiously motivated movements in American history (Fowler et al. 2013). Religious revivals in the North awakened the Christian consciousness against slavery while white southern evangelicals came to the defense of slavery, their institutions, and their way of life (2010). Hence, the Bible becomes both a beacon of hope for slaves and a justification for slavery (Noll 2010).

It was not until the prohibition era that evangelicals again mobilized on a national scale. Fowler et al. (2013) explain that the Temperance movement “provides some important practical lessons for religious partisans today” (14). The Anti-Saloon League, founded in 1895 by Rev. Howard Hyde Russell, was a compilation of various protestant clergy from different denominations. The league was incredibly effective as it used education, lobbying, and electioneering to establish its message. The ability of the league to pull together religious groups across varying denominations and to appeal to a variety of people through messaging rather than pure political pressure sets the Temperance movement apart from other religiously motivated movements (2010). Those involved in the movement began their campaign in states and slowly moved their way through each state. Fowler et

al. (2013) say that “Prohibition represented the high water mark of the popularity and political clout of evangelical Protestantism” (15).

The Temperance movement engineers were effective and strategic. They constructed and pulled on the emotions of Americans throughout the country. Too many times men had come home drunk or never came home at all. People lost their jobs, their money, their homes because of drunkenness. These experiences primed the public for the voice of change that the evangelical elites presented through the Anti-Saloon League. However, despite initial success, the Temperance movement failed as the country came to grips with the reality that law cannot mandate morality. Evangelicals withdrew from public politics for the better part of the 20th century until the late 1970s when new issues arose that seemed to call for their activation (Fowler et al. 2013).

In the late 19th century, Mainstream Protestants began shifting their understanding of faith in relation to the "outside world" in response to the modern scientific and social ideas (Wilcox and Robinson 2010). With this change, Protestant churches started preaching a new "social gospel," one that put more focus on outward changes in behavior to alleviate social ills (2010). Fundamentalism was the direct reaction to the new "social gospel." Those who held more conservative religious beliefs felt the new "social gospel" threatened the Christian's fundamental focus of simply "saving souls" (2010). In the earlier 20th century, the fundamentalists were moderately active in politics as they engaged in anticommunist crusades. In the 1950s these crusades devolve and were followed by the charismatic movement, prevalent amongst Mainline Protestant churches and Catholic churches. It was not until the late 1970s that a new fundamentalist movement began.

The fundamentalists began showing signs of potential politicization during the 1970s since they mobilized in response to local political issues and in support of "born-again" presidential candidate Jimmy Carter (2010). It was because of this mobilization that evangelical and political elites realized that evangelicals could be mobilized. It was not until the late 1970s and the early 1980s that latent evangelicals began to fully engage in political mobilization through the emergence of the Christian Right (Fowler et al. 2013). Guth (1996) states that "Few political movements have enjoyed as much notoriety in recent years as the 'New Christian Right'" (7).

Wilcox and Robinson (2010) explain that portions of the Christian Right movement were aimed solely at returning America to "a sound moral footing" (46). Green (1999) finds that during the rise of the Christian Right, their moralism began to transition from concern about general societal moral decay to specific policy goals such as restrictions on abortions and gay rights. The Christian Right movement showed that religion could generate strong collective identities that can serve as a basis for political action (1999). These collective identities, as Smith's subcultural identity theory explains, are strengthened by outgroups. Jelen (1991) contends that antagonism toward cultural minorities—namely, atheists, Blacks, homosexuals, feminists, liberals, and religious minorities---fueled the Christian Right. Individual congregations were sources of religious and political cues used to mold the political and religious identity of the Religious Right (Djupe and Gilbert 2008; Jelen 1991).

The Christian Right movement started for a variety of reasons. Moen (1992) attributes much of the fervor to moral outrage. He even condemns scholars for pigeonholing members of the Christian Right into a specific framework. He says, "The concerns of

Christian Right supporters were explained as the by-product of authoritarian personalities or symbolic crusades, rather than taken at face value. One unfortunate result of pigeonholing the Christian Right was that scholars circumscribed their research agendas” (349). Secular trends during the late 1970s, such as the removal of religion from schools, abortion, and the sexual revolution all contributed to a growing unease in the evangelical population (Moen 1992). Therefore, it is crucial, in any research of evangelicals to acknowledge the religious versus secular paradigm in the country and its effect on evangelicals.

However, many others scholars have found that evangelical unease also stems from an embedded antagonism for outgroups (Jelen 1991; Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek 2016; 2017; 2018; Wong 2018a; 2018b). As Smith et al. (1998) assert with their subcultural identity theory, these outgroups help to stimulate and cultivate a tighter, more exclusive "in-group" amongst the evangelicals. This is particularly prevalent amongst white evangelicals. While white evangelicals tend to share some socially conservative views with minority evangelicals, white evangelicals more are highly conservative in all other issues in comparison to minority evangelicals. This difference in political perspectives speaks to an underlying racial component influencing the politics of white evangelicals (Wong 2018a). Thus, the Christian Right movement was both a reaction to a secularizing society and a pushback against demographic changes in society.

Motivated for a number of reasons, the newly activated evangelical political force in the late 1970s birthed several organized and politically influential groups starting with the Moral Majority.⁴ Jerry Falwell, the pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg,

⁴ “[T]he approximately 50 million evangelicals in the country and in particular the fundamentalist wing of this community. The aim from the beginning was to mobilize a group of people who had traditionally avoided

Virginia, started the Moral Majority in 1979 (Hunter 1992; Leonard 1987; Moen 1992; Post 1992; Wilcox and Robinson 2010; Wilcox 1986; 1989). Other evangelical conservative Christian groups such as the Religious Roundtable, The Christian Voice, and the Christian Coalition followed the Moral Majority. Some scholars posit that these groups greatly influenced politics and society at the time---some even called the political activation of the evangelical base waking a sleeping giant (Moen 1989; 1992).⁵ Others find that the Christian Right Movement's influence was limited when compared to other major social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement or the Feminist Movement (Rozell 1997; Wilcox and Robinson 2010; Wilcox and Wolpert 2000)

The Christian Right of the 1970s was “shaped by the nature of its evangelical constituency” (Oldfield 1996, 28). While evangelicalism and its adherents (fundamentalists, neo-evangelists, and Pentecostals) grew, Liberal Protestant denominations stopped growing (Oldfield 1996, 28-29). At this time, evangelical Christians began to align with the GOP (Brint and Abrutyn 2010; Green and Guth 1988; Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Lambert 2010; Moen 1996). The alignment of evangelicals with the GOP produced the sustained alignment of evangelicals with conservatism and the GOP, while secular members of society began aligning with liberalism and with the Democratic Party (Brint and Abrutyn 2010; Moen 1996; Lambert 2010).

politics because they saw it as dirty, corrupt business...by convincing these people that political involvement was a God-given responsibility” (Zwier 1982, 9-10).

⁵ Not all scholars agree. Some scholars contend that in fact, the Christian Right had little impact on government or policy (Wilcox and Robinson 2010). In fact, some argue that the political mobilization of the Christian Right may have instigated and caused a change in the opposite direction of their desired change (Jelen 1993a; Fetner 2008).

Before these alignments, evangelicals were not automatically assumed to be conservative. However, in time, partisan politics adopted vital religious components, with the GOP becoming known as the party of the evangelicals and Democratic Party becoming the party of secular society. Scholars predict that the more evangelicals use the GOP as their vehicle for access, the more the GOP will be identified with traditional values and religion and Democrats with secularism. It is from this that “sharper partisan conflict will ensue” (Green and Guth 1988, 162).

Brint and Abrutyn (2010) show that adherence to traditional moral standards is the crucial link between religiosity and conservatism across a broad range of issues (345). Traditional moral standards are the pivotal link between religion and conservatives rather than traditionally conservative issues such as government assistance and/or environmental policies (1988). “In this respect, commentators have frequently overstated the support of religious people for the broader conservative movement. They have failed to see how narrowly focused this support has been on issues like abortion, gay rights, and end-of-life care” (Green and Guth 1988, 345). Further research shows that the Republican Party started appealing to the evangelical base by stressing the importance of traditional moral values and that this began to draw evangelicals to the Republican base.⁶ The GOP found a reliable voting base in evangelicals because of moral issues and took advantage of the base by intentionally exaggerating these issues (Wilcox 1990). Thus, intentional elite framing is highly responsible for the marriage of religion and republicanism. This elite framing is a form of social constructionism, a theory I explain later in this chapter. Based on social

⁶ Some scholars find that, at least where voter turnout is concerned, the attachment of the evangelicals to the Republican party was more a result of social and demographic changes within the evangelicals rather than a result of a change in political strategy by the Republican party (Claasson and Pavtak 2010).

constructionism, the GOP engaged in a sophisticated form of collective identity framing with the use of emotionalism to garner evangelical followers.

The politically active evangelical conservatives became known as the Christian Right and were uniquely evangelical and distinct from mainline Catholics and Protestants (Moen 1992; Wilcox 1991). In interviews with these Evangelical Christian Right activists, Oldfield found that members knew they were “objects of ridicule in the broader society,” but were more concerned about the values and culture being ridiculed (Oldfield 1996, 39; Moen 1992). Thus, evangelical “values” are critical to an evangelical’s identity and key to my theory.

Evangelicals adopted a group consciousness during the rise of the Moral Majority under this Republican collective identity umbrella (Jelen 1991; Wilcox 1990). This development is significant because individuals *feel* marginalized if they feel the group they identify with is marginalized; for this to happen, individuals must have a conscious awareness of the group in which they associate. Research shows that denominational affiliation has an independent effect on partisanship and political attitudes (Kellstedt and Green 1993; Olson 2000; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Wilcox 1990, 28) as does religious doctrine (Wilcox and Jelen 1990). Both affiliations create a group consciousness, one that significantly influences individuals’ political perceptions, values and beliefs (Conover 1984; Conover and Feldman 1984; Goren and Chapp 2017; Wilcox 1990, 29).

Wilcox says that scholars have developed a consensus that “group consciousness is an important part of group mobilization, and that group identification is an important prerequisite for group consciousness” (1990, 29). This group consciousness has developed over time for evangelicals. Televangelists, pastors and political elites attempted to mobilize

the evangelical voting base intentionally by stoking and constructing this group consciousness (Wilcox 1990). The idea of a "group consciousness" or an awareness of one's personal identity and the group of people they are then associated with, is called "collective identity" by social movement theory scholars. A "collective identity," we will find moving forward, is an important condition for evangelical collective action.

Evangelicals and the Influence of the Christian Right

Generally, scholars disagree on how influential the Christian Right was at its peak. Moen (1989) argues that the Christian Right was relatively successful at influencing policy, especially at the congressional level. However, Wilcox and Robinson (2010) argue that while the Christian Right had some influence, it was not unified enough or large enough to win most political battles. In fact, Wilcox and Robinson detail the many political and judicial *losses* that the Christian Right suffered over the recent decades. They agree that, at times, the Christian Right can influence elections but rarely does their candidate ever enact the desires of the Christian Right since their policy preferences are usually too radical for the candidate implement once in office (2010).

This finding supports Prothero's (2016a) theory that liberals win all culture wars. Prothero (2016a) details the different societal and political wins that liberals secured over American history. He concludes that conservatives push an agenda for a period before it is eventually phased out by the liberal agenda which eventually becomes the American agenda. Given that the Christian Right is a subset of the *right*, Wilcox and Robinson's conclusion about the Christian Right is reinforced. Evangelical influence can and has only gone so far and is not likely to go much further anytime soon.

Jelen (1993a) details why he believes the Christian Right movement of the 1980s failed.

After interviewing evangelical clergy, he finds three prominent reasons for the failure of the Christian Right to fully mobilize. *The first reason he notes is that evangelicals are individualistic.* He is not the only scholar to find that evangelicals are highly focused on individual salvation and otherworldly issues (Calhoun-Brown 1996; Campbell 2004; Djupe, Neiheisel, Sokhey 2017; Green 1999; Green, Guth and Wilcox 1998; Green, Rozell and Wilcox 2000; Olson 2000). Salvation (which was the most important thing to the evangelical clergy interviewed, not policy change) is an *individual* experience and relationship that exists only between the individual and God. Jelen (1993a) says:

The evangelical pastors simply would not accept systematic explanations for adverse political developments, nor would they integrate macro level accounts into their own theological thinking. Such matters as homosexuality, abortion, and drug use were regarded as evidence of individual moral failings, which could be handled by individual conversions. Even communism (which had been prominently featured in the demonology of the Christian Right) is simply a bad idea, rather than a manifestation of evil on earth...The idea that either sin or salvation can be collective matters represents a cast of thought alien to Evangelical Clergy. A *political* response to matters of individual piety would involve an enormous perceptual shift for a majority of the evangelical clergy (132).

He found that the mindset of the evangelical clergy is micro, not macro. Thus, the macro-mobilization of the Christian Right to combat a problem that they consider to be an individual issue between God and man is not enough to stimulate sustained political action. Further, he says that the emphasis that evangelicals have on individual conversion limits the scope of their impact on political agenda. Policies, regarding religion, beyond the scope of individual morality, were considered irrelevant to the evangelical clergy.

Second, since evangelicals are highly concerned with doctrine, unity amongst different sects of evangelicals becomes more difficult. This lack of unity is yet another inhibiting factor. Doctrinal differences tend to be highly divisive and are even prevalent within sharing theological families (Jelen 1993a). Without being cohesive and somewhat unified,

evangelicals were never able to create a legitimate force for long-term change.

Finally, he argues that political participation itself may play a role in undercutting the Christian Right's movement. "It may be that the aggregating characteristics of a political party, which is not identified with a particular theological tradition, make the assertion of specific religious doctrines inappropriate" (134). He concludes by saying that a strong enough move of secular humanism and a strong enough feeling of threat could be enough to mobilize evangelicals, at least for a short time (Jelen 1993a).

These findings do not mean, however, that evangelicals have not and do not have any influence. The Temperance movement alone is sufficient enough evidence that evangelicals have been active and can have significant influence. Evangelical influence has waxed and waned over the decades, with its arena of influence also shifting. Many times, the disagreements amongst evangelicals themselves that has been the biggest roadblock to continued evangelical success (Jelen 1993a). Recall that a growing sense of "collective identity," predicated upon an "us" versus "them" mentality, contributes to evangelical influence. Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2017) assert that Donald Trump's "us" versus "them" rhetoric stimulated a "white identity" crises in America. Given that evangelicals supported Trump at a much higher rate than their non-evangelical white citizens, this rhetoric appears to be resonating with them and is likely stirring up a missing sense of "collective identity."

Evangelicals and Race

Evangelicals are *not* a homogeneous unit doctrinally nor are they a homogeneous unit demographically. While a significant portion of doctrinal/denominational evangelicals are white, a sizable number are African American and Latino. However, scant research has been done on the experiences and concerns of white evangelicals in contrast to the

experiences and concerns of African American or Latino evangelicals. Most research, except for a few works (Calhoun-Brown 1996; 1998; Emerson and Smith 2000; Fowler et al. 2013; Harris 1999; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Wadsworth 2012) detailing religion and race have focused on "religion" and race rather than "evangelicals" and race.

Statistics and research show that African American Protestants are generally socially conservative even though they overwhelmingly vote Democrat (Fowler et al. 2013; Harris 1999; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Wadsworth 2012). Black Protestants and white evangelicals share similar theological belief systems. Jones and Francis (2012) show that measures of religious belief and practice, across five standard measures (salience of religion, biblical literalism, a certainty of God's existence, and frequency of prayer and church attendance), were almost entirely identical and markedly different from the rest of the public. However, while white evangelicals tend to vote Republican overwhelmingly, Black Protestants vote Democrat (Jones and Francis 2012).

Wong (2018a) studies some of these racial differences in political perspectives and attributes the difference to racial anxiety among white evangelicals. She finds that white evangelicals are significantly more conservative on immigration than their black, Latinx and Asian counterparts. Latinx and Asian evangelicals are the only sources of growth occurring in the evangelical community in 2018 (2018b). Despite growing racial diversity, Wong finds that white evangelicals are growing *more* Republican (2018a). Thus, Wong believes that the growing demographic changes in the evangelical community have triggered racial and religious anxieties (2018b). She explains that "white evangelical conservatism strongly correlates with their perceptions of anti-white discrimination" (Wong 2018b).

Harris (1999) looks at the differences between white evangelical mobilization and black evangelical mobilization. He contends that there is a fundamental difference between how black churches approach their political engagement and how white evangelical churches approach their engagement with politics. Historically, black Protestants remained politically aloof, for both theological and social reasons (Fowler et al. 2013; Harris 1999). African Americans and have a unique relationship with evangelical Protestantism (Harris 1994; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Noll 2010). Harris (1994; 1999) studies white and black religion and mobilization and finds that religion, though at times used as an opiate for the masses (particularly during slavery), now acts as a mobilizer for most African Americans (also see Calhoun-Brown 1996). Verba, Schlozman, and Brady (1995) and Harris (1994) show that religion can be a tremendous political resource. Harris (1994) shows that the three political resources that religion provides are motivation, organization, and social interaction. In some ways, religious motivation acts as an opiate because of theological passivism; however, moral issues are likely to stimulate action (1994). Harris posits, "Organizational participation as a political resource provides individuals not only with communication networks and opportunities to interact with others with shared goals but with organizational skills that can be nurtured through involvement, thus promoting political action" (1994, 53).

Harris contends that these three political resources have different effects on political mobilization based on demographic and SES factors (1994). He finds that church attendance has a more significant impact on political participation than education for Black and white Protestants (also see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995). Church attendance has a more significant impact on white mobilization than black mobilization. He finds that

civic attitudes are important to white mobilization while group identity and consciousness are essential to black mobilization (1994). Church activism has a more significant influence on black voter participation than on white voter participation. Overall, as Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) also show, churches are essential communal, political institutions for all races but particularly for blacks.

Thus, the literature that does exist on black and white evangelicals is still growing. There is very little research available on other evangelical racial minorities. Wong's (2018a; 2018b) research has opened a door for a deeper understanding of black, Latinx and Asian evangelicals but is only the beginning of research on evangelicalism in the Latinx and Asian communities. The literature on race and evangelicalism presents a puzzle for religious scholars and this dissertation. Thus far, the literature has not profoundly engaged with the religious and doctrinal beliefs that blacks and whites share or do not share. Instead, the historical backdrop, assumptions, and findings all point to the conclusion that blacks and whites who share the same religious and doctrinal beliefs are politically divergent. This disparity is attributable to racial resentment within the ranks of white evangelicalism, but there is still room for more exploration on this topic. Is there a theological difference, perhaps even an interpretation, that scholars have missed? Do white evangelicals possess a stronger or weaker sense of antagonism towards Asian and Latinx than they do black evangelicals? These are a few areas that still need fine-tuning.

A few scholars investigate evangelical *perceptions* of issues of race and racism. Emerson and Smith's (2000) book is perhaps the seminal work in religion and politics research investigating evangelical racial relations. They examine the diverging perspectives on race between white evangelicals and evangelicals of other races. The white

evangelicals interviewed possessed a limited knowledge and acknowledgment of race and racial problems. Intuitively, the Native American and African American individuals interviewed felt racial issues were alive and thriving. White evangelicals focused more on the *individual* (as Harris (1994) would predict) by claiming that prejudiced *individuals* (not institutions) are the leading cause of racism. They conjecture that the United States does not have a race problem, per se, but rather individuals in society have race relation problems (2000, 74). In fact, the focus on individuals was so severe that some respondents would not even answer the race questions because the questions seemed to be about groups rather than individuals. These findings re-establish Jelen's (1993a) findings that evangelicals focus almost exclusively on salvation at the individual level.

Emerson and Smith investigated these findings more deeply. Contemporary white American evangelicalism is one of the primary carriers of the accountable freewill-individualist tradition (Emerson and Smith 2000, 77). Under this belief set, individuals are accountable for their actions *regardless* of the structures and institutions surrounding them. This belief starkly contrasts the progressive view of individuality and free-will. The progressive conception of freewill posits that social structures and institutions prevent humans, who by nature are good, from acting out their free-will. This difference in beliefs is key to understanding evangelicals and their individualistic view of humans and human nature.

Emerson and Smith (2000) explain that the difference between progressive freewill and freewill-individualism is an important factor explaining why white evangelicals and Black evangelicals (and even white evangelicals who have more interracial connections) have highly diverging perspectives of the "race problem." Black evangelicals, possessing a more

progressive freewill perspective (likely because of their experiences with institutional racism) are quick to acknowledge the race problem and quick to give examples. White evangelicals (perhaps avoiding the acknowledgment of their responsibility in the institutional racism), typically free-will individualists, may acknowledge the problem but only at an individualistic level and are hard-pressed to provide any specific examples of racism. This disparity in perspective, Emerson and Smith say, is the result of racism itself. Even if the white evangelical community is not intentionally being racist, they are part of its perpetuation by not acknowledging its real and prevalent existence beyond individualism (Emerson and Smith 2000).⁷

Key to understanding evangelicals and race relations is this: “The white evangelicals we interviewed do not want a race problem. They want to see people get along, and want people to have equal opportunity. They see these as essential to living out their faith. In short, they yearn for color-blind people” (2000, 89). White evangelicals are not distinctly racist; in fact, Emerson and Smith find that many of them seem to be particularly opposed to racism. However, by refusing to acknowledge or understand the characteristics of racism itself, evangelicals contribute to the racial divide (2000). This unique disparity in racial acknowledgment between African American evangelicals and white evangelicals is essential to my study. Emerson and Smith's findings enlarge our understanding of the evangelical experience and open the door for more research on these diverging perspectives and the *feelings* and *actions* they produce.

⁷ There are many black evangelicals based on the denominational and doctrinal definition. However, this does not mean that there are many *conservative* black evangelicals. Though "evangelical" and "conservative" have begun to be considered interchangeable, understand that when I say evangelical, I mean doctrinally and/or denominationally. Black pastors typically demonstrated a proclivity to vote and identify as liberal (McDaniel 2003). Research shows that the church is the primary civic institution in many black communities (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; McDaniel 2003).

Historically, evangelicals and racism have been connected, especially in the South (Cross 2014; Calfano and Paolino 2010; Noll 2001). Some research shows that fervent evangelicals tend to be less racist than their other Christian counterparts (Jelen, Kellstedt, and Wilcox 1990). In fact, Wilcox and Jelen (1990) find that evangelicals are typically intolerant of both ideological extremes. Calfano and Paulino 2010 found that ideology was more important than race to white evangelicals when voting between Black and white candidates. In other words, research has shown that evangelicals are intolerant of fascists, racists, communists, homosexuals and other belief systems. The irony of this, of course, is that many consider the evangelical belief system itself to be extreme. However, these findings do not negate the research on Christian Right activism and racial prejudice (Jelen 1991; Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek 2018; Wong 2018a; 2018b) nor does it mean that racial anxiety is not relevant to the feelings of marginalization of white evangelicals in 2018 (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2018). African Americans and other racial minorities may be fulfilling the sub-cultural identity theory by acting as "out-groups" to white evangelicals.

Evangelicals and The LGBTQ Community

A scant few scholars have researched homosexuality and evangelicalism. Sherkat et al. (2011) find that, over the past thirty years, Americans have substantially increased their support and acceptance of LGBTQ Americans and LGBTQ rights. Evangelicals and Protestants alike have also begun to accept homosexuality and LGBTQ rights over the past thirty years (Bernstein and Jakobsen 2010; Olson, Cage, and Harrison 2006; Pew Research Group 2016; 2017). Recent data show a dramatic shift in perceptions among young white evangelicals. In 2017, the Pew Research Group published that young evangelicals (those born after 1964) went from 29% favoring same-sex marriage in March of 2016 to 47%

favoring same-sex marriage in June of 2017. This is a marked increase and demonstrates some of the dramatic changes happening in the evangelical community.

Even with these changes, evangelicals are still one of the few groups left in America to overwhelmingly disapprove of same-sex relations (Pew Research Group 2016; 2017). The LGBTQ community and evangelicals have operated at odds for decades; conservative evangelicals have been one of the gay community's staunchest opponents (Jelen 1991; Lewis 2005; Lewis and Gossett 2008; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Fetner 2008). Olson et al. (2006) find that religion, even above race, is the primary influencing variable shaping attitudes towards same-sex marriage. Citizens who listed values as one of their top two priorities were also more likely to oppose gay marriage (2006). Further, during the presidential election in 2004, Republicans found gay marriage and moral values to be key mobilization variables in the election (2006).

The relationship between evangelicals and the LGBTQ community is much more fraught with tension than the relationship between mainline Protestants and the LGBTQ community. Olson and Cadge (2002) interviewed 62 mainline Protestant pastors and found that none of them took a hard and fast stance against homosexuality. While I do not explicitly ask the pastors that I interviewed their opinions on homosexuality, you will find that these evangelical pastors were much more willing to take a stand against homosexuality than the mainline protestants Olson and Cadge interviewed.

Other research shows that conservative and Republican elites have found the perfect framing device to stir up against and frustration amongst evangelicals and thereby increase mobilization (Jelen 1991; Miceli 2005; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006). Stokes and Schewe (2017) posit that "the Religious Right often builds upon societal homophobia that

places LGBTQ people as the societal scapegoat, and, especially with rhetoric combatting AIDS, the Religious Right further stigmatizes LGBTQ individuals by comparing them to a deadly plague” (63, see also Barton 2012; Diamond 1989; Tranby and Zulkowski 2012). Evangelical elites frame a subcultural in-group, out-group identity for their evangelical constituents/church members because evangelicals *need* a reason to feel attacked and marginalized to keep them active and involved (Stokes and Schewe 2017).

The subcultural identity theory (Smith et al. 1998) posits that "conservative religious groups, thrive, rather than dwindle, amidst secular society by constructing a strong community identity that can be activated to motivate political action" (Stokes and Schewe 2017, 61). Smith et al. posit three essential components of the subcultural identity theory. First, there must be a *defined* conflict with an out-group. This out-group must be perceived as a threat to the religious norms of the community. With this threat comes an increased sense of group identification and attachment to the in-group. Elites use the culmination of these symbolic and ideological boundaries to "mobilize movements, resources and membership" (Wellman 1999, 187). The essence of Smith's theory is identity maintenance through boundaries and distinctions from the "hostile" out-group (Stokes and Schewe 2017). Thus, the LGBTQ community has become the perfect "out-group" for the evangelical elite to frame in the current zeitgeist.

Fetner (2008) contends that for the past thirty years the religious right and the LGBTQ community have “flowed in concert with each other, the actions of one affecting the choices and repertoire of the other” (119). She analyzes how the gay community has responded to Christian Right activism and claims that the Christian Right’s fight against homosexuality mobilized the gay community in ways it would never have mobilized

without the Christian Right. Theoretically, groups feed off each other. When one group mobilizes, the other counter-mobilizes (Zald and Useem 1983). In some cases, a movement can generate a counter-movement and shape the tactics and structure of the counter movement (Zald and Useem 1983). Then these two groups enter a “loosely coupled tango of mobilization and demobilization” (1). The LGBTQ movement is part of the current cultural zeitgeist of acceptance, tolerance and sexual freedom and has won many cultural and political battles recently (Wilcox and Robinson 2010), causing evangelicals to feel defensive. Therefore, the “loosely coupled tango” theory and the subcultural identity theory are vital to understanding how evangelicals are acting and *reacting* today and essential to my theory.

Tanya Erzen (2006) found that the relationship between religion and the homosexual identity is fluid and ever-changing. Through extensive field research in the evangelical “ex-gay” community, she finds that evangelicals use the message of “real change” in the gay community through conversion to Christianity as their weapon against the gay identity (2006). However, she posits that her findings demonstrate that this evangelical argument falls flat in the face of reality.

Again, most of the research detailed above looks primarily at *conservative* evangelicals, or the Christian Right, or mainline Protestants; it does not look at evangelicalism from its core doctrinal principles. Jonathan Hill, in his Masters' thesis from the University of Notre Dame, tests the real-world application of Smith's subcultural identity theory. He postulates that evangelicals should display higher levels of religious fervor as they become “geographically and subjectively ‘nearer’ relevant outgroups” (2004, 21); however, he finds this is not the case. Smith's subcultural identity theory that evangelical interaction with out-

groups strengthens and increases the fervency of the in-group could not be empirically supported. However, Hill's research was still preliminary and only draws attention to an area of research that needs more analysis.

Changes in Society

There are other reasons, outside of growing anxiety about societal or racial displacement, for evangelicals to feel a sense of marginalization. Social liberalism plays a significant role in today's current cultural context. Examples include liberal political changes such as Obamacare, the legalization of same-sex marriage, increasing transgender rights, and other social moves towards increasing tolerance and acceptance (e.g., illegal immigrants) (Hunter 1992; 2007; Moen 1992; Wilcox and Robinson 2010). Recent data from both the Pew Research Group and Gallup polls show that Democrats and Republicans are increasingly adopting new liberal social norms. In 2015, 42% of Republicans identified as socially and economically conservative (Jones 2016a; 2016b). This is the lowest number of social conservatives in the Republican Party ever recorded in Gallup history. The increase in social liberalism is likely correlated with the rapid growth in the number of Americans who claim no religious affiliation, otherwise identified as "nones." Since 2007, this group of Americans has increased from roughly 19 million to 56 million as of 2014 (Lipka 2015).

Studies show that since 2008, the entirety of the United States electorate has shifted in the liberal direction on every social issue (Jones 2016a). Further, many of the citizens shifting to the left on the social dimension are religious conservatives (Jones 2016a). Some evangelicals (for example, the influential California evangelical Rev. Rick Warren) are embracing a slightly more socially progressive set of values. In conjunction, the Christian

share of the U.S. population has been declining.

One reason for the dramatic increase in “no religion” is that political moderates and liberals were driven away from religion when they saw organized religion attach itself to a conservative social agenda (Hout and Fischer 2002). This finding is unique given that one of the theories regarding religion’s persistence in the United States is that up until recently, it did *not* attach itself to any political party. Much of the decline in religion can be attributed to a rejection of politicized religion rather than a complete rejection of all things spiritual (Hout and Fischer 2002). The more that religion attaches itself to a conservative or Republican agenda, the more society assumes that being religious means being conservative or Republican. This attachment causes those who are religious but are not conservative or Republican to reject or throw off their religious identity to avoid identifying with a mistaken political identity (2002). Hout and Fischer conclude, "If the identification of religious affiliation with political conservatism strengthens, then liberals' alienation from organized religion may become, as it has in many other nations, fully institutionalized" (189).

The modern cultural context is merely an outgrowth of movements and trends that started years ago and that spurred evangelicals into political action. It was the political awakening of the Christian Right in the 1970s and 1980s that propelled social scientists to theorize about a "culture war" or a "war of values" (Hunter 1992). Inglehart (1977) claimed that a modernized society cares more about non-materialist items than materialist items. He theorized that Americans were transitioning from economic and security concerns to concerns about the quality of life (1977) such as the environment, democracy, and human rights. Broadly, Americans, in the post-WWII era, care more about value issues than other

issues (e.g., economics, industry, international affairs). According to Inglehart, post-materialist concerns only exist in an economy that is doing well. A society that is struggling to survive economically has no time to devote to issues of morality and values; however, a society that is economically stable is more likely to begin to fracture on value-oriented issues (1977). Hence, Inglehart's theory gave credence to the idea of a "culture war" emerging over values in America in the 1980s.

Prothero (2016a; 2016b) examines what he claims are centuries of culture wars between conservatives and liberals. He argues that conservatives always begin the war, direct the war and eventually lose the war. In fact, liberals are hardly even a part of the war. What he finds most surprising is that conservatives do not usually start these culture wars until the cause they are fighting over is virtually lost (Prothero 2016a, 17). He says, "the fight is fiercest when the cause at hand is already well on its way to being lost" (17). For example, conservatives only attack same-sex marriage when attitudes toward homosexuality have gravitated toward acceptance (2016a). He claims that, essentially, conservatives "choose for their rallying cries causes that are already on the verge of being lost" (2016a).

I present a different interpretation of this "lost cause" anomaly. It is possible for cultural norms to shift but not enough for a group to feel the need to become outspoken against the change. However, as the change increases and permeates society, those who are not fond of the change are more and more likely to react publicly. Prothero's argument that liberals never really "do" anything in these culture wars does not make sense when compared with social movement theory of a "loosely coupled conflict" (Zald and Useem 1983). The theory of loosely coupled conflict contends that all sides of the ideological spectrum are engaged

in a political and social dance, affecting change and action in each other. Therefore, in the case of Prothero's conservative "lost cause" anomaly, it could be that as society accepts some new liberal social norms, conservatives and evangelicals are *reacting* to the change, not starting a last ditch "culture war" over a lost cause.

Prothero's reasoning, of course, is about conservatives, not evangelicals. However, given that many evangelical values are conservative values, are evangelicals feeling that their cause is a "lost cause"? The Christian share of the U.S. population has been declining. The Pew Research Group found that the percentage of Americans who claim to have a religious affiliation dropped eight percent from 2007-2014 (2015a). However, the number of Americans who affiliate with a religion other than Christianity has increased over the past seven years.

The Christian share of the population is declining and the religiously unaffiliated share is growing in all four major geographic regions of the country. Religious "nones" now constitute 19% of the adult population in the South (up from 13% in 2007), 22% of the population in the Midwest (up from 16%), 25% of the population in the Northeast (up from 16%) and 28% of the population in the West (up from 21%). In the West, the religiously unaffiliated are more numerous than Catholics (23%), evangelicals (22%) and every other religious group (Pew Research Center 2015a; Hout and Fischer 2002).

This dramatic change in the religious distribution of the U.S. population is nationwide and follows the general trend of secularization. However, while the Christian share of the population is declining in many respects, the one group increasing in proportion to the rest of the Christian population is evangelical Protestants.

While the mainline Protestant share of the population is significantly smaller today than it was in 2007, the evangelical Protestant share of the population has remained comparatively stable (ticking downward slightly from 26.3% to 25.4% of the population). As a result, evangelicals now constitute a clear majority (55%) of all U.S. Protestants. In 2007, roughly half of Protestants (51%) identified with evangelical churches (Pew Research Center 2015a).

Hence, the religious vitality that Hunter (1981) and Smith et al. (1998) both grappled with is still a present and relevant trend.

A growing portion of evangelicals are joining the rest of society and inching leftward in their socio-moral views. This is evidence that the progressive position is winning in the aggregate, much as Prothero (2016a; 2016b) predicts. This does not mean, however, that the evangelical population is “dead” or no longer influential. While the U.S. may not be as overwhelmingly Christian as it once was (either culturally or numerically), it still houses a substantial number of Christians than any other nation (Pew Research Group 2015a). Further, the evangelical population is growing relative to the rest of the Christian population. Religious actors might not have as much political or social clout as they once did, but we cannot fully understand the inter-workings of American politics and collective action today without understanding the views and reactions of the evangelical base.

If evangelicals believe they have lost some of their *national* political and social influence and the Christian population en masse has diminished, might we find a tighter, more homogeneous evangelical base today? Smith et al. (1998) would argue this would be the case. That is to say, the more the evangelical population interacts with and encounters threatening out-groups—be it racial minorities or gender minorities—the more cohesive and unified the “in-group” becomes.

However, what Smith et al., do not research is what evangelicals are doing about these out-groups and the perceived threats. Evangelicals are politically involved in the traditional sense but there is limited research on evangelicals’ use of expressive mobilization. Are modern evangelicals sticking to their tried and true forms of political and social participation or are they also inserting themselves into the political and social conversation

through expressive mobilization? Any feelings of evangelical social strain are most likely being engineered and exploited by elite entrepreneurs who want to mobilize evangelicals by stirring up feelings of marginalization. Tilly (2006) posits that incremental “changes in the dispersion of power, the openness of political institutions, the instability of political arrangements, the availability of allies and supporters, and regime repressiveness” lead to incremental changes in the repertoires of influence that a group uses (2006, 45). Guth (1996) argues that the Christian Right began to respond defensively in the 1970s because of the cultural changes that ultimately triggered the rise of the Moral Majority and the broader political engagement of the Christian Right. I conceptualize the rise of the Christian Right in the 1970s as an offensive movement because the Christian Right used public and political platforms to try and force a change in government. However, their tactics backfired to an extent⁸ with the subsequent rise of the “nones” (Hout and Fischer 2002; Putnam and Campbell 2012) and evangelicals today have a different world in which to operate.

Social Movement Theory

Social movement theory, though more prevalent in comparative and international politics, can still inform us about social and political mobilization in the United States. Social movement theory stems from theories of "collective behavior." Research of collective behavior flow from theories of mobilization. These theories are helpful to understanding the political and social action or inaction of the evangelical community, whether their mobilization is *collective* or *individual*.

⁸ The Christian Right movement of the 1970s did manage to influence some change, in school boards (Deckman 2004), in the political agenda (Moen 1989), and even in election outcomes (Oldfield 1996; Green, Guth, Smidt, and Kellstedt 1996). However, the vast majority of these have since been overturned or in some way nullified.

Several theories attempt to explain the *how* and *why* of collective action. The mass society theory is one of the first and oldest theories of collective action. The mass society theory is rooted in psychological reasoning and sees social conflict and collective action as an irrational and emotional reaction to the feeling of social destabilization or threats to entrenched social identity (Aslandis 2015). Frequently, these social movements occur because of strains from dramatic changes in society such as industrialization. This theory reasons that individuals are driven to participate in a social movement because of feelings of marginalization and alienation; thus, marginalized individuals are the primary actors in social protest. Arendt (1951), Buechler (1993; 1995), Kornhauser (1959) McAdam (1982) all contribute to this literature.

Around the same time, other scholars (Turner and Killian 1957; Smelser 1962) developed and introduced the theory of collective behavior. They recognized the importance of the psychological motivations stressed in the mass society theory but conciliated them with specific social conditions. In other words, marginalization and alienation are key to collective action but only under a set of specific social circumstances that trigger these emotional and irrational reactions. Smelser (1962) contends that societal upheaval is frequently to blame. He posits four “determinants” of collective behavior: structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of a generalized belief and precipitating factors (1962, 15-16).

The theory of relative deprivation is another seminal yet obsolete theory of collective action that originated around the same time as mass society theory and the theory of collective behavior. Gurr (1970) was the primary scholar to spearhead this theoretical contribution to the literature. With his theory, he attempts to explain the counter-intuitive

reality that social unrest and action tends to emerge from affluent individuals rather than from the impoverished ranks. Relative deprivation asserts that these affluent individuals who are acquainted with success are hastier to activate collectively than their impoverished neighbors. Hence, discontent is *still* the ultimate reason for collective action but the reasons behind this discontent are given more thought than previous theories cared to admit (Aslanidis 2015).

Aslanidis (2015) explains the problematic issues facing these collective behavior theories. He explains that within these theories “strategy and deliberate, organized action never grew to become part of their rationale: collective action was almost exclusively a quasi-metaphysical, grassroots, spontaneous phenomenon which came and went in automatic outburst and equally rapid declines” (4). The collective action theories saw social movements and collective action as therapeutic for those involved but they never considered collective action a political operation (McAdam 1982; Aslanidis 2015).

These collective action theories were soon considered jejune and a new set of scholars (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Jenkins 1983; Kerbo 1982; McCarthy and Zald 1973; 1977; Olson 1965; Oberschall 1973), experiencing a new social paradigm during the 60s and 70s, introduced the *resource mobilization theory*. Using Olson’s theory of collective action and conceptualization of individuals as rational beings able to make decisions based on a cost-benefit analysis, scholars introduced the resource mobilization theory. Proponents of this theory emphasized the need for resource availability and mobilization as well as organization and networks (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Oberschall 1973). Aslandis (2012) describes the theory: “Protest, they claimed, is not an automatic response to social and psychological strain: it requires an organization mindset which can facilitate the successful

allocation of resources required for mobilization" (6). These scholars accepted that citizens feel marginalized, alienated and frustrated and in fact, they consented that societal grievances are pervasive. Given this then, why is society not in a constant state of mobilization (Aslanidis 2015)?

Resource mobilization theory stresses the importance of resources. Resources include but are not limited to money, time, labor, social networks, friends and connections in government and the media, and members themselves (2015). One of the most critical resources needed to translate shared feelings into action is a mastermind to lead, organize and mold the movement efficiently and responsibly (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Thus, marginalization and alienation are not sufficient for collective action and must be paired with the appropriate resources to bring about collective action.

The theories described so far work as building blocks to my theory. Grievance with society and government is important but can only go so far in mobilizing a group of individuals into collective action. For this to happen, rational actors must utilize available resources and organize accordingly. However, these theories lacked an acknowledgment of politics, which a new set of scholars have claimed play a central role in collective action. McAdam (1982) and Meyer (1999) contend that the resource mobilization model overemphasizes the importance of resources and the power of elites to manipulate and shape mobilization while completely missing the political context surrounding the grievances, resources, and opportunities (Aslanidis 2015). Therefore, a new group of scholars introduced the *political process* theory and the *political opportunity structure*.⁹

⁹ These two theories are interchangeable and are referred to like the same theory (Aslanidis 2015).

This theory conceptualizes mobilization as an *expression* of politics, binding together the hitherto divided concepts of politics and mobilization (Oliver, Cadena-Roa, and Strawn 2003; Meyer 2004; Useem 1998; Jenkins 1983; Tarrow 1998; Tilly 1978; Giugni 2011). Aslanidis explains: “Movements are not irrational mobs, but they are not the mere outcome of entrepreneurial calculation of resources, either. They provide yet another link between the people and political institutions (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996) – they *are* politics” (2015, 7, emphasis by the author). These theories emphasized *opportunity* as the key to successful collective action. The key explanatory variables being a political opportunity and the “nature of the institutionalized political systems” (Aslanidis 2015, 8). McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) introduced the idea of “mobilizing structures” in which individuals engage in rational *political* action mediated by the appropriate opportunities, resources and networks (Aslanidis 2015). However, empirical findings do not support the emphasis that this political process theory put on political opportunity (Meyer 2004; Jasper and Goodwin 1999; Useem 1998).

These theories mentioned above came full circle in recent years with the realization that social psychology and the way individuals *feel* is and must be part of the structure and theory of collective action. Though rationality and organization are indeed important to social movements and collective action, they should not be considered at the exclusion of emotion and culture (Morris 2000). The macro-approach of some of the theories lost the importance of the individual and his or her feelings about whatever issue is being protested or acted against (Klandermans 1984; Aslanidis 2015). Further, many of these theories did not account for religious motivations, which are not always pushing for institutional change

but instead personal change (Jenkins 1983). Identity, culture, emotions, and framing are all essential to this new theory.

Thus, the theory of *social constructionism* was born. This theory is foundational to my approach and theory in that, scholars (Oliver, Cadena-Roa, and Strawn 2003; Jasper 1998; 2011; Gamson 1995) of this persuasion argue that “grievances need to be skillfully *constructed* in such a way to bring about action” and further, these grievances need only to be *perceived*, not reality (Aslanidis 2015, 13). Hence, the construction of perceived marginalization can lead to social movements.

Emotions are a vital element to the theory of *social constructionism*. They are useful if framed appropriately and coupled with collective identities (Jasper 1998; 2011). They can be used by “social movement entrepreneurs who know how to construct them, bring them to the surface and manipulate them” (Aslanidis 2015, 13). Part of this manipulation is through framing. Snow and Benford (1992, 137) define a frame as:

An interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the “world out there” by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one’s present and past environment.

Snow and Benford (1988) construct a three-step process of mobilization through the framing lens. First, entrepreneurs engage in diagnostic framing, which is the interpretation and creation of a problem and a culprit to blame. Following this, the entrepreneurs suggest a remedy for the existing problem. This is called prognostic framing. Finally, the entrepreneurs engage in motivational framing, in which they provide a rationale for action to stimulate constituent mobilization by explaining why collective action is indeed going to help solve the perceived problem. Thus, a feeling of “strain” or “marginalization” or “grievance” plays an essential role in collective action, even if, left to itself, it is not enough

to stimulate collective action. Smelser (1962) said, “Some form of strain must be present if an episode of collective behavior is to occur (48).

The other theoretical elements of identity and culture are straightforward. For collective action to occur, and emotions and framing to matter, the group of interest *must* possess a sense of “we-ness” or attachment to an in-group, usually strengthened by the construction of an “out-group” (Friedman and McAdam 1992). This collective identity helps to convince members that their individual involvement will make a difference. Hence, “injustice and identity have to be framed in ways that lead to actual mobilization” (Aslanidis 2015).

Culture is also important. Ann Swidler (1986) posits that within every culture is a "toolkit" that social movement entrepreneurs can utilize as they construct their social movement frames and collective identities. It consists of "symbols, icons, traditions, narratives, habits, styles, social norms or even heroic figures and events" (Aslanidis 2015). All framing, collective identities and emotions function within this cultural context. This cultural context then, limits or expands the "strategies of action" available (Swidler 1986, 276). Hence, Aslanidis explains that a successful strategy and repertoire of action in the United States cannot be "just copied and pasted into the French context and be expected to work out of the box" (17). Thus, every strategy, slogan, or repertoire utilized within a specific cultural context must be in line with the accepted societal norms of the recipient group (Meyer 1999; Aslanidis 2015).

To conclude this section on collective action literature, it is important to note that theories on collective action and mobilization are ever changing and ever-adapting. The influx of social media and the internet have fundamentally altered mobilization and

collective action. I argue that collective action is not the only form of mobilization; instead, individuals can also mobilize. Multiple individuals mobilizing creates a type and form of collective action. In the proceeding chapters, I utilize the theory of social constructionism as the foundation for my theory as it applies to evangelicals.

One final note regarding religion and social action: Svensson (2007), in his studies of conflict in various countries, found that conflicts involving a religious group fighting a non-religious group over attempts to separate religion and government are far less likely to reach a compromise than conflicts between two non-religious or even two religious groups. Members of a religious community are fighting for spiritual and sacred intangible values that cannot be appeased materially or economically (Svensson 2007). This scenario creates a far more volatile and impassioned conflict than a conflict where compromise is easily reached. Thus, in the context of the U.S., any sort of cultural disagreement involving a religious group, whose members are fighting for spiritual and sacred intangibles, is also likely to be more volatile and impassioned---which accounts for the introduction of various social and political theories about the supposed *raging* culture war in the United States. Indeed, research shows that moralized attitudes lead citizens to oppose compromises, punish compromising politicians and even forsake material gains (Ryan 2017).¹⁰

Political Efficacy

Political efficacy is also relevant to my theory. External political efficacy exists when someone feels they can impact politics and government; further, they also feel government officials are responsive to their desires. Internal political efficacy is the belief that one is personally politically competent. Therefore, an individual can have a high level of internal

¹⁰ To the man of rigid morality... it is better not to agree at all than to agree to an imperfect bargain. (Dahl 1967, 53)

political efficacy and a shallow level of external political efficacy. An individual may believe that he/she is politically competent and educated and at the same time believe he/she has little to no influence on the government and political system at large. Internal efficacy influences voting but is not an effect of voting while external efficacy both causes voting and is an effect of voting (Finkel 1985, 903). Research shows that political participation has a positive effect on *external political efficacy* (Finkel 1985). There is a strong relationship between external political efficacy and political turnout, explaining the recent declines in feelings of external political efficacy (Finkel 1985).

However, as Weissberg (1975) accurately points out, efficaciousness is not always based on reality. Someone can feel highly efficacious while their influence on government policy is virtually nonexistent and someone can feel highly inefficacious when in fact they do have more influence and access than some other people. Therefore, the reality of one's efficaciousness is not the issue; rather their belief in their efficaciousness is the issue. If one's feelings of efficaciousness are low then they are less likely to want to try influencing government and participating in politics.

There are a variety of different influences on one's internal political efficacy. Being involved in a politically active community, learning the smaller skills of political action, engaging in political discourse, and inclusion in collaborative pluralist contexts are all shown to increase feelings of internal political efficacy (Beaumont 2011). However, feeling like one is capable and knowledgeable enough to participate in politics (internal efficacy) does not mean that they feel like those in politics will listen (external efficacy).

The evangelical community provides some of the variables necessary for high internal efficaciousness. A community of believers who share political beliefs provides a ripe

environment for internal efficacy and is known to be a very influential and powerful form of political community (Campbell 2004; Calhoun-Brown 1998; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). Internal efficaciousness is vital to understanding the mobilization of the evangelical community because they armed with a comprehensive set of civic skills which enable them to, on a moment's notice, quickly and powerfully organize (Campbell 2004).

It is of little consequence whether evangelicals have access and influence on government; what matters is whether they *feel* like they have access and influence. As Weissberg says, one's perception of efficacy is not always aligned with the reality of their potential efficacy (1975). I theorize that evangelicals, given the Donald Trump presidential administration, possess heightened levels of political efficacy. However, increases in *political* efficacy are not the same as alleviated *social* strain. Evangelicals feel strongly enough about the issues they care about and feel threatened enough by society and standing law, to be moved to action, but the kind of action is likely mediated by the level of external efficacy they feel.¹¹

I believe that evangelicals still possess moderately high levels of both external and internal efficacy. This does not mean that they are not feeling marginalized. A group can feel marginalized, socially and even politically, while still feeling somewhat efficacious. Evangelicals may feel that they have access to government officials, and may even feel that their votes count but still feel marginalized by the policy outputs of government. Select

¹¹ African Americans tend to possess low levels of external efficacy, for various reasons---lack of access, poverty, low levels of descriptive representation in government---all symptoms of their minority status and institutional racism. Is the efficacy that Black evangelical pastors possess different from or the same as the efficacy that white evangelicals possess?

scholars conclude that though evangelicals can sometimes impact the election process, their influence does not go much further because of the extremity of their policy preferences (Wilcox and Robinson 2010). Thus, evangelicals likely believe they have political influence and access while at the same time feeling incredibly unhappy with the policy outcomes of the government.

Further, evangelicals can feel marginalized by society while still feeling like they have access to government officials. I explain this paradox in more detail in the next chapter, but it is important to understand that society and government are not the same things. If societal norms change in a way that upsets evangelicals, they are likely to feel socially marginalized. Further, elites manipulate and use media coverage to paint a dire image of society for evangelicals, tying social changes to possible political changes, motivating them to more passionately go to the polls and vote for a candidate whom they feel is not caving to the new upsetting societal trends. This understanding of evangelical strain and mobilization falls more in line with some of the older social movement theories that keep politics, and social movements separated. I explore this in more detail in Chapter Three.

Conclusion

In this literature review, I explored and explained two very distinct fields of literature: religion and politics literature, specifically on the Evangelical Christian Right; and social movement theory literature. Both fields are fraught with conceptual and theoretical disagreements as they attempt to explain empirical and real-life anomalies. However, until now there has been little cross-over between the two fields of research. Religion and politics scholars tend to stick with their basic understandings of political behavior and focus most of their research on the make-up and motivations of the Christian Right, sometimes

exploring the reasons for political activism during the years of the Moral Majority. These scholars also show great interest in the reasons behind evangelical vitality in such a modernized society. They also show an interest in understanding the connection between religion and politics. What skills does the church institution instill? What ways do religious belief systems affect political behavior? How do the church's surrounding communities affect their political mobilization? There is also a burgeoning field within religion and politics literature detailing the relationship and interactions between the religious community and the LGBTQ community. However, there is still scant literature analyzing race and evangelicalism.

The social movement theory portion of the literature suffers from similar omissions. Social movement theory still provides limited research on evangelicalism and collective action. Social movement theorists tend to forget religiously motivated collective action and have been critiqued for such oversights. Little has been done to remedy these gaps in the literature (but see Smith 2014 and Wald, Silvermank and Fridy 2005).

I intend to *begin* filling these gaps by first acknowledging them. Evangelicals are not a homogeneous block of conservative white southerners whom all adhere to the Christian Right stance and attitude. Further, while it is empirically and theoretically interesting to study the reasons for evangelical vitality, perhaps scholars should move on from this line of research. *Given* there is vitality and this vitality is in some way shaped by feelings of marginalization or threat (Hunter 1992; Smith et al. 1998), how are *evangelicals*, not the Christian Right, *expressing* these feelings? Additionally, what *emotions* are needed to stimulate the evangelical population to collective action and mobilization? Also, given the Donald Trump presidency and evangelical political access, what kind of marginalization is

being felt and acted upon? Are evangelicals merely feeling marginalized because of a perceived loss of status and power as a result of changing demographics? In other words, are evangelicals simply displaying a stronger version of the racial anxieties that scholars have found simmering in white Trump supporters (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2016; 2017; 2018) or is there more to the story? With this dissertation, I am going to analyze one of the few occasions of *evangelical* collective action in the past few decades as well as analyze social media to see if any mobilization is happening in this forum.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS: TO MOBILIZE OR NOT TO MOBILIZE?

Using social constructionism's theoretical assumption of collective action, I build my theory of mobilization with a few addendums. I believe that groups can feel they have political access while also feeling a sense of social and political marginalization and that this marginalization, coupled with social constructionism's theoretical requirements, is enough to stimulate expressive mobilization. Theoretically, if a group feels politically accepted, and possesses a high sense of internal and external efficacy, they are less likely to use expressive mobilization (e.g., marches, boycotts/buycotts, social media expression) and more likely to stick with conventional forms of political action (e.g., voting, writing Congressmen, attending town hall meetings).

However, I argue that, since groups can feel they have political access while also feeling a sense of social marginalization, this marginalization stimulates expressive mobilization through "identity claims" (Tilly 2006). I do not argue that this form of mobilization happens at the exclusion of conventional political participation even though, throughout history, many groups who engaged in unconventional "expressive" mobilization lacked access to conventional participation. That these groups usually lacked direct access does not mean that all groups who engage in expressive mobilization and conventional participation lack access. The LGBTQ movement has been highly expressive even though members of the LGBTQ community can vote. Social movement entrepreneurs

have had to learn how to make groups who do have direct access feel like they do not have access. Emotions and elite manipulation are vital to this type of social construction and are even more essential to analyze and understand when looking at a group who possesses conventional political access and yet still engages in expressive mobilization.

Expressive mobilization is key to understanding the modern day political and social dynamics occurring in America today. Feelings of *social* marginalization affect *political* mobilization. Therefore, if we are to understand better why specific groups mobilize politically, we must understand the story behind the expressive forms of mobilization and their indication of social strain that no doubt speaks to future and past political mobilization.

In this dissertation, I analyze one group within the United States who fits my theoretical dynamic. They have political access but also seem to possess a sense of social, and to a degree, political marginalization. I perform both qualitative and quantitative analyses to see if there are indeed indicators of social strain manifesting through alternative forms of individual and collective mobilization. I find that these alternative forms of mobilization are dependent on catalyst events that stimulate emotional reactions.

Theoretical Foundations

Theorists, starting as far back as Aristotle to Dahl have all wrestled with the concept of political participation in a democracy. They all agree that political participation is necessary for the maintenance of a democracy. Active political involvement by the citizenry is not only essential to the democracy but also to the citizens abiding in the democracy. It is imperative, then, to know and understand what makes a citizen, and subsequently, a group of citizens, express themselves politically and socially.

Scholars have found that, in America, a decrease in political participation correlates with a decrease in mobilization activities (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). The more that the public is involved and mobilized the more individuals will want to participate in the political process. Hansen (2015) and Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) focus much of their work on elite mobilizers. They argue that to mobilize the masses politically, the masses need stimulation from political candidates, political parties, campaigns, interest groups or social movements. Mobilization acts as a political stimulant. This means that since political participation is essential to democracy and political mobilization is vital to political participation, political mobilization is important to democracy. Therefore, understanding how and why different groups mobilize is important to understanding political participation and democracy.

I detail various social movement theories in the previous chapter. Tilly (1978) explains that most of these theories originate from Millian (2002), Durkheimian (2014), Weberian (1978), Marxian (2018) and Tillian (1978; 2006) theories of political participation and democratic theory. Both Weber and Durkheim posit that widespread social change is a crucial stimulator for collective action while Mill conceptualizes collective action as an intentional pursuit of individual interest. Tilly (1978) focuses on the resources that are available to groups as they mobilize. He defines mobilization as the “acquisition of collective control over resources, rather than the simple accretion of resources” (78). Mobilization is costly (Tilly 1978). Collective action by any group requires collective resource. This means that groups must be highly motivated to assume the effort and cost that it takes to mobilize. Further, he breaks social movements into three forms of "claim-making." The first form he describes is called "identity claiming" which is when a group

attempts to establish their continued existence in society (Tilly 2006). They are not necessarily calling for changes in society as much as *expressing* an identity's continued existence and relevance. They are still a force with which to be reckoned.

These few descriptions exemplify how these foundational theories paved the way for theories like the theory of social constructionism or collective behavior. Most of these theories provide different ways to uncover *how* groups mobilize while a few theories, namely rational choice theory, begin to uncover the *why* of mobilization (Aslanidis 2015).

A portion of social movement theory is dedicated to counter-movements. Zald and Useem (1983) posit that movements of any kind with moderate visibility and impact create the condition for the mobilization of counter-movements. Movements and counter-movements adapt and update their tactics to account for changes in their interactions with the opposing movement. Zald and Useem say,

Central to M/CM [movement/countermovement] analysis is a description of the strategies and tactics and forms of conflict, how and where they interact. A wide range of forms of battles exists, from direct confrontation, to lobbying authorities, to speaking to disparate audiences, to debating the shadows of previous generations. Moreover, they have a wide range of strategic goals and tactics. They attempt to inhibit each other's mobilization, as well as persuade authorities and bystanders. (10)

Movements must employ a variety of strategies and techniques to both combat the opposing movement and to persuade others (government or society at large) to side with their position.

A *movement* is conceptually not the same as a *counter-movement*. Mottl (1980) defines a countermovement as a “particular kind of protest movement which is a response to the social change advocated by the initial movement” (620). A social movement is “a conscious, collective, organized attempt” to bring about social change while a

countermovement attempts to stop this social change from happening (Mottl 1980, 620). Hence, social movements are centered around *social* change; however, many of these social movement groups fight for political *as well as* social change.

The critical difference in a movement and a *counter*-movement is their perception of the *status quo*. When a group is upset or unhappy with the current status quo they are more likely to mobilize to change the standing status quo. Scholars call this a social movement (Wilson 1973; Mottl 1980). A *counter-movement* is a movement of individuals who are happy with the *status quo* and are resisting change (Mottl 1980). “Countermovement participants develop strategies (institutional resistance, non-violent direct action, violence) for the overall conduct of the movement in reaction to the successes of the initial movement and to the amount of social control exerted against them” (Mottl 1980, 624; see Snyder and Tilly 1972; Turner and Killian 1972; Wilson 1977). Counter-movements use specific tactics (lobbying, letter-writing, sit-ins, boycotts) to promote their cause (Mottl 1980). Counter-movements are mobilized into different forms of political engagement to defend and uphold the status quo.

I include this philosophical difference because I am more interested in how groups that want to *maintain* a status quo are mobilizing. I am not analyzing what causes a fully developed counter-movement per se. Instead, I am interested in analyzing the signals of social strain that manifest through individual mobilization and instances of collective action as a group attempts to maintain or protect their preferred status quo.

Moving forward then, my theory rests on a few assumptions. First, it assumes that

feeling marginalized is important to mobilization.¹² This has been confirmed by multiple different social movement theories (Arendt 1951; Buechler 1993; Gurr 1970; Kornhauser 1959; Jasper 1998; Jenkins 1983; McAdam 1982; Morris 2000; Smelser 1962; Snow and Benford 1992; Tilly 1978). Further, I assume that groups can feel *social* marginalization while still possessing a high level of external and internal political efficacy. I call this high sense of political efficacy, *political access*. These feelings of *social* marginalization, while mediated by their feelings of political access, will manifest themselves via expressive mobilization as "identity claiming." I am interested in groups who, theoretically, want to *maintain* the standing societal status quo through expressive mobilization. Moving forward then, anytime I refer to mobilization or collective action, I mean counter-mobilization, or only that the mobilization being referred to is attempting to *stop* change and preserve the status quo rather than promote change and replace the *status quo*.

Identity

Oliver et al. (2003) split the social constructionist milieu into four distinct areas: emotions, framing, collective identity, and culture. The social constructionist theory contends that for individuals to act collectively, they must possess a shared identity. Tilly (1978) defines it as "a population which has some common structure and shared belief" (8). Identity influences individual action and collective action (Campbell et al. 1960). Kauffman (1990, 67) said that identity politics is "the belief that identity itself—its elaboration, expression, or affirmation—is and should be a fundamental focus of political work." Identity politics politicizes areas of life such as "sexuality, interpersonal relations, lifestyle and culture" (67). If an individual identifies herself with a group that she believes

¹² This is something that, aside from a few scholars (Hunter 1992; Smith et al. 1998), has been overlooked in the research on religion and mobilization.

to be on the margins of society or government, she behaves differently than if she identifies with a group she believes to hold a pre-eminent role in society and government. Brown (1995) argues that “marginalization forms the basis for the culture of identity politics” (Bernstein 2005, 50).

Taylor and Whittier (1998) argue that "to understand a politicized identity community it is necessary to analyze the social and political struggle that created the identity" (352). Throughout history, identity has shaped and influenced social movements. Before the 1960s and 1970s, most identity politics were seen as economic rather than social. In other words, one's economic status defined them and was the reason for their unrest and protest. However, with the onset of the Civil Rights and Women's movements in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars were forced to step back and reassess their conception of identity. Scholars promoting the New Social Movement (NSM) literature explain that there is a difference between some social movements and others. For instance,

Touraine (1998) makes an ontological distinction between identity politics and NSMs. He does not regard movements such as the women's and lesbian movements as identity politics because they have radical and inclusive tendencies and have themselves criticized identity politics. In contrast, he does consider conservative social movements as identity politics because they respond to economic globalization and the decline of a national culture (Touraine 1998, p. 131) by forming movements based in ethnicity, religion, or nationalism, such as political Islamism or Serbian nationalism. (Bernstein 2005, 55).

This distinction between conservative movements based in identity and *exclusion* versus liberal movements based on inclusion and rejecting identity shows the importance of identity to social movements and collective action. In both cases, identity was central but is essential to note the difference between those motivated by including identities and excluding identities. This is particularly important to note in the current political environment where identities, such as the "white identity," are formed as a result of more

diversity in the United States and a need to *exclude* these new identities (Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek 2017).

Individual identities are not the same as collective identities (Pollenta and Jasper 2001). Individual and collective identities do regularly interact, but collective identities are not merely the aggregation of individual identities (2001). Rather, collective identities are "imagined as well as concrete communities" and they involve "an act of perception and construction as well as discovery of preexisting bonds, interest and boundaries" (298). Collective identities are fluid and relational and create the lens through which individuals can make sense of the world (2001).

Alberto Melucci (1988) contends that developing a well-constructed collective identity is one of the most pivotal tasks for agents of mobilization. He says that the construction of collective identity is "a process in which the actors produce the common cognitive frameworks that enable them to assess the environment and to calculate the cost and benefits of the action" (343). There are two dimensions of collective identity. Individuals who ascribe to a certain collective identity participate either to help the group achieve some goal or because they simply enjoy feeling a part of the collective group (Gamson 1992). The social constructivist theory contends that politically relevant identities are the only identities that can lead to social movement. This is problematic since many significant identities are not necessarily political (Aslanidis 2015). Klandermans (1984; 2001) contends that even more important than a political identity is the existence of an "out-group" that allows the "in-group" to develop and gives the "in-group" a "they" to fight against.

Bernstein (1997) defines the concept of identity as it relates to social movements by breaking it into three levels. First, for any social movement to mobilize, there must be a shared collective identity. Second, “expressions of identity can be deployed at the collective level as a political strategy, which can be aimed at what are traditionally thought of as cultural and/or political goals” (59). Third, identity can itself be a goal of social movement activism, “either gaining acceptance for a hitherto stigmatized identity or deconstructed categories of identities such as “man,” “woman,” “gay,” “straight,” “black,” or white” (59). The activists within each group must formulate strategies (Hartsock 1983; Collins 1998; Haraway 1988) to combat the power structures and establish or promote their identities. When enough people share a similar identity and feel the need to make their voices heard, the collection of these various individuals takes on an identity of its own. This shared identity can lead groups to mobilize when trying to promote or defend this identity.

Theoretically then, a group must possess a solid sense of identity for them to feel marginalized enough to act. Perceived societal marginalization of an individual's identity or the values with which they identify leads to a sense of social strain. Further, scholars stress the importance of collective identity to stimulate mobilization. Without an "us" versus "them" mentality, individuals are less likely to mobilize. Thus, a strong sense of individual identity and a sense of collective identity is essential to my theory of mobilization.

Marginalization Conceptualized

While I do not directly examine what makes a group *feel* marginalized, I do believe it is important to conceptualize marginalization and present some theoretical assumptions

about what causes it. The basic Merriam-Webster definition of "marginalize" is "to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group." Another more specific form of marginalization is alienation. Political alienation can be categorized into four categories: political powerlessness; political meaninglessness; political normlessness and political isolation (Finifter 1970). Extrapolating from the concept of alienation, some individual feels marginalized when they feel that they and their opinions, knowledge, expertise, experiences or anything unique to that individual or group are pushed to the periphery of society and/or politics and considered unimportant or unnecessary. This is what I mean by marginalized.

To reiterate, the only thing that matters is that the group *perceives* or *feels* marginalized (not if they *are*). The creators of the social constructionism approach introduce and support the idea that what matters is not the *reality* of marginalization but somewhat the *construction* and *perception* of marginalization (Gamson 1995; Jasper 1998; 2011; Zurcher and Snow 1981; Benford 1997). For the group, what they perceive about themselves, about society, and about how society views them, is the reality. Thus, the group operates and interacts with society from the viewpoint of *that* reality.

What makes individuals or a group of individuals *feel* such a way? *Emotions* play an important role in social constructionism's theory of mobilization and are therefore important to discuss. Feeling marginalized and aggrieved by some societal or political ill is nothing new to society (Jasper 1997). In fact, these feelings are so common that many social movement scholars began to abandon their importance altogether. However, Jasper (1997) contends that the emotional context of a movement is relevant and should be addressed. Marginalization is most commonly felt by demographic minorities, whether the

minority is based on gender, race or religion. The systemic oppression of women over the course of human history is perhaps one significant aberration in that women make up half of the human population. In short, marginalization is the feeling, usually sensed by these minorities, that they are on the margins of society and lack influence and access to government (1997).

However, it is pertinent for this dissertation not only to acknowledge the marginalization of demographic minorities, but the perceived marginalization of those who *marginalize* the demographic minorities. Recent research shows that shifting power structures and demographic shifts cause those *who hold power*, both socially and politically, to feel threatened and anxious (Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek 2016; 2017; 2018; Tesler 2016; Wong 2018a). This feeling of threat and anxiety creates a feeling of marginalization that can and does lead to mobilization. Scholars such as Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek (2018) find that these feelings of threat and anxiety, stimulated by racial and demographic changes, were essential in mobilizing white Americans to vote for Donald Trump. Thus, it is essential to understand that feelings of marginalization can stem from systemic, societal or governmental oppression *or* from feeling that the power *to* oppress is in jeopardy. In other words, it is possible for the oppressed and oppressors to *both* feel marginalized.

The marginalization of the oppressed (or oppressors) sometimes stems from a perceived stigma about one's culture. For instance, societal expectations likely caused LGBTQ individuals to feel marginalized. Standing laws in government that stipulated that marriage is only between a man and woman influenced them to feel that their perspectives and their voices were marginal and unimportant to society at large. Perhaps a macro-level,

they sensed that the unspoken but understood prevailing Judeo-Christian values of American culture were against them. In fact, the LGBTQ movement had a very interactive relationship with the Christian Right, one that spurred the LGBTQ community into forms of action that they may never have tapped into absent the stimulation of an opposing group (Fetner 2008). Broadly, the accepted or understood morality of the culture did not line up with their understanding of values and morality. Thus, feeling or perceiving this friction of values is likely another reason for feeling marginalized. Ultimately, the creation of an “us” versus “them” mentality worked simultaneously with a feeling of marginalization about their culture and values to stimulate and mobilize the LGBTQ community in ways it had never mobilized before.

As I mentioned earlier, a key component of marginalization is the feeling of alienation. Olsen (1965) explains that "External social conditions are extremely important in producing these feelings, but alienation occurs only when a person consciously experiences discomfort or discontent in his social relationships. Because of inadequate or undesirable ties with his social world, the alienated person feels cut off or separated from society" (202). Hannon (2011) explains that feelings of alienation tend to be higher amongst conservatives because they are more likely to feel that their values are being ignored or under attack (Weakliem and Borch 2006). Alienation tends to increase support for expressive forms of political participation such as demonstrations or boycotts (Southwell 1985; Opp 1990; Weakliem and Borch 2006).

The *social construction* of these negative emotions is perhaps the leading cause of feelings of marginalization. Jasper (1998; 2011) calls emotional manipulation motivational framing and frame alignment. In other words, elite entrepreneurs construct and manipulate

these emotions to bring them to the surface. While the emotions may not be constructed from scratch, as all the previous examples demonstrate, "a certain amplification procedure is nonetheless employed in most cases" (Aslanidis 2015).

Moving forward, I refer to a group that perceives itself to be on the margins of society, who feel a sense of societal strain or emotion-laden injustice, as marginalized. I will not always say *perceived* marginalization because reality does not matter if a group feels themselves to be marginalized, they *are* marginalized. My theory and social constructionism are predicated on the assumption that all that matters is the *feeling* or *construction* of marginalization, not the reality of marginalization.

Social and Political Marginalization

Building off the social constructionist theory, I theorize that there are two dimensions of emotional marginalization: political marginalization and social marginalization. This inevitably leads to the following question: can a group feel politically marginalized but socially accepted, or vice versa, politically accepted while feeling socially marginalized? In short, can oppressors feel marginalized? I contend that, confirmed by current research, individuals and groups with power and access can feel marginalized.

I conceptualize political marginalization as having low levels of political efficacy and low political access. As I discussed in the literature review, when someone has low levels of external political efficacy they feel they cannot influence government (Finkel 1985). This feeling may stem from seeing few people in power who share their ideological convictions, racial or gender identity, or even their economic status. These emotions can stem from real life experiences, but they are most likely framed and socially constructed (Aslanidis 2015). The essence of what I conceptualize as *political* marginalization is

feeling like one cannot influence government or government institutions for or against something they care about. Groups that feel that they are on the margins of government are groups that feel themselves to be politically marginalized.

Craig (1980) posits that a poor sense of external efficacy is the strongest determinant of “popular mobilization” in democratic settings (191). This is directly related to my theory as I argue that individuals who possess a high sense of external efficacy can still be motivated to mobilize expressively because of perceived societal marginalization.

Social marginalization is distinct for a few reasons. Both the oppressed and the oppressors can feel a sense of social marginalization. To feel social marginalization, a group might believe that *society* does not accept them or that accepted *social norms* do not align with the group’s social norms. Ultimately, society *misunderstands* them. A socially marginalized group may feel that portions of the mainstream media are against them and that many people on social media do not understand them. They may feel that institutions are predisposed to be against them. They believe that society looks down on them, their way of life, their culture. They may believe they experience institutional discrimination. They may feel that their way of life, their status in society, and their ability to access government or power is being jeopardized by changes in society.

They may also feel that society stereotypes them wrongly and judges them for this stereotyped existence. For example, “rednecks” in the South may feel that society at large thinks of them as stupid, poor, uneducated, inbred and worthless, based upon the way elites and the media have portrayed them. These types of experiences lead someone to believe that society is somehow against them, or wrongly judging them—which leads to perceived social marginalization. Social entrepreneurs then take and exploit these feelings and

experiences for their benefit and to stimulate collective action (Snow and Bedford 1992).

To build upon the feeling of threat, social marginalization can come from feelings of racial anxiety or status loss (Conover 1983; Crawford 1980; Lorentzen 1980; Wald 1989). When individuals feel their lifestyle or their power status in society is being threatened, they may begin to feel a sense of social marginalization. Their identity, their values, their perspectives are all being threatened by new values, identities, and perspectives. Whites during the Civil Rights Era may not have had any reason to feel marginalized except that they felt their power in society was threatened by allowing African Americans equal footing in society. In other words, innate prejudices against an out-group stimulate feelings of angst and anxiety when perceived “out-groups” appear to be gaining power.

Sometimes, if a group identifies with a set of beliefs, and they feel that these beliefs are becoming taboo in society, they will start *feeling* socially marginalized. In this instance, the feelings of marginalization are not about some tangible aspect of the individual as much as the feelings about the individuals’ belief system. Individuals who practice polygamy believe in the usefulness and virtue of having more than one wife. However, if they feel that society at large does not agree with this way of living and this belief system, they likely will feel marginalized by society. They feel that they cannot have a voice in society; they cannot influence or cause society to view them differently or more favorably because society has already put them in their predetermined and judged position. Mainly, they feel they have no power or influence in society to be popularly accepted by society.

This feeling of social marginalization is inextricably tied to politics, however. Polygamists, for instance, may feel that societal acceptance will give their perspective more of a voice to speak into and influence government policies about their lifestyle. If the

government did make marriage to more than one person legal but society still shunned polygamy, the polygamists would still feel a sense of societal marginalization even if their political access and representation had been rectified (see Jasper 1997). These *feelings* of societal martyrdom are just affirmed and re-affirmed by the community, news, and social media with which each group surrounds itself. Individuals in groups that feel this kind of societal marginalization feed off each other's experiences and stories that affirm the perception of societal marginalization. This is part of the "cultural" context requirement mentioned in the social constructionist theory.

The Two Levels of Marginalization

Political and societal marginalization are intricately connected. In this next section, I set up a full generalized image of reality to paint a picture. My broad over-generalized assumptions do not mean that in all circumstances they are what happens but rather that in *many* circumstances they have happened and may continue to happen.

Historically speaking, sometimes societal acceptance is a necessary condition to bring about political acceptance. In other words, members of society must come to a point where they feel the need to change their judgment or stance on a particular group of people, and in doing so pressure government also to change its institutions and laws to treat the individuals better. The LGBTQ movement is an example of societal acceptance that eventually led to political acceptance.

Social movement entrepreneurs advanced and framed the LGBTQ movement in a way that caused a shift in social mores and understandings that caused *society* to take the first jump. These entrepreneurs used value framing to shape collective opinion about gay rights (Brewer 2003). Scholars agree that individuals use their core values to inform their political

positions (Feldman 1988; McClosky and Zaller 1984; Rokeach 1973). Value framing entrepreneurs found that equality and traditional morality were the two most effective frames by which to frame LGBTQ issues (Brewer 2003). These values are an important part of public opinion more broadly, not just about LGBTQ rights (Wilcox and Wolpert 1996; 2000). Using the pro-gay right's equality frame, entrepreneurs slowly shifted public opinion of gay rights in their favor (Brewer 2003). Eventually, government policy caught up with public opinion, most notably with the *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015) ruling. I do not assume causation here, but I do assume correlation.

Sometimes, the government must act first (usually through pressure from members of the group advocating for political and societal acceptance). Government policy sometimes affects societal acceptance. The Civil Rights movement is an example of this kind of change. The government, in response to social and political activism, made legal changes to accept African Americans; however, large portions of society did not want to capitulate. Almost every law was contested socially and politically. Eventually, society did capitulate and, at least in the areas mandated by government, moved past a portion of their social and institutional prejudice.

These are just two examples. I use them to paint a picture. These two dimensions are correlated. Thus, if members of society shift their position on a specific group, it is likely that portions of government are soon to follow; and, if government shifts its position towards a certain group, members of society are more likely to follow.

The Oppressors

What happens when those in power begin to feel threatened, feeling like they may lose this power and status? Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2017) argue that unexpected waves of

political participation such as in the election of Donald Trump in 2016 are the result of pent-up racial and status anxiety over the potential loss of power. Snow and Oliver (1995) find that “individuals who were accustomed to a stable increase of their wellbeing are the first to take to the streets when deprivation kicks in, not the ones who have nothing to lose” (Aslanidis 2015).

Naturally, society and government cannot change positions towards specific groups without also shifting their positions on other groups (Zald and Useem 1987; Tilly 1978). For instance, while the Civil Rights Era brought about great advancements and positive changes for African Americans, it completely shifted the autonomy of business owners and school boards. Business owners, in this case, the oppressors, were no longer allowed to discriminate by race in whom they hired, whom they fired, whom they served, how they served and so on. Regardless of the rightness or wrongness of the situation, it is necessary to understand that a change in the social and political position of one group resulted in a change in the social and political position of another. This is true in all countries and circumstances. Zald and Useem (1983) call this "loosely coupled conflict." In other words, actions and positions by one group stimulate and effect actions and positions of another group.

Sometimes these losses are merely perceived moral losses. For instance, while there was a practical change for business owners during and after the Civil Rights Era, the moral loss was likely what many racist whites felt after the change. Racist whites felt a figurative sense of loss and marginalization. Society at large no longer accepted their racist views and perspectives, nor were they condoned or promoted by the government anymore. They experienced a perceived moral loss.

Do those in power react to feelings of marginalization differently than the oppressed? Presumably, the oppressors engage in politicking and social advocacy in a particular way, a way that they had come to accept, appreciate, and believe worked. In other words, they cultivated and built a repertoire of useful and effective tactics to maintain and promote their accepted position in society and government (Tilly 2006). These tactics likely included lobbying politicians, campaigning and promoting candidates sympathetic to their cause, voter suppression and discrimination, and in some cases violence and intimidation.

Theoretically, a group that does not feel marginalized and feels a strong sense of political efficacy and social dominance does not feel the need to engage in peripheral and expressive forms of political and social activism (Mottl 1980). In other words, they may not feel the need to march on Washington or in the streets of their town.¹³ These are forms of political and social activism that marginalized groups engage in since they feel that they do not have the same clout or access as the accepted group (Jasper 1997; Mottl 1980).

Oppressors are not going to feel the need to make symbolic stands for their position, nor are they going to feel the need to promote or convince the public of the virtue of their position; they believe society already accepts their position. For example, people who believe that alcohol should be legal have nothing to grandstand about;¹⁴ Society already accepts the consumption of alcohol and the government has also accepted it.

However, what is true for all groups is that they must shift and adapt with the times, with the current and prevailing zeitgeist. What once worked for one group, may no longer

¹³ Just because they do not need to engage in expressive forms of activism does not mean that they will not. However, it is more likely for groups who perceive themselves to be marginalized to engage in these forms of mobilization.

¹⁴ With the exception, of course, of some counties and towns that are entirely dry and a few small towns, primarily in the South, that have dry Sundays.

work. This is *especially* true for those groups who hold a position of dominance in society but are now *feeling* threatened or marginalized. For instance, consider what people may do if, for some reason, they began to *feel* that legal alcohol consumption was being threatened. Even if there was no way that alcohol would be made illegal or hindered, for some reason alcohol retailers began feeling like the social zeitgeist was turning against them, how would they respond? It is the *threat* or perceived *threat* that would spur a once dormant or settled group into action. Hence, this is an example of a counter-movement. A group who previously held the status quo attempts to defend themselves against movements attempting to change the status quo.

The dominant group, who feels that their dominance is being threatened, will likely turn to unconventional forms of mobilization to express their concern. They feel the need to use the unconventional forms of mobilization that the oppressed groups have used throughout the centuries. This does not mean the dominant group does not *still* use all of their conventional institutional access, but if a once-dominant group begins to engage in unconventional mobilization, this is a sign that this group is feeling threatened and concerned that their station in society is in jeopardy.

Social movement entrepreneurs have to rush to figure out ways to frame and activate a collective identity for a dominant group that has not had to rely on such things before. This is what Donald Trump's campaign did. They promoted and constructed a "white identity" and stirred up feelings of marginalization in the dominant group in society. They used the "us" versus "them" mentality to help strengthen a collective identity and feeling of threat. Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek (2017) quote the philosopher Charles Mills as they attempt to explain the uniqueness of "white identity." Mills says, "The fish does not see the water,

and whites do not see the racial nature of a white polity because it is natural to them, the element in which they move" (1997, 76). Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek (2017) explain that since whites have always had the numerical majority in the United States, and have been afforded a disproportionate share of the political, economic and social resources, their "white identity" has been hampered.

What then are the mechanisms that cause dominant groups to mobilize using unconventional forms of expression? The social constructionist theory contends that a collective identity, an effective frame, a ripe cultural context, and emotional strain are all necessary to produce collective mobilization. I contend that these are true but that the emotional strain need only be social. In some countries, groups who fit this model have resorted to violence to be heard; other groups have formed coups to try and use force to change the government; others have gone to the streets peacefully and violently (Mottl 1980). In this dissertation, I look at the mechanisms that produce expressive mobilization in one "dominant" group.

Expressive Mobilization Defined in Modern Society

Accepted scholarly conceptualizations of mobilization define mobilization as the "deliberate activation of social networks as a method of diffusing awareness about a social or political problem or of exerting social and/or political pressure for its resolution" (Theocharis 2015, 5; see also Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Hansen 2015; and Brady 1999). There are different manifestations and forms of mobilization (Craig 1980; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Hansen 2015).¹⁵ Mobilization can be conventional (voting,

¹⁵ Some scholars differentiate between political participation and political mobilization. Rosenstone & Hansen (1993) define mobilization as the "process by which candidates, parties, activists, and groups induce other people to participate" (25). Hence, mobilization is the activity of *inducing* participation but is distinct from the act of participation itself. However, current scholars argue that this distinction is no longer relevant

lobbying, writing Congresspeople) or unconventional (boycotting, sit-ins, marches, rallies). Understanding the ways that a group engages in *conventional* mobilization is relevant to political science because it informs us about how and why citizens directly influence the political system.

However, unconventional "expressive" political mobilization is also relevant for many reasons. First, expressive mobilization disseminates a message and/or an identity to the broader public. It draws attention to an issue. By doing so, it can place the issue and/or identity on to the political agenda. This form of manifestation allows for the person or group of people to raise awareness about a social or political problem and/or exert social and political pressure to solve this problem. Without such forms of expression, underprivileged members of society such as women, racial minorities, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities, may not have had the opportunity to be heard by elites or their identities socially validated/accepted.

Expressive mobilization also indicates for society and government that the group engaging in such mobilization feels aggrieved, and indicates what issues are perceived problematic for this group. It also indicates for society and government the potential for conventional political action. *In other words, expressive mobilization acts as a clue to the broader public that there are areas of concern within the ranks of some collective group that, if ignored by state and federal governments, could potentially result in a backlash at the polls.*

While expression may not fit the formal definition of conventional political

in the age of digital participation (Theocharis 2015). "Digitally networked participatory acts are thus often inseparable from a conventional understanding of participation --- even by the standards of the narrowest definitions" (Theocharis 2015, 5).

mobilization, it is important to the political process. Scholars argue that expression is a crucial part of political mobilization (Theocharis 2015; Rojas and Puig-I-Abril 2009). Expression is the way that individuals can publicly *express* their political orientations (Rojas and Puig-I-Abril 2009); thus, it is an essential part of the mobilization process. How they express themselves can vary, but when an individual or a group of individuals mobilizes, it is with the intent of *expression*. Since expression is mobilization, then *how* expression manifests itself is irrelevant.

Since this dissertation focuses primarily on extra-institutional means of political action, it is essential to discuss some historical context of such protests. Jasper (1997) explains that moral protests present themselves in different ways. The commonly used styles of protest today include massive public rallies, marches, occupations at specifically targeted sites, "provocative verbal and visual rhetoric," and mainstream lobbying and electioneering (Jasper 1997, 7). Boycotting, mass petitions and urban rebellions began around the time of the French Revolution. These forms of mobilization were used primarily by groups who were not afforded full human rights such as political participation or economic protections. Jasper explains, "They were movements demanding full inclusion for these collectivities, including industrial workers, women, and later ethnic and racial minorities" (1997, 7). He calls social movements motivated to gain basic human rights, *citizenship movements*. Only in the 19th century did "*post-citizenship*" social movements begin to spread across the United States and other countries. *Post-citizenship* social movements consist of groups who already integrated into the political, economic and educational systems, but desire to see injustices done to other groups or entities (animals, the environment, lifestyle protections) rectified (Jasper 1997).

American social movements have consisted primarily of "post-citizenship" mobilization except for a few key movements such as the Women's Suffrage movement and the Civil Rights movement. In the 19th century, "the United States was filled with post-citizenship movements concerned with drinking and other sins, health foods, the environment, spirituality, and other 'lifestyle' issues sometimes pursued by today's post-industrial movements" (Jasper 1997, 8).

Thus, social movements are not always aimed at merely gaining legal or institutional rights. Many movements also attempt to "rework cultural meanings and tolerance for diverse lifestyles" (Jasper 1997, 8-9). For example, women or LGBTQ people may now be afforded certain legal rights but are still fighting to change cultural stigmas or disadvantages they face in the private sphere due to cultural norms and attitudes (1997). Therefore, those engaging in expressive mobilization through extra-institutional methods are not always attempting to change government policy but also to reframe cultural norms they perceive as damaging to their group and/or society.

Jasper (1997) admits that most social movement literature is not equipped to explain all forms of social movements and collective actions. Specifically, the literature is not equipped to explain movements of privileged groups compared to oppressed groups. Theoretically, I do not attempt to fully explain this difference either; instead, I start to shed light on the mechanisms and emotions necessary for one privileged group to engage in forms of extra-institutional mobilization.

Jasper (1997) explains that every group attempts to come up with new, innovative spins on traditional forms of extra-institutional protest. He gives the example of the "kiss-ins" that gay and lesbian activists have begun to use in response to entities that oppress them.

Animal rights activists have broken into research laboratories to “liberate” the animals (Jasper 1997). Anti-abortion supporters have bombed abortion clinics or picketed outside them. Women in the Temperance movement came together and knelt outside a saloon in protest of alcohol consumption (*A Nation of Scofflaws: Prohibition--A Film by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick*). Recently, anti-gun activist students from the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, the site of a recent school shooting, promoted a "Die-in" at the local Publix grocery store to protest the funds the company donated to a politician who backed the National Rifle Association. The method of expression varies, but all of these forms of expression are done outside the institutions of government and are therefore not conventional forms of political participation. They draw attention to an issue or identity that is causing unrest in some portion of the population and therefore should not be dismissed. If unrest is happening, this unrest may eventually influence the aggrieved to conventionally participate in more politically impactful ways.

There is now a growing debate regarding what counts as political participation/mobilization—precisely because of the inception of technology, the internet, and social media. Traditional forms of political participation and mobilization are now being joined by an entirely new array of political engagement and expression. Political participation must now be categorized as either *offline* participation or *online* participation. Does political engagement on social media platforms (online participation) count as political participation? Is *expression* via online forums a form of political mobilization?

The scholarly consensus is that political engagement on social media platforms has developed into its own form of political mobilization (Feezell 2016; Oser, Hooghe, and Marien 2013; McCosker 2015; Sormanen and Dutton 2015; Theocharis 2015). Theocharis

(2015) says that "the act of (digital) communication as a form of mobilization ...[is]... understood as integral to political participation" (6). This mobilization is a form of self-expression and identity (Theocharis 2015). Some argue that digitally networked participation is merely an expressive form of engagement that has no real impact on social change (Morozov 2009). Social media engagement creates the illusion of participation and influence, but it has little real-world implications (Morozov 2009).

However, scholars have found this negative interpretation of social media political involvement to be untrue. Social networking and engagement on digital networks can and has had a critical impact on social movements, mobilization and collective action (Bennett and Segerberg 2012; 2013; Castells 2007; 2012; Diani 2003; Earl and Kimport 2011). The overwhelming evidence seems to be that online political engagement is its own form of independent engagement; it is relevant, and it can have an impact on the political process and mobilization (Gibson and Cantijoch 2013).¹⁶ Theocharis (2015) provides perhaps the most succinct definition of online political mobilization: it is "a networked media-based personalized action that is carried out by individual citizens with the intent to display their own mobilization and activate their social networks in order to raise awareness about, or exert social and political pressures for the solution of, a social or political problem" (6). Political and social expression, therefore, is a form of political mobilization and has become an essential part of the political and social process. Thus, I would expect to see a group, feeling socially marginalized, to utilize such forms of self-expression and

¹⁶ A key quote in Gibson and Cantijoch's (2013) article regarding the importance of online political participation is this: "Posting one's opinion to a blog or social network site arguably makes a more immediate and potentially influential public statement than wearing a label badge." (714) In short, online political engagement can sometimes be more effective than offline political engagement.

mobilization. I conceptualize mobilization that is expressive, with the intent of drawing attention to a problem or to one's identity, *expressive* mobilization as distinct from conventional mobilization, which generally means voting, lobbying, writing letters to members of Congress and using all the conventional forms of political participation available.

As I mentioned earlier, there have been different social movements throughout history that have used these forms of *expressive* mobilization. The Civil Rights movement, the Women's Suffrage movement, and the LGBTQ movement are all examples of movements that engaged in unconventional expressive forms of mobilization in an attempt to make their identity known and their voices heard (Freeman and Johnson 1999). The Christian Right movement was also a part of many of the mid-to-late 20th-century movements sweeping the United States. These movements used different forms of protest, namely, marches, boycotts, books/articles, interest groups, and sit-ins. Most recently the Black Lives Matters movement, and the #MeToo movement have begun to utilize new forms of expressive mobilization such as kneeling during the national anthem and Twitter hashtags and other forms of online media expression. The #MeToo movement spread primarily as an online phenomenon, indicating the present day importance of online media expression.

There are a variety of ways that groups can expressively mobilize. In this dissertation, I chose to look at political consumerism (boycotting and buycotting) and Twitter expression as indicators of social marginalization. Both forms of expression are highly relevant in today's society, with political consumerism being one of the most commonly used forms of political mobilization and online media expression growing exponentially over the past decade.

Evangelicals

I am interested in understanding evangelicals in America as they are an ideal test group for my theory. Globally, evangelicals are a small but significant portion of the population. Evangelicals in the United States have enjoyed a rather comfy level of perceived societal and governmental acceptance throughout American history (McLoughlin 1968; Coleman 1980; Smidt 1988). In fact, evangelicalism permeated American culture and values so much so that it can be said that “the story of American evangelicalism is the story of America itself in the year 1800 to 1900” (McLoughlin 1968, 1). In short, evangelical Protestantism has enjoyed a dominant position in both political and social life throughout most of American history (Wong 2018a, 94).

Evangelical Christians have enjoyed an accepted and pre-eminent position in American society and government (Oldfield 1996). Feminists argue that patriarchy is a highly Judeo-Christian value, and patriarchy has been and continues to be a staple in American society (Foucault 1990; 1995). Nominal evangelicals have been in some of the top positions of political power and have also had a monopoly on societal definitions of virtue and morality (Marsden 2006). Further, there is new evidence of a growing and well-connected evangelical elite who hold pre-eminent positions in government, corporations, academia, Hollywood and more (Lindsay 2008). Wong (2018a) says that the white evangelical voting block today “is buttressed by several structures that reinforce its advantages, enabling it to resist the challenges to its strength posed by demographic changes” (89). These are examples of past social and present political acceptance afforded to evangelicals in the United States.

Two scholars, Hunter (1981; 1992) and Smith (1998) were aware of this dynamic. Each

claim that societal changes and/or the identification of villainous out-groups play an essential role in bolstering evangelical vitality. In other words, the more evangelicals feel threatened either by modernity or out-groups, the more they thrive. Where these scholars differ is in the ways that evangelicals maintain this vitality. Hunter (1981) argues that retreat, boundaries and social distance from modernity have kept evangelicalism alive while Smith et al. (1998) contend that direct interaction with opposing groups stimulates evangelical vitality. Social movement research shows that direct interaction with opposing groups should also instigate mobilization. It creates an environment of collective identity by establishing an “us” versus “them” mentality.

Jelen (1991) affirms these findings when he shows that members of the Christian Right were motivated primarily by antagonism for minority groups. These "out-group" versus "in-group" emotions have become more evident in recent history for many hypothesized reasons, most specifically the advent of an African American president being elected. Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2016) find racial and status anxieties were more influential on support for President Trump than education or income. Where evangelicals fit in the overall emotional reaction to changing demographics and power structures is not completely clear; however, what is clear is that their support for Donald Trump was high and the reason for such staunch support is strongly associated with racial and partisan attachments.

The question concerning evangelicals then is what emotions might they be feeling? Jasper (1997) and his fellow social movement scholars admit that there is no shortage of grievances for groups to feel. Given that "white" evangelicals are and have been a dominant force in American society for most of American history (Fowler et al. 2013), what methods are elites using to stir up anxiety and a feeling of marginalization in a group that holds

political access and power (especially in the Trump era)? As my theory explains, there are two dimensions to marginalization, social and political. These dimensions are connected, but social movement entrepreneurs are more likely to find success in motivating evangelicals on social and political grounds than simply political grounds. They need to stir up a moral "outrage" in the community (Jasper 1997).

White evangelicals are a part of a broader paradigm shift happening in the ranks of white Americans. Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck (2017; 2018) explain the phenomenon as "white identity politics." "Trump showed that appeals to white grievance have the power to resonate in a multicultural America where whites increasingly feel like an aggrieved minority" (22). They claim that this is part of a broader global phenomenon. Perceptions of discrimination against whites were strong predictors of support for Brexit (2016). Tesler (2016) argues that Barack Obama's presidency may have inflamed this white identity phenomenon by intensifying by drawing attention to the relationship between race and politics. Hence, white Americans' growing feeling of being an "aggrieved minority" is likely connected to increased feelings of marginalization amongst white evangelicals.

White evangelicals, in particular, are displaying signs of social strain and threat (Jardina 2014; Wong 2018a). Wong (2018a) attributes this feeling to diversifying demographics within the evangelical population. Looking at white, Black, Asian and Latinx evangelicals, Wong found that they all demonstrated more conservative perspectives on moral issues such as abortion and gay marriage. However, on issues such as immigration, reparations for slavery, support for Black Lives Matter, and welfare, white evangelicals are dramatically different from their racial minority counterparts (Wong 2018a; 2018b). Generally speaking, white evangelicals are far more conservative on issues

than are Asian, Black, or Latinx evangelicals. Wong (2018b) shows that 50% of white evangelicals believe immigrants hurt the economy, and she articulates that the difference shown between white and non-white evangelical policy preferences is in how they define "us" versus "them" (Wong 2018a). She explains:

Stemming from dominant perceptions among white evangelicals about community boundaries and 'who we are' may be feelings of anxiety and a sense of peril about external threats to those boundaries and the identities they maintain. I show in this book that part of what underlies white evangelicals' more conservative policy attitudes compared with the attitudes of nonwhites is the belief that whites face as much discrimination as outgroups, such as Muslims, or even more (95).

She found that at least half of white evangelical respondents felt discriminated against, which paints a clear picture of "white embattlement against a changing world" (2018, 95). Thus, racial and demographic changes are likely a principal source of marginalization in the white evangelical community. They are feeling displaced and feeling like they are losing their grasp on social norms and political policies that benefit them as a result of demographic changes. Elites have been able to manipulate and use this growing unease to their advantage as they emphasize the "us" versus "them" rhetoric. As Smith et al. (1998) find, this sub-cultural identity unique to evangelicals makes white evangelicals the perfect target for amplified marginalization.

With this status, power, racial and identity dynamic as a backdrop, another point I intend to drive home in the succeeding section is the importance of social and religious values to evangelicals. Moen (1994) says of scholars during the Christian Right's era that "The concerns of Christian Right supporters were explained as the by-product of authoritarian personalities or symbolic crusades, rather than taken at face value. One unfortunate result of pigeonholing the Christian Right was that scholars circumscribed their research agendas. They neglected fruitful lines of inquiry..." (347-348). It is important to

look at evangelicals from an open perspective and acknowledge that many possess a strong sincerity for their belief system. Racial prejudice, white identity politics, and status anxiety may all be a part of why evangelicals are feeling increasing marginalization, but these feelings are all shared by the white population more broadly (Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2017; 2018). When analyzing white evangelicals as a part of this phenomenon, it is important not to miss the theological and religious aspects unique to evangelicals that may also be affecting their perceptions of social marginalization.

The social mores, norms, and Biblical values are unique for evangelicals because these values are not just what evangelicals believe but quite literally represent *who* they are (Keeter 2007; Moen 1992; Wilcox and Robinson 2010). Thus, any aspersions cast on these values is digested as disrespect directed to them. This makes the situation simple. All it would take for evangelicals to begin to *feel* an increase in social marginalization would be for society to appear to embrace values that are opposite the traditional evangelical or Judeo-Christian values. In this situation, evangelicals would feel that they are the ones being rejected. However, as Oldfield notes, they might not even be concerned with feeling rejected as much as they are concerned with their values being rejected for their value's sake (1996).

Of course, the caveat to this “value-oriented” understanding of evangelicals is that white evangelicals and Black evangelicals who share similar “values” engage in politics differently (Harris 1996). This is not true for *all* Black and white evangelicals but for the majority of them, and historically speaking, Black and white evangelicals share theological beliefs but not political beliefs. In fact, for much of American history, white evangelicals have used their faith to justify their suppression of Blacks while Blacks used their faith to

justify their right to freedom and every other “God-given” right (Noll 2010). The complicated relationship between evangelicalism and race informs our understanding of the political disparity between white and Black evangelicals now. Racial angst and resentment within the ranks of white evangelicals may be one of the key differences between the two groups.

Every group is unique; this is true of the evangelicals. One critical area of theological uniqueness specific to evangelicals and one that I believe is relevant to this dissertation is the evangelical's understanding of human nature grounded in their view of biblical teaching, which colors his or her reaction to changes in culture and society. Evangelicals believe in the inerrancy of the Bible, and the Bible states explicitly that men's hearts are deceitful and desperately wicked, above all things (Jeremiah 17:9). Based on the Biblical understanding of the fall of human-kind by Adam and Eve after having eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, all humans are fallen. This is not the only time the Bible states that man's heart is darkened by sin and has no good in it. In fact, the entire message of the Bible and of a Savior revolves around the *need* for a Savior. Specifically, *because* man is wicked and without hope, man needs a Savior to change the wicked nature. The Bible says that there is none good, no not one (Romans 3:10), and given that evangelicals believe in the inerrant truth of the Bible, they believe this statement to be true. Thus, all worldviews, political systems, or anything else, that are based on the premise of human goodness hold no merit for evangelicals.

Given that evangelicals believe in the wickedness of the human heart, it comes as no surprise to them when they see changes in society that do not align with their Biblical worldview. According to their beliefs, man is already corrupt, and an increase in corruption

is and should be expected. It is likely customary to hear evangelicals say that they believe society is “getting worse” but that they are not necessarily rattled or shocked by this; instead, it only confirms their Biblical understanding of human nature, which is that it is tarnished and darkened by sin. As time passes, more of this fallen nature begins to fester and grow and manifest itself in new and various ways.

Thus, for the average evangelical, changes in societal moral norms (such as abortion or gay marriage) that, according to them, do not align with Biblical principles are not all that shocking. In fact, many evangelicals would likely expect these changes. Other issues, such as growing racial tension or sexual harassment issues, are just further evidence to support their understanding of a Biblically fallen and decaying world. However, a lack of shock to the changes in society is not the same as a lack of discomfort or displeasure with the changes in society. Hunter (1981; 1992) and Smith et al. (1998) both acknowledge and utilize the assumption that current societal changes are real and antithetical to evangelical values, thereby disrupting their comfort level.

The formation of an “out-group” identity is essential then to evangelical collective identity (Smith et al. 1998). Groups antithetical to evangelicals are groups whose values do not align with evangelical “values” and are therefore the ideal villain needed to create a coherent evangelical collective identity. One outgroup to form recently is the LGBTQ community. Fetner (2008, 120) researches the “loosely coupled” political game played between the LGBTQ community and the Christian Right. She attributes the rise and success of the LGBTQ movement to the Christian Right. Hence, the Christian Right served as the necessary “out-group” for the LGBTQ community's collective identity.

Fetner (2008) explains that the size and scope of the Christian Right movement was

much bigger than the LGBTQ movement. Members of the LGBTQ community perceived themselves as marginalized by society and government. The homosexual community experienced a great deal of oppression and discrimination during the McCarthy era because of claims that they were communist perverts and a threat to the country (D'Emelio 1983, 41-43). This claim led the federal government to fire and dishonorably discharge hundreds of homosexuals from their government positions (D'Emelio 1983, 44-45). This is just an example of the different manifestations of marginalization that the LGBTQ community experienced.

The Christian Right movement was far more powerful than some of their opponents, specifically the LGBTQ community (Fetner 2008). With radio, TV, film and print media outlets, along with a much heavier purse and substantial access to and influence within the Republican Party, the Christian Right was a “movement of size and strength that dwarfs the resources, access, and constituent base of the lesbian and gay community” (Fetner 2008, 120). However, Fetner’s (2008) research shows that even with the difference in access and influence, the gay and lesbian community made notable gains in both society and politics. Many of their gains were a direct result of pressure from the Christian Right that mobilized the LGBTQ community into political and social action (2008).

The LGBTQ community has won many important social and political battles recently. Wilcox and Robinson (2010) explain that the speed with which the LGBTQ social movement swept across the nation was nothing short of astounding. They won a major battle when the Supreme Court legalized gay marriage. Further, they are making gains socially. Members of the society are far more favorable toward gay marriage today than ever before (Pew Research Group 2016; 2017). Ninety-two percent of homosexuals say

society has become more accepting of them in the past decade (Pew Research Group 2013). However, evangelicals are one of the few groups in the United States that still disapproves of homosexuality.

Evangelicals, coming from a Biblical perspective, struggle with the societal and political acceptance of homosexual norms. In other words, society's acceptance of values as opposed to their conception of Biblical values is a loss for them and causes them to *feel* socially marginalized. Thus, in terms of homosexuality, evangelicals perceive that their position in society has shifted from accepted to marginalized which causes them to feel socially marginalized as a group. Scholars explain that evangelical elites use the LGBTQ community to create an in-group/out-group mindset amongst evangelicals and to stir up feelings of societal marginalization (Barton 2012; Diamond 1989; Miceli 2005; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Stokes and Schewe 2017; Tranby and Zulkowski 2012).

The LGBTQ movement is just one example of a broader change in society, or as Hunter calls it modernization,¹⁷ that stimulates the ideal environment for the creation of Smith's theorized subcultural identity. The shifting societal and political positions of racial and religious minorities and the resurgence of white identity politics is likely a result of elites stoking the fires of marginalization for evangelicals (Sides, Tesler, and Vavrek 2017). However, my theory goes a step beyond Smith's theory of societal "out-groups." I assume that social marginalization also increases the more that society embraces certain activities or lifestyles that evangelicals find opposed to Biblical principles. The perception that society is disrespecting Biblical principles is troubling at the individual level. As this perception of disrespect grows and is propagated by elites, the more evangelicals

¹⁷ Sometimes interchangeable with secularization.

personally—and as a group—feel marginalization and strain. They feel that their values and value sets are being marginalized and therefore believe that *they* are being marginalized. They feel that society looks down on them, considers their way of life, their standards of morality and their understanding of right and wrong to be out of date and not in line with the current trends and zeitgeist in society. I say this with the acknowledgment that there is a difference between the "moral" concerns of white evangelicals and African American evangelicals (Noll 2010). While I cannot speak directly to this difference in this dissertation, it is something to be noted and studied in the future.

Over time, and as a result of a variety of social movements and expressive mobilization, society has progressed to new levels of acceptance to which the evangelical message does not conform. In fact, evangelicalism, as I have defined it here, is highly *exclusive* in that it proclaims that there is only *one* truth, that there is only *one* way to God, that there is only *one* God, **and** that there are concrete rights and concrete wrongs. There is no compromise in the evangelical message regarding eternal and Biblical truths. This very premise is anathema to secular and even mainline orthodox Christian society.

Thus, in a society that is now embracing different kinds of truths, different types of rights and wrongs, different kinds of religions and gods (or lack thereof), I contend evangelicals are feeling increasing social marginalization for saying otherwise. They perceive that their position is progressively seen as the outlying position or the position that is hindering the current progress being made by society to be more accepting and open and equal. The headline in an opinion piece written for the Huffington Post declared, "White evangelical Christians are America can't have nice things" (Tannehill June 13, 2017). The recent victory by the LGBTQ community is just another notch in a belt of

acceptance and justice that has been slowly getting longer with time. These are some of the reasons I believe that evangelicals are feeling social marginalization.

Based on Inglehart's (1977) theory of post-materialism, and Hunter's (1992; 2007) conception of a "culture war of the body," I can safely assume that, at least in the past few decades, social issues have taken precedence over economic issues for *most* individuals.¹⁸ The interpretation of these statistics is contingent upon one's conception of morality when answering the question. According to Hunter, liberals and conservatives build their conceptions of morality from two different worldviews. This means that what a conservative might consider immoral, a liberal might consider moral. The evangelical message is exclusive and not tolerant of actions the Bible calls sin. Liberals would find this exclusivity to be part of the *problem* with society. Issues like abortion, gay marriage, and prayer in schools are more important to many evangelicals than justice, tolerance and civil rights (Moen 1989; 1992; 1996; Hunter 1992). Ergo, the more society embraces the left's moral values, the more society rejects the moral values of the evangelicals and vice versa.

While evangelicals may not feel they have a powerful influence on social and political norms, Wuthnow (1988) points out that government has an impact on evangelicals. He posits that almost every new policy or judicial ruling impacts religion in the United States. Rarely have new governmental policies or legal decisions been neutral concerning American religion. Therefore, evangelicals (and/or their values) are consistently being affected with almost every new law or new court ruling. The effect that government has on religion plays a vital role in shaping evangelical perceptions of marginalization.

¹⁸ Given that Inglehart's (1977; 2006; 2015) theory rests on the assumption of a stable economy, I would expect the pre-eminence of value-oriented social issues in comparison to economic issues to waver during times of relative economic difficulty (i.e., the most recent recession in 2009).

The media is also sending evangelicals signals about their place in society. Newspaper articles, internet reports, TV news segments and more decry the Christian Right and predict its eventual extinction (Beaty 2017; Gobry 2017; Kivisto 1994; Posner 2016; Rubin 2016 Tannehill 2015). With titles like “This is the last spastic breath from the Religious Right before its overdue death” (Hansen 2016), members of the media argue that the United States is progressing, so ideas like “homosexuality is sin” are outdated and people who refuse to move away from such ideas will have to change or die off.

Media coverage of the “culture war” has shifted over the past fifteen years toward a new assumption—the left has won the culture war. News stories such as “The Left Won the Culture War. Will they Be Merciful?” (Swaim 2016), “White Christian America is Dying” (Sides 2016), “They’ll Always Lose the Culture Wars: The Right Loves Fighting Lost Causes—But Liberals Keep Winning” (Prothero 2016b), “Is this the End of the Religious Right?” (Posner 2016), “Evangelicals and Politics: The Religious Right (Born 1979, Died 2000)” (Forster 2012), and “The Religious Right: A Eulogy” (Dreher 2016) are examples of some opinion leader’s belief that the culture war is indeed ending, or at least that the Christian Right is breathing its last breaths. The Christian Right may indeed be dead, but that is not the focus of this study. Evangelicals are not dead and still make up a solid voting bloc in elections. As Oldfield said, people who say that the evangelicalism is “declining, ultimately doomed, anti-modern movement” need to recognize that, if this group is doomed to extinction, “they show no inclination to accept their assigned fate” (1996, 41).

There has been an increase in religious “nones” over the past few decades. Religious “nones” are individuals who answer “no religion” on the religious preferences

questionnaire. Putnam and Campbell (2012) posit that following the cementing of the alliance between religious conservatives and the Republican Party, society experienced a new aftershock of Americans (primarily young people) turning away from religion (2012). This new group of secular individuals is commonly referred to as the "nones" (Hout and Fisher 2002). The "nones" have continued to grow while many of the Christian Right organizations of the 1980s and 1990s have become obsolete. The Moral Majority ceased operation in 1987. It was immediately followed by the Christian Coalition and the presidential run of an evangelical Christian, Pat Robertson. However, Pat Robertson never got elected, and the Christian Coalition eventually faded into irrelevance (Vaughan 2009).

These are all reasons that evangelicals may have begun to *feel* a sense of loss and marginalization. Data from the from a survey done by the Public Religion Research Institute in 2017 show that white evangelical Protestants in America are the only Christian group to feel that they are *more* discriminated against than Muslims in America. Additionally, the Pew Research Group reported an increasing number of evangelical Protestants who say it has become more difficult to identify as an evangelical protestant in America, increasing from 34% in 2014 to 41% in 2016 (Lipka 2016). This report contrasts the 31% of "nones" who say that having no religion has become easier in the past decade (Lipka 2015).

A global survey of evangelical Protestant leaders show that members who live in the Global South (71%) expect that the state of evangelicalism in their countries will be better in five years, while evangelical Protestant leaders in the Global North (primarily secularizing nations) believe the state of evangelicalism in their countries will either stay the same (21%) or get worse (33%) over the next five years (Pew Research Group 2011).

Further, a majority (66%) of evangelical leaders in the Global North feel that evangelicals are losing influence in their societies (Pew Research Group 2011). In the United States, this number is much higher, with 82% saying evangelicals are losing influence in society.

To add to evangelicals' downbeat outlook and perception of *threat*, a recent report showed that Christians are the most persecuted religious group in the world—according to a study done by the Centre for the Study of Global Christianity (Chiaramonte 2017). Around 90,000 Christians were killed for their faith in 2016, amounting to one every six minutes and 900,000 over the past ten years. This is a staggering number. While Christians are not killed for their faith in the United States, these numbers do not likely inspire confidence in evangelicals. Perhaps evangelicals see the current secular social and political trends in the United States and, rational or not, fear that the persecution they see outside of the country may start manifesting inside the country.

There are other religion-related reasons why evangelicals may feel social marginalization. Theoretically, when fighting a war with no apparent winner, both sides stand their ground. Only when one side begins to gain an advantage do members of the losing side start surrendering to avoid worse consequences. In other words, a war has been effectively won when members from one opposing side begin to surrender and assimilate with the opposition, or wars have been won when members of the losing side begin to use desperate and risky techniques as a "last ditch" effort to fight for the cause. Current data show that this surrender is happening in the United States. In the past few decades, social liberalism has increased. Gallup polls on "key moral issues" reveal that along with every social dimension, the American population has shifted to the left in the aggregate (Newport 2016). This includes a sizable portion of religious conservatives (presumably not as many

evangelicals). Data averaging from 2005-2016 reveal that 61% of Protestants believe divorce to be morally acceptable (up from 53% in 2001), 50% found premarital sex morally acceptable and 41% found same-sex relationships morally acceptable (Newport 2016). While this data does not show that evangelicals are transforming at the same rate or in the same way, it is still substantively important to acknowledge the change in Protestants at large.

I discuss different causes for feelings of marginalization, but I do not measure these causes. Thus, based on the social constructionist theory of collective action, elite entrepreneurs are using everything I just described above as ammunition to increase emotional marginalization in the evangelical population. Research shows that elites, the media, campaigns and other organized interests, use different methods to coerce citizens to mobilize (Hansen 2015). These various entities attempt to convince citizens that their situation is so dire that the cost of mobilizing is lower than the cost of not mobilizing (Hansen 2015; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993). Not only are elites trying to stoke the fires of societal marginalization but also frame issues in a way that creates more strain and feeling of threat. Further, they identify certain outgroups to evangelicals to stimulate and develop a collective identity. Hence, much of the marginalization that evangelicals are feeling is likely due to elite coercion and framing.

However, I am interested in the intervening variable in the relationship between elite framing and mass mobilization. Hansen and Rosenstone (1993) and Hansen (2015) argue that elites trigger mobilization by influencing how people feel, whether that is by spotlighting opposition, inflaming polarization or by drawing attention to the poor treatment of one's personal identity group. The purpose is to manipulate people's *feelings*

in a way that mobilizes them into action. If someone feels strongly enough about something, (whether it is simply anger at the opposing party or worry for the future of their children or job), they are willing to pay the cost of mobilization. This is an accurate simplification of the social constructionist theory of mobilization.

I am interested in these *feelings* of *social* marginalization. These feelings of social marginalization may be a result of elite manipulation, or fed by the media, campaigns, and interest groups; however, that does not change the fact that feelings of marginalization still exist and that these feelings are key to motivating evangelicals into action. *How* and *why* evangelicals feel marginalized is not central to my question. Evangelicals may feel marginalized from personal experiences that have left them feeling like they cannot speak about their beliefs or they may feel marginalized because they are avid Fox News followers and the storyline on Fox News is that of persecuted evangelicals. *Regardless, if they feel marginalized, I hypothesize that one way they will respond is by engaging in expressive forms of mobilization.*

I argue that groups can feel socially marginalized while still feeling that they have a level of political acceptance. Wilcox and Robinson (2010) conclude that while evangelicals have had an influence on elections, their influence all but disappears after elections because of the impracticality of their policy preferences. Therefore, evangelicals never see their policy preferences enacted once their preferred candidates are elected (2010). Wilcox and Robinson (2010) argue that to predict the influence of the Christian Right in the future, scholars must consider their successes or failures in the past. “On some of its core issues, the Christian Right has experienced significant defeats” (191). Prothero (2016a) corroborates these assertions when he submits that conservatives always end up losing the

major social and political battles. Theoretically then, it is possible for a group to feel they have access to members of government, and yet still feel that their views and preferences are marginalized in policy and in society.

A group can feel that they have political access and possess high external political efficacy and yet feel marginalized by society and the policies that are currently in place. For example, during the Obama administration, African Americans may have felt that they had more access in the federal government while at the same time feeling increasingly socially marginalized.

I assume that the two spheres, social and political, work in tandem; thus, feelings of social marginalization may lead to feelings of political marginalization. I expect that evangelicals will express feelings of social marginalization but maintain a relatively high sense of external political efficacy. However, I also expect to find low expectations regarding their place in government and politics in the future.

Evangelical Response

Given that I theorize evangelicals are socially marginalized, I predict that one form of responsive mobilization will revolve around social issues and issues of morality in society rather than government. I expect that they will demonstrate some frustrations with government, specifically with standing policies such as abortion, gay marriage, and no prayer in schools. However, their frustration is not necessarily with the current government but instead with the policies that are indicative of the problems they perceive in society. By this I mean, evangelicals are aware that abortion would never have been legalized had members of society not put it on the agenda, and the same goes for gay marriage and prayer in schools.

Evangelicals' feelings of social marginalization manifest less in mainstream political participation and more in peripheral forms of expressive participation that are socially visible.¹⁹ I theorize that the *method* of mobilization is contingent on the *sphere* of marginalization. If a group feels marginalized by society, they will rely more on social avenues to express their displeasure with society and the reasons they feel marginalized. Therefore, because I argue that evangelicals are feeling socially marginalized, I expect to find increased expressive mobilization. Direct implications could include social media expressions, boycotting companies that support social values they are against, and/or public demonstrations (marches or rallies).

Evangelicals, feeling socially marginalized will not only mobilize conventionally but will also engage in different forms of political and social expression, voicing their frustrations and attempting to maintain and protect their valued status quos. Social constructionist theory posits that if a group possesses a sense of marginalization, a collective identity—coupled with the appropriate framing for the target culture—they will collectively mobilize. I am not testing all aspects of this theory, but rather a simplified version. I am more interested in forms of expression rather than social movements. The participation of evangelicals in traditional forms of mobilization and expression—voting, donating to campaigns, and so forth—in the 2016 elections underscores the fact that expressive mobilization is but one of many forms of engagement.

Based on the previous theory then, I hypothesize that evangelicals, when they have a clearly constructed collective identity with constructed emotional strain framed

¹⁹ In some ways, this is also because they already lost these political battles. They could try to get standing laws reversed, but it is more worth their while to try and prevent other similar policies from being placed on the agenda by a society they feel is trending away from their values and preferences.

appropriately for their cultural norms, should be engaging in collective action and individual mobilization.

H1: If evangelical clergy exhibit a feeling of social marginalization and strain, they will also engage in various forms of expressive mobilization.

H2: Feelings of social marginalization in the evangelical community stimulate individual “identity claims” through expressive mobilization.

H3: Feelings of social marginalization, conditional upon collective identity, elite framing, and cultural context, will stimulate political consumerism, a form of expressive mobilization.

H4: Feelings of social marginalization lead to expressive individual mobilization.

These are broad and extensive hypotheses that I break down into specific testable hypotheses as they relate to evangelicals in each distinct chapter. The indicators I use to test the broad hypotheses speak to an aspect of each hypothesis and my theory more broadly.

Conclusion

Evangelical Christians are my group of interest. Evangelical social marginalization and mobilization are what I analyze. I theorize that if evangelicals, as a group, are feeling socially marginalized, one way that this feeling of marginalization will manifest is through expressive extra-institutional mobilization. Forms of political expression and mobilization have evolved over time and are now categorized as either offline participation or online participation. Therefore, a valid study of political mobilization analyzes both forms of expression. My hypotheses are direct implications of my theory. The independent variable in my study is marginalization, and the dependent variable is mobilization. The more evangelicals feel marginalized, the more likely they are to engage in expressive mobilization; thus, specific catalyst events and framing are more likely to instigate

mobilization. I intend to draw a line connecting these feelings of social marginalization for evangelicals and their subsequent activities of mobilization.

CHAPTER 4

THE PERCEIVED MARGINALIZATION AND EXPRESSIVE MOBILIZATION OF EVANGELICAL CLERGY

“One of the most extraordinary things about our current politics—really, one of the most extraordinary developments of recent political history—is the loyal adherence of religious conservatives to Donald Trump. The president won four-fifths of the votes of white evangelical Christians. This was a higher level of support than either Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush, an outspoken evangelical himself, ever received.”

- Michael Gerson *The Atlantic*

Perhaps the first question to answer at the outset of this chapter is, why clergy? There is a sizable and continually growing number of works that study clergy and their importance as political elites (Beatty and Walter 1989; Cavendish 2001; Crawford and Olson 2001; Djupe and Gilbert 2002; 2003; 2008; Djupe and Grant 2001; Djupe, Olson, and Gilbert 2005; Guth et al. 1997; Olson 2000; Olson and Crawford 2001; Smidt 2016). Scholars agree that clergy have played and continue to play an important role both in religion and politics (Jelen 1993a). Guth et al. (1997) find that evangelical clergy are much more willing to engage in political leadership and activity than previously found. They split their findings into a two-party system of conservative and liberally minded pastors—where the fundamental division is not ideological but rather theological (1997). Other scholars find that this ideological division is usually split between clergy who are concerned with social justice and clergy who are concerned with evangelicalism (Wuthnow 1988). Beatty

and Walter (1989) find that conservative clergy have the *potential* to mobilize but usually only mobilize around the narrow area of moral issues.

Djupe and Gilbert (2008) measure how clergy "have multiple venues through which they can engage members' political interests, although their efforts to influence members' decision making can create tensions within the congregation" (7). When a pastor discusses a political topic with his congregation, he is able to stimulate interest and action (2008). Further, the topics that clergy discuss publicly with their members can shape the political agendas of their members. Djupe and Gilbert (2008) show that in these particular ways, clergy are incredibly influential on the political activities and civic abilities of their members. However, not all clergy are equal. Evangelical clergy have a different level of influence and authority than mainstream Protestant clergy, who also possess a different level of influence compared to Catholic Priests and Bishops.²⁰

Therefore, perhaps most relevant to my dissertation and to the research done in this chapter is the consistent finding that evangelical pastors, in particular, hold the most influence over their parishioners (Jelen 1993a; 2001). While mainline Protestant pastors struggle to find a theological basis for claiming authority as religious or political leaders, evangelical Protestant pastors have many sources from which to pull to establish their position of authority and influence in the congregation (Jelen 1993a). The steadfast belief in Biblical inerrancy serves as a basis for evangelical clergy to proclaim unambiguous political messages (1993a). However, Jelen (2001) explains that the "otherworldly" orientation of evangelical clergy and their narrow focus on individual salvation have usually served to undercut their ability to influence and mobilize politically. Not all

²⁰ Churches vary in their political cohesiveness as well (Wald 1990).

scholars agree, however; Guth et al. (1997) found that in recent years evangelical clergy have begun to embrace the legitimacy of political activism (2001).

Evangelical clergy are “opinion leaders” influencing evangelical parishioners (Katz and Lazarfeld 1955). They are not the *only* opinion leaders influencing evangelical action, however. Political elites who espouse “evangelical” messages, such as Ted Cruz or Jimmy Carter, and evangelical public figures, such as Jerry Falwell or Pat Robertson, influence evangelical action. As I addressed before, elites must *construct* a narrative by which to stimulate action from their target base. This is no different for evangelical elites outside of local clergy except that their voices must contend with the voices of the local clergy. Given the effect these outside opinion leaders can have on evangelical parishioner action, these outside voices may be a plausible explanation for why parishioners of evangelical churches would be *more* politically mobilized than their congregational minister. In fact, Moen (1992) contends that it was the religious parishioners rather than the religious institutions that were key to the success of the Christian Right movement. Hence, evangelical churches were the place to recruit movement activists, but the churches themselves were not the organizational block (Moen 1992). This shows that opinion leaders outside of clergy can also have a dramatic effect on evangelical political action.

Harris (1994) postulates that, while religion has been used as an opiate for the masses, it can also be used as a mobilizing force. It provides the needed community and resources for mobilization (1994). Djupe and Gilbert (2008) lay out the many ways that the church structure, including small groups, informal contacts and the link between the clergy and the congregants, play an important role in the politicization (or lack thereof) of the church. The leadership of the church then is pivotal. If a pastor treats the church as a political

resource, then it will be a political resource, but if a pastor believes that the church and politics should be separate, it will be separate. Thus, it is empirically enlightening to speak directly with evangelical clergy. What do they think about today's society, the church's role in society and what their own Christian identity is? I am able to learn about current perspectives on evangelicalism, from evangelical clergy themselves, while also learning about how they feel about society and how they think society feels about them. I am able to dig a bit more into the convoluted realm of race and religion. I cannot generalize the findings in this chapter, but the findings provide an original and unique glimpse into an area of research that needs more careful evaluation.

As I discuss in the literature review, evangelicalism and race is still an understudied area in religion and politics; however, scholars have found that Black and white evangelicals share similar spiritual beliefs while holding differing political perspectives (Harris 1994, 1999; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Fowler et al. 2013). In this dissertation, I look for implications of evangelical perceptions of marginalization and the use of expressive mobilization as a reaction to this perceived marginalization. However, I am aware that white and Black personal and religious experience and history are unique from each other and may lead to differing forms of mobilization and differing reasons for perceived marginalization. When analyzing political consumerism and Twitter, I am unable to uncover many of the racial differences present; however, I am able to uncover some racial differences and similarities in this chapter by interviewing both white and Black evangelical pastors. I am interviewing Black and white *evangelicals*, based on theological convictions alone; thus, I am interviewing theological evangelicals, I am *not* interviewing Black Protestants and white evangelicals.

I expect to find the following differences between white and Black pastors: white evangelicals will focus more on individual salvation while Black evangelicals will focus on community; white evangelicals will demonstrate concern for moral issues of sexuality and express a sense of social marginalization regarding these issues while Black evangelicals will show less concern for moral issues of sexuality but give more attention to issues of social justice; finally, I expect white evangelicals to demonstrate a stronger sense of political efficacy than Black evangelicals.

In this dissertation, I theorize that if 21st-century evangelicals feel socially marginalized, this feeling of social marginalization---coupled with a clear collective identity and powerful elite framing---leads evangelicals towards expressive collective mobilization. However, I also contend that evangelicals will *individually* mobilize in response to a feeling of social marginalization. Thus, to better understand the feelings and thoughts of individual evangelicals and to assess how or in what ways their leaders might be mobilizing them, I conducted interviews with evangelical clergy in three different states.

The fundamental question I intend to answer in this chapter is, how are Black and white evangelical clergy feeling and responding to the social changes in America today? Are they feeling socially marginalized? If so, are they responding to this marginalization with expressive mobilization? Specifically, this chapter is designed to uncover some unique and original data regarding the difference between how white evangelicals feel and respond to social changes and how African American evangelicals feel and respond to social changes.

Data Collection

I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with evangelical pastors in three different states. I selected evangelical pastors from three cities in different parts of the

country: Columbia SC; Winston Salem NC; and Rochester NY. I chose these cities because they have a similar population size. Columbia has 133,114 residents, Winston Salem has 244,605 residents, and Rochester has 208,046 residents (US Census Bureau). The locations of these cities provide regional variation. The religious makeup of the cities also vary.

Fifty-four percent of Winston-Salem residents affiliate with a religion. The largest religious group in Winston-Salem are the Baptists with 16% of the total religious population. City-data.com shows that evangelical Protestants are the largest religious group in Winston Salem, followed by mainline Protestants and a small portion of Catholics and Black Protestants. Religious "nones" make up the majority. Evangelical Protestants hold the top spot as well in Columbia, South Carolina; however, there are fewer evangelical Protestants in Columbia than in Winston Salem. In Columbia, mainline and Black Protestants hold the second and third spots, respectively, followed by Catholics. Making up 48.8% of the population, the majority of Columbia residents are not affiliated with any religion making. Evangelical Protestants and religious "nones" have both grown in numbers since 2000 in both cities (city-data.com).

Rochester's religious makeup differs from the other two cities because of its Catholic population. Catholics are the largest religious group at 25.7%, followed next by evangelical Protestants and mainline Protestants at a distant second and third. The religious "nones" make up the bulk of the population with 53.6% of the total population. Interestingly the Catholic population has decreased since 2000 while the evangelical population has grown. Unsurprisingly, the "nones" have also grown dramatically (city-data.com).

I base the partisan makeup of each city on the 2016 presidential election results. Winston-Salem reported that 53% of the population voted for Clinton, and 43% voted for

Trump. Columbia reported that 64% of the population voted for Clinton while 31% voted for Trump. Finally, 54% of the population of Rochester voted for Clinton while 39% voted for Trump. All three cities lean Democratic.

After selecting the cities, I went through a Yellow Page search of churches in each city and selected every 10th church. I then compiled a list of these randomly selected churches from each city and narrowed down the list to churches that fit the general definition of evangelical.²¹ I did this by analyzing the statements of faith on the websites of the churches or relied on denominational cues. Some churches only had Facebook pages, that did not contain much information, while other churches did not have a website at all. In cases such as these, for churches in South, if the church was Baptist or Pentecostal, I automatically assumed it was evangelical. However, for churches in Rochester, I did not include the church unless the information I gathered from websites fit the definition of evangelical.²² We cannot assume Baptist churches in the North are all evangelical; the American Baptist Churches, U.S.A. denomination is affiliated with mainline as opposed to evangelical Protestantism. After identifying and discarding the non-evangelical churches, I randomly selected churches by selecting every third church in Rochester, every fourth church in Columbia, and every fifth church in Winston Salem.²³ This left me with a total sample of forty-three churches.

I then sent each church a formal letter requesting an interview with their pastor. I heard

²¹ If, as I randomly selected churches, one of the churches my search landed on was an obviously non-evangelical church (i.e., Catholic, United Methodist, etc.), I left that church out of my list.

²² To reiterate: evangelicals are churches or individuals who believe in the infallibility of the Bible, the need to be born again and the importance of evangelizing. The primary indicator I looked for was the belief in the supremacy and infallibility of the Bible. All else essentially stems from this basic belief.

²³ I chose a random number based on how many evangelical churches existed in each city. There were fewer evangelical churches to choose from in Rochester, so I selected every third church randomly rather than every fourth or fifth as I did with the two Southern cities.

back from the first few pastors within a week. I followed up with all the pastors the next week by phone, calling each church to speak directly with the pastor. A sizeable number of churches were closed or no longer in the location provided in the Yellow Pages. However, I did connect with over twenty pastors, and successfully interviewed a portion of them. Unfortunately, some of the pastors agreed to the interview, but I could never get in touch with them after the initial interaction. I recall three pastors saying no, while around half of the 43 churches were simply unreachable. In total, I interviewed 16 pastors, three of which were pilot interviews with pastors not originally on my list. I formally interviewed 13 pastors.²⁴ Six of the pastors lived in Columbia, four lived in Winston Salem, and three lived in Rochester. Three of the thirteen pastors I interviewed were African American pastors. One African American pastor from each different city responded.²⁵ The average age of the pastors was fifty-three, with the youngest being thirty-six and the oldest being sixty-seven.²⁶

I interviewed the four North Carolina pastors in person. I conducted the other interviews via Skype and phone: four via Skype and the rest on the phone. I recorded each interview with the pastor's acknowledgment and permission. I asked each pastor a series of thirteen questions.²⁷ I never asked them directly whether they feel marginalized; rather, I asked them questions about how they feel about society and the direction they perceive it

²⁴ I did conduct one official interview with a pastor who was not on the official list. The last pastor I interviewed introduced me to a few African American pastors he was friends with for a possible interview. One of those pastors wanted to be interviewed. At the time, I had been able to talk only two African American pastors and was therefore willing to veer from the list for this final interview.

²⁵ The last pastor I interviewed and one of the African American pastors I interviewed, was a connection from one of the final pastors to respond and be interviewed. He was not on the original list. This is the only pastor I interviewed as a connection from another pastor.

²⁶ I use the data from an online survey the pastors filled out to provide this information. However, one pastor never filled out the survey, meaning the average is an average of twelve rather than thirteen.

²⁷ See Appendix A for the list of questions.

is heading. I also asked about how they feel society views them and people like them. The answers to these questions provide plenty of insight into their feelings about society and about their place in society. Further, I asked them about what they and their church are doing politically and socially and then asked them directly whether they boycott or use Twitter to engage politically and socially. I also asked a question about President Trump and whether his election has changed anything for them.

Almost all the pastors seemed excited about participating in the interviews. Many of them, prior to agreeing to the interview, after hearing about my own Christian persuasion, were even more excited and open.²⁸ A few pastors did not know about my religious convictions until partway through the interview, but I did inform them all. This knowledge seemed to lead many to be more conversational and curious about me and my project and studies. I was open to answering questions regarding me personally but kept information about the project minimal so as not to bias their answers. The pastors were friendly and easy to converse with. Many offered me coffee or tea as we talked. The ones I talked to on the phone or over Skype were equally friendly. They all appeared quite interested in the project by the time the interview was finished. Many of them seemed reinvigorated about life and their ministry at the end of the interview and talked about how the questions I asked were challenging and caused them to think about things in ways they had not had to previously. Apparently, they enjoyed the challenge.

Most of the clergy I interviewed expressed interest in reading my dissertation once it is finished. Many of the ones I interviewed on the phone or Skype expressed a desire to

²⁸ I never told them I considered myself an evangelical or that my study was about evangelicals, unless or until the interview was over. I did not want to bias their thinking. They simply knew I was interested in interviewing Christian pastors and that I was a Christian, or they knew that I went to such and such church and was religiously active.

meet in person if I was ever in their area. One pastor from South Carolina contacted me months later to ask how I was. While a few of them seemed a little skeptical at the start of the interview, all of them seemed open and trusting by the end of the interview. More times than not, after the interview ended, our conversation continued for fifteen minutes to an hour.

Those I interviewed in person were eager to show me around their church after the interview and introduce me to people.²⁹ I think the excitement stemmed from being interviewed by an academic who shared their religious beliefs--- to whom they could finally express their frank opinions on controversial issues. Further, they all showed a keen interest in the subjects discussed. They wanted to continue to discuss more things after the close of the interview; they especially wanted to hear more from me.

I first asked them to tell me about themselves and their ministry. Sometimes their answers to the question lasted thirty minutes. I would usually ask for more information or clarification on things as they would give me their life story but forget to tell me anything about their current ministry, or vice versa. Most of the information provided by this question is not relevant to the research and theory of this dissertation, but it was a good ice-breaking first question.

Part 1: Marginalization

Evangelical Identity

I use Hunter's definition of "evangelical" since his conception is purely doctrinal. It includes the following: the inerrancy of the Bible, the divinity of Jesus Christ and personal

²⁹ One of the pastors introduced me to his daughter on Skype. She came bounding into his office at one point during the interview, and he put her on his lap and introduced her to me. This goes to show the ease and comfort level of these interviews. They were light and conversational, and the pastors seemed to feel a connection with me that put them at ease.

conversion or being “born again” through faith in Jesus Christ, not of works. As I step through the answers to this question of evangelical identity, this definition should be used as a comparison or baseline.

As a follow up to my opening question, I asked, “*Do you consider yourself to be an evangelical?*” and “*Do you believe this term can also be applied to your congregation?*”. I asked these questions for several reasons. Primarily, I wanted to know whether the pastors adopt or internalize an evangelical identity. How they identify themselves helps me to understand better if evangelicals who do identify as such might be more likely to feel social marginalization than those who do not identify as such. I also asked this question because I want to see how evangelical pastors understand and interpret the term *evangelical*. If they do identify as such, how and why is this the case? Are there commonalities or differences among the pastors’ different conceptions of the term *evangelical*?

Five of the thirteen pastors interviewed gave me some sort of dictionary definition of the word, *evangelical*. Specifically, most of these five pastors referenced the Greek word “euangelion” and its meaning. Beyond the specific definition, many of the pastors discussed the historical context and meaning of the word *evangelical*. Almost every pastor gave some sort of explanation or description of the way they wanted me to perceive them in the context of the term evangelical. Most of them balked a bit at the term as if it had a negative connotation. Many felt the need to shed some perceived or assumed negative connotation and teach me the “correct” definition of evangelical, after which they were willing to adopt the identity. All but two listed their expected doctrinal standards of

evangelicalism as their understanding of evangelical, even if they used different words or phrases to explain.³⁰

I do...Labels change over time. What is considered to be defined one way in one period of history it suddenly starts taking on new names...it's become fairly broad. I think originally evangelical would be a way to describe someone who believes the Biblical gospel and the need to be born again, and saved by the Lord in order to be forgiven of your sin...to be justified...There would be groups that would call themselves evangelicals that...we would not be a part of. We believe in the Biblical gospel and the need to proclaim the Biblical gospel and that it is the only way for people to be saved from their sins, then yes, we are evangelical.

This pastor shows a strong grasp of the basic tenets of evangelicalism but also wants to clarify that not everyone who claims to be evangelical is what he would define as evangelical. He concludes by saying that yes, he and his congregation are evangelical *if* what is meant by evangelical is what he defined. He was uncomfortable giving a clear yes or no answer without defining for me what he meant by yes or no. This defensiveness was mild compared to some of the other answers, however. If you notice, the pastor quoted above does immediately give an affirmative response and then proceeds to define and clarify.

Not all of the pastors were so quick to take on the evangelical label. This pastor, a thirty-eight-year-old African American pastor in South Carolina who pastored another independent, non-denominational church, says:

Um, I heard about thirty different definitions of that. By basic definition, evangelical is just of or pertaining to, you know, the teaching of the Gospel which we take very seriously. Sharing the Gospel with different people is something we take very seriously. For me, the Bible says that we should be fishers of men and a fisherman goes where the fish are, they're intentional about going where the fish are biting.

³⁰ The irony, of course, is that I did not ask what they think evangelical means. I just asked if they consider themselves to be evangelical. Sometimes they wanted clarity or seemed unsure how to answer this question. Sometimes, they did ask me to define it for them. I would not define it for them however and explained that I was more interested in hearing how they understand it.

He describes and explains his idea of evangelicalism definitionally and talks a great deal about what it means to reach out to the community and be a “fisher of men”; however, he never officially says, yes, he is an evangelical. He seemed almost afraid to associate himself with the term. He proceeds and says:

Go into the nations. It wasn’t about the geographical nations which change every one hundred to two hundred years...that word is pertaining to the different people groups, and so that we should go to white people, and go to Black people, and go to Hispanic people and to go Asian people, with the emphasis being on going to them. Many people we deal with...you know...church has put a bad taste in their mouth, we try to prove that differently...are we lining up with scripture, are we truly going? Scripture says [to go] despite the fact that 85-89% of all churches are 90-95% one ethnicity. Even Dr. King referred to the church as being the most segregated time of the week, Sunday morning. Are we going to the nations? Not just people who look like you?

It was finally at this point that I asked this pastor if he considered his congregation to be evangelical. He said:

I would say yes...doing what the Bible says. By definition, evangelical is just about of or pertaining to the teaching of the gospel. Are we doing that? I would say we are. Church growth, as well as the diversity, is ... proof that we're not only doing it but doing it according to scripture.

At this point, he does accept the term evangelical for his congregation but based solely on his definition. Earlier in the conversation, I asked him whether he was uncomfortable with or wanted to avoid other interpretations since he seemed so adamant about clarifying his own definition. He said no, and that it is not about avoiding interpretations. He then proceeded to talk about how many of the people he ministers to have a bad taste in their mouth from other churches about what “evangelicalism” means. Ergo, he *does* seem to want to establish himself and his ministry as unique from other ministries. It was also clear that he was keenly aware and concerned about ministering to *all* people out of a perception that not all churches do that. He believes that the Bible is clear about evangelizing all

nations, meaning all ethnicities. This is something I would expect a pastor representing a racially mixed congregation to be sensitive about.

Another pastor from South Carolina, a white sixty-seven-year-old pastor of a small Pentecostal church, says: "Yes, depending on the definition exactly. We definitely would consider ourselves evangelical in the sense that we believe in the Bible; all of the doctrine comes solely from the Bible...". As we were talking, he brought up the definition of evangelical on his computer and then proceeded to say: "... 'emphasize the authority of the Bible,' 'personal conversions,' yes, 'doctrine of atonement'...may have a different interpretation of what salvation doctrine really is." His understanding of salvation is based more on what he called a "fuller faith system"; however, this difference was one of doctrine and did not change his acceptance of the evangelical label. He also gave a conditional "yes": he is evangelical if the doctrinal definition [that he looked up online] is in line with his doctrinal standards.

A sixty-four-year-old white pastor from Rochester, New York, pastor of a non-denominational church, gave one of the most unusual answers. His first response was, "Ha. That is a huge loaded question. I don't ever use that term anymore. I did forty years ago, but evangelical meant something different. Now it's a political term and uh especially what we saw the Judge Roy Moore and the whole explosion of evangelicals...". He shows a keen awareness of the political connotations associated with the term. He proceeded to tell me a story about how his daughter, in her twenties at the time, came to him asking if they were a "born again church." She had been challenged by someone that if she was not "born again" she was not Christian. Being unfamiliar with the term but believing herself to be Christian, she asked her father for clarification. He told her:

...yes, we are a born-again church but we don't use that term a lot because it is jargon, it's an insider term and when people say 'yeah, I've been born again' now they have this entire loaded view that all comes cascading in that it's a certain view of scripture, a certain view of inerrancy blah blah blah...the problem is the Christian life is not as simple as that...we're not a catchphrase church.

He proceeded to say: "We would be in the line of evangelical with personal conversion, a foundation of knowledge that scripture is the Word of God, it is reliable for the course of our daily lives and as a source of truth without error." Thus, he lays out the three fundamental tenets of evangelicalism.

However, his entire discussion of this concept was colored with shadows of disdain, as if it pained him to take on the label "evangelical" even though in some sense of the word he did seem to believe that he and his congregation were evangelical. He discussed issues of biblical inerrancy and said that the problem with that doctrine is that it only applies to original manuscripts, so, inerrancy is great in theory but not always in reality. He said, passionately, of being called evangelical, "...it's a catchphrase. So, what happens then is, 'I know exactly what you believe because you use this term,' you know, you have no idea what I believe, it all depends on what you mean by evangelical".

He then proceeded to reference the "euangelion" root of the word and ended by saying that based on *that* Greek definition, "...I'm evangelical yeah, I don't use the term, no I'm not." His entire discussion regarding this term was contradictory. I followed that up by asking whether his congregation was evangelical and he said yes since they follow him, and he's been their pastor for forty years (again identifying as an evangelical). He then said that a good number of people in his church would say that they were evangelical.

Two other pastors from Rochester demonstrated a similar hesitance to identify with the evangelical label. One, a fifty-one-year-old African American pastor of a non-denominational church, said:

Uh, I would consider myself to be an evangelical, yes. You know, I'm always afraid of terms and labels because other people might consider themselves to be evangelical that I might not what to be uh [associated with them]³¹ ...so I'm always reluctant when I hear those terms...I'm always leery of using those terms because I think people immediately then in their minds assume that you are...they check off certain boxes. Certainly, in terms of evangelical belief, those would be my convictions, reformed evangelical I guess...[I] hold that salvation is by faith alone through Christ's finished work, the scriptures are the inspired Word of God, in their original writings they're infallible. That the scriptures are our guide for faith and practice and those things. Certainly, an imminent return of Christ, I am still a pre-tribulation believer.

Again, he is cautious when taking on the name evangelical even though he was relatively quick to say yes and then explain himself. The third pastor from Rochester demonstrated a similar hesitance to say he was evangelical. He, a thirty-six-year-old white male and pastor of an independent "Bible" church, said: "Define evangelical, and I'll tell you." When I would not define it for him, he proceeded to say the following.

Let's start with history ok. Evangelical has been around for hundreds of years. And I'm pretty sure that the term started in Scotland and the evangelicals were people who had an unwavering belief in the foundations of our faith, the authority of God's Word, the exclusivity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the cost of discipleship, that we are not just Christians by name, but we are followers of Jesus Christ...belief in a miraculous faith, that Jesus Christ literally raised from the dead, that Jesus Christ was virgin born, that Jesus Christ did heal the sick, that Jesus Christ was a literal human being and not some kind of figurative teacher, that He did come from God and went back to God...so all these foundational beliefs is what the beginning of evangelicalism was. That got rolled into fundamentalism back in the early 1900s...as...a defense against liberal Christianity.

Thus, he sets the stage, explaining the historical context and whom he believes evangelicals used to be. The point of this explanation, of course, is to make sure I understand the

³¹ Bracketed words were inaudible.

definition he wants to be defined by versus the one he wants to avoid. He continues and says:

Then fundamentalists became Bob Jones University, right? Like Blacks and whites are separated, and you've gotta walk on different sidewalks for boys and girls, and all that garbage, KJV-only stuff became what fundamentalism is, like NO, at that point NO, I'm not a fundamentalist. Now, an evangelical is anywhere from Benny Hen to Donald Trump, and when I hear about the evangelical voting block I just say, what the heck is that? **So, I'm trying to defend myself before I even answer the question.** So, from a historical perspective I would call myself a historical evangelical, uh from a contemporary political perspective I would say no to that question because I don't know what the person asking thinks is an evangelical and I want to make sure we're going to define our terms. Fundamentals of faith---yes, a political voting block—no. (emphasis added)

This pastor demonstrates obvious defensiveness even though I made it apparent to the pastors that I considered myself to be Christian as well. This grounding should have created a solid foundation for them to feel free to answer my questions honestly. Perhaps the connection he had with me on a human level allowed him to express defensiveness more freely. Perhaps he was feeling attacked by *society* and the stereotypes and social marginalization he felt and finally had an avenue of expression? Further, I do not believe that he or the other pastors demonstrated as much defensiveness about themselves personally as they did about their values and a desire to keep them undiluted with politics.

A forty-two-year-old white pastor in South Carolina demonstrated a similar hesitance to adopt the evangelical label. He said,

You know that's a good question these days, isn't it? That's kind of a hot topic. You know, in the way I would define it I would say yes. That's such a loaded word these days...whenever I think of evangelical, I think of someone who views the Bible as authoritative, who would argue that the only way to heaven is to trust Jesus as your Savior, those sorts of things.

So, in those terms, you know, the word 'euangelion' that's a Biblical word, evangel is good news, so gospel. So that's where that word comes from, so in the gospel sense of the word, absolutely I'm an evangelical; **but, that question was on the survey too and, you know, as far as me filling out the little boxes, I didn't check**

the box though. I was going back and forth on whether or not I wanted to check the box cuz in our context that word is so politically loaded where it's, uh, people will tend to think ok that means you must be an old white Republican and, you know, if you think about our context, it's been hijacked for political purposes, and I hate that. Really, I need to do some more thinking whether or not this term is one worth fighting for and redeeming...

This pastor demonstrated a similar level of defensiveness in that he would not even select “evangelical” on my survey because of the stereotypes and assumptions associated with that term. While he admitted to being evangelical Biblically, he clearly felt a need to distance himself from the label politically.

Some of the pastors were more readily willing to label themselves as evangelical. A Columbia pastor of an independent non-denominational church said, “Evangelical? Yes, of course.” After which, as all but one of the pastors did, he defined what he meant.

Yeah, evangelical in the sense that we want to be as understandably close to apostolic era church doctrine. The gospel as given by the Lord, by the Holy Spirit to the apostle Paul and others by revelation and was delivered to the saints once and for all. We don't want to stray from the original intent of the Holy Spirit for the redeeming plan, the plan of redemption for man. If we mess up on that, if we dilute that in any way, we're not gonna have the desired effects for our church, and for the community and for the culture, as a matter of fact, as we'd like to and that is very, very important.

He proceeded to give more details by what he meant but never demonstrated fear of being wrongly identified nor did he show that he understood or was troubled by political implications of “evangelical” in the way that some of the other pastors did.

One pastor's answer was simply, "Yes. Yes. It's pretty straightforward for me I guess," and that was all. This pastor, a pastor of a Southern Baptist church affiliated with a national denomination, was also from South Carolina and relatively young at age forty-five. He was the only pastor who simply said yes and did not feel the need to explain.

Another pastor, from North Carolina, also a Southern Baptist, was also more willing to adopt the identity of evangelical. He said,

I do. Yeah, I consider myself, and I've actually turned myself old fashioned. Very evangelical. Our church is very, very mission oriented. I'm a firm believer in where the Lord said that you know, we're to reach our Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria and the utter parts of the world. And I take that in a literal fashion.

This pastor, in answering this question, at first came across as somewhat unaware of the political connotations and stigma associated with the term evangelical. However, later in the interview, he seemed to demonstrate a clear understanding of this stigma. His interpretation of evangelical was very mission-and outreach-oriented. When I asked whether he was evangelical, he did not seem to identify with the term politically or even socially but based on the word's theological meaning. "Is he evangelical?" Of course, he is, his church's mission is to be evangelical.

Later, when I asked a question about what society thinks of people like him, he showed a clear internalization of the "evangelical" identity evincing both a sense of pride in his religious commitment and a rather clear sense of social marginalization. He was one of a handful of pastors who did not seem preoccupied with the political implications associated with the word evangelical; they simply understood it as a definition of outward mission work. A Reformed Presbyterian pastor from South Carolina said, "Yes. And I would qualify that. The word evangelical is built on the word from the work in the Greek *euangelion*, the good news, the good news is it's all about Jesus...". He does qualify what he means by evangelical but does not seem to balk at the idea that he would be called an evangelical.

Two pastors did not say they were evangelicals. One was the pastor of a Moravian church in North Carolina. This comes as no surprise to me. He said, "I consider myself to

be a mainline Protestant. If you had to identify Moravians, we are a mainline Protestant church”. He went on to explain what a Moravian is and their ecumenical relations with other mainline churches. Later he explained that in terms of outreach, his church is evangelical, but, it is not so in terms of a "political persuasion, or a certain identifiable cultural context or being white or being Anglo-Saxon. Moravians have always been mission-minded, so in that sense they were evangelical.” While he did eventually get around to finding a way to be evangelical, I believe the first response is the most telling. He immediately said no, and that he was a mainline Protestant.

A fifty-year-old, Winston Salem African American pastor³² of a non-denominational church also said no. He said:

Not really. I choose to stay away from that. I consider myself as non-denominational or basically as someone who loves God and someone who understands that God will meet anyone where they are. I think nowadays many people sometimes associate evangelicals with party affiliations or certain affiliation towards certain beliefs and I don't pertain to that. I don't believe that God is neither Democrat or Republican. I believe He supports what is best for humanity. If you are an evangelical and you're Republican what if God's telling you to vote Democrat ...you could miss God because of you not being open to the voice of the Holy Spirit because God knows what's best for the nation and what's best for the country and even for the world nowadays...everything's connected ... so that's the reason I don't, per se, connect myself to one group because a stigma comes with that. 'Political stigma' yeah, political and even some of the other issues, my belief is that He will meet people where they are I don't believe that uh everything is always Black and white in some situations.

He has some similar reasons for not identifying as evangelical as the previous pastors; he was one of two to immediately answer negatively to the question.

These answers can be categorized in three ways: rejection of the term overall; rejection of the political implications of the term but acceptance of the theological implications; and complete acceptance of the term. The majority of the pastors (8) rejected the political label

³² He identified as “mixed” for his race on my post-interview survey.

evangelical but accepted the theological label evangelical. Two pastors rejected the label completely, and three pastors adopted the term completely regardless of any political or theological implications they associated with it or perceived others to associate with it.

Social Perceptions of Evangelicals

One aim of my project is to learn about the way these pastors feel society views them, and more broadly how they feel society views evangelicals. For this reason, I ask the following question: *“How do you feel society views you or people like you?”*. I do not define what I mean by “people like you,” but rather allowed them to interpret the idea for themselves and respond accordingly.

Each pastor had a different take on what this question meant and subsequently how to respond. Many of them did interpret the question as “how society views evangelicals,” but quite a few gave other varying answers. Almost all of them demonstrated a sense of marginalization, at least in terms of being stereotyped. They each had different experiences regarding stereotyping, but all seemed to be trying to avoid or refute some stereotype. For some of them, the stereotype was less about their Christian identity and more about their racial identity; however, even for the African American pastors, race was not the only identity they internalized since it was wrapped up in their evangelical identity. For instance, the African American pastor from South Carolina said,

...as far as being a pastor, I would say that pastors have, you know, gotten a bad rap and there's a negative connotation right now. You have people who are involved in scandals, and you know, you see the stuff on the news...I would say that there's a negative connotation right now.

I would also say a very close second to that, being a young Black man also carries a negative connotation and I'm working against that as well. Most people, when they think about a young, Black man, integrity is not what comes to mind... A lot of

young Black men by the way that they carry themselves and their life pursuits, they have earned a reputation that's not positive...I would say of pastors, that reputation hasn't been earned, you're talking about a few who are deciding the image of many, and most pastors I know are great men whether they be Black or white, I would say that that image... shouldn't be earned...

The first thing to notice about this pastor's response is that he immediately took my question to mean "how does society view pastors?" In other words, the identity that first came to mind for him, perhaps because of the nature of the interview, was his position as a pastor. Thus, he did not lead with a sense of being evangelical. He more profoundly internalizes being a pastor and the stereotypes he feels because of that, while also identifying himself as being a Black man; both identities are clearly important to him and essential to his worldview. However, he does not seem to display a strong sense of societal marginalization regarding either his religious identity or his race. Both identities seemed like a part of life to him, and the stereotypes and hardships involved are just something to work through and hopefully prevail against. He told me that on multiple occasions he had been harassed by police officers for no apparent reason. He attributed this to his race; however, even in discussing these clearly disturbing run-ins with police officers, he never showed a sense of anger or frustration, but rather an acceptance of it being the way life is (see Gaventa 1980 for an explanation of this sentiment that he calls "quiescence")

Instead, his focus seemed to be on reaching out into the community and helping other Black men, specifically, overcome challenges they face. He indicates that he's "...trying to show young Black kids, hey, ...you can carry yourself intelligently and, you know, you don't have to look like and act like what you see on TV, you can stand tall and be proud of who you are and... intelligence is sexy anyway". He goes on to talk about how he wants to show other young Black men that it is possible to only be with one woman and have kids

with one woman because he has done that. He said that most young Black men, even in the church setting, are floored when they hear that about him. He hopes he can provide a tangible alternative for them so that they can prove the social stereotypes wrong. Here we see an African American pastor balancing his evangelical and Black identities by reaching out into the community to help people one individual at a time. This is how he tries change culture, and his focus on individuals embedded within culture is profoundly evangelical.

The Reformed Presbyterian pastor also answered my question from the perspective of a "pastor." He internalized his identity as a pastor and discussed how society sees him and other pastors. He says,

That's easy. It's the last thing I ever tell people that I'm a pastor, ok. It really is. Because I've grown to expect that people will not trust me if they knew I was a pastor. Because they're a lot of charlatans, there are a lot of people who call themselves ministers of the gospel and are some of the biggest hypocrites...I'm a broken, sinful man, I need Jesus just as much as anybody probably more so it's troubled me when that title, that title evokes a sense of awe...

He identifies the same stereotype the South Carolina African American pastor identified: one of a hypocritical, false pastor. He shows a sense of humility and an unwillingness to fully embrace the label "pastor" because of stereotypes.

Two pastors responded by identifying society as their immediate community. They detailed the positive image they have developed for themselves and their churches in the community. For instance, one pastor in Rochester said, "Around town [his church name] and [name] kids is very very highly regarded...". Another pastor in South Carolina said something similar: "... we're well accepted and well viewed here in our community, yes we are...we, we've helped so many people." Both pastors therefore identified with their "evangelical" identity but identified society as their immediate surrounding. However, both did talk of how society, in general, viewed them and their churches. In fact, the Rochester

pastor gave one of the clearest examples of a feeling of social marginalization in my interviews.

The African American pastor from Rochester did not once mention his race throughout the course of answering my question. He started by saying he had never really thought about this question before. He then proceeded to give a vulnerable and deeply personal answer. He says,

I think society, and wrongly so, I think society believes...been lead to believe, that Christians hate people who are not like them. That because, say, for instance, the position I would have with regards to abortion or homosexuality or even for that matter, drug use, that because we would take a particular position toward these things, that that, in turn, means that we hate the people who do these things and nothing could be further from the truth....you know, starting from the back forward, I don't hate drug addicts, I was a drug addict, and I just want to see people who are on drugs liberated from that because I recognize the bondage that drugs bring into people lives...

He continues by giving detailed examples about each group of people he mentions: drug addicts, women who have had abortions, and homosexuals. He explains how he does not hate these people but rather cares for them and desires to help them. He states that the view society might have of him or people like him is inaccurate.

Such attempts to rectify false conceptions of evangelicalism seem to stem from a few sources. Pastors and evangelicals feel they represent something bigger than themselves, namely God. Thus, the way that society sees them is how they see God, and representing God truthfully is perhaps the evangelical's greatest concern. Thus, it seems part of the exasperation demonstrated by these pastors comes from this concern.

The challenge of representing God was a common theme throughout all the interviews. Most of the interviewees spent a great deal of time disputing some societal perspective of them that they had internalized. Many felt the need to either defend or distance themselves

from a certain meaning of evangelical. Whatever societal marginalization they had internalized was so real to them that when given the chance to defend themselves to someone who was willing to listen, they did so readily. I do not believe that they were always defending themselves or even their personal identity per se, but more so, their faith. They were attempting to rectify a false image of who God is.

One pastor from Rochester gave a personal example of an interaction that displayed one societal perspective of him and his beliefs that he had internalized. He said,

A couple months ago I was in a coffee shop, and I was doing some work, and this guy started talking to me and asked me what I do. I told him I was a pastor, kinda rolled his eyes, and we started talking about the Bible and he starts bringing up all sorts of scientific questions that he thinks that God's Word does not answer or that he thinks that is contrary to the Bible and as best as I could to tell him, no, you're coming with assumptions that I don't have, you're assuming a lot of things about me and about my faith that aren't true, you're closing yourself off from an actual conversation. So, I guess I dunno, I guess people come to the table thinking that we're dumb, that we haven't thought things through, that faith is opposed to reason, and that faith is opposed to science and it kind of starts our conversations from a bottom rung of a ladder rather than at an equal spot.

It is these sorts of experiences and interactions that contribute to an internalized feeling of social marginalization as expressed by this pastor. Such internalizations create a feeling of isolation and inability to connect or explain oneself to others, as well as a helpless feeling that one has no recourse or way to shed incorrect stereotypes.

Another Rochester pastor (we will call him Pastor Rob for the purposes of this example) shared a similar experience about interacting with some auto mechanics. In conversation, one of the mechanics mentioned knowing a friend of Pastor Rob. This friend also happened to be a pastor. Pastor Rob says he asked why the mechanic liked this other pastor so much, to which the mechanic responded, "...he was not a Bible thumper, he never thumped his Bible in my face." Pastor Rob said of this answer, "That was his first

statement. I said, 'that's an interesting description of this guy, I don't know why you say it that way'. The mechanic replied, "I've met those Bible thumpers before, and they're always trying to hit you over the head with the Bible..." At that point, Pastor Rob says he informed the mechanic that he is a pastor as well and received the following response: "You're not one of them, are you? You're a pastor. You're kidding! Do you thump people with your Bible?". Pastor Rob, clearly miffed by this type of stereotype describes for me how he felt about this whole experience:

That was the only thing he wanted to talk about...The other two guys were very silent, but they were very much in agreement. I think in terms of a prejudicial view when they don't actually know anybody...the view is basically negative. Here in the Northeast, the view of people in the Bible belt where you live is there's Bible thumpers on every street, and all the churches are after everybody to save their souls and get them into heaven. That's not really true, but it's a view based on a pre-judgment...that allows them to sit comfortably and evaluate the world in terms they understand...I never wack people over the head with that stuff even though I know it, I took a very different approach. I would say when people actually know me the regard is very high, if they have a prejudice, it's probably pretty low.

This is an excellent example of an individual experience, likely not the only one, that led to feelings of social marginalization. Nothing speaks as powerfully to or influences as much as the direct interactions that feed feelings of marginalization. Thus, the two experiences described above are likely indicative of experiences other evangelicals have had. Therefore, it is presumptuous to assume that all feelings of social marginalization within the evangelical community stem from elite and media frames. We cannot discount personal experiences and their influence as well.

While the pastors from the North did show a heightened sense of social marginalization, some in the South did as well. The intensity with which they expressed feelings of marginalization varied but was apparent in almost every case (this is not entirely

true for the two pastors who did not identify as evangelical). The South Carolina Southern Baptist pastor said:

You know, in the mainstream culture that you would see on television news, on an average show I guess, most Bible-believing Christians are probably thought of as a little bit behind the times, or a little bit less than intellectual. I guess I'll leave it at that. I guess that's how we are portrayed in the mainstream culture. Most Christians, Bible-believing Christians, are portrayed like that, a little bit dumb, insecure, a little bit backwards.

This pastor was the least interactive of them all, but he still gives a clear indication of the stereotypes he perceives in his daily life. Take note that he uses collective identity language when describing the way he think he or people like him are viewed. He says, "that's how *we* are portrayed." While he does demonstrate some sense of marginalization, the North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor takes this perspective to the next level, saying:

I think that I'll just say the past 15 years, I think the way society views evangelical Christianity has taken a downward turn...it seems like, to me, like the most persecuted bunch in the United States today are the Christian people. If Christianity says something like homosexuality is bad, and yet what they've done, they've kinda turned that around to say that all Christians hate the homosexual community which is not true. I have sat down and had face to face talks with those in the homosexual community and pointed these things out and said you know you've come in very militant, you know, in wanting to try to squash me like a bug and you say I hate you and the thing about it is I don't hate you, I don't agree with your lifestyle because of ... what the Bible says about it.

So, if we take the Bible and we believe in the Bible we have a world and a society that doesn't want that because it puts restrictions on them, you know, we're in a society that doesn't want any authority over them...I think that society in and of itself no longer views church and Christianity with the same value and respect that it did even as much as it did 10-15 years ago.

This pastor demonstrates a strong sense of marginalization verging on martyrdom. He says that he believes "Christian people" are the most persecuted people in the United States and proceeds to vehemently defend that claim. He talks of the society's refusal to accept the "Christian" perspective that homosexuality is Biblically wrong and then couches this

challenge in a deeper problem he sees in society. Society does not want authority or restrictions, and because “Christianity” is predicated on authority, society rejects it and has lost respect for it. According to this pastor, this change has been happening over the past ten or fifteen years. This perspective is not an anomaly either. One Rochester pastor says:

So, faith in our culture is very much to the point where you can think what you want to think and it's supposed to be accepted; and I think a lot of times that is true for everything but Christians. Where, if we stand up for what we believe God's Word says, we're going to get persecuted for it. Let's just take, for example, the Christian baker in Colorado...what happened? You had a Christian saying, this is against my beliefs, and I can't support it, I love you, and I would love to have a relationship with you, but I don't want to participate in what you are doing because I think it is wrong...

Another pastor in North Carolina echoed a similar sentiment regarding authority, he says:

What you're really talking about is the issue of authority. That is the issue, at the end of the day, is the issue of authority. What is somebody's authority for what they believe and why they believe it? I believe the Bible is completely true, inspired by God and without error, everything we believe and practice and do is based on the scripture. That might lump me in, in their minds, with some groups that I probably wouldn't want to be associated with...

This idea of being persecuted or an anomaly for standing on an unyielding authority became a familiar refrain during the interviews. The prevailing logic is that American society does not want anything restricting freedoms or desires. According to many of the pastors, the more society moves in relativist direction, the more obsolete or outdated the idea that there are set boundaries and a final authority outside of oneself becomes. This thought process is one of the major reasons for the feelings of marginalization and displacement cited by the pastors. Most of the pastors echoed the sentiment that they felt

they and other evangelicals³³ were viewed as behind the times, or an oddity. Earlier in our conversation, the pastor from North Carolina said:

...well I would believe each day that goes by we're viewed more and more as an oddity, out of step with the culture, out of step with the times. If they find out what we really believe (they may think we're just a social organization), I think they would probably call us narrow, unloving. What else would they wrongly think about us? Maybe even a cult?

Notice the language here. He says, "what else would they think *wrong* about *us*?" The first thing to note is his assertion that the beliefs he thinks society has about him and his church are wrong. Secondly, he clearly identifies with an "us." The way this pastor answered my questions and presented himself leads me to believe that by "us," he does not mean evangelicals as a whole, but is more specifically referring to himself and his church. He demonstrated one of the most individualistic worldviews I encountered among the pastors and thus, I do not believe he has adopted a broader "collective identity" outside of his own church identity.

One pastor from Rochester, humorously, but to make a point, says of the Christian bakers, who are the plaintiff's in the high-profile Supreme Court case, Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission (2018), and of evangelicals in general,

...and obviously, there's an uproar in society saying that those people are bigoted, that those people are nasty, that those people are unloving and unkind and behind the times and... they're dinosaurs; you know what I mean? That they're on the wrong side of history, and I think that is, for the most part, the way that our society would see me and my church.

³³ Typically the pastors did not use the term "evangelical" but rather "Christian" when referring to other believers like them. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I refer to the "others" as evangelical, assuming that the pastors mean, other people with their same religious tenets.

The tone in which he said this was as impactful. He is dripping with sarcasm as he lists the various stereotypes and sweeping assumptions made about evangelicals, as if to insinuate, naturally, evangelicals are seen in this way, because it is just how things are.

These pastors all seem to be internalizing a societal perspective of themselves that they are "dinosaurs," behind the times, or prejudiced and hateful. These are stereotypes they disagree with and refute. Yet, peculiarly, at the same time, they seem to agree that there is some group of evangelicals out there that fit this stereotype. Hence, they want to make clear that *they* are not part of *those* people. In other words, many of the pastors believe there is some amorphous group of evangelicals out there that is bigoted, prejudiced, and hateful, but they are not those people. On numerous occasions, the pastors say in various ways that they are lumped into "*this* group" of people simply because they agree with and espouse some of the same religious beliefs.

The pastors also made clear that the stereotypes stem from their unwillingness to compromise on Biblical truths, sin, and right and wrong. Thus, there is an implicit suggestion of a radical group of "evangelicals" out there misrepresenting *real* evangelicals, but also a resignation to the fact that their perspectives, as they are, are going to be considered hateful, bigoted and behind the times. Further, the pastors show a resignation to the assumption that this perspective of them is set no matter what they contend otherwise. They do not, however, necessarily treat this situation as a problem. They have come to expect, both from experience and what the Bible says, that society will treat them as outcasts. One pastor from South Carolina, a self-proclaimed optimist, says;

...a hotbed topic would be same-sex marriage if you look at our church's website and our church's statement of faith, you'd see that we believe marriage is for one man and one woman. Up until the past thirty years that's been...not all that controversial of a statement. The speed in which the conversation is changing on

that, and particularly if I was to say I hold marriage to be one man and one woman, if I was to say that in a different context there's the chance I could be looked at as kinda like, uh, almost akin to the Civil Rights movement, almost as someone who's prejudice or discriminatory and that's definitely not our church's heart, not my heart, but then again it could be viewed that way.

He knows his views are considered prejudiced and bigoted even though he contends his church is not that way. Almost all the pastors acknowledge that there are evangelicals out there with whom they do not want to be associated. They also acknowledge that their Biblical beliefs are the main reason society calls them hateful or bigoted and prejudiced. This specific pastor goes on to say that in his context, in Lexington, South Carolina, he and his church do not experience the kind of stereotyping he talks about; however, he says that if it does get that way for them personally, "then so be it."

Three of the pastors, at some point in the conversation, mentioned the Masterpiece Cakeshop bakers in Colorado. Though the pastors were not directly experiencing what the bakers are experiencing, as parties to a high profile court case, they seemed to identify with the bakers and use them as a symbol. For the pastors, the bakers' situation symbolizes something sinister happening in society that somehow underlines the pastors' feelings of social marginalization. The bakers' situation provides a concrete example the pastors could utilize to support their argument that society is no longer embracing evangelicals but rather castigating them for living by their religiously based worldview, as illustrated by the bakers' refusal to create a wedding cake for a gay couple.

The two pastors who did not identify as evangelical had a slightly different take on how society views them or people like them. Both pastors identified with their church's identity or denomination more than anything else. The African American pastor from North Carolina said,

I wish sometimes people would judge ministries not by their names but by the content of their character as well, just go visit the church, see what's it's like, just because it's a Baptist church doesn't mean that they're all the same, just because it's a Pentecostal church doesn't mean that they're all the same, you can go down the line....sometimes people think all Black churches are the same, I don't like saying the word church because I believe there's one church but different congregations. The body of Christ is one church, but we have different congregation...

Here he shows a sense of marginalization and of being stereotyped but by other churches.

His own community struggles with stereotyping each other's denominations. This makes sense, given that he is pastor of an African American church and likely experiences negative or wrong assumptions about the way his church operates because outside observers fail to appreciate the diversity inherent in African American Protestantism. He tells me that just because his church is primarily Black does not mean they sing all the same songs people might assume they sing and then lists the various types of music they play there.

The Moravian pastor also answered from a denominational approach. He talked about how other more contemporary churches or today's society might think his church is a bit too traditional or old-fashioned. He said,

I think society at large would view mainline churches as being an acronym as being somewhat out of touch with reality, no praiseathon, but I think we see that because since the 1960s mainline churches have gone down so You're not getting it, you're out of touch with reality or want to have a monumental light show. We're kinda more the liturgy.

His form of Christianity then might be considered out of date since Moravians are not engaging in contemporary ways of practicing Christianity. He identifies as a Moravian and a mainline Protestant; thus, his answer stems from how society views mainline Protestants. His answer was markedly different than answers of the pastors who did identify as

evangelicals, as he makes no mention of Biblical standards, authority, or values. Rather, he talks about society's perspective on his style of church.

Where Is Society Headed?

While the point of my dissertation is not to uncover *why* evangelicals are feeling marginalized, the interviews do provide insight on this front. I asked the pastors: "*What do you think about the direction society is headed in both socially and politically and how does it make you feel?*" I asked this question specifically to find out whether these clergy are feeling socially marginalized which is relevant to my project because I assume social marginalization. As I have shown above, the answers to the first few questions set a tone of social marginalization; however, this question gets at these feelings more directly and also, to a degree, uncovers *why* the pastors feel the way they do.

Across the board (save for the two pastors who did not identify as evangelical), all the pastors said that society is headed in a bad direction. One pastor says, "...the culture will constantly find more ways to express their hatred of God and hatred of truth, and so we get better and better at expressing our depravity..." while another says, "It breaks my heart. As a society, we're broken people, and we need God to change our hearts." Each pastor had his own understanding of why society is heading in the wrong direction, but most of the explanations all boiled down to one central problem with one central solution: the problem is sin, and the solution is Christ. The ails of society are just the outward manifestations of individual inward darkness.

Some of the pastors expressed concern about the future, especially for their own children. One pastor's concern was centered around safety. He bemoans his perception that society has become far less safe. He talked about how his wife does not feel she can do the

same things that she could do thirty-forty years ago because of how dangerous the world is. He believes things have changed due to the moral breakdown in society, and specifically a lack of moral boundaries. In his view, American society began demanding more moral liberties to do whatever they wanted but in doing so brought upon themselves more dangers. He says,

...our society has granted people the loss of moral fiber, the failure to hold up, 'No, this is wrong, we don't do that, that's not ok, that's not how you treat women, that's not how you treat men, which seems terribly limiting and all that, but you know what? It's like the fence around the playground; yes, it's limiting but doggone there's tremendous freedom when you don't have to worry about kids running into the street to chase a ball. So, God's Word is very limiting, but it's freeing! Stay inside the fence; you'll be fine. Yeah, you're gonna miss a whole lot but thank God for that.

Breakdown of moral boundaries was a common theme throughout the interviews. The pastors all expressed a sense of societal moral degradation that all of them attributed to sin and felt the solution was individual and personal salvation. The North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor communicated a similar sentiment when he said,

I think that socially and politically our country is going in a wrong direction. For me, as an evangelical Christian...I think they're going away from Biblical principles on both a social level as well as a political level. Our society today doesn't want any absolutes, because if there are absolutes, then that will make somebody wrong. If you look at things socially, the uptick, (and I'm just taking some of the social things that we have seen on the forefront) homosexuality, that's one of those things, transgenderism...

He sees a trend in the wrong direction both socially and politically. He then draws the issues of "homosexuality" and "transgenderism" back to what he believes is the root cause of the problems he perceives, a rejection of absolutes.

The use of words like "boundaries" and "authority" and "absolutes" set the tone for what the pastors believe sets evangelicals apart from society. As I have argued above, evangelicals may feel social marginalization because of their unwillingness to compromise

on matters of theology in a society that no longer values the idea of one single "truth." These pastors acknowledge this societal shift by claiming that society no longer has moral boundaries or respect for values and authority due to the root problem of sin.

Another pastor, one from Rochester, expressed concern regarding the future of his family and his safety as a pastor and evangelical. "...so, I don't like the way society is heading. I wonder what it's gonna look like for my kids. I look at the secularization of Europe and how ostracized Christians are becoming in Europe, and that's the way that we're going to go so you know I don't like the trajectory." He proceeds to say that he is praying for religious revival and for people to have a face-to-face encounter with Jesus and be changed by Him; however, he does expect that circumstances could get bad for him and his family. He says, "I've believed for a long time that I'm probably gonna spend some time in jail at some point for preaching the truth of God's Word. I've wondered if that's going to happen if that's going to affect my family. I would hope that it doesn't, but that's the trajectory that I see in our culture." He is representative of most of the pastors in this viewpoint that emerged in response to my question about where society is headed.

Societal division and divisiveness was another common theme. The same pastor referenced above says, "Our culture is becoming one where if you are not extremely on one side then you are extremely on the other, and we can't have conversations." He proceeds to give examples of this phenomenon. He says if he claims to understand, empathize with and appreciate the conversations being started because of NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick's protest action of kneeling during the National Anthem, then suddenly he is seen as hating police, veterans, and America itself. However, if he says he thinks Kaepernick should not kneel then suddenly he is considered racist without a heart of

compassion for the African American community. I ask him to clarify this as he had used this for an example of something he experiences spiritually. He explains by connecting this example to how he, as an evangelical, feels in today's divisive culture.

When that comes to the way that we talk about different societal and cultural issues whether it's gay marriage or it's abortion, we just can't have a conversation anymore, and I just think that's a terrible loss. The exclusivity of the gospel is a big deal if we say to somebody that Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, the life, I instantly hate all Muslims and ... I think all Muslims are terrorists. I do believe that there's one way, and I do believe that Muslims are wrong, but I want to have a compassionate conversation to be able to say, 'This is what I believe the truth is'; but if I say that I'm instantly ostracized as a hater and as closeminded and bigoted and an Islamophobe, and you know, why can't I just keep my own beliefs to myself?

The frustration this pastor feels is rooted in his perception that society is so divided that no one can empathize with the opposing perspective. If anyone says they support or understand one political or ideological perspective, they automatically are lumped in with all the *extremes* associated with that perspective.

What causes this division? One pastor says that the division in society is the work of the devil, society itself, and the media. He says, "...society is inciting division. I can say that it's like our society wants us divided ...or at least the media does, because of what's promoted." He (an African American pastor living in South Carolina) expressed frustration with how the media seemed to be intentionally inciting division as if their goal was to create anger and frustration across races. He says, "...it's almost as if everyone's not going to be happy until we've gone forty years back in time and schools are again Black or white and restaurants are too, and it's like maybe then everybody will be happy, it's like they just want to be in their corners...".

This frustration with polarization shows up in many of the interviews. The reasons and causes for the perceived divisions vary, but the pastors were similar in their overwhelming

sense that the country is painfully divided and their sense that they are on the losing side of cultural change.

Further, there seemed to be an assumption, primarily among the African American pastors, that polarization was intentional and in some way conjured up by elites. The African American pastor from Rochester says, "...socially it seems that society is becoming increasingly divided and I think that's intended. I think that there's great political advantage in dividing people and the society has followed suit, it has embraced that. We see a lot of divide going on in society". He goes on to say that society is not as divided as the "world" would have us believe, but that there are only two types of people in the world: those on the narrow path to heaven and those on the broad path to destruction. He truly believes that division in society, especially racial divisions, are somehow being intentionally conjured up and promoted. He reiterated this belief multiple times in the conversation. The African American pastor from South Carolina echoed the same sentiment.

Many of the pastors shared the belief that the politics of our times is just a reflection of society. In their view, the worse society gets, the worse the political realm gets. This finding supports my understanding of political marginalization and social marginalization. These pastors seemed more concerned with society than with government. They saw problems with government as simply a symptom of greater problems originating from the collection of individuals that make up American society. One African American pastor said, "politically I think that's a reflection of what we see in society, I think that the political divide is becoming greater." He believes divisions in government are simply a reflection

of the divisions in society, rather than society reflecting and being shaped by elites in government. Another pastor echoes this sentiment and gives a more detailed explanation:

...moral issues etc. that I think are very wrong and have progressed in a wrong direction uh, and politically likewise. Politically, ...I think is just a lot of times ... reflecting what is happening socially. People that get elected have to please their constituents, have to identify with their ideals, so I think politics a lot of times is just a reflection of what's happening socially.

Yet another pastor, the North Carolina Southern Baptist, said the same thing in his own words, "society is actually dictating polity...that's kinda scary as well because essentially it appears that society is dictating the politics of our generation." He said that if he had to put a one-word title on how all of this makes him feel, he says it would be "overwhelmed." This finding speaks directly to my assumption that evangelicals are feeling socially marginalized and concerned *about society*. I ask about the direction of both society and politics; however, most of the pastors focused on the "society" part more than the "politics" part.

Political Efficacy

I found that the pastors' feelings of marginalization do not seem to be associated with any lack of political efficacy or access to government. I ask the pastors this question. "*Do you, as an individual and as a congregation, feel that you have or can have, an impact on the political process?*" Surprisingly, or perhaps unsurprisingly given the current presidential administration, almost every pastor responded with an immediate yes. They demonstrated a strong sense of efficacy and trust in the system. Many of them talked about how they encouraged their congregations to vote or felt they could write their member of Congress if they needed to express their concerns about something.

I use one pastor from North Carolina as an example of the other pastors. This pastor said: “We encourage our people to stand for the truth and contact your representatives contact your senators for any law that's coming up...be a good citizen and be a good Christian stand for the truth...let's hold our leaders accountable...”. He and many others said they pray for their leaders, vote, and are happy with their level of political participation. “Our approach is to encourage Christians as *individuals* to get involved...” This pastor felt that an evangelical who has impact on the political process was the same as one who has an impact on any other social section. Someone can try to *impact* the institution they work for by urging it to operate with integrity and Biblical values, but any change they might effect is temporary. Thus, the impact he is more concerned about is glorifying God.

Towards the end of the interview, the same pastor says of impacting government: “I’m not under illusion of thinking that what we’re trying to do is create a Christian nation with a Christian government...no I don’t believe that’s what we’re called to do... That’s not what the government was founded upon...but I think we can glorify God by being salt and light”. He concludes by saying he thinks Christians can have a “Measured temporary impact in the political process and it will never be more than that ... I think that’s scripture...”.

This answer is representative of many of the others. Many pastors' answers were shorter than his, but almost all demonstrated a similar refrain. Some pastors felt that they can have an impact. Others felt less so, but they all demonstrated a solid sense of external political efficacy. Their priority was teaching their congregants to love, to be good citizens, to vote their conscience, and train their children up "in a Godly way." If people do these things,

according to the pastors, they can have an impact. Moreover, their focus tended to be on the *individual*. Most of the pastors made it clear they were not interested in holding rallies or protests, but instead wish to encourage individual congregants to live quiet Godly lives, love their neighbors, vote and passionately pursue whatever career (government or not) they are interested in pursuing.

The answers to my question about political efficacy show that it is possible for someone to feel highly efficacious while also demonstrating a strong sense of marginalization. These two feelings seem contradictory. How can someone possess a high level of political efficacy and yet also feel marginalized? I theorize that there are two dimensions of marginalization at play here: social marginalization and political marginalization. Individuals may feel as though they have access to government and that they can impact it through their votes and other forms of participation, yet at the same time feel shunned and marginalized by society. This is exactly the dynamic these pastors demonstrated.

Some of the pastors articulated a feeling of political displacement. One pastor says, "I feel like there's really nowhere to go in terms of a side when it comes to being a Christian." This statement concludes a small rant about how he feels he cannot say he is a conservative Republican because people will assume he does not have compassion for the poor. Likewise, he thinks that if he says he is a liberal Democrat, he cannot hold to the exclusivity of his faith because he would be expected to have compassion for everyone. At this point, he exasperatedly says, "So, as a whole, politics is a joke. I think it's broken. I don't think anything is going to change our society but the power of Jesus Christ, so as long as we can preach I could care less who's in power and that's about it". This pastor clearly demonstrates a frustration with politics, as if he wishes he could participate more; however,

he feels that, as an evangelical, he does not fit in on either side. Neither side allows him to fully live out who he is. Also, note that he said he could care less what government officials are in power “as long as we can preach”; thereby insinuating, if something threatens or appears to threaten his ability to preach he *would* care about who is in power. This is something to keep in mind moving forward.

Notice also that this pastor says he thinks politics is broken and a joke and immediately transitions to saying he does not think anything can fix *society* but Jesus Christ. A logical upshot of his thought here would be that the only thing that can fix or change *politics* is Jesus Christ since it was politics that he just stated was broken. This means that he was thinking in terms of politics being the *answer* to the ails of society. Many want to look to government and politicians for a remedy for ails in society. However, this pastor and many others say that politics and government is not that answer and cannot do anything for society; therefore, he cares little about politics. There is nothing that politicians can offer as a cure for what ails society; only Jesus Christ has that cure.

The pastors’ perceptions of marginalization did not necessarily originate from their identity, but rather from their values: a particular set of Biblical values, or what they consider “traditional” values. Many of the pastors, when discussing the direction society is headed, bemoaned a move away from their own Biblical social values or, as one pastor put it, mores. One pastor from North Carolina said,

Through the centuries...what happens is, the world stays out here and does its thing, and it comes up with rules and laws and regulations...but through the centuries the world has started, and the government has started, encroaching into more and more of the things that the Bible addresses...the more that it starts saying things that are the opposite of what the Bible says the more Christians are gonna get concerned...you’re dabbling now in moral things that the Bible addresses and

speaks strongly about and we cannot remain silent...we must stand against things and preach the truth.³⁴

His language sounds more activist than he says he is. He uses the phrase, "stand against things," but he does not mean through corporate or public displays. He made that point very clearly later in the conversation. I believe he is referring to a position of standing against things as an evangelical pastor whose job it is to preach the Gospel.

Most of the pastors do not seem surprised by the downward trend they see in society; Many of them expect this trend because of the worldview that human nature is depraved and sinful. However, this belief does not equate to any lack of frustration, sadness, or in some cases, fear. One pastor says, "My perception is that our society in America is probably moving, you know, further and further away from Christian beliefs, um, you know that makes me sad. At the same time, you know, Biblically, I think that we are kinda told that things will get worse." Another pastor claims that society is moving away from Biblical principles, while others claim society does not want boundaries, society no longer has any morals, and society hates authority and absolutes as the North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor says, "Our society today doesn't want any absolutes, because if there are absolutes, then that will make somebody wrong... I think that's why people are so adamantly against the Bible is because there are absolutes".

Some pastors say that the way they see society going makes them feel more evangelically missional. They have a job to do and seeing the depravity of society only stimulates them to more missional activity. One pastor says, "...there's a weight of responsibility that you feel to help society or to stop that downward flow or just reach any

³⁴ This answer came in response to Question 6. However, because of the vast amount of material I have from these interviews, I had to focus on the answers to a select few questions. Therefore, I do not detail the answer to Question 6 in this chapter but feel this pastor's answer is relevant and fitting for this portion of the chapter.

individual that you possibly can to bring them to a point of salvation from all that." The sense of mobilization expressed here and by most of the pastors was religious in nature rather than political. This is somewhat counterintuitive to my expectation that evangelicals, feeling socially marginalized, are mobilizing politically to express themselves and defend their values. Even though these pastors are feeling marginalized, the increased marginalization and concern for society instead makes them feel more spiritually missional. This standpoint, unsurprisingly, originates from a belief that the only thing that can change humanity and subsequently society is *individual* conversion; therefore, no amount of change in government would be able to cure the root problem.

While all the pastors express a gloomy outlook on society, their faith has built into them an innate expectation of moral and societal decay. Therefore, they all give a similar response when discussing how they *feel* about the way society is trending. One pastor explains, "I'm not shocked and dismayed when I hear reports of somebody doing this or that. I don't expect anything to be different because we live in a fallen world and sin is a terrible thing, and sin devastates people's lives, and if people don't know Christ there's no telling what they'll do". Others echo a similar sentiment by saying that the Bible says to follow Christ without fear. The most recently quoted pastor later says, "My hope is not in this world, so I don't feel fear over all...now I'm not gonna lie to you and not say there's never an anxious moment. I'm still in my fallen body...so, of course, I have those moments where I'm tempted to be anxious and fearful, but I've come to a place where those movements are few and far between." Another pastor more confidently says, "... Jesus is on the throne, so I don't have any fear, I don't have any anxiety".

Given that *pastors* are admitting reasons for fear, what is going on in the evangelical community at large? Presumably, average evangelicals who are not pastors deal with these emotions and probably do not handle them the same way---which paints the picture of an unsettled, fearful, stereotyped, repressed, and marginalized group of individuals. Therefore, if these pastors' answers are in any way representative of the general population, it supports my belief that evangelicals are indeed feeling socially marginalized.

Part II: Mobilization?

For the past thirty pages, I presented answers to questions intended to illustrate, albeit in a small sample, how the evangelical community is feeling. The answers paint a picture of social marginalization. The descriptions vary, but the overall feeling that emerged from all the interviewees was one of marginalization and trepidation about the future. The feelings of marginalization manifested in the following ways: an overall hesitance (in some cases a disdain) to ascribe to the evangelical label; a feeling of being stereotyped; feelings a martyrdom and prejudice because of their "old or outdated" values; a defensive need to explain or defend oneself; expectations of eventual persecution; personal experiences of prejudice; and finally, an overall gloomy outlook for the future of the society and Christianity in society. They also displayed a sense of repressed frustration with society and the way they feel their values have been stereotyped. They universally expressed concern and frustration with government, but usually in the broader context of society. In other words, they seemed to believe that the problems they see in government are just a reflection and result of corruption in society.

The social constructionist approach to collective mobilization posits that emotion is an important variable needed for collective mobilization (Jasper 1998; 2011; Snow and

Benford 1988; 1992; see also Goodwin, Polletta, and Jasper 2001). Mobilization is “the deliberate activation of social networks as a method of diffusing awareness about a social or political problem or of exerting social and/or political pressure for its resolution” (Theocharis 2015, 5). Based on this definition, and based on the theory that marginalization is an important pre-condition for mobilization, I expect to find these pastors mobilizing, at least to some extent, to combat the *social* problems they see in society. Further, I would expect to find their congregations mobilizing, as mobilization is the deliberate activation of social networks (Harris 1994). A pastor’s most immediate social network is his congregation, which sometimes reflects and participates in the political or social activities a clergyperson promotes (Crawford and Olson 2001; Djupe and Gilbert 2008). I also expect to see individual mobilization among clergy; specifically, individual public expressions against the social values they feel are unrepresentative of their faith. Many pastors said things like, “we must take a stand,” implying some kind of individual or collective expression.

There is a story to tell here. I interviewed a group of people who, for the most part, all shared a sense of social marginalization because of their beliefs and values. How strongly this marginalization was felt varied; however, even across states, regions, and races, social marginalization was present. I detail how they respond to this feeling in this next section. I attempt to answer the “mobilization” portion of my theory with the second half of my interview questions. I devote this next section to answering this question: how, if at all, are the pastors responding individually and/or collectively with their congregation to these feelings of social marginalization.

A comment one pastor made about mobilization works to tie together many of the pastors' attitudes about political activity, social activity, and feelings about Donald Trump. This pastor, who is from South Carolina, said of all these external actions and activities, "You know, those things amount to nothing more than rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic." The message here is clear: American society and government are the Titanic, headed towards imminent destruction. Sure, being politically or socially active may help a few temporal things, but in the end, those activities amount to nothing more than putting Band-Aids on a lethal gash. They may slow the bleeding, but they cannot prevent the death. The pastors' recurrent concerns were much more "eternal" than temporal; therefore, doing something individually to see people come to know Christ one at a time was far more beneficial and effective than any external political or social activity.

Donald Trump

How important is politics and government to these evangelical pastors? I asked a question about Donald Trump to get a clearer picture of the evangelical sentiment and thoughts about Donald Trump. This is relevant for a few reasons. First, 81% of white born-again/evangelical Christians voted for Trump (Smith and Martinez 2016). This is a staggering percentage and one that scholars are still struggling to fully grasp and begin to understand. It is also important because the pastors' satisfaction with this administration sheds light on feelings of political efficacy. Also, this question helps shed light on how important these pastors think government and government officials are. Are these pastors' worldviews in any way shaped or affected by who is in political office? Finally, it is important because it can help us understand more clearly what the draw to Donald Trump was. As certain pieces of literature say, Donald Trump's "us" versus "them" rhetoric

appeared to strike a chord with white evangelicals, given the demographic changes happening within evangelicals themselves (Wong 2018a; 2018b).

My interview question is: *Has Donald Trump's election or his presidency so far had any effect on your answers to my previous questions?* The answers varied, but most of the pastors said no. Indeed, many of the pastors seemed almost eerily aloof toward the specifics of American electoral politics. The attitudes towards Donald Trump and other political officeholders was one of willingness to pray for whoever is in office, but disengagement from – almost disinterest in – who actually is in office.

One pastor says, "I don't think anything is going to change our society but the gospel of Jesus Christ, so long as we can preach that, I could care less who is in power and that is about it." Another pastor, the African American from South Carolina, said, "whether you like the guy or not, whether he believes what you believe or not, our response should be the same, we should just pray for them...". Another pastor said, "I vote and certainly have a desire that a certain kind of person be elected, but if they aren't in any given election I don't lose sleep... if Hillary Clinton had won the election, I would have answered those questions the same way". Most of the other pastors answered in a similar fashion, with a similar reasoning. Candidates, elected officials, and Supreme Court Justices are far less important than eternal issues.

Earlier in the interview, the African American pastor from South Carolina talked about how important it is for him and for all Christians to always wave their Christian banner higher than all other banners. He says everyone has multiple banners; he personally has banners for basketball, for being Black, for being a Democrat, and for being a believer in Christ. Without knowing it, he is listing elements of his social identities. He stresses that

no single component of identity, or in his words, no *banner*, should ever be waved higher than the banner of Christ. He expressed frustration with believers he has seen who wave their political or racial banners higher than that of Christ. He says:

...You know there's nothing wrong with being a Democrat or Republican. It doesn't matter whether you like Obama or you like Trump, that's fine, but like, none of that is more important than your relationship with Christ and that you represent more avidly that than you represent anything else. I've even caught slack about not waving my Black banner high enough but I'm not gonna alienate other people ... the only banner that I have that I want you to look at and be jealous because you may not believe what I believe is that of Christ, and if you look at my Black banner and you're not Black you can't be Black. I've just condemned you for no reason or made you feel condemned for no reason, but if you look at my Christian banner and you feel Godly sorrow and think, man, I don't know the Lord, and I see how he does, and I want to know the Lord, then that's great, then let's talk about it in love and I can introduce you to Him! To wave anything higher than that, I'm not gonna do that.

These pastors identify with their evangelical Christianity *decidedly* and *completely*. It is not just a way of life or a list of rules or principles to follow; it is *who* they are. This hearkens back to my claim that an attack on evangelical Christian values is perceived by evangelicals as an attack on them personally because of how strongly they identify with their religious identity. This Black pastor knows and understands the significance of his race and even admits that he has been accused of not prioritizing his race above other banners yet his race is not what he claims is most important for him to promote about himself. His answer illustrates just how unconcerned some of these pastors really are with politics, especially since racial identity is so politically charged in American culture. They say they acquiesce to whoever is in office because eternally, politics is not the answer to the problems they perceive in society. All that truly matters is that individuals meet Christ.

A few pastors seemed to find a silver lining in the Trump presidency. One pastor says:

[My] hope would be just to stay off the downward motion of these moral issues...be it deterioration of the original traditional definition of the family ... a stronger voice

in the White House against (abortion)... just there would be more of a traditionally wholesome environment along the lines of morality... you see America going down the tubes, slouching towards Sodom...you then would see a conservative president who would veto certain legislation that might tolerate more, you just see that as more hopeful than someone in the White house who purposefully wants everything to go in a downward... a more liberal direction... so I think that's the hope... America could remain as a good wholesome family culture than what seems to be trending at this point.

Some religion and politics scholars (Hunter 1992; Jelen 1993a; 1993b; Smith et al. 1998; Wilcox and Robinson 2010) would expect to hear an answer more along these lines from a traditionally religious white evangelical. However, this pastor still did not put much stock in Donald Trump's victory. Perhaps it provides a reprieve of sorts from political liberalism, but it is still temporal. The result of the 2016 presidential election is still a chair on the deck of the Titanic. This same pastor said,

Yes, it has. I think that one of the biggest things that he actually said on the campaign trail...he said that...evangelical Christians are the most persecuted group of people in the United States right now. That tells me that he has seen that based on what is taking place and what is going on.

This pastor, like many evangelical Trump supporters, appreciated being recognized having someone in power who he sees as being on his side. He went on to say he is not sure where Trump stands spiritually but perhaps that does not matter because society, in his view, has become blatantly anti-Christian that even non-Christians notice. He proceeded to discuss some of the specific policy priorities he appreciates from the Trump administration as well as his sense that Trump has kept his word and is trying to make good on enacting his campaign promises. He criticized Trump for the *way* he says things and explains that he wishes Trump would express himself differently. However, he still appreciates *what* he says even if he has a problem with *how* he says it.

Unsurprisingly, one of the African American pastors, the one who does not identify as evangelical, was one of the few to say Trump's election and presidency have affected his answers to my previous questions in a negative way. He said,

Yes, it has. His mannerisms, misunderstanding that as a leader you have the power to influence...the things that he says and does, whether he's aware of it or not, influences others to walk in light or to walk in darkness...darkness is racism, sexism, any injustice...it's denial of things that are not as they really are.

After this comment, he said little more about Trump or his presidency; however, he did talk more about the "darkness" he used in reference to Trump's presidency and what it means to him. It is interesting that the two African American pastors who *did* identify as evangelical said the Trump election had no or little influence on their previous answers, while the one African American pastor who did not identify as an evangelical did say the Trump election affected his answers. The African American pastor from Rochester said,

No, he's just another president. No, not at all. No, he hasn't had any effect on any of those answers. If our worldview is shaped by the world, then every change that comes about in the world, our views change, but if our views are shaped by scripture...the way I look at the world doesn't change. Every leader is actually put in place by God for His own purpose. God put them in place for His own purpose. I just bow to His sovereignty. Whoever's in charge I obey the governing authority. I don't bad mouth them. I pray for them because that's what the Bible says we're supposed to do. So, my view doesn't change because the Bible doesn't change. If my worldview came from CNN or Fox News, then my view would be constantly changing.

The African American pastor from South Carolina said he thinks the political and social division in the U.S. have gotten worse since Trump's election. He believes some of the things Trump has said have instigated more division. However, this pastor moderated his response with the following statement: "...so I would say it has affected some of these things that we've talked about today, but those things were already happening." He seems

to be saying Trump's presidency has not helped anything and in some cases, has exacerbated the problems and issues that were already there.

Answers to the Trump question were more varied than many of the other answers though most pastors seemed unaffected by the Trump presidency. My sample is admittedly small and may not be representative of the evangelical population at large. Further, since I only interviewed clergy, it is possible that evangelicals in the pews think and feel differently about Donald Trump.

Marginalization to Mobilization?

Thus far, we have seen that many of the evangelical pastors demonstrated indifference to the Trump election, and we know they possess a sense of social marginalization; however, what I have yet to show is their response to this perceived social marginalization. Are they responding with action, and if so in what ways? Have they changed their political tactics at all over the past few years because of this perceived social marginalization? Are they mobilizing in any way?

The short answer to all of these questions is no. They are not responding socially *or* politically nor have they changed their political tactics in recent years (primarily because most of them admittedly have no political tactics). Save for one evangelical pastor, the North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor, the only two pastors who indicated they were politically active were the two pastors who did not identify as evangelical.

A few quotations summarize this narrative about mobilization. One pastor says, "We express ourselves politically only through voting and as a congregation, you know, praying and living our lives in light of the truth that we believe...". Another says, "I would say probably we are as engaged in the quiet side of society as best we can... some people go

to town board meetings or school board meetings and voice their opinion...”. In the words of another, “We don’t. We don’t. We’re very, very intentional not to ever bring that into the picture”. With the metaphor of the chairs on the Titanic still in place, another analogy from the African American pastor from South Carolina is instructive. He says,

The Bible talks about...the fiery darts of the enemy...in those days, ...the thought was that you had the arrow...you shoot it, and there's this little point that's on fire, and the thought was that this little small point that is on fire would hit the target and it would only hit a very small space on the target but ...the idea was to catch the whole thing on fire through hitting a point... the goal wasn't to catch that point on fire it's to catch the whole thing on fire...and so we believe as far as acting politically and those things... what we're doing in regards to promoting Christ and drawing people to God and encouraging community... getting people to have a responsible relationship with God ...we believe if we are accurate and are able to, through the Holy Spirit, hit that, well, then, the change that that would incite would, like a fire, spread to politics... does that make sense? ...So we want to, it's not that we don't care about politics, but it's our method, we're not trying to hit politics, you know?...and so we just have a different method as far as causing the change.

For him, as with many other pastors, politics is not the priority. Changing politics is not a bad thing. Though many of pastors would like to see government operate in a certain way, it is only temporal. The eternal things are what matter. So, if the church can create change in individual lives, this change eventually will spread and affect things across sectors, including politics and government. Another African American pastor says, “Politically I mean we vote. We don't make any tremendous effort to be political, you know, we're called to be Biblical.” Earlier in the conversation, he spoke about why he and his congregation are not concerned about political or social involvement. Much of what he says is just a different version of the fiery darts analogy. His quote is key to understanding the perspective presented by these pastors. It is an excellent proxy for how many of the pastors regard political and, to an extent, social involvement. He says,

The scripture is very clear that the gospel is offensive to man...and we have to accept that. ...The message we bring is offensive because the message we bring

tells man of his complete inability to save himself, it tells him of his desperate self, it tells him that there's nothing he can do in himself to repair that condition and that his only hope is in the mercy and grace of God to save him through the sacrifice of another and that's an offensive message to the pride of man. But if the church tries to mask the message with social activism or getting involved too much in political things and those types of things, then we lose the one thing that the world truly needs...no one else has the gospel. Only the church has the gospel...there are tons of agencies that can provide food for people...clothing...shelter...but nobody else can do what the church can do; the church can bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the world which is the only remedy for man's condition.

This is what the pastors believe sets them apart. Spreading the Gospel is their primary mission. Though political and social change might be nice, it simply amounts to rearranging chairs on the deck of the Titanic. Further, by preaching the Gospel and reaching people individually, it is plausible that these individual changes may indeed spread.

Social and Political Mobilization

With this “not of this world” point of departure worldview as a backdrop, let us now consider, *“How, if at all, do you and your congregation express yourselves politically and socially?”* One pastor says, “...Just being the, um I guess you could use the word ‘best’ Christian you can be...to be the nicest, kindest, most forgiving grace-filled person out in the community doing ministry and to have an impact on the world primarily that way”. Another says, “So politically none, I have no interest in that. Again, we're a young church; we want Rochester to be different because we're here. So socially, not marching in a rally but socially filling needs that need to be met, we want to do that, so that's how we're gonna make a difference in that sense.”

A pastor from South Carolina says, “Well, again, by voting...by encouraging one another...we do discuss political things...bolster and encourage one another, anyway that could trickle down to other family members, friends...”. He proceeds to say that one of the ways his church is politically and socially involved is through social media. Specifically,

he says, “Social media, that comes to mind, expressing ideas on social media... um, just things like that, sharing about who you are with anybody you can by whatever means...”. While only he and one other pastor mentioned social media *before* I later asked about Twitter, this form of expression is the exact form I have predicted evangelicals would use. It is a highly individualistic form of expression and one that scholars (Theocharis 2015) have begun to consider a viable form of mobilization.

As I explain the answers to my interview questions about Twitter and boycotting, it will become clear that neither avenue is something the pastors commonly use. However, a few of them do mention that their congregations use social media and that they sometimes must confront congregants for engaging in visceral political conversations on social media. While pastors and religious leaders may not be highly active on Twitter (or at least active around political topics) their congregants, not being held to the same standards, are more willing to engage on Twitter.

The pastors answered the mobilization questions by focusing primarily on the role of the individual. Ergo, these pastors were not interested in getting the church involved in anything collectively as a congregation but were fine with individual members choosing to be as active or inactive socially and politically as they chose to be. These answers are not surprising given other scholars' similar findings (Emerson and Smith 2000; Jelen 1993a; Smith et al. 1998).

The pastors who did not identify as evangelical had similar responses. They were neither highly active themselves, nor did they promote collective action. The pastor of the Moravian church said, "Well we are a voting place. Right here where we're sitting now, so we support the political process...is to be supportive of the process but not come to the

point where we say we're going to shoot you if you are of a different political persuasion.”

The African American pastor who also did not identify with evangelicalism said, “we bring people in from all spectrums...you choose...go by what you feel. We don’t let them get in the pulpit...we feel that if you let someone who has a certain affiliation get in the pulpit what you’re saying is this is what I endorse...”. These two pastors demonstrate a similar refrain. They utilized traditional political participation as their means of mobilization, and feel that politics and the church should be kept separate.

One evangelical, the North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor, did say he was mobilizing in response to his sense of social marginalization. He also organizes congregational mobilization. Most of the mobilization he is involved in is traditional, like voting for a bill or a member of Congress as opposed to boycotting or Twitter venting, however. He said: “I am not the guy who necessarily wants to preach a political agenda from the pulpit because that’s where the gospel is to be preached.” However, he proceeded to say that he led his congregation to support and promote North Carolina’s well-known Amendment One, which defined marriage as being between one man and one woman. He said, “as a pastor, I did lead us getting behind approval of Amendment One. We put signs out. We went on record as saying we are supportive of Amendment One.” He was the most politically active pastor I interviewed. He did, however, stress the importance of not treating the pulpit as a place for politicking but rather a place for preaching the Gospel and allowing the Holy Spirit to direct how the spiritual turns into the political. His answer was an aberration from the other evangelical answers and fell more in line with how the two mainline Protestant (non-evangelicals) responded. His activism is the only real aberration from the individuality espoused by the rest of the pastors.

Earlier in the interview, during his answer to the question “how does *this* [direction he sees society and politics going] make you feel?” the North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor explained that he was less concerned about causing actual change as much as simply expressing his opinion and the opinions of the religious community to his local town council. He gave this example after explaining that he believes no real change in society can come until a majority speak up, but that does not stop him from still trying to individually mobilize even if it does not always make a difference. He said:

I’m just gonna give you an example. In this particular community, there was a vote here recently about whether or not to allow businesses to serve liquor two hours earlier, and essentially, I wrote, ... to not make that change, and I know people are going to do what they’re going to do...but I said you know what, it’s a good *tip of the hat* to say, ‘you know we still respect Christianity and we still respect religion in our community not to make that change.’ And I said we’re only talking about a two-hour difference, but to take a stand and say that we’re gonna at least acknowledge our community of religion...just give us the honor of leaving it like it is to say that this is something that is still important. And once again it fell on deaf ears, but nonetheless, I still did what I felt like I had to do...I also felt like I would be doing a discredit and a disservice to my God to not at least express my opinion in regard to that. ...It didn't turn me against any of the town council, and we still have a great relationship to this day, and my thing was I simply expressed my opinion based on my beliefs on that regard.

This observation perfectly exemplifies the social marginalization I expected to observe among evangelical pastors: the desire for society to still “respect” and give “honor” to religious values and traditions. In his own words, this pastor wants government to *at least* give a “tip of the hat” to Christianity. Many evangelicals have felt betrayed by social change since at least the 1960s (Wilcox and Robinson 2010). The language he uses here originates from a feeling that society and government no longer respects or values his religion. Further, the importance of mere expression is confirmed in this example. All this pastor hoped to do was, at the very least, express his opinion, even if he knew it was not

popularly accepted anymore. Further, his expression was less about any particular issue as it was about the respect and honor of Christianity he felt was missing.

Quite a few of the pastors espoused the “vote your conscience” message. They were not in favor of collective congregational politicking even though they were all in favor of being good citizens. They were happy to vote, write members of Congress if or when necessary, or hand out political pamphlets; however, they would not want any of these activities to be turned into a congregational activity. They would rarely, if ever, even suggest that the congregation should all vote for a particular candidate (of course, doing so could cost their church its tax-exempt status) or participate in a church protest. One pastor said, “what I tell them to do is vote according to their conscience and their world view...and we have also created the climate here, do not judge somebody else because they have concluded that they need to vote a certain way based on certain issues.”

Many of the pastors supported and promoted *social* activity as a congregation. Social outreach, in the form of benevolence to people who struggle, is a part of the church’s calling even if it only temporal. Evangelicals believe God calls the church to meet temporal needs as a means of spreading the Gospel.

Political Tactics

The next question I asked was “*How have you changed your political tactics over the past few years?*” I asked this question to see whether the pastors might be increasing or changing their political tactics because of my theory of social marginalization. As I explain in my theory, extra-institutional forms of political participation can tell us a whole lot about if and how evangelicals are feeling aggrieved. However, most answers went something like this: “Well I don’t really have any tactics...so no. I’ve gone from nothing to nothing”.

Many of the pastors had no tactics, or if they did, they had gotten *less* active in their tactics. One pastor says that he has not changed his tactics and that he has felt “this” way for a long time. I asked him to clarify what he meant by *this*, and he said, “...that the answer, the solution is not politically” changing things. Again, we see the focus on spiritual conversion at the individual level as the pastors’ top priority.

The African American pastor from Rochester chuckled and said, “I don’t have any political tactics. Again, for me, it’s business as usual. God raises up one, and he sets down another.” He then mentioned Nero and the persecution Nero wrought on Christians in the Roman Empire during the Apostle Paul’s time of ministry. Yet, Paul still encouraged Christians to submit, honor and pray for those in authority. Further, this pastor argues that Paul’s views were not shaped by who was in power but by the throne of God, so “it’s important for me to maintain that as well.”

There was one evangelical pastor from South Carolina who expressed excitement about politics, especially with growth of political activities at the state and local level. He was not hopeful about the federal government but was excited about political opportunities locally. In context, he had changed his tactics. He had gone from being cynical about politics to perceiving strategic openings at the local level. Here he clarifies that his church does not engage in politics congregationally, but he personally has developed enthusiasm recently because of some matters he was privy to at the local political level. He says, “I see things like that [a member of his church running for local government office] I get excited... in that sense, I’ve become more involved in the process ... again we don’t have signs...”. He explains he has increased his political involvement at the local level, but he

clarifies that is not involved in alternative forms of political expression such as boycotting or Twitter venting.

The African American pastor from South Carolina said that he has changed his tactics since becoming a pastor. He used another analogy to describe this circumstance. He says, “There’s a certain way that you drive when you’re by yourself...You drive differently when there’s people behind you...much more deliberate, much more methodical”. He said that his activity has neither increased nor changed, but that he puts a lot more thought into what he does say politically and how he votes because he now has a congregation to shepherd and lead.

Another pastor from South Carolina said that he has not changed nor has his congregation; instead, where he sees change is in the Democratic Party. He says,

The Democratic party has changed. At one time, they were a good party especially down South here...they really were for the blue collar they were for the worker...They wanted to look out for the little guy...but now the national Democrat party...the past 30 years maybe has been on decline because they have been hijacked by special interest groups that are the elite of our society...any party that promotes abortion on demand and promotes homosexual marriage, I can't stand behind that, it's not good for society.

I asked this pastor whether he has changed his political tactics recently and he explained how the Democratic Party has changed their tactics. This tells me little about his tactics, but it does give me an idea of his political opinions and indicates clearly where he stands in the context of polarized American politics.

Another, the pastor of a Pentecostal church, said something I found particularly noteworthy. He said that neither he nor his congregation have not made any changes other than becoming more involved in social media. He says, “I can’t say I’ve changed unless it would be just the new use of social media...I think that's another outlet or it’s another

means of expressing your view or sharing ideas, many of which could be political...I think that might help get beyond your little sphere”. As I suggest above, he was the only pastor to mention social media as a form of activism. This fits my theoretical expectation that social media provides an ideal avenue for individual expression. It is an avenue that previously did not exist, but now provides an outlet for evangelicals to mobilize without having to physically “rally” or “protest” collectively.

The African American pastor in North Carolina who did not identify as evangelical was very politically engaged. He described his time politically campaigning for President Obama,

I get involved...I definitely get involved. I go to voter registration handouts...I did it years ago when a certain individual was running for office... he was Republican. I recently did it with President Obama...it was a voter’s registration volunteering center, where people came and you...I thought he was gonna bring some change...I felt that he was competent and capable. I felt that it was time for American possibly to have someone of color in that position...it was fun. Everybody was excited, and it was fun...there was no Black no white...it was a sense of the human race having one objective...It’s [his political tactics] changed a little bit. It’s not like it was... you know, with the family.

He mobilized during the Obama campaign, as well as for other campaigns in the past. This is noteworthy because the pastors who identified as evangelical did not report being active at all, other than voting.

Boycotting

After hearing broadly how each pastor acts politically and socially, I asked each pastor specifically what they think about using boycotting and Twitter as a means of social or political expression. The questions were worded as such: *“Do you see boycotting (Twitter) as an appropriate outlet for establishing political positions and/or expressing your feelings*

about today's society?" In sum, ten pastors said yes, boycotting can be useful, while three said it cannot. Nine pastors said yes to the use of Twitter while four said no.

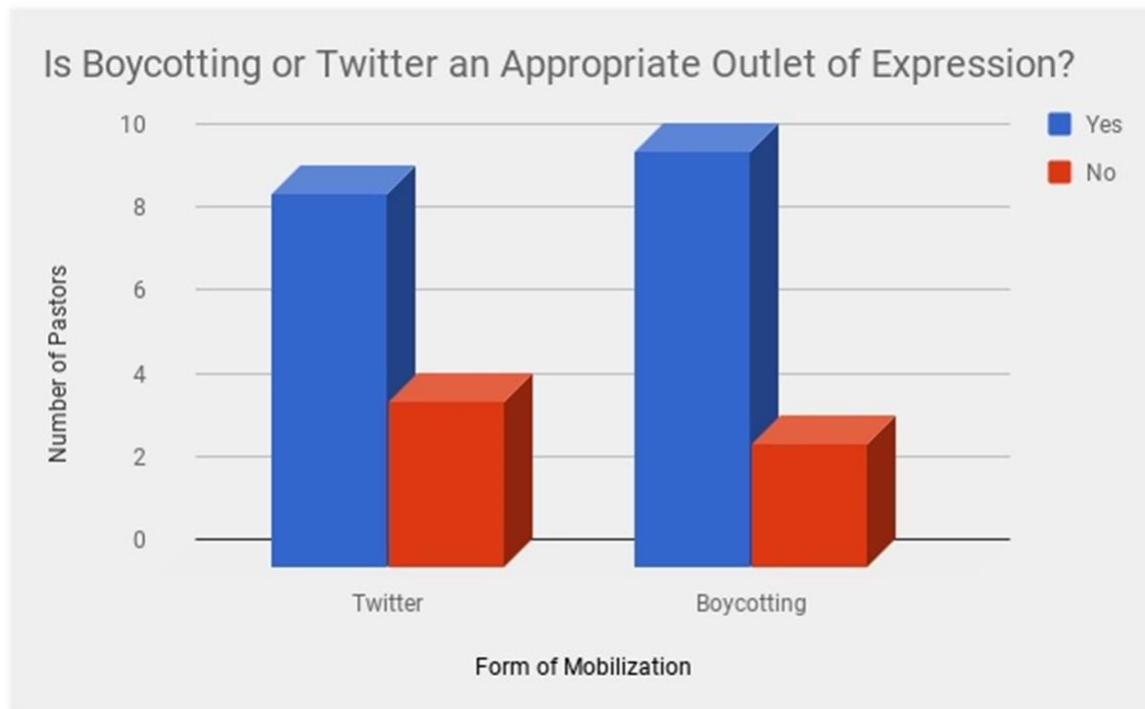


Figure 4.1 Is Boycotting or Twitter an Appropriate Form of Expression?

Each pastor offered different reasons for their answers. Most of them were not personally engaged in either activity but spoke more generally about whether these activities were useful ways to express frustrations with the current social or political environment.

The North Carolina Southern Baptist pastor said that boycotting can be useful sometimes and in specific circumstances. He stressed the importance of being consistent with oneself choosing to boycott. He gave an example, “I’m not a proponent of drinking, I think that hurts your testimony but yet I still go to the grocery store and buy groceries, so does that mean that if I buy a roast up at Lowes grocery store that I am supporting their cause of selling alcohol?” He then said, “I’ve never actually stood up [in the pulpit] and said we should boycott this.” He seemed fine with the idea of someone choosing on their

own to boycott but, he explains, they must be careful that they are consistent and not hypocritical in their actions. He explains that many companies support or sell things that someone may not appreciate or be against; the question then is, are they going to boycott them all? He says that people must be careful in what they choose to make an issue and boycott. He says, "You have to take each instance along the way and determine whether that cause is really going to bring about an incredible amount of change to start with and I think that if hypocrisy comes into play, then it's defeated...society will see right through this." He ends by establishing that he has never done anything collectively in terms of boycotting; however, he feels that if he sees a situation is bad enough or blatant enough, he might consider it.

A North Carolina pastor gives a different explanation for individual boycotts versus collective boycotts.³⁵ He believes that boycotting is appropriate if it is used at the individual level. He proceeds to explain a passage in the Bible from Romans 14. He explains how Romans 14 defines the conscience, as well as the importance of individuals not violating their personal conscience. He says,

...if you, before God, believe that it is offensive to you to use a certain cell phone company because that cell phone company uses some of their money to support Planned Parenthood then if that violates your conscience then I think you should not violate your conscience.

If an individual feels their conscience is violated by patronizing a company with values they dislike, then he believes avoiding that company is essential. However, he did not seem to interpret this question with a political slant. If someone wants to boycott because they cannot in good conscience spend money at some company, then so be it; however, this has

³⁵ Note here that I never mentioned or said anything about individual versus corporate actions. The pastors make this distinction themselves.

nothing to do with making a political statement or expressing oneself politically. He later says of collective boycotting,

Would we as a church ever do some sort of corporate public...encourage our people to boycott some sort of company? I'm not going to say never...I won't say never. We might get backed into a corner, the way our culture is going, we might get backed into a corner where it is so clear and so obvious, 'listen guys we have got to altogether make a stand here.' I think we would. I don't know of one A corporate boycott maybe? Kinda where we are politically, the way that the world is going I'm not gonna say that it would never come to a point that we believe as pastors should not get up and say something publicly.

This *specific* pastor was perhaps one of the *most* individually oriented, least politically concerned, most spiritually-minded of the pastors I interviewed. He could not care less who holds political office and feels that all social and political activities are only important or relevant in the temporal context.

Earlier in the interviews when we were talking about what his church does politically and socially, he repeatedly expressed the importance of not taking collective action and making sure instead that the church maintains respect for people who share or hold different political positions or opinions. At one point he said, "...what we don't do as a church is take corporate stands or corporate actions like protests or things like that...we do not see that as the role of the church to do...we don't get involved as a church in trying to lobby government." He also invoked the importance of respecting individual's conscience and reason for voting the way they do.

However, in response to my question about boycotting, he admits there *may* come a time when he would feel the need to do something corporately as a church to stand against something blatant, something with which they so blatantly disagree that it must be publicly addressed. Again, take note that he is still not evoking a political stance but rather a spiritual and almost collective conscience. He uses more than once the phrase "the way our culture

is going” as the reason that he feels a collective response may eventually be evoked. This idea of an eroding culture alludes to the idea that, while actions like boycotting are only temporal and not really the focus of many evangelical congregations, expressive mobilization such as boycotting and Twitter venting may one day be seen as necessary. This means he believes society is getting so depraved that there may come a point when even he would feel the need to take a public stand against it. This is key to my theory. Can these spiritually minded evangelical pastors be pushed far enough that they eventually snap into action, or were they ones that did snap into action during the 1980s and 1990s with the emergence of the Religious Right? Portions of the evangelical population have become politically active in response to certain events in society such as prohibition, abortion, and prayer in schools; however, rarely does the literature speak to the percentage of the evangelical base that was activated. Are these pastors part of the population that was mobilized or are they still maintaining a sense of “separation” from society and politics?

If this pastor says, he may be willing to make a collective congregational stance on a social or political matter, after demonstrating high levels of perceived marginalization, what then might this mean for the average evangelical churchgoer? Presumably, it would take more to push a pastor of his mindset to mobilize than it would to push an average evangelical churchgoer into public action. Therefore, if an average evangelical churchgoer feels the social marginalization these pastors display, the churchgoer is might be more likely to have already been pushed to their limit (see Djupe and Gilbert 2002, 2003 and 2008 for more on the relationship between clergy and parishioners).

One of the Rochester pastors says that my boycotting question cannot be answered with either a yes or a no. He then gives personal examples of boycotting companies as a younger

man. He boycotted because of clear racism and prejudice demonstrated by the companies. However, he said he would never organize a boycott of Target (as some evangelicals have done as a result of the transgender bathroom policy). He says of that type of boycott,

Ok, you can do that if you want, that, to me, is an irrelevant way of dealing with that particular issue. But that doesn't mean that boycotting of itself is the wrong thing to do ... so the answer? I think under certain circumstances that [boycotting] would be appropriate. Are there places I don't shop or won't invest because of their policies? Sure, but it's a boycott of one.

Here he demonstrates a striking contradiction. Earlier in the conversation he talks of boycotting companies that were clearly racist and seems to argue that this type of boycotting is useful and the kind he would support. However, he would not organize a corporate boycott against Target because he feels it would be an irrelevant means of dealing with the issue. He ends by saying that boycotting is fine, individually, but it cannot do a whole lot when it is a boycott of one. This is curious. On one hand, he says that his personal boycotts at a young age were relevant to the issue, but does not see the relevance of organizing a collective boycott. Yet, he ends by criticizing individual boycotting because it is not effective. I interpret this progression of thought as his way of saying the same thing the pastor above said: individuals can boycott because of personal conviction, but it really has little ability to influence or promote change.

The African American pastor from Rochester said boycotting was not a useful tactic. He says, "I am certain as a Christian that I have far more influence on my knees than I do in boycotting." At first, he did not seem to be strongly against boycotting but rather saw it as something trivial in the larger scheme of things. However, the more he talked about it, the more he seemed to dislike it. He said,

You know that I don't know that I would want to...there are people that work there and those people are counting on a paycheck at the end of the week to feed their

families...if I'm hurting that company at some point I'm gonna be hurting those people because that company's gonna start laying people off...people are gonna start losing their jobs...I'm not really interested in hurting people...so I'd rather pray and ask God to affect those changes.

He believes that if all he is trying to do is make a political point or social statement by boycotting a business, his actions could affect the people who work there and who have nothing to do with the political or social stances the company has taken. Therefore, in his mind, he would rather leave these changes to God and not get involved. His reasoning has little to do with politics or mobilization or marginalization. His convictions and concern for people's wellbeing simply are more important to him than any political or social statement. He did not seem to think about some of the angles other pastors had mentioned such as violating one's conscience by buying from a company due to questionable moral stances. His mind was focused on the individual people around him whom his actions would affect, and that was all that really seemed to matter to him.

Further, this Rochester African American pastor did not seem to think much about or even consider the role that boycotting played for African Americans during the Civil Rights movement. The African American pastors in South and North Carolina showed a clear appreciation for the use of boycotts. Perhaps then, this lack of acknowledgment is simply due to the fact that he lives in the North. Or perhaps his worldview is so shaped and molded by his faith that he only sees two types of people in the world (as he said during our conversation), those going down the broad path to destruction and those on the narrow path to eternal life.

This particular Black pastor did not really conform to the generally accepted understanding of what a Black Protestant should be like. Unsurprisingly, he possessed a strong understanding of the tenets of evangelicalism, but surprisingly he demonstrated

feelings of marginalization similar to what the white evangelicals demonstrated. On his survey, this pastor identified himself as Republican. Research would stipulate that this pastor is simply an aberration.

Harris (1994) and Fowler et al. (2013) admit that there was a sizable portion of Black pastors during the Civil Rights Era who did not want to involve themselves in political or social activism. In fact, there were some pastors, such as Rev. Joseph H. Jackson, who opposed the social action of the Civil Rights Era (Fowler et al. 2013). In fact, Day (2012), explains that the majority of Black churches did *not* support the social and political involvement of the church during the Civil Rights Era. These churches opposed such action for both theological and social reasons. Day points out that theological beliefs of churches such as the Church of God in Christ “interpreted justice issues as issues that would ultimately be resolved by God in the coming eschaton” (2012, 8). Hence, there has been similar theological motivations for political indifference between some white and Black evangelical churches. This is not to say that the Black churches who stayed out of the social and political realm because of social, political, institutional threat are similar to white churches. Rather, it is simply important to note that where the theologies between the two churches lined up, their political and social actions did as well.

Which leads to the question. Are there African American pastors who, like this pastor from Rochester, still ascribe to the theological convictions of the latent Black churches during the Civil Rights Era? If so, how can we uncover who these pastors and members are? Thus far, the literature has predominately accepted the notion that Black Protestants and white evangelicals should be categorized in two separate groups, and yet I contend that there may be a small, yet important, overlap in the middle somewhere. I cannot, of course,

draw any conclusions from the data provided in this dissertation that could speak to or answer this question but I am able to bring light to a new area of research.

In short, I found that the two African American pastors that demonstrated the closest theological convictions to the white pastors also shared many of their political and social convictions as well. Are there theological beliefs that transcend the historical and racial components that have shaped religion for both Blacks and whites? In other words, are issues of social justice, that seem to be missing from the list of concerns for most white evangelical pastors, also affected by differing theological beliefs and not *just* racial experience? If so, does this mean that Black Protestants who happen to share these theological beliefs are somehow less concerned about social justice as well, despite their racial experience? Or are white evangelicals simply harboring racial prejudice, which keeps them from supporting policies that Blacks tend to support?

Previous research has convincingly shown that race and religion cannot be distinguished from each other (Emerson and Smith 2000; Lincoln and Mamiya 1990). If this were unequivocally true, I should have found evangelical Black pastors who demonstrated a very different understanding of the church's political and social involvement, and strong sense of community within their own church and their own race. Instead, I found the opposite of most of these expectations. The one African American pastor who did not identify as evangelical, fulfilled my predicted answers and yet his beliefs aligned more clearly with the beliefs of the one mainstream Protestant in my interviews. Hence, the differences appeared to stem less from race and more from the fundamentals of faith. These interviews show that evangelical African American pastors and white pastors shared many similar concerns, specifically that of *individual* conversion

and *personal* outreach. Future research is required to better understand all the nuances that exist in the evangelical population, specifically regarding race. Though some work has been done on evangelicals and race, I believe this area of research nonetheless merits more attention and care.

Twitter

Social media activity has evolved into a new form of political expression. Scholars now agree that social media activism is indeed political activity (Oser, Hooghe, and Marien 2013; Feezell 2016; McCosker 2015; Theocharis 2015; Sormanen and Dutton 2015). If an individual chooses to go online and express themselves—their feelings and thoughts about a political/social issue in a public forum—they establish themselves as uniquely different from someone who does not put the same time and effort into expressing those feelings or thoughts publicly. Social media activity is a form of mobilization (Theocharis 2015) and therefore should be treated as such. I choose Twitter to analyze evangelical political expression because it is both a form of political mobilization and a highly individualistic activity. Given evangelicals' individualistic tendencies (Emerson and Smith 2000), Twitter is an ideal form for political expression.

Of the thirteen pastors interviewed, four felt Twitter was not an appropriate means for expressing one's thoughts and feelings about society and politics. The other nine offered various reasons for feeling Twitter was appropriate. Only the African American pastor in North Carolina who did *not* identify as evangelical, explicitly said he had a personal Twitter account.

In response to the question about Twitter, one pastor said, "Sure yeah...I think it's a great way to make your thoughts known... Twitter's not really meant for conversations it's

meant for statements. I think as a pastor I wouldn't have a problem posting something politically, but I can't remember the last time I have, just because I just want to stay out of the mess.” The “mess” he references, is the stereotyping that often occurs when making a simple statement online. He expresses his frustration with the division and polarization he personally experiences. It is for this reason he does not engage in politicking on Twitter.

If I say “Wow, look, Trump did something I really like!” ... all the sudden, where’s your MAGA hat? If I say “Man, Trump, you're a bonehead cuz you did this!” ...all the sudden I'm a flaming liberal. You just can't even have opinions. It's frustrating. It's an appropriate way to express things; I just wish I was more witty and snarky so I could have better opinions.

This pastor demonstrated a longing or desire to be able to express things via Twitter. However, because of the vitriol, he perceives in society and the stereotypes he expects, he avoids the situation altogether.

The African American pastor who did not identify as evangelical said, “Oh yeah. It’s part of the culture we live in today. I believe if Jesus was living today, and Peter and Paul, they’d be on Twitter. I’m on Twitter...I’m on Facebook”. The African American pastor from South Carolina felt Twitter was fine to use but had never used it himself. He says, “I mean, social media gives you a voice, a public voice, and so anytime you have a public voice it can be used for good, but a lot of bad can come from it too.” Another pastor agrees with this same sentiment. He does not use Twitter himself but feels it can be used for good or for bad. He says,

Twitter is a tremendous social network tool to send out a message...You have multiple tens of millions of people on that list. Yeah, you can influence a lot of things...Again, a car is good. But if you're gonna run over people, then that's no way to use a car...Twitter is the same way...it's a good tool...

Many of the pastors who said Twitter can be a useful way to express thoughts politically and socially expressed similar sentiments to those presented above. They did not have

personal Twitter accounts but felt that because of the large number of people who could be reached, it could be a useful tool. However, it could also be a dangerous and harmful tool. One pastor, the pastor who had already mentioned using social media a few times during our conversation, seemed to appreciate Twitter more than most of the other pastors. Again, he did not personally have an account, but he said, "I think it could be a format for sharing to the world with whatever is on your mind, political, social...I think it's great; it does give people a means of expression."

The pastors who were not keen on the use of Twitter shared similar reasons for not appreciating it. They feel Twitter has taken away personal face-to-face interactions. One pastor says, "No, no I do not. No, I don't...Communication is a challenge at best. So, the further we get away from face to face conversations the more likelihood for misunderstanding and misinterpretation...I don't think it's appropriate at all." Another pastor says he does not find Twitter an effective means of expression for him personally, but would not tell others not to use it. He reasons, "I don't think it's effective. I think that sort of thing probably emboldens and encourages people to agree with you and antagonizes people who disagree with you. You have to be really clever to change somebody's opinion or crack their armor through a tweet or something like that." Both pastors agree that this platform is simply not the platform use when engaging in sensitive conversations.

Most of the pastors had a limited knowledge of Twitter but enough knowledge to have a general opinion of it and the benefits and downfalls associated with it. I entered these interviews believing that Twitter would be a principal avenue of mobilization for evangelicals who feel marginalized. However, this was not the case among the pastors. While Twitter seemed fine in theory for some of them, only one (who did not claim to be

evangelical), had his own Twitter account. Apparently, the marginalization they feel has not led them to use Twitter as a means of expression.

This does not mean, however, that no evangelicals are mobilized on Twitter. A few pastors did mention that their congregants can be quite active on Twitter and other social media platforms. Some of these pastors said they have challenged congregants because of the poor “testimony” they thought their social media activity displayed. One pastor says, “I’m not opposed to the use of technology whenever it comes to exercising your opinions I just think you gotta do it in a decent way.” At this point, he proceeds to say that his congregants have been and can be very active on Twitter, but that he must keep an eye on their online presence.

This tells me that although the pastors may refrain from tweeting for various reasons, the perceived social marginalization apparent in their answers may be felt even more strongly by their congregants. This leads me to believe that these congregants, unconstrained by some of the existential pressures facing pastors (Crawford and Olson 2001), are more likely to publicly express themselves and mobilize for political action. Since social media has become a significant avenue for this type of expression and mobilization, we should expect to see more and more evangelicals using it in the years ahead.

Conclusion

Although I was only able to interview a small selection of pastors, several key findings emerge. Perhaps the most striking finding is that African American clergy have some similar fears, concerns, and feelings of marginalization as white evangelicals. As much of the previous literature confirms, they do not have to share political convictions with white

evangelicals to share their spiritual convictions. However, I also found that theological differences, rather than racial differences, appeared more integral to each pastor's approach to collective political involvement. Though the data is too limited in allowing me to generalize these findings, I do believe that there is more work to be done in this area of race and religion. Scholars, notably Emerson and Smith (2000), Harris (1999), Jones and Francis (2012) and Lincoln and Mamiya (1990), show that race is unequivocally yoked with religion. While I do not dispute these findings, I do contend that my research shows there may be a yet unstudied "middle-ground." What of the racially mixed evangelical churches? Are there vital theological differences between white and Black evangelicals that contribute to their different political and social actions or, as most research shows, is race the only variable causing a difference?

Again, as I said during a lengthy discussion of this very topic earlier in the chapter, I was only able to interview three Black pastors. It is possible that these pastors are an aberration from the norm. Alternatively, there may be an understudied and unrepresented group of Black evangelicals in the United States, who perhaps go to racially heterogeneous congregations. Wadsworth (2012) noted the growing trend within the evangelical population to engage in congregational racial blending. What contributes to this willingness to attend these racially diverse congregations? Wadsworth notes various differing motivations. One motivation she did not address was theological agreement. Some African American evangelicals may feel that their theological beliefs are better represented in a church that is not racially homogeneous. Would I find that these Black evangelicals demonstrate similar feelings of marginalization and concern for society? They may not fit what the media and society portray as evangelical (white, southern, poor,

Republican), but they also may not fit in with the typical African American Protestant (Black, Democratic). I say this with the acknowledgment that these are mere musings that require much further research to speak to with any authority.

My findings also provide support for my theoretical assumption that evangelicals today are feeling socially marginalized. Most of the pastors I interviewed articulated such feelings. Many of them seemed keenly concerned about the social stereotypes and assumptions applied to them because of their religious beliefs. Many of the pastors expressed concern about society because they see values and norms being changed. Most of them conveyed consternation about the direction society is headed and the future. They all pointedly drew the conversation back to their commitment to sharing the Gospel as their central calling.

While I found that most of the pastors feel marginalized, I did not find evidence that these feelings have led to any kind of sustained social or political action apart from voting. All the pastors were happy to engage in the political process using conventional methods of participation, such as voting or writing a representative. This finding is intriguing given the perceived social marginalization I found; however, it also makes sense. These pastors displayed relatively high levels of both internal and external efficacy. They believe conventional political participation is useful since they believe such participation can have an impact.

This finding provides support for my theory that evangelicals are feeling socially marginalized while still possessing a sense of political efficacy and access. I believe this perceived social marginalization is affecting them, and I believe it played a part in Donald

Trump's election. They may feel that their last hope is a King Cyrus³⁶ of sorts, an ungodly, immoral individual whom God uses to protect His people. This "Cyrus" is being personified in Trump (Gordon 2017). Few of the pastors seemed enamored with Donald Trump personally, and none of them held him in high regard, but a few of them did express thankfulness for some room to breathe socially and politically. Others felt they finally had someone in office who could speak on their behalf, something that evangelicals have felt about previous presidents such as Carter, George Bush, George W. Bush and to an extent, Reagan.

I did not find evidence that these pastors are feeling marginalized because of racial or demographic concerns. However, given the taboo nature of such feelings, feelings of this nature are less likely to manifest in this form of research. I did not find as much difference between white and Black pastors, however, which was unexpected. I did find that white pastors were less likely to address race or racial issues as a significant concern in comparison to Black pastors.

I think one of the most important takeaways from these interviews is this: if these pastors are feeling marginalized, worried, and out of place, their congregants *may well be* feeling similarly, and perhaps with a higher intensity. Quite a few pastors alluded to this possibility as well. Scholars should be alert in the years to come for evangelicals mobilizing using new tactics, especially social media and boycotting, despite the twin emphasis evangelical theology places on individual salvation and skepticism of all things temporal.³⁷

³⁶ The Bible talks about King Cyrus of Persia in 2 Chronicles and a few other books. In the biblical account, he was a secular and immoral king whom God raised up to do good for and protect the Jews. The Bible says that God moved in his heart to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

³⁷ I discuss this in more detail during my chapter on boycotting, but the Chick-fil-A controversy is a prime example of this type of collective activation.

While there is still much to be uncovered and discovered, these interviews provide some useful insights into the mind of evangelical clergy in 2017/2018. The media's portrayal of an "evangelical" is not necessarily representative of all evangelicals. Instead, evangelicals are diverse in many ways, as we should expect of a group that comprises at least a quarter of the U.S. population (Pew Research Center 2015a; 2015b). Further, not all evangelicals are white. There are Black evangelicals who share some of the same concerns about society as white evangelicals. What does this mean moving forward? As a few of the pastors said, if they think things get *bad enough*, which they emphasized was highly possible given the direction they see society heading, they may be forced to take a collective, public stand. Notwithstanding the still-existent Religious Right, there are many evangelicals who have never mobilized publicly. The question then is this: what happens when the quiet, reticent portion of the evangelical population begins to mobilize?

CHAPTER 5

POLITICAL CONSUMERISM: THE NEW OLD TACTIC?

"[T]he market is turned into a powerful discursive terrain where commodities not only embody but also mediate religious ideals and qualities."

--- Echchaibi, 2012, p. 33

When you hear the word “chicken” what do you think of? You probably think of a lot of things: chicken wings, football, food, a bird, animal rights, KFC, Chick-fil-A, or an easy dinner. You probably *do not* think of marginalization, evangelicals, LGBTQ rights, and mobilization. Yet, chicken, or any other neutral commodity, can symbolize these concepts and more. Research shows a growing trend of individuals expressing their values and ideologies through what they consume (Hannon 2013; Holzer 2006; Michelletti 2003; Michelletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2008; Neilson 2012). In this chapter, I analyze how “chicken” became a symbol of hate and discrimination, or alternatively a symbol of free speech and Biblical values, and how this case represents an unstudied segment of evangelical collective action. I also analyze the way that a popular supermarket became involved in a war of values.

Political consumerism is the intentional buying of a product or the intentional rejection of a product for political or social reasons. In layman’s terms, political consumerism is boycotting or buycotting a company. Anyone can engage in political consumerism. Boycotting is not, in and of itself, a collective act, even though it has been used as a form of collective action. Individuals can engage in a boycott of one. This makes political

consumerism one of the most individualistic, and yet potentially collective, forms of political participation available to citizens (Newman and Bartels 2011).

Micheletti (2003) creates an entirely new concept to categorize political consumerism: *individualized collective action*. Micheletti challenges the long-standing assumption in political science that political participation *is* group-oriented behavior. She distinguishes between individualized collective action and "our more common notion of political participation, here called collectivist collective action" (2003, 1). Scholars find that citizens of Western societies are shifting away from the traditional forms of political involvement to more "flexible, network-oriented, and applied" forms of political engagement (2003, 6). Micheletti coins the term *individualized collective action* to capture these new forms of political and collective, yet individualized, action. She defines it as "the practice of responsibility-taking through the creation of everyday settings on the part of citizens alone or together with others to deal with problems which they believe are affecting what they identify as the good life" (2003, 7).

Political consumerism, then, is one form of *individualized collective action*. Micheletti defines political consumerism as "actions by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices" (2003, 2). Political consumerism provides a way for citizens to express their dislike of policy issues or societal issues without having to use conventional political participation.

Consumption as a Political Act

Political consumerism, as defined by one of the leading scholars in this field, is merely the "use of the market as an arena for politics" (Micheletti and Stolle 2008, 750). Micheletti and Stolle (2008) contend that "shopping is now an established part of social justice

activism" (749). When people use the market to express their political concerns either through boycotts or “buycotts” they are engaging in *political consumerism* (Micheletti 2003; 2010; Michelletti, Follesdal, and Stolle 2008; Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti 2005).

There has been some debate among academics about whether *political consumerism* is truly a form of political participation. Micheletti (2003; 2010) argues that it is, and Newman and Bartels (2011) find that political consumerism is an “individualistic” and “high-initiative” form of political participation. Micheletti (2003) claims that this type---political consumerism---of political mobilization is the result of increasing micro-level politics and is a distinct form of political participation, or, as she calls it, *individualized collective action* (2003).

Scholars agree that many countries are experiencing an increase in political consumerism (Copeland 2014; Neilson 2012; Neilson and Paxton 2010; Friedman 1985; Strømsnes 2009). Zukin et al. (2006) find that political consumerism is the most commonly used form of political participation second only to voting. Inglehart’s (1977; 2015) theory of post-materialism is cited as one leading explanation for the increase in alternative forms of political participation (Copeland 2014). In a post-materialist society, citizens are more concerned about promoting non-material, value-oriented issues, which generally fall within the political spectrum (2014).

The three primary forms of political consumerism are boycott and buycott and discursive consumerism. Hitherto, boycotting has been the primary form of political consumerism and is the oldest form of political consumerism (Friedman 1999; Michelletti 2003; 2008). Boycotting is the deliberate rejection of a product for social or political reasons. It is “an attempt by one or more parties to achieve certain objectives by urging

individual consumers to refrain from making selected purchases in the marketplace” or “the intentional buying or abstention from buying specific products for political, social, or ethical purposes” (Newman and Bartels 2011). Consumer boycotting has frequently been used in the United States and other countries as a form of political activism and has been “very important for people marginalized in conventional politics” (Micheletti 2008, 751). Activists who organize and stimulate these boycotts find boycotts incredibly difficult to frame and organize (Friedman 2003; Micheletti 2008). The financial impact of boycotts is debatable (Micheletti 2008, see also Koku and Springer 1997; Smith 2003; Vogel 2005).

Political consumerism can only affect change if it is done collectively (Hannon 2013). Individuals can engage in political consumerism but rarely if ever is their individual choice to consume or abstain going to cause corporate change. Since boycotts are most successful when done collectively, the media plays a crucial role in organizing and involving individuals by making individuals feel like they are part of something bigger (Hannon 2013). Media helps frame an individual choice “as collective action, potentially motivating participation either because boycotters would interpret the participation of others as normative behavior, or because the participation of others would provide reassurance of a boycott’s efficacy” (Neilson 2012, 216).

Boycotting is the intentional buying of a product for social and political reasons. Hannon argues that boycotting is moving from the periphery to the forefront as a form of activism. It is less contentious than boycotting and easier to mobilize (Hannon 2013; Micheletti 2008). Proponents of boycotting say that it is a constructive way to show support for an issue by allowing consumers to “consume and support causes at the same time” (Micheletti 2008, 752). Also, boycotts are not as beholden to the media for collective

stimulation and action as boycotts. They can be organized through word of mouth, social media and local networks (Hannon 2013).

Boycotting and buycotting are the same action with a different motivation. In other words, in most cases, they are both the result of an individual purchase transference from one place to another (Hannon 2013). Hence, boycotting a place means, by default, buycotting another place (2013). "The key nuance is, therefore, going to reside in the intent of the action: is an individual seeking to punish a company or reward it?" (62-63).

The third form of political consumerism is "discursive political consumerism" (Micheletti 2008). This form of consumerism focuses on other vulnerable aspects of business such as their brand name, reputation, and logo (2008). It uses a "variety of non-economic tools to convince the public and/or business leaders that social responsibility is good for the corporate world" (2008, 753). I do not test this form of political consumerism in this dissertation, though it could provide some interesting insight for future research.

These forms of political consumerism do more than push for corporate change or justice; they also create an avenue of *expression* for individuals who want to make a statement about themselves through consumption. Thus, consumption is as much an extension of one's identity as political action (Hannon 2013). Some argue that individuals are consuming the label rather than the product (2013). However, "[the] bulk of mundane consumption is normally outside the area for reflective choice" (Jacobsen and Dulsrud 2007, 478).

While Jacobsen and Dulsrud's statement is true, Hannon counters: "a reflexive choice is still being made to purchase one item over another. Even without reflection, one is choosing to participate in consumption rather than to abstain and to consume product X

over product Y. Agency is being exercised, and in some cases, consumption can be moved to inhabiting a reflective space" (Hannaon 2013, 58). Consumption, whether it is intentional or not, makes a statement about who an individual is: an ice cream person or a cake person, an Apple person or a Samsung person (2013). Political consumerism, therefore, is just a step above mundane consumerism. It is the active choice between products, not because of price or aesthetic appeal, but because of one's political leanings and their desire to affect change and express their identity through the consumption of one product and abstention from another (Hannon 2013).

Thus, consumption has turned into a way for individuals to express themselves and connect themselves to a public identity. "Consumption is ... an external marker of internal beliefs. What and how an individual consumes not only builds an image of who they are, but how others should interact with them" (2013, 48). Where an individual consumes creates an identity for who they are and places them in a pre-conceptualized community while also serving as an "external declaration of belief" (48). Hence, political consumerism provides the perfect environment of expression for those who possess a collective identity and desire to express their connection to that collective identity through consumption.

Scholars find that a consumer's religion is an important variable influencing individuals to engage in political consumerism (Delener 1994; Lorentzen 1980; Hirschman 1991; 1982; Sheth 1981; Swimberghe, Flurry, and Parker 2011; Vitell 2009; Vitell, Paolillo, and Singh 2006; Vitell, Singh, and Paolillo 2007; Wilkes, Burnett and Howell 1986). "Consumption, therefore, provides the venue through which religious individuals can outwardly declare their beliefs" (Hannon 2013, 48). Market goods have begun to take on a religious meaning (Echchaibi 2012; Hannon 2013). Hannon distinguishes between goods

that are expressly religious, such as Veggie Tales or the Passion of the Christ, and those goods that made for secular consumption but somehow imbued with religious qualities (2013, 52). For example, Chick-fil-A, an organization founded and run by Christians, is an emblem of traditional Christian values. Thus, individuals can make a public statement about their values, their religious convictions, and identity, both collective and individual, simply by eating a chicken sandwich. The assumption of religious value, bolstered by media narrative, means consuming a product somewhere is now imbued with “reverent quality and transform[s] a trivial act of consumption into a committed act of faith” (Echchaibi 2012, 32). “Consumption, therefore, provides the venue through which religious individuals can outwardly declare their beliefs” (Hannon 2013, 48).

Hannon (2013) posits that “consumption is a generative space in which individuals can express religious belief within modernity” (1). She performs a case study of the Chick-fil-A controversy with special attention given to Facebook posts regarding the controversy. She argues that consumers make individual and communal identity construction through what they choose to consume. Consumers express their values and identity through what they consume.

The literature provides conclusive support that political consumerism is indeed a form of political mobilization. Also, research shows that alienation, a key component of marginalization, increases support for nontraditional forms of political participation such as demonstrations or *boycotts* (Southwell 1985; Opp 1990; Weakliem and Borch 2006). I chose political consumerism as an indicator for my theory because of its unique position in politics and society. It is both political and social, collective and individual, expressive and impactful. Since I am interested in expressive extra-institutional forms of political

mobilization in response to *social* marginalization, political consumerism is the ideal indicator of marginalization because of social strain over politically charged social issues. Political consumerism is not a conventional form of political participation (hence the scholarly debate about its place in politics), which makes it an alternative form of participation and a valid implication of my theoretical argument. Further, it provides the ideal set of circumstances to test social constructionism's necessary conditions for collective action. It is also a form of expression, and I am interested in evangelicals' expressive mobilization as a form of identity claiming. Finally, I chose political consumerism as an indicator for my theory because it allows me to examine whether specific mechanisms are sufficient to stimulate evangelicals into *collective* action.

Data and Methods

How does an unpleasant *feeling* translate into social and political collective action? What causal mechanisms are crucial to this transition? I contend that for evangelicals, a *catalyst event* must present itself. This event acts as a catalyst for evangelical response. However, without the appropriate elite framing within the cultural context to stir up a sense of collective identity around a constructed emotion, evangelicals would merely grumble and mobilize individually rather than mobilize collectively. There are, of course, more moving parts here than a single case or a small number of cases will allow me to examine. So the results that follow are suggestive at best of a causal chain.

What is a catalyst event? It is an event that stirs up emotions and reactions and draws media attention, critique and support. The event can be purely political such as a Supreme Court case or a new political policy. However, it can also be social—Starbucks hires or fires a gay President. A corporation can publish a politically or socially charged

commercial, pull a product or introduce a product for political and social reasons, or make a public statement for those very same reasons. These events can cause a reaction, depending on how much of a reaction the media and elites want. Of course, in today's social media context, sometimes grassroots reactions on social media force elite and media attention.

A catalyst event provides an avenue for response. Since evangelicals generally support the *status quo*, incidents that threaten their preferred status quo (and perhaps their historical social and cultural dominance) cause evangelicals to feel the need to mobilize. However, just because an event occurs does not mean that evangelicals will automatically engage in collective mobilization. Only under specific circumstances will evangelicals engage in collective mobilization. Using the four elements of social constructionism, and Snow and Benford's (1988) three-step process to collective action, I set up the following chain:

A group feels socially marginalized and alienated → Catalyst event → Increasing feelings of marginalization → Social entrepreneurs frame the event, and the relevant out-group → Social entrepreneurs stir up emotional strain using cultural symbols, phrases, etc. → Entrepreneurs suggest a viable solution to the problem and encourage participation and mobilization → Group engages in collective action in response to elite mobilization.

I propose five different hypotheses which I test using two cases studies. I derive these hypotheses from the social constructionist theory of social movements and the literature on political consumerism.

H1: A catalyst event is a necessary condition for evangelical collective mobilization.

A catalyst event can be anything from a Supreme Court Case to a corporate statement—

the key attribute being the event draws attention to some social or political issue relevant to evangelicals. The social or political issue need not be new, although it may be. Regardless, the catalyst event, by drawing attention to the issue provides evangelicals with the option of responding or remaining neutral and silent.

H2: Elite mobilization and framing according to the cultural milieu is a necessary condition for evangelical collective mobilization.

Elite mobilization is a little easier to define. Elites are individuals who hold a position of power in whatever domain in which they exist. This position provides them with a platform to speak and influence, and resources to draw upon when needed. Lindsay (2008) conducted an in-depth field research study of evangelical elites. He claims that elites “provide critical resources, produce cultural goods, and facilitate the legitimation of a given movement to external audiences” (64, see also McCarthy and Zald 1997; Peterson and Berger 1975; Tilly 2006). Elites are respected by the community they speak for and represent; therefore, their word means something. Elites can be individuals and/or organizations that speak on behalf of evangelicals.

H3: A coherent collective identity, predicated upon an in-group/out-group frame, is a necessary condition for evangelical mobilization.

A coherent collective identity provides members with a common goal and common cognitive framework (Melucci 1988). Individuals feel a connection to and desire to be a part of this collective membership. I add “predicated upon an in-group/out-group frame” because of the difficulty of identifying a *feeling* of “collective identity” by assessing boycotts. Thus, based on Smith's subcultural identity theory and his assertion that evangelicals' collective identity grows stronger because of a clearly defined “they,” the presence of a clear “out-group” is a proxy for evangelical collective identity. If there is no

clear out-group in any example, I consider a coherent collective identity absent.

H4: Social marginalization is a necessary condition needed for collective action.

I am most interested in the presence and absence of this variable. Social marginalization is a feeling of social threat and strain, coupled with frustration and feelings of societal rejection. This is not predicated upon a feeling of low political efficacy or feeling like one has no access to or influence on government policy; instead, it stems from the societal marginalization of valued norms and issues. Though I cannot access the minds and psyche of evangelicals to show indisputable evidence of these feelings, I am able to gain insight into the motivations of their actions by assessing the frames and rhetoric used by elites (and in a few circumstances the evangelicals themselves) to motivate the evangelicals into action. If they utilize certain phrases and words, invoking any assumed social strain, this is evidence of assumed societal strain in their culture. Further, I infer from events and the societal trends at the time of the boycott the probable level of strain that evangelicals are feeling at the time. Presumably, the higher the feeling of strain the more likely they are to mobilize. I believe that collective political consumerism itself is evidence of feelings of social strain/marginalization and am not alone in this assumption.³⁸

H5: All four hypotheses combined are sufficient for evangelical collective mobilization.

This final hypothesis is simple and does not need to be defined since it is the combination of the four previous concepts that I just defined. If the four previous variables are satisfied, then I expect that evangelicals will indeed engage in political consumerism. My analysis tests the veracity of these hypotheses based on real-world occurrences. Perhaps evangelicals have collectively boycotted/buycotted in the absence of one or two of these

³⁸ Evangelical emotions are something I uncover with more nuance in the next chapter.

hypotheses; hopefully, my analysis can uncover such circumstances. Either way, this analysis sheds new light on evangelical mobilization.

Data and Methods

Most research on political consumerism has been theoretical, qualitative and/or relies heavily on survey data. Because of the lack of extensive empirical data, I rely on a variety of different data sources that allow causal process tracing to test my hypotheses. Using the General Social Survey (GSS) codebook, I first provide a descriptive snapshot analysis of evangelical boycotting trends during the two years that GSS asked questions about boycotting—2004 and 2014.

There are only a *few* cases of evangelical *collective* political consumerism available to analyze, which, in and of itself says something. Most collective evangelical boycotts were started, promoted and carried out by the same set of evangelical elites: The Southern Baptist Convention and the American Family Association (AFA). I use process tracing to analyze the mechanisms surrounding boycotts, in addition to more deeply analyzing the one evangelical boycott launched in recent American history. These boycotting and boycott examples provide support for my theory of evangelical social marginalization and mobilization while leaving the door open for future research and new questions. Using process tracing, as well as an in-depth analysis of the cases through the lens of the hypotheses, I can analyze the moving parts of the theory.

ANES and GSS Data

I believe, based on other scholar's previous findings and on Micheletti's conception of individualistic collective action, that evangelicals are involved in political consumerism primarily at the individual level (Shamir and Ben-Porat, 2007; Swimberghe, Flurry, and

Parker 2011; Lorentzen 1980; Sheth 1981; Vitell 2009; Vitell, Paolillo, and Singh 2006; Vitell, Singh, and Paolillo 2007).

An ANES survey recently included two questions about political consumerism in a 2016 Pilot Study. The study asked 1200 people “In the last 12 months, have you bought a certain product or service because of the social or political values of the company that provides it, or have you not done that in the past 12 months?” followed by the same question about boycotting. The unique aspect of this question is that it touches on *values* rather than pure partisanship or political reasons. A recent study on political consumerism used this dataset, in conjunction with two original datasets, to pinpoint the variables with the most influence on one's propensity to engage in political consumerism. Endres and Panagopoulos (2017) find that Democrats are more likely to engage in political consumerism than Republicans and find that political knowledge, political interest, and ideological intensity are all positively related to political consumerism. They did not, however, include a variable for religion.

Using their same dataset but adding in a variable for religion, I assess some descriptive characteristics of evangelicals and political consumerism. I use a question about being "born again" as my proxy for evangelicalism. If the respondent answered yes to being born again, they are considered evangelical, and if they answered no they are not considered evangelical. The percentage of evangelicals in the whole group who also answered yes to either boycotting or buycotting in the past 12 months is 10.8%. A total of 26.8% of the evangelical respondents engaged in political consumerism, which is over 10% less than the overall total percentage of participants at 39%. Evangelicals also made up 27% of the total number of respondents who did engage in political consumerism.

There are some demographic differences in the boycotting evangelical population. As the chart shows, whites make up the most considerable portion of the 10% of evangelicals who did engage in political consumerism, followed by Blacks, Hispanics, and others. However, proportionally Black evangelicals and white evangelicals engaged in political consumerism at the same rate. For white and Black evangelicals, 37% of them engaged in political consumerism, while members who identified as other were the most active at 41%.

Percentage of Evangelicals Who Engaged in Political Consumerism in 2015

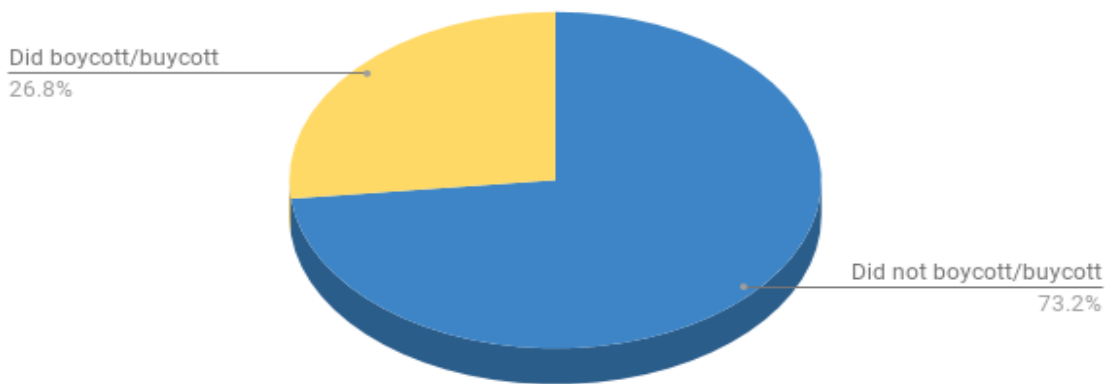


Figure 5.1 Percentage of Evangelicals Who Engaged in Political Consumerism in 2015

Hispanic evangelicals were the least active with only 30% of them engaging in political consumerism. After running a basic probit model with race and evangelicalism as the two independent variables and political consumerism as the independent variable, the only variable that showed any statistical significance was the "other" category in race. Thus, at least for 2016, evangelicalism seems to have little statistical effect on the probability of an individual engaging in political consumerism.

Evangelical Political Consumerism in 2015 by Race

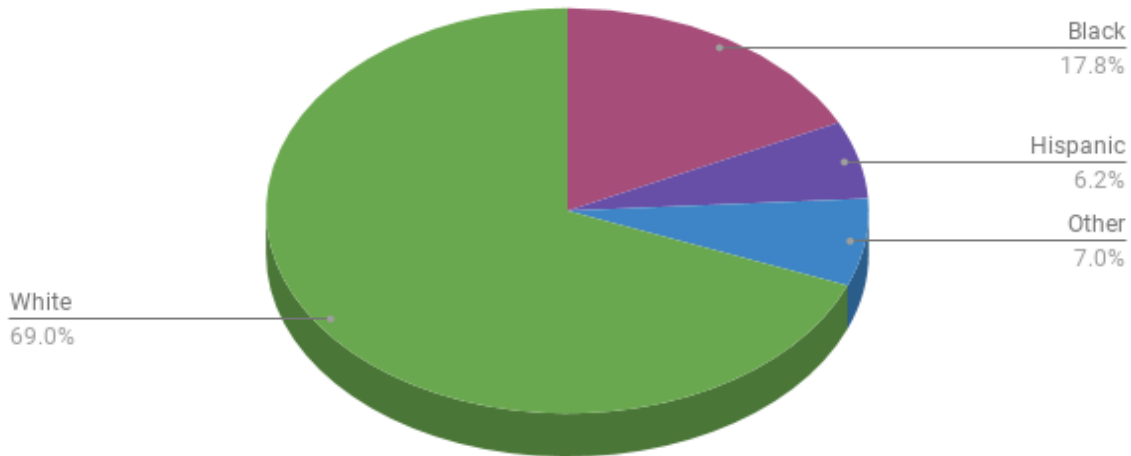


Figure 5.2 Evangelical Political Consumerism in 2015 by Race

The information provided in the figures is limited and supplies a mere snapshot of evangelical involvement. Ergo, this chapter is not designed to analyze individual expression but rather collective expression. I believe that evangelicals are willing to mobilize collectively, given a specific set of circumstances; however, because of their focus on the individual, occasions of evangelical collective action are few and far between. When a group feels unappreciated and marginalized, they respond; however, this response is contingent upon elite framing and elite manipulation (Dicsh 2011; Goffman 1974). Elites are the glue that connect feelings of marginalization to mobilization.³⁹

³⁹ Many times, elites are also responsible for stirring up or creating feelings of marginalization (Benford and Snow 2000; Pizmony-Levy and Ponce 2013; Slothuus and Vreese 2010).

Political Consumerism: Boycotts

Evangelicals have launched a few boycotts over the past few decades. I analyze a boycott launched and carried out by the American Family Association (AFA). I analyze boycott cases by the AFA because it is one of the only evangelical organizations to boycott with media coverage consistently. I cannot analyze boycotts that did not receive notable media coverage.

Using the Lexus Nexis (now called Lexis Uni) All News search, I searched for keywords and phrases such as "boycott," "evangelical" and "political consumerism" to assess the frequency of news articles discussing evangelical boycotts. Combing through the articles, I discovered that there have been a few, though not an abundant, number of evangelical boycotts. Launching a successful boycott is a strenuous and challenging process for elites, given the amount of framing and stimulation needed to fully involve enough people. I also learned that most of the evangelical boycotts launched in recent history have been launched by the same few evangelical organizations. Namely, the AFA and the Southern Baptist Convention. Neither of these organizations is explicitly political but because of their stances on social (politically charged social) issues, have waded into political waters through this form of expressive mobilization. These are not the only two evangelical organizations in America, but they are the two that seemed most adamantly involved in political boycotting instead of focusing exclusively on individual mission-oriented evangelical work.⁴⁰ That is not to say that these are the *only* two evangelical organizations engaged in politics or political action; instead, these are the primary

⁴⁰ Evangelicals for Social Action, The Christian Embassy, the Center for Faith and Work, and the National Christian Foundation are a few examples of Christian organizations that engage in primarily spiritual and mission-oriented action.

organizations engaging in the expressive form of political mobilization that I am interested in testing.

After further research, I found that the single Southern Baptist Convention boycott was initially launched by the AFA. Thus, it became apparent that most of the nationally known and media covered evangelical boycotts in recent history are and have been sponsored by the AFA.⁴¹ In my analysis then, I overlay one AFA sponsored boycott against the social constructionist theory to identify the necessary and sufficient conditions of evangelical mobilization better. I select the only current boycott, which also happens to be their most successful boycott ever. Unfortunately, due to data limitations, I am confined to the one current boycott.

The American Family Association (AFA)

The American Family Association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, created in 1977 by Donald E. Wildmon, pastor of First United Methodist Church in South Haven, Mississippi. It is not a political organization and promotes no overt political agenda but does have a clear evangelical set of doctrinal values. The organization is engaged in various kinds of activities. The AFA has its own radio show and online coffee shop that sells ground coffee. The ad on the front of coffee shop webpage says, “When you purchase American Family Coffee, you are supporting our parent organization, American Family Association whose goal is to restore a strong sense of biblical values to American public life” (Americanfamilycoffee.net). Hence, this otherwise mundane item is imbued with a sense of morality and family values. I am not sure how purchasing this coffee accomplishes their stated goals, but this is the sentiment presented nonetheless.

⁴¹ I later came across a boycott launched by Focus on the Family, but it was a boycott that the AFA was also involved in and therefore does not change my research.

The AFA also has an online store, a journal and a studio. They started two tangential organizations called One Million Moms and One Million Dads⁴² whose goal is to activate and connect evangelical dads and moms across the country to speak out against "trash on TV." The first lines used in the One Million Moms "who we are" page is telling. "Mom, are you fed up with the filth many segments of our society, especially the entertainment media, are throwing at our children? Are you tired of all the negative influences our children are forced to contend with? If so, we urge you to become a member of OneMillionMoms.com" (OneMillionMoms.com). The language is indicative of the framing and emotional manipulation prevalent in the language assessed below. Evangelicals, holding a historically dominant social and political position in society must feel that their position is being threatened.

According to the parent organization (AFA.net):

The mission of the American Family Association is to inform, equip, and activate individuals to strengthen the moral foundations of American culture, and give aid to the church here and abroad in its task of fulfilling the Great Commission.

Their philosophical statement gives more insight into their motivations and focus:

The American Family Association believes that God has communicated absolute truth to mankind and that all people are subject to the authority of God's Word at all times. Therefore AFA believes that a culture based on biblical truth best serves the well-being of our nation and our families, in accordance with the vision of our founding documents; and that personal transformation through the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the greatest agent of biblical change in any culture.

Note the culturally appropriated language used. The AFA stresses the importance of *personal transformation* through the gospel and that this is the *greatest* agent of Biblical change. The irony, of course, is that the AFA is not an organization engaged exclusively

⁴² In the "who we are" description of One Million Dads, the word conservative is used to describe their organization, this is not the case with the AFA or One Million Moms.

in individual mission oriented evangelicalism. Thus, even though the AFA is dependent on collective involvement and action, they cater to this mindset focused on individual salvation by using keywords and phrases that assuage any skepticism of intent that their individualist readers and potential members might have.

The AFA professes to use activism to preserve: "Marriage and the Family," "Decency and Morality," "Sanctity of Human Life," "Stewardship" and "Media Integrity" (AFA.net). This focus on evangelical moral doctrine rather than *overtly* conservative ideology is important for my theory since I am interested in evangelical mobilization, not just Christian Right mobilization. Further, they state that they intend to:

1. Restrain evil by exposing the works of darkness
2. Promote virtue by upholding in culture that which is right, true and good according to Scripture
3. Convince individuals of sin and challenge them to seek Christ's grace and forgiveness
4. Motivate people to take a stand on cultural and moral issues at the local, state and national levels
5. Encourage Christians to bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ as they live their lives before the world (AFA.net)

Again, line three draws the attention back to the individual and personal conversion. This continued focus on the individual is further evidence of the AFA's evangelical persuasion and of their keen knowledge of their base. Most of these goals are painted in a positive light and with the attempt to instill hope and direction in an otherwise, potentially frustrated and marginalized, population.

AFA activism, therefore, is done with the intent of trying to preserve (and promote) what they perceive to be the *status quo* of marriage and family, decency and morality, the sanctity of human life, stewardship and media integrity. They cannot *preserve* something they believe does not already exist in some capacity. Hence, they feel they are preserving

the *status quo* from cultural and societal changes. The website explains why they engage in activism.

We believe in holding accountable companies that sponsor programs attacking traditional family values. We also believe in commending those companies that act responsibly regarding the programs they support.

It is AFA's goal to be a champion of Christian activism. If you are alarmed by the increasing ungodliness and depravity assaulting our nation, tired of cursing the darkness, and ready to light a bonfire, please join us. Do it for your children and grandchildren. (AFA.net)

The AFA uses culturally specific language here. First, they call attention to their preferred form of activism: political consumerism. They then frame their call to action by first promoting the positive image of Christianity and then drawing upon assumed feelings of social strain amongst their target population.⁴³ Key phrases like "alarmed by increasing ungodliness" or "depravity assaulting our nation" paint the picture of an embattled evangelical population with nowhere to turn. They draw a broad picture of the problems facing our country here. They then say, "tired of cursing the darkness" and "ready to light a bonfire." This imagery is powerful, especially for their target population. They play upon assumed feelings of frustration and angst that their constituency is feeling stuck as if their only form of release for their frustration is to curse the darkness. They then answer the problem with a solution of "lighting the bonfire" by joining their organization. Finally, they end with perhaps the most powerful call to action, act for your children and your grandchildren! Evangelicals, the ones I interviewed at least, express concern for the future, specifically for their children and grandchildren. If indeed they feel a growing sense of

⁴³ Also note that they never feel the need to define what "traditional family values" are, as it assumed that their target population is aware of their meaning and the perceived threat against these "values."

social strain, utilizing fear of the future to motivate evangelicals into action is a brilliant move by the AFA social entrepreneurs.

The AFA also tries to alleviate any worries for the portion of their Christian base who feel that boycotting is unbiblical. Their Vice-President, Mr. Vitagliano, writes a piece called “objections answered” to assuage some of these concerns. He starts out by saying the following:

Since it began in 1977, AFA has been known for its boycotts. However, some Christians believe such a tactic is, well, not very Christian.

First, let me put forth a simple definition of what I mean by the word *boycott*. In its simplest form, a boycott involves the intentional withholding of money from a business of which you disapprove. It is usually used as an instrument of protest, persuasion, or even economic coercion (Vitagliano).

This definition is helpful for my research in that the AFA defines boycotts in the same way that I define boycotts. They are a form of expression and protest and potential means for change. Mr. Vitagliano proceeds to explain *why* the AFA participates in boycotts. He, again, invokes the individualistic mindset of personal evangelism so prevalent in his culture.

Christians are called to warn unbelievers that “the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience” ([Eph. 5:6](#)). Is there something wrong with indicating to sinners what exactly constitutes their disobedience?

There are many ways for the church to carry out this assignment. AFA believes boycotts are one of those ways. For example, when AFA initiated a boycott of Movie Gallery more than a decade ago, it was triggered by the company’s practice of renting and selling hardcore pornographic videos.

In any case, AFA merely asks companies to remain *neutral* on controversial cultural issues. We aren’t asking them to side with us on abortion, for example, but we *are* asking companies not to fund Planned Parenthood. We aren’t asking businesses to uphold the biblical model of natural marriage, but we *are* asking companies not to give money to gay activist groups that call Christians bigots.

Hence, the AFA sees their actions as "evangelical" in some way. They are helping point out sin in people's lives, and therefore promoting the gospel by boycotting. They establish that they are not trying to force corporations to support Christian values but rather to remain neutral. Further, they add that they do not want companies giving money to the "out-group," the gay activist groups, who are involved with calling Christian bigots. Hence, they are protecting evangelicals from what they see as further social marginalization.

Mr. Vitagliano also defines what the AFA considers a successful boycott.

The fact is AFA does not primarily call for a boycott in order to hurt a company's pocketbook. This is why AFA goes out of its way to target *huge* corporations, not the mom and pop grocery store on the corner. Disney. Pepsi. Ford. Home Depot. Such behemoths are often impervious to financial damage from boycotts – and AFA knows it.

This differentiation is essential. I spoke with the head of the activism division of the AFA, and he was rather confused that I had found a decent number of AFA boycotts online. In fact, he could only list a few of which he was aware. He warned me that many news reports call a lot of AFA activism boycotting, when in fact there was no boycott. The AFA frequently petitions its members to speak out or contact businesses with objectionable value stances; however, it rarely calls on its members to intentionally boycott, and when it does, it is only for those businesses that are big enough to remain relatively financially unaffected by the boycott. Hence, there are only a few *boycotts* that the AFA has sponsored. This AFA executive went on to inform me that when the AFA does sponsor a boycott, they try to do so organically. In other words, they simply call on their members to boycott and let their members disseminate or spread the message to others. They do not advertise the boycott or promote the boycott outside of their member base. Thus, any involvement by

non-members in an AFA boycott is grassroots and stimulated by person-to-person contact.⁴⁴ Mr. Vitagliano proceeds to explain what a successful boycott is for the AFA.

We have had some tremendous successes with the use of boycotts, as the current effort against Target demonstrates. Some of our boycotts were actually settled behind the scenes and thus could not be publicly touted as victories. And some of AFA's boycotts met with far less success on the financial level.

Then why call the boycott? AFA uses the pocketbook to accomplish two things: (1) Get the attention of the offending company in order to start a dialogue with the decision makers; and (2) get the attention of the public in order to begin a dialogue with our neighbors in the community over the main issue of contention.

The final paragraph explains that the AFA wants to start a dialogue to draw attention to some problem by placing it under public scrutiny. Thus, the boycotts are motivated not only by a desire to cause change but also to draw attention to an issue that evangelicals are expressing concern about.

Since the central focus of this dissertation is not the way that evangelical organizations collect members, but rather how and why evangelicals mobilize, specifically through political consumerism, I am going to transition to the actual analysis. The information above provides a clear context for the boycotts under analysis.

Boycotts

Every year, the AFA publishes a Christmas Naughty or Nice list. The list rates American retailers as either nice, marginal or naughty based on how "Christmas-Friendly" their advertisements are (AFA.com). This promotes the AFA as a good source for private and individual level boycotting. Further, their members are encouraged and mobilized to directly contact and appeal for corporate change when the need arises. The number of small-scale protests and/or appeals that the AFA and their tangential organizations are

⁴⁴ The bias here, of course, is that members of the AFA are already notably more engaged than their non-member counterparts. Further, their friends and direct community are also probably more engaged.

involved in is numerous; however, appealing for change is not the focus of this study although it may be interesting to analyze at a future date.⁴⁵ For the purposes of this dissertation and this analysis, I only analyze the *actual* boycotts that garnered national attention and generated notable collective involvement.

While I would like to provide a case study analysis of all the major corporate boycotts, there is little to no information on the AFA's website about any of those boycotts. Further, the head of the activist department had nowhere to point me to on the website and no helpful past documents or previous statements to provide. To accurately test my hypotheses, it is imperative I have language written by the elites who framed and mobilized the boycott. Therefore, I am confined to a case study of one, given that there is only one current AFA boycott. The AFA introduced the Target boycott in 2016 because of Target's bathroom policy (AFA.net). I use *The Associated Press* and *The Washington Post*, Breitbart, and the AFA's official website as the primary sources for my data and information.

The Target boycott is one of the most successful boycotts the AFA has ever sponsored in terms of individuals involved. As of April 18th, 2018, the online boycott pledge has 1,527,832 signatures. The boycott was initially launched on April 20th, 2016. By May 2nd, 2016, the boycott had already received the bulk of its signatures with 1,137,000 (Riehl 2016). That means that within days a significant portion of AFA members and many non-members (membership is not required to pledge) had already signed the petition. Perhaps even more telling are the stock and profit losses that Target has experienced since the

⁴⁵ Most of these small-scale activities are not usually boycotts, even if they are actions taken in response to corporate stances on issues. One Million Moms, specifically, writes letters, calls and personally contacts companies who are engaged or promoting values to which they are opposed.

boycott launched.⁴⁶ *The Washington Post* reported that Target's popularity dropped 4% after their bathroom policy was first announced (Andrews 2016). The AFA reported that Target's stock fell 43% and their stock prices hit a two-year low after the start of the boycott (Vitagliano 2017). This indicates that the individuals who first signed the pledge are indeed holding up their end of the bargain.

Target Boycott

On April 19th, 2016, Target released a statement that they would allow transgendered people to use the bathroom of their choice. In their own words, "In our stores, we demonstrate our commitment to an inclusive experience in many ways. Most relevant for the conversations currently underway, we welcome transgender team members and guests to use the restroom or fitting room facility that corresponds with their gender identity." (corporate.target.com). This statement satisfies the "catalyst" requirement of Hypothesis One in that it drew attention to an issue that evangelicals feel strongly about.

Following this, the AFA called their members into action—asking members and non-members alike to sign a pledge. By signing this pledge, individuals promised to take their business elsewhere because of Target's bathroom policy. The pledge says, "Until Target makes the safety of women and children a priority, I will shop elsewhere." Then the AFA specifically asked their members to share the Target pledge with others, their friends and family and church members and to "politely" voice their concerns on social media. The AFA "call to action page" also includes a list of links to stories about harassments that have happened in Target bathrooms and changing rooms. This, of course, is supposed to instigate evangelical concern and consternation. The page has a picture of a young girl

⁴⁶ There is no way to say with any certainty that the AFA boycott *caused* Target's economic struggles but there is a clear correlation.

looking scared and alone with the words, “Men don’t belong in women’s restrooms and changing areas. #BoycottTarget” inscribed on the picture. The AFA website says the following:

This [Target bathroom policy] means a man can simply say he "feels like a woman today" and enter the women's restroom...even if young girls or women are already in there. Target's policy is exactly how sexual predators get access to their victims. And with Target publicly boasting that men can enter women's bathrooms, where do you think predators are going to go?

Clearly, Target's dangerous new policy poses a danger to wives and daughters. Over 1 million people agree with us and pledged to boycott Target stores until protecting women and children is a priority.

One solution is a common-sense approach and a reasonable solution to the issue of transgendered customers: a unisex bathroom. Target should keep separate facilities for men and women, but for the trans community and for those who simply like using the bathroom alone, a single occupancy unisex option should be provided (<https://www.afa.net/activism/action-alerts/2016/04/sign-the-boycott-target-pledge/>)

There is obvious framing here, as well as a clear invoking of an out-group, namely sexual predators, who want to prey on women and young children. The unidentified but implied outgroup is the LGBTQ community. This boycott is based upon the in-group/out-group premise. As the literature on gays and evangelicals posits, the homosexual community acts as the perfect villainous “they” in these boycotts (Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006). Hence, the homosexual community provides the threatening out-group for evangelicals to respond to and coalesce against; this in-group/out-group dynamic, based on Smith’s (1998) subcultural identity theory, strengthens and develops evangelical collective identity. The existence of an out-group provides support for my third hypothesis that stipulates there must be a collective identity to stimulate collective mobilization.

The language invoked here focuses less on values and marginalization and more on issues of safety. The AFA assumes that their members share their traditional Biblical values

and already have a problem with the premise behind “open” bathrooms. Thus, it invokes a direct sense of threat. The AFA uses words like "dangerous" and "danger" to invoke a sense of fear. Elites organized and framed the issue. They first drew attention to the problem and the out-group, presented a solution, and convinced their members that participation is essential to the cause. This is evidence of the requirements needed to fulfill Hypothesis Two.

The fourth hypothesis is the final hypothesis that needs to be satisfied. Do members feel social marginalization? This is perhaps the most difficult hypotheses to assess given that I am trying to extrapolate individual feelings from collective action; however, there are a few key indicators that provide support for social marginalization. The first indicator, of course, is that these individuals chose to be a part of the AFA and given the language used by the AFA to inspire membership, these individuals were feeling enough strain to join. However, this is not enough to satisfy hypothesis four.

The Target transgender bathroom policy is a product of the times. In other words, the social zeitgeist that I spoke at length about in my theory is veering towards norms and policies with which evangelicals are not as comfortable. This change creates an environment or a feeling of social marginalization, if not of the individual themselves, then of the values they hold in high regard. The social marginalization of their values then plays an important role in stimulating them to action. They are not OK with something that goes against their Biblical moral standards. Protecting and promoting Biblical values is why they joined the AFA in the first place; therefore, any policy or event that threatens or marginalizes those values must be spoken out against. Consequently, the very existence of this out-group and the policies and values they represent engenders the social strain and

feeling of threat that Smith's subcultural theory posits. The issue frame then paints an even more threatening picture and one that likely stirs up more strain. The framing likely intends to make evangelicals respond with the following sentiment: "The homosexual agenda is not only threatening our values but now also our personal safety!"

Beyond this, the fact that the Target boycott is one of the largest in the AFA's history is telling. Many of the previous boycotts and appeals were in response to the same "homosexual agenda." However, in 2016, the social zeitgeist had become increasingly liberal socially and therefore, much more socially marginalizing. Thus, it is no surprise that the Target boycott received the most support.⁴⁷ This does not mean, however, that the framing of the issue, as well as the other variables, did not also play an important role in the sizable turnout. It is worth considering why this is that the largest response to a boycott and what about today's social zeitgeist likely played a part.⁴⁸

However, I cannot definitively show support for the social marginalization hypothesis in the way that I can for the other three hypotheses. I can only analyze the context, language, and reason for the boycott, along with the mission statement of the AFA, to get a sense of the emotions behind the boycott. Most every boycott that the AFA has launched has been in response to some new "homosexual agenda"; therefore, the Target boycott is no different except that it is in response to a different aspect of the "homosexual agenda." Further, I can assume, that with the presence of the homosexual "out-group," based on Smith's theory, evangelicals are feeling threatened by the perceived out-group and feel the

⁴⁷ The more prevalent use of social media in 2016 versus other periods of time is also a likely causal factor in the success of the Target boycott; however, I do not believe that this changes or negates the effect and existence of increasing feelings of social marginalization. If anything, it likely acted as an amplifier.

⁴⁸ What does this say of the theory of increasing social marginalization? I cannot test that theory with this dissertation, but it is a theory I hope to explore more in the future.

need respond. Thus, I believe social marginalization was a necessary condition for evangelical collective mobilization.

Political Consumerism: Buycotts

The Chick-fil-A buycott is a unique and so far, “one-of-a-kind” occurrence. A close analysis of the moving parts of this event helps us better understand evangelical mobilization moving forward. Buycotts are uniquely different from boycotts in that they are predicated on supporting and rewarding a business rather than punishing a business. Hence, buycotts require more active involvement since those involved must intentionally *go to* the business and buy to express their support. Boycotting is the *absence* of activity (or transference) while buycotting is *activity*.

Since there is only one example of an evangelical buycott in recent history, I spend extensive time delving into the specific details surrounding the event. This event is not only unique because of its singularity but also because it was not organized and promoted by an organization with an already established following; instead, it was promoted by a few evangelical elites via social media, allowing for all evangelicals, whether socially or politically engaged or not, to mobilize.

Setting and Context

As of 2012, many major companies had begun to take a public stand on sexual politics. Major brands like Google, Starbucks, Nike, General Mills, Apple, Goldman Sachs, Boeing, amongst many others, took a public stance on the issue of gay marriage (Phillip 2012). The first line of Phillip’s article says, “Gay marriage advocates have a new and powerful ally in corporate America.” She goes on to note that 48 companies signed a brief arguing that the *Defense of Marriage Act* negatively affected their business. In 2011, 25 executives of

major corporations including Goldman Sachs, Viacom and Alcoa lobbied New York legislators to approve same-sex marriage. Another 2012 news article proclaimed that “the last five years have seen a significant increase in the number of companies deciding to embrace the reward rather than the risk of voicing support of LGBT rights” (McPherson and Clise 2012). Many companies, such as Apple, JC Penney, Macy's, Kraft Foods, and Oreo, started embracing LGBTQ rights by using gay couples and imagery in their advertising. This uptick in corporate support and promotion of LGBTQ norms coincides with the societal embrace of LGBTQ norms. Gallup polls show that, in 2012, 63% of Americans thought gay marriage should be legal while 54% thought it was morally acceptable. Though these are not overwhelming numbers, they are high when compared to what they were ten or even five years prior.

“Traditional marriage” has, for the most part, always been the socially-accepted status quo and the norm in American society. Therefore, it is novel and noteworthy for a company to run a commercial showing a boy with two dads, or to include a same-sex couple emoji on an iPhone. The companies that are making these changes are moving *away* from the status quo and starting to embrace and promote new norms. Still, even with this burgeoning change in society and in corporate America, it is important to note that most commercials and advertisements still conform to heterosexual norms while the commercial or advertisement that does not is the aberration. The increase and promotion of these new norms are distinctive given their scarcity.

These new norms are part of what stirs up a feeling of social marginalization. This feeling of marginalization/alienation is made up of a mixture of feelings—including, but not limited to: feelings of concern, fear for the future, feeling disrespected and feeling

frustrated and agitated. These are all the feelings that the evangelical community begins to feel in response to the changes they see in society. Seeing outward evidence of what they call "sin" only bolsters and increases their already negative perspective on society. Their worldview dictates that man is innately sinful and evil and that everything slowly decays and dies. Given this worldview, they already feel that society is naturally going to go in the wrong direction; however, this does not make the practical ways they see this happening less painful to them. This is the picture. Evangelicals are coming off long and hard-fought social and political battles during the 1970s through the 1990s. They formed the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, supported Pat Buchanan, fought against Roe vs. Wade, and fought to keep prayer in schools. In the end, they lost most of these battles politically.

Entering the twenty-first century, from the perspective of the evangelical community, things in society are not looking too promising. Church attendance has fallen to new lows, religious "nones" continue to grow, Protestant churches are closing their doors in droves and abortion is still legal (Lipka 2013; 2015). A few years into the twenty-first century, the LGBTQ movement begins gaining traction socially and politically. As society begins to embrace the LGBTQ cause, corporations respond and do the same. Soon, the LGBTQ movement is a fully developed social movement calling for societal acceptance and governmental validation via the Supreme Court. Some are starting to consider evangelicals to be bigoted and hateful for continuing to hold to the pastime belief that homosexuality is, in some way, wrong or sinful. I cannot say definitively that evangelicals are feeling socially marginalized because of this context, but the chances are high that they are.

Chick-fil-A

As of 2012, many corporations had started to establish their support of same-sex marriage publicly. No company had come out speaking *against* same-sex marriage. It is much easier to advertise one's brand *for* something rather than against something. However, as the Chick-fil-A example will show, saying you are for something implies that you might be against something. The implication, in some cases, is enough.

On June 16, 2012, Dan Cathy, the president of Chick-fil-A, said on “The Ken Coleman Show” that:

"I think we are inviting God's judgment on our nation when we shake our fist at him and say, 'We know better than you as to what constitutes marriage.' I pray God's mercy on our generation that has such a prideful, arrogant attitude to think that we have the audacity to define what marriage is about" (McGregor 2012).

There was little acknowledgment or coverage of this interview at first. Then in the July 7th issue of the *Biblical Recorder*, Dan Cathy responded to the claim that some are critical of his company's support of the traditional family by saying, "Well, guilty as charged." Then he explained to a reporter for *The Christian Post*:

“We are very much supportive of the family—the biblical definition of the family unit. We own a family business, a family led business, and we are married to our first wives. We give God thanks for that ... We want to do anything we possibly can to strengthen families. We are very much committed to that.” (Collier 2012).

On July 2nd, *Equality Matters* released a study showing Chick-fil-A's financial contributions based on a 2010 tax return. In it, they found secondary donations to “anti-gay” organizations. Not long after this, the *Baptist Press* published the *Biblical Recorder* interview with a few minor grammatical changes (Hannon 2013). The next day, *Advocate* published an article entitled, “It's Official: Chick-fil-A COO Dan Cathy Comes Out as Anti-Gay” (Garcia 2012). A slew of articles began to pop up all over the internet with

similar titles. Soon, the June 16th interview on “The Ken Coleman Show” is publicized and thrust into the conversation, as are the findings about the Chick-fil-A donations. These new reports sparked a social media firestorm. Hannon (2013) points out that prior to the July 16th article, the interview was entirely uncommented upon in social media (2013)

The reporter who wrote the initial story and conducted the interview for the *Biblical Recorder* said that the interview with Mr. Cathy was “very positive” and unlike how the rest of the media was portraying it (Hendricks 2012).

After BP re-posted the story, related articles soon surfaced in the *Huffington Post*, Associated Press, *USA Today*, *Los Angeles Times*, Fox News, and other news agencies – many of which ran articles with “anti-gay” in the headline.

Many of those reports “turned [the original story] into a negative,” said Blume, adding the term “anti-gay” never came up in the June interview while Cathy was speaking in the Raleigh area.

“He was not saying ‘guilty as charged anti-gay,’” Blume added. “[Cathy] never even brought up that subject. Everything he stated was on the positive side ... He never stated anything negative” (Hendricks 2012).

For some, this is a clear example of media framing, framing that spurred many into action and triggered a firestorm of reactions and condemnations by celebrities and politicians on social media and eventually spurred politicians to speak out against Chick-fil-A and to declare the organization unwelcome in their cities. The framing that the media and LGBTQ community engaged in is a clear example of social constructionism. This framing, however, ended up working against them as the critiques and anger towards Chick-fil-A just solidified this LGBTQ community's out-group status for evangelicals and increased the feeling of threat for evangelicals.

Quite a few major politicians took public stances against Chick-fil-A after news of Dan Cathy’s comments hit the web. The mayor of Boston, Thomas Memino, told Chick-fil-A

that there was "no place for your company" in his city and stated that he would not allow Chick-fil-A to open franchises in his city. Not long after, Chicago city officials declared that Chick-fil-A's values were not representative of Chicago's values, after which, Alderman Moreno stated his intentions to block any new Chick-fil-A stores from opening in Chicago. A DC councilman tweeted that he does not support "hate chicken" (Bingham 2012). CNN reported that a city councilman in Philadelphia, James F. Kenney, said to Chick-fil-A "Take a hike and take your intolerance with you." San Francisco Mayor Edwin M. Lee tweeted: "Closest #ChickFilA to San Francisco is 40 miles away & I strongly recommend that they not try to come any closer." (Gilgoff 2012). Twitter also broke out in a firestorm because of the comments made by Dan Cathy. Ed Helms, the actor most known for his role in *The Office*, tweeted, "Chick-fil-A doesn't like gay people? So lame. Hate to think what they do to gay chickens! Lost a loyal fan." Eventually, Chick-fil-A posted a Facebook statement saying that they strive to treat all people with respect, honor, and dignity and intend to stay out of the political and social debate.

Not much later, Carly McGehee, a lesbian political activist in Dallas, introduced the idea of protesting Chick-fil-A by holding a "kiss-in" at Chick-fil-A on a specific day (Walsh 2012). She called this day "National Same-Sex Kiss Day @ Chick-fil-A." She is quoted saying, "I hope the visibility of the kiss-in helps LGBT youth who feel isolated and are victims of bullying" (Walsh 2012; Laird 2012).

Without any elite framing, mobilization or organization, the frenzy of reactions would likely die down, and people move on with their lives. Evangelicals may feel connected to Chick-fil-A more than before and begin eating there more often, but little else changes. Their feelings of marginalization and alienation slowly die down but remain raw and easily

stoked.

However, evangelical elites did respond. Leith Anderson, the president of the National Association of Evangelicals, said, “Individuals have the right to decide whether or not to ‘eat mor chikin.’ But no government leader should restrict a business or organization from expanding to their district based on the personal or political views of the owners” (Gilgoff 2012b). Evangelicals expressed exasperation with the politicians and leaders who began to politically shun the franchise because of Dan Cathy’s comments. Anderson said, “Such evident discrimination and attempts to marginalize those with religious convictions have no place in American democracy” (Gilgoff 2012b).

Mike Huckabee, a well-known Baptist pastor, and politician, posted on Facebook and Twitter a call for an organized counter-protest. He says:

I ask you to join me in speaking out on Wednesday, August 1 "Chick-Fil-A Appreciation Day." No one is being asked to make signs, speeches, or openly demonstrate. The goal is simple: Let's affirm a business that operates on Christian principles and whose executives are willing to take a stand for the Godly values we espouse by simply showing up and eating at Chick-Fil-A on Wednesday, August 1. Too often, those on the left make corporate statements to show support for same-sex marriage, abortion, or profanity, but if Christians affirm traditional values, we're considered homophobic, fundamentalists, hate-mongers, and intolerant. This effort is not being launched by the Chick-fil-A company, and no one from the company or family is involved in proposing or promoting it.

This Facebook post satisfies Hypothesis Two and to an extent Hypothesis Three. Huckabee first provides evangelicals with an organized and individualistic collective way to respond to the criticisms of Chick-fil-A. He then uses culturally specific language to target and stir up the evangelical population. He says, “willing to take a stand for the Godly values *we* espouse.” First, he frames the situation appropriately for evangelicals by stressing the importance of “Godly values.” He then uses the word “we” invoking a sense of the “collective” we, as if he represents and is part of a bigger collective unit of people whom

all agree on what these "Godly values" are.

The media painted the picture that eating at Chick-fil-A is a statement to the world of being a devout evangelical (Hannon 2013). "Once Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day was established, it became the "in" thing for conservative politicians and pundits. It became, briefly, a litmus test for if someone was really conservative and if they really supported Biblical values or just gave them lip service. In this way, participation became a badge of membership" (Hannon 2013, 46). There is a clear out-group and sense of a collective "we"—even if evangelicals are still maintaining their individuality by showing up individually for their own personal reasons. Hypothesis Three is therefore satisfied.

Huckabee went on to give a specific time and date for evangelical mobilization and catered to their individuality by emphasizing that it is not a political act as much as it is just a simple act of support and solidarity that can be carried out individually. He invoked this same sentiment earlier in his post when he says, "no one is being asked to make signs, speeches or openly demonstrate." He used these phrases intentionally. Evangelicals who are not involved in much else than their church and personal outreach are likely not thrilled (like the pastors I interviewed) about engaging publicly in protests. However, showing up to support Godly values by eating food, along with other evangelicals who are also supporting the same values, provides an excellent opportunity for evangelicals to mobilize. The final portion of his post invokes those feelings of frustration, and social marginalization that he assumes are already simmering in the evangelical population. He said, "Too often, those on the left make corporate statements to show support for same-sex marriage, abortion, or profanity, but if Christians affirm traditional values, we're considered homophobic, fundamentalists, hate-mongers, and intolerant." He paints a picture of the

stereotypes evangelicals fall under and the frustrations they must have with those stereotypes. Further, he lists all the negative attributes (same-sex marriage, abortion, profanity) of the out-group that are stimulating the feelings of social marginalization.

With this Facebook post, Huckabee attempted to stimulate and stir up already present feelings of frustrations within the evangelical population. He paints a picture of a marginalized, pitiful and unrepresented group that needs to come out and re-establish their marginalized position. Without this feeling of social marginalization to stir up, he would possess far less ammunition to stimulate the evangelical public into action.

I remind you of how the pastors I interviewed responded. They seemed so eager to explain and justify their positions, their identity and what they stand. In the same way, evangelicals, when given a chance participate in collective claim making (Tilly 2006) by eating a chicken sandwich, seemed eager to do so. One *New York Times* article described the Chick-fil-A controversy in this way, "For many, it comes down to this: Eating at Chick-fil-A supports heterosexual marriage and religious freedom. Refusing to eat there supports same-sex marriage and equality" (Severson and Brown 2012). An article in *The Atlantic* said that Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day was a sort of anti-boycott in response to calls for an actual boycott (Martin 2012). Hence, I can safely say that, given the evidence presented, Hypothesis Four, social marginalization, is satisfied.

This is also an obvious form of counter-mobilization in that evangelicals are countering first moves made by the LGBTQ community. However, the primary reason I conceptualize it as a counter-mobilization is because evangelicals are supporting and holding up what they consider to be the *status quo* of marriage values.

Evangelical Response

After Huckabee, an elite, framed the embattled, marginalized storyline to the evangelical community, how did the evangelical community respond? An article from *The Huffington Post* reported the following quote from Steve Robinson, a Chick-fil-A executive of marketing, “While we don’t release exact sales numbers, we can confirm reports that it was a record-setting day” (*Fox News* 2012). Fox News called the turnout on Chick-fil-A appreciation day unprecedented, with some reports saying that restaurants were running out of chicken because of the overwhelming business. Huckabee told Fox News that the turnout for Chick-fil-A had “gone beyond anything I could have imagined” (Bingham 2012). CNN reported that the lines in multiple locations across the country were tremendous and that Facebook was flooded with images of people holding up their Chick-fil-A bags in support of the movement. One Forbes writer who also attended the Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day wrote of his experience:

I live in LA so, I was not expecting much in way of support but, I was not just surprised, I was blown away. The Chick-fil-A in Northridge, California, had a line that twisted throughout the parking lot. It was almost 100 degrees but, that didn't seem to deter anyone. They were peaceful, and the demographic was wide-ranging. Blacks, whites, teenagers, kids, Latinos and all other categories you could imagine. At this location, there were no anti-Chick-fil-A protesters. (Broes 2012)

News reports say that lines snaked around the buildings at some stores, with people waiting hours to get their chicken. There was a tremendous turnout and record sales. There is no way to know the religious or political identity of those that did turn out; however, Huckabee's call to action was a direct plea to Christians, most notably evangelicals. He said, "Let's affirm a business that operates on Christian principles and whose executives are willing to take a stand for the Godly values we espouse...".

Who are the people who mobilized in this case? Are they really evangelicals? While it is unclear how many of those who participated in Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day were evangelical, the news painted the movement as an evangelical movement, and the call for action was directed at evangelicals. There is no way to defend against the ecological fallacy statistically; however, common sense dictates that this turnout was highly evangelical and based upon the defense of typical conservative evangelical values.

The result is clear, evangelicals (and many others) collectively mobilized in support of Chick-fil-A. All four necessary conditions were met, and therefore, collective mobilization occurred. They would not have mobilized without the instigation and planning of Mike Huckabee, who was aided in disseminating the message through conservative media outlets and social media platforms. They would not have mobilized to the same extent without feeling marginalized and alienated. They would not have mobilized without the “collective identity” and desire to express that identity and their values through consumerism. In conclusion, then, all four hypotheses were satisfied and thus suggest a potential sufficient condition for evangelical collective mobilization.

News Reports and Interviews

In this section, I provide a few quotes from different individuals who were involved in the boycott. This gives a more in-depth understanding of the individual motivations for collective action, although I cannot say based on this evidence that it is representative of the population of participants. Individuals within the evangelical community, as well as individuals not associated with the evangelical community, mobilized for various reasons. Some mobilized simply because they wanted to support “free speech” while others counter-mobilized for religious reasons. CNN reports one person saying, “It’s really hard to find

people or leaders that stand for something good and stay firm” (Staff 2012). Another man was reported saying “I think it is ironic that the so-called forces of tolerance and inclusion are calling for the exclusion of Chick-fil-A from cities simply because of the beliefs of their chairman... People that disagree with me have a right to their opinion, and I have a right to mine,” he said. Another posted on Facebook the following statement: “Good job supporters for coming out in force. This company is going to make more money today than any other day of the year. That's what happens when you put Jesus first.” Another person is quoted saying, “A lot of us I think, we believe that our country has made a lot of poor choices and it's nice just to support someone who supports the same things that we do” (CNN.com)

CNN published a comments article displaying a swath of comments made by different readers weighing in on the Chick-fil-A debate (see “Overheard on CNN.com: Readers Defend Chick-fil-A’s Stance on Marriage”). One commenter says,

Mr. C. is not trying to force you to do anything. He is merely stating his moral standards in public, standards which you refuse to accept. That is not hate. That is not discrimination. That is intolerance, but it's intolerance of evil behavior, and that's laudable. If you are offended by that, then that's your fault. Admit it and stop spewing hate.

Others were more concerned about the issue of free speech. One commenter said, “Someone asked him his opinion. What, is he locked into only chicken-related discussion because he runs a chicken place?”. A homosexual man is quoted as saying, "I'm gay. I don't care. If I ceased buying products from companies that did things I didn't like, then I'd be Amish...".

Many different organizations joined to support of Chick-fil-a, including Project 21, a Black conservative activist organization. Fox News reported one of its members,

Demetrios Minor, explaining why their organization supports Chick-fil-A. He says, “I think liberals are missing a vital point in their blind hatred of Chick-fil-A. Being against gay marriage is not being anti-gay” (Roberts 2012).

There were at least two primary types of supporters, those who supported the specific religious cause and those that supported free speech (Hannon 2013). Hannon (2013) also found that amongst the evangelical population there was a debate on what real Christianity is. Some argued that Christianity is about love and tolerance and that Dan Cathy was not representing true Christianity while others disagreed.

Who Mobilized? The Individual or the Church?

Individuals mobilized in response to elite prompting, but did churches and congregations also respond corporately? "Religious leaders make connections between faith and political goals by impressing members with a sense that they should participate in politics as part of the criteria of living 'like a Christian'" (Greenberg 2000, 381). Pastors can use the community of the church to impress upon their members the importance of supporting their Christian values by supporting Chick-fil-A. However, there is little evidence available, that I can find, to show that this is how pastors or churches responded in this instance.

While churches act as a network of association with opinion leaders generating and stimulating discourse, as my interviews show, not all churches engage in corporate behavior. In fact, based on my findings, very few churches engage in this behavior. This leads me to believe that only a small number of evangelical pastors are responsible for making most of the noise coming from the evangelical population. Perhaps most evangelical churches keep their heads down and do not get involved? This does not mean

that many of the evangelicals attending church were not activated to participate in the Chick-fil-A boycott, but it does mean that many of those participating were not likely participating because of a church-wide movement instigated by the pastor.⁴⁹

However, *some* evangelical pastors and evangelical leaders feel the need to get involved in political and social issues even if others, seemingly the majority, do not. Larry Taunton, a prominent author and Christian activist, also the founder of *Fixed Point Foundation*, a Christian think tank in Alabama, wrote an article about his experiences regarding the Chick-fil-A controversy. Taunton used the article, published on a Fox News Opinion page, to criticize pastors who do not get involved, claiming that they are simply wimps. He says, "This event [Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day] marked the first time I could remember Christians fighting back rather than meekly submitting to the media and special interest bullies" (2017). He argued against the stance a fellow evangelical, John Piper, took on the Chick-fil-A controversy. Piper discouraged evangelicals from participating in the boycott and said that he would not be participating in the Chick-fil-A boycott. His reasoning is as follows:

Convictions, especially political ones, will divide people. That is inevitable but not desirable. The separation of believers and unbelievers, when it happens, must be a last resort or an unavoidable result. Actions to the contrary, those that clearly promote an 'us versus them' mentality, are most often unhelpful. There is a time for Christians to engage in boycotting, such as when a business deals in obviously immoral areas or is clearly unethical in its methods. But for a mass of Christians to descend upon Chick-fil-A restaurants across the country tomorrow to support the leadership's view on this issue is, I believe, a bold mistake.

Taunton, miffed by this stance, writes in response, "...brother, if you can't be relied on to show up and order a combo meal in support of a company under attack for its commitment

⁴⁹ I cannot definitively say that there was no corporate church involvement/mobilization; however, I could not find any news reports or information to show that there were church wide mobilizations. There likely were a few; however, there were apparently not enough to garner media attention.

to Christian principles, when exactly can we count on you?”. Taunton proceeds to lay out what he believes a Christian’s duty is. He says it is not to be *likable*. Rather, Christians should "push back against culture" and, in turn, be perceived as "divisive," "unloving," "bigoted" and "intolerant" for standing for what is right and moral. He draws his argument to a conclusion when he says, "I fully believe that if they [evangelical Christians] were to find their voices, their courage, and were to dispense of the candy-assed Christianity, that we would see a Great Awakening in America. Indeed, we would see American become *truly* great rather than superficially so. But it will, as I say, require courage because the forces opposing us seem determined to burn this country to the ground" (2017).

There is a clear spiritual disagreement within the evangelical community about their place in society and politics. I believe that the Chick-fil-A controversy draws attention to this disagreement. Further, I presume that the Chick-fil-A case was one of the few occasions that the hitherto latent evangelicals were willing to participate. Their involvement was not part of a church-wide protest. It did not require a political stance or require becoming deeply involved in a debate, nor did it require a well-oiled organization with millions of members. Instead, all that was required was simply buying a chicken sandwich. In doing so, however, they could make a statement about their individual values and establish themselves as part of a certain community (Hannon 2013).

The pastors that I interviewed almost all seemed to fall into the “stay out of the politics” camp. They did not mind forms of traditional political participation like voting. In fact, they encouraged and supported traditional participation; but they would rarely ever organize a church-wide protest or boycott or tell their congregants to vote for someone. The focus on the individual was ever-present in their mindset. Every individual in the

congregation was entitled to their own opinion, conscience and political position. The church was not interested in forcing its members to support a corporate position that the member may not support. Each pastor seemed fine with the idea of individual members engaging in whatever form of political mobilization they wanted, whether it be expressing on Twitter on avoiding a certain company because of their position on some moral issue, but corporate activity was avoided. Thus, it is fundamental to this chapter that the readers understand the uniqueness of this Chick-fil-A boycott.

The “Kiss-In” and Homosexual Response

Two days after Chick-fil-A Appreciation Day, the LGBTQ community launched their own protest, this time against Chick-fil-A. They held a “Kiss-In” in which gay members of the community came to Chick-fil-A to kiss in public at the restaurant. The turnout was surprisingly muted. News reports claim that there was a much smaller than expected turnout for the “kiss-in” protest (NBCDFW 2012; Williams, Vives, and Xia 2012). Local TV stations reported little to no turnout in some places.

This muted turnout in support of the homosexual community seems a little surprising. At the time, LGBTQ rights were central in the cultural zeitgeist. In 2012, 3.5% of the United States population identified as LGBTQ (Gates 2017). This is not a very large number of people in the U.S., although if all 8.3 million turned out to kiss at Chick-fil-A, there could have been a notable turnout. The LGBTQ population is smaller than the evangelical population, which could be one explanation for lower turnout. However, they had been very active socially and politically during 2012, and social and political activism is not against the LGBTQ movement or worldview.

The LGBTQ population has been a marginalized population for centuries (Plummer 1996). "The significance of homosexuality in our society context within which the homosexual can find has been minimized and obscured by the force acceptance as homosexual and collective support of social taboo" (1996). However, clearly, an important variable was missing in this instance of attempted LGBTQ mobilization. A hypothesis was left unsatisfied.

Carly McGehee, a lesbian political activist, based in Dallas, Texas, posted a Facebook post calling the LGBTQ community to action after Cathy's remarks. She said later in an interview, "We live in a time where hate isn't acceptable anymore" (Murray 2012). Her Facebook post received 15,000 likes. How elite and respected is Carly McGehee? It is hard to say, and research shows little about what *kind* of activist she is. She does not represent Gay, Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) a powerful and prominent gay rights organization. Her "Kiss-In" did receive a sizeable amount of media coverage, and she was interviewed by GLAAD about the boycott prior to the planned day of action. However, the satisfaction of Hypothesis Two, elite framing, and mobilization, is hard to establish. The framing was weak and the elite status questionable.

There is a clear sense of "collective identity" in this community, and the presence of the evangelical "out-group" confirms this, which means Hypothesis Three is satisfied. Dan Cathy's statements act as a clear catalyst event, satisfying Hypothesis One. A clear sense of social marginalization brought on by Dan Cathy's comments is harder to support, however, even if it appears supported at face value. The LGBTQ community has been marginalized on many occasions; however, in this circumstance, the swath of media voices,

political voices, and social reactions supporting the LGBTQ community after the Dan Cathy statements likely vindicated some of these feelings.

Further, Chick-fil-A made no public statement regarding its stance on homosexuality. Dan Cathy spoke of his marriage values, but he did not say that he opposes gay marriage or that members of the LGBTQ community are not welcome in his restaurant. Perhaps the discovery of Chick-fil-A donations to “anti-gay” organizations is a stronger motivator; but even that does not change the fact that many politicians and talking heads rallied in support of the gay community, assuaging much of their social marginalization. For the feelings of marginalization to matter, members must feel like society is not on their side and that they are on the margins of society. The slew of reactions *for* the LGBTQ cause goes against this marginalized premise then, making collective action harder to stimulate. There is no *need* to make an “identity claim” or express a marginalized perspective when---as I showed in the description of the backlash against Chick-fil-a---most of society is rallying in favor of that perspective and identity. Hence, I cannot safely say that Hypothesis Four is satisfied. This means that Hypothesis Five is not satisfied and is the likely explanation for such a low turnout on the designated “kiss-in” day.

Conclusion

These case studies show that the combination of four necessary conditions potentially creates the ideal *sufficient* condition for evangelical mobilization. Further, the unsuccessful LGBTQ “Kiss-in” suggests the importance of a *prominent* elite voice, a powerful frame and vibrant feelings of social marginalization.

There is much work to be done moving forward. This is not an exhaustive study, and there are other cases to study. The two cases I have tested provide support for my theory that

perceived social marginalization, kindled by opinion leaders, may be a necessary condition for mobilization. Further, they provide a clearer picture of evangelical motivations and stimulation. They respond to language promoting Biblical values and family values; further, they may feel threatened by the homosexual “out-group” and therefore respond to language invoking this threat.

The findings presented in this dissertation are unique within political science and religion and politics. Groups that feel marginalized and alienated are supposed to mobilize using alternative methods of political and social involvement. However, I am finding that, for evangelicals, they are for the most part content using mainstream forms of participation such as voting and writing their congressman. A small subset certainly engages in deeper ways as opinion leaders, media figures, and campaign donors. Further, many seem to be entirely individualistic in their worldview. Therefore, it takes a unique set of conditions to mobilize evangelicals. In other words, evangelicals do mobilize because of feeling marginalized but only under a specific set of circumstances. This chapter shows that collective mobilization is hard to come by for evangelicals and may only occur when the stars align.

CHAPTER 6

TWITTER: THE NEW, NEW TACTIC

“The gospel doesn’t need gimmicks it stands on its own truth. Marketing ploys in the church as if Jesus is a product is an insult to the cross & the redemptive power of God. Implementing secular things or preaching a ‘desirable’ gospel other than the bible to win souls is a no.”

Nefertari---@Rumbizlee, posted on Twitter April 1, 2018, at 1:42 pm

“The church cannot be both prophet and lobbyist. We must decide to whom are we allegiant? In whom do we place our trust? If it is man, then we should lobby as if our lives depended on it. But if our hope is in God, then we should speak truth. To power. Regardless of consequence.”

Mark Charles---@wirelesshogan, posted on Twitter February 2, 2018, at 10:13 pm

“Federal lawsuit in Colorado against a Christian baker why not against a Muslim baker? Double standards?”

Harry Hattigh---@HarryHattigh, posted April 5, 2018, at 8:50 am

“I don't spend a single moment fearing Muslims. White Republican Evangelicals, on the other hand... now, they terrify me daily. #LoveAMuslim”

John Pavlovitz---@johnpavlovitz, posted April 3, 2018, at 4:00 pm

“YES. They frighten me too. Crazy. They actually believe in doing whatever they deem necessary to bring on the apocalypse and therefore the second coming. Dangerous Fools.”

NerdQueen---@Scarletthirty2, post on April 4, 2018, at 4:19 pm in response to Pavlovitz's tweet.

The prominent author and blogger, Lauren Leto, said this of Twitter: “Twitter provides us with a wonderful platform to discuss/confront societal problems. We trend Justin Bieber instead” (Farfan 2017). She brings attention to the irony of Twitter. Twitter provides an open forum for public political discussion and news in a way that has never been seen before. Yet, most people tweet about nonsense or mundane topics. Research shows that

liberals tweet more about politics than conservatives and that their tweets are also more negative (Preotiuc-Pietro et al. 2017); therefore, there is variation in Twitter usage, and this variation allows us to garner some useful and interesting information about different groups in America.

I use Twitter as a proxy for evangelical mobilization at the individual level. Twitter provides a public forum for evangelicals to express themselves and their values; the question is, do they? Rigorous analysis of the emotional makeup of the tweets requires a level of statistical sophistication that even some highly skilled computer programmers struggle to carry out. Therefore, I am unable to provide conclusive evidence about the levels of perceived marginalization, or the lack thereof, expressed in evangelical tweets. However, I do create a completely original dataset of evangelical Twitter users and a control dataset of randomly selected Twitter users that allows me to compare the use of political language by evangelicals and the general US population on Twitter. Further, I assess the basic negative and positive sentiment displayed in evangelical tweets versus the control dataset. I am also able to assess political Twitter use between the two groups regionally. This analysis provides a narrow but enlightening and original starting point for religion and politics scholars to understand how evangelicals are mobilizing online.

Twitter

Twitter has changed our world. It has become a new forum for public statements, a new source of political and social activism, and a primary news source for many people (Cresci 2016). As of January 1, 2018, there were 330 million monthly active Twitter users producing about 500 million tweets a day (Aslom 2018). Seventy-nine percent of Twitter users are based outside of the United States (2018). Demographically, 37% of Twitter users

are between the ages of 18-29, while 25% are between the ages of 30-49. Fifty-percent of Twitter users make \$50,000 or more a year. Twenty-nine percent of Twitter users have a college degree or higher, while 25% have some college. Only 20% have a high-school degree or less. Twitter is therefore more popular among the highly educated. Men and women use Twitter at about the same rate. Twenty-four percent of all internet-using Americans (68%) use Twitter (Greenwood, Perrin, and Duggan 2016; Smith and Anderson 2018).

Twitter has truly revolutionized the way the world works. However, as Lauren Leto aptly stated, much of the discussion on Twitter has little to do with political or social issues. In fact, Preotiuc-Pietro et al. (2017) find that most of the political discussion on Twitter comes from a small number of ideologically extreme members while most moderate members use the site for immaterial conversations, comments, arguments, celebrity following, and discussion. Demographically, Twitter does skew young, and users tend to make more money than the world average; therefore, I realize that an analysis of Twitter is not representative of everyone. However, because Twitter over-represents the educated and wealthy it provides a key source of analysis to look at some of the more vocal members of the population (Smith and Anderson 2018).

Twitter acts as an ideal proxy for individual-level mobilization. Are evangelicals stimulated to express their “identity claims” (Tilly 2006) online after a politically or socially relevant event stirs up feelings of social marginalization? The results of my case studies in Chapter 5 show that without the necessary conditions of elite framing, collective identity, a catalyst event, and a feeling of social marginalization, evangelicals are unlikely to mobilize collectively.

However, in this chapter, I assume some evangelicals are mobilizing *individually* by expressing their thoughts and positions on social media forums. Thus, all the variables previously mentioned are not necessarily relevant. I believe each variable might at some point influence online expression, but the combination of all the variables for sufficiency is not required for individual expression on social media. I contend that the key influencing factor for political expression on Twitter, for evangelicals, is a feeling of social marginalization. In other words, if the counter-factual could be tested, we would find that members who are politically expressive on Twitter would not have expressed in this way were they not feeling social marginalization.

Expression is a fundamental part of political mobilization (Theocharis 2015; Rojas and Puig-I-Abril 2009). Mobilization or counter-mobilization is simply an individual or a group of individuals *expressing* themselves publicly. Citizens desire that their voices, for whatever cause, be heard. Charles Tilly calls it "identity claims." Evangelicals simply want to express their identity and their position on an issue without becoming overly involved in the political or social process. Twitter allows for this kind of engagement.

While there is some debate about whether social media activity can be considered political activity, scholars now agree that social media activism is indeed political activity (Oser, Hooghe, and Marien 2013; Feezell 2016; McCosker 2015; Theocharis 2015; Sormanen and Dutton 2015). Someone who chooses to go online and express their feelings and thoughts about a political/social issue in a public forum is uniquely different from someone who does not put the same time and effort into expressing those feelings or thoughts publicly. While it is impossible to know whether the person who does not use social media politically has the same feelings as the one who does, we can know that there

are some intangible variables pushing one person into online mobilization instead of another.

The intangible mobilizing variable may be as simple as age. An elderly person may have strong feelings and thoughts about political and social issues, but they are not inclined or even capable of using social media to express those sentiments. Also, research shows that certain personality types, such as extroversion and openness to new experiences, lend themselves to increased social media usage, specifically for political reasons (Correa, Hinsley, and Zúñiga 2013). Other psychological factors such as anxiety and emotional instability also lend themselves to increased social media usage (Correa, Hinsley, and Zúñiga 2013). While I cannot analyze the variables that differentiate Twitter users from non-Twitter users, I can analyze the nuances differentiating Twitter users who express themselves politically from those users who do not.

Some research has been done on the differences between conservative and liberal Twitter users. Preotiuc-Pietro et al. (2017) find that there are fewer *very* conservative Twitter users than *very* liberal Twitter users. Very conservative Twitter users use more religious language and demonstrate more positive emotion than very liberal Twitter users. Liberal Twitter users' language reflects more anxiety. Preotiuc-Pietro et al.'s analysis shows that "...conservatives on Twitter [tend] to identify [with] like-minded individuals, as extreme conservatives are a minority on the platform. Liberals, by contrast, use the platform to discuss and popularize their causes" (734).

Their research shows then that liberals are far more likely to use Twitter for political expression than conservatives, which means that any amount of political expression by evangelicals is that much more unique. Preotiuc-Pietro et al. (2017) also find that

ideologically extreme Twitter users tweet about political issues much more frequently than ideologically moderate users. Further, the overall sentiment of ideologically extreme Twitter users is more negative. Ergo, the use of political terms in tweets is almost always correlated with the ideological extreme groups. Given then that evangelicals usually hold ideologically extreme views, they should be politically active on Twitter. However, as Burge (2018) shows in his assessment of evangelical elites on Twitter; very few of them used the platform for political expression. I believe that these pastors are restrained by more pressures and expectations than average evangelicals, and therefore I expect to find a higher rate of evangelical political expression on Twitter by non-clergy evangelicals.

Operationalization

The research for this chapter is two-fold. First, are evangelicals mobilizing? The literature has established that social media political expression is a form of activism. Therefore, the first question to answer is *are they actually* mobilizing. After I uncover the answer to this question, I assess the negative or positive sentiment displayed in the tweets.

Given that mobilization is “the deliberate activation of social networks as a method of diffusing awareness about a social or political problem or of exerting social and/or political pressure for its resolution” (Theocharis 2015, 5) and that *expression* is a key means of carrying this out, I choose to analyze Twitter. Due to data and coding limitations, I simply analyze the number of tweets that contain political words. Using an extensive list of 240 political words or phrases such as "Trump," "Parkland," "Gun Control," "Gay," "Abortion" and many others, I am able to identify political tweets. To achieve a more nuanced assessment of political tweets, I divided the set of 240 words into social-political words and non-social political words. Social-political words consist of words that deal with social

issues, for example, gay, abortion, transgender, and death penalty. Non-social political words are any other political words such as the following: Trump, Hillary, Congress, taxes, immigration and more.

While I cannot analyze the following expectations directly, based on my theory, I expect that evangelicals will display defensive language, especially surrounding values they feel are under attack. Since I believe that evangelicals are counter-mobilizing, I expect to find them defending the status quo; specifically, I expect to see them defending what they believe to be the status quo of values. For instance, if evangelicals believe that the status quo in America is “traditional” marriage, they will defend their version of this value if they feel it is under attack. Further, if they feel that *they* are under attack, they will also use language defending themselves or their identity.

Ryan Burge (2018) found that, out of 88 evangelical pastors’ Twitter accounts, only three of them were politically active. This finding coincides with my theoretical assumption (and findings from my interviews) that most pastors are disinclined to make public political or social statements or take public positions on political or social issues. I do not believe that pastors will be highly active on Twitter given their sensitive leadership position; however, I *do* believe that, based on social movement theory, evangelicals who are not clergy will use Twitter to vent their frustrations with society and/or express their views. Twitter provides a low-cost means of activism and expression, and I believe that evangelicals are willing to capitalize on this low-cost form of activism. If evangelicals are indeed feeling socially marginalized, then I would expect to find evangelicals on Twitter using a good degree of political rhetoric, specifically defensive political rhetoric. I expect them to verbally “fight back.”

Theoretically, I also contend that there must be a significant event that mobilizes evangelicals into *collective* action. They collectively mobilize with the instigation and framing of elites, but I believe many individually mobilize sooner than they engage in collective action (if they ever do). In short, I do not believe that a catalyst event is a *necessary* condition for individual mobilization on Twitter; however, I do believe that an event will likely spur more reaction than no event. The goal of this chapter then is to test whether evangelicals first, *mobilize*. Second, do they mobilize as much, more or less than a random sampling of all Twitter users? Finally, do they tweet more about social-political issues or non-social political issues and is there a difference in the sentiments between the two?

Evangelical Users Dataset

I compile a dataset of evangelical Twitter users as well as randomly-selected Twitter users that are active on Twitter today. In order to do this, I first selected six evangelical elites—evangelical "superusers"—from Ryan Burge's 88 evangelical elites. By doing this, I increase the likelihood of evangelicalism by using their followers as my pool of Twitter users to create the evangelical dataset. I did not select one of the three overtly political elites that Burge identified as I did not want to bias my selection and I also wanted to assess the use of political rhetoric by purely doctrinal evangelicals. The three evangelical figures I chose were Matt Chandler who has 421,000 followers, John Piper who has 981,000 followers and Beth Moore who has 865,000 followers. I created for myself double protection by sifting through followers of an already established evangelical elite. Thus, not only do these account profiles use key evangelical words and phrases, but they are also following key elite evangelical figures.

In order to identify evangelical users, I created a dataset of overtly evangelical words, such as "Christ," "Jesus," "born-again" and "redeemed," and identify users with these words in their profile descriptions. I hydrate 351,000 users from the over 2.2 million evangelical superuser followers. Of these 351,000 hydrated users, only 17,417 were overtly evangelical—i.e., they used overtly evangelical words in their profile descriptions. This means that of the 351,000 followers of the six evangelical superusers, just under 5% were overtly evangelical based on their profile. Following this, I was able to gather up to 3,000 tweets per user; however, since most users have not tweeted 3,000 times, the average number of tweets per user is 450 resulting in a total of 7.8 million tweets. These tweets span a range of time between one week to two years, depending on how frequently or infrequently the user tweeted. For a baseline dataset, I gathered one million tweets from 2,500 randomly selected Twitter users. I am able to analyze approximately 400 tweets per user for the control dataset.

Again, the percentage of followers who are distinctly evangelical was about 5% of the total followers of each evangelical figure. I cannot definitively say that these Twitter users fit into the doctrinal standards for evangelical, but the likelihood is high that they do. The fact that they follow prominent evangelical figures, coupled with their public proclamations of faith, leads me to believe that these individuals are highly active and involved in their faith and therefore more likely evangelical than mainline protestant. I also cannot say that the users without key religious words in their profiles are *not* evangelical. This is the price I must pay, however, to compose a clearly identified evangelical dataset possible using the information provided on Twitter.

With this dataset, I can examine variation within the evangelical population itself. The first question I want to answer is, how many evangelical users are *actually* politically active on Twitter? Since I have established that political rhetoric on Twitter, a form of expression, is considered a form of mobilization, I can assess how many evangelicals are mobilizing on Twitter by looking at the frequency of political language in their tweets. The next question I want to answer is how many of these evangelicals are showing signs of perceived marginalization? Further, I expect the tweets discussing social issues will show more indications of marginalization than those tweets that are purely political.

I analyze evangelical mobilization against two baselines: the rate of elite evangelical mobilization shown in Burge's (2018) analysis of evangelical elites on Twitter and all Twitter users. For the Burge baseline, out of 88 users, he found that only three elite evangelicals were actively engaged in political rhetoric on Twitter. He found that just 1.8% of the tweets analyzed (85,543 tweets in total) displayed political language. Thus, the threshold of political mobilization is very low for evangelical elites. I believe that most pastors and evangelical elites hold themselves to a different standard and are therefore more careful about what they tweet about and how engaged they are politically. The findings from my interviews with pastors confirm this belief. I argued in Chapter 4 that it is likely that evangelicals who are not pastors are much more willing to engage in politics and express their feelings of social marginalization than pastors. Further, if evangelical churchgoers are anything like their pastors, they are feeling socially marginalized and stereotyped, but with less of a filter than the pastors. Thus, I expect to see *more* mobilization in my dataset than that of Burge, since mine is compiled of all kinds of evangelical users, not just elites.

The baseline using all Twitter users is a bit more complex. While theoretically I could say that evangelicals, if they are feeling socially marginalized, should show *more* political mobilization than the other users, I do not necessarily believe this is the case. Neither do I believe that evangelical tweets are going to be more negative than those of all Twitter users. As Preotiuc-Pietro et. al. (2017) find, liberal users are much more negative than conservative users. However, I *do* expect to find that evangelical users will display higher levels of marginalization when discussing social issues than political issues when compared to all Twitter users. This finding can speak specifically to my conceptualization of social marginalization.

I also analyze regional variation. Are evangelicals in the South more likely to mobilize than those in the Northeast, Midwest or West? These findings allow me to understand a bit more about the environments in which evangelicals may feel marginalization, or if that even matters. In other words, I would expect northern evangelicals to feel more marginalized by society than southern evangelicals; but perhaps living in the South, where evangelicals probably feel more accepted, leads to increased boldness and assertion of one's values on Twitter. This regional variation can shed some light on these differences.

This brings me to my testable implications for the evangelical dataset, a compilation of 17,417 evangelical Twitter users.

H1: Evangelicals are individually mobilizing on Twitter at a higher average rate than the elite-level evangelical figures from Burge's (2018) dataset.

I conceptualize individual mobilization as any tweet that includes political rhetoric, whether it be social, or economic or other. Even the use of one political word shows

engagement. However, the more political words that show up, the more highly political it is.

H2: Evangelicals display higher levels of negative sentiment when discussing social political issues than non-social political issues.

Social topics are those that deal with issues of morality or values. Social rhetoric includes words like abortion, same-sex marriage, homosexuality, gay, lesbian, transgender, poor, sex, sexuality, political correctness (PC), religious freedom, tolerance, bigotry, racism, sexism, discrimination, Colorado bakers, and more.

H3: Evangelicals are more likely to display higher levels of negative sentiment when discussing social political issues than non-social political issues compared to all Twitter users.

Discussion

First, I randomly select 84,000 tweets from the evangelical dataset and the control data to analyze. Using a set of political words, I find that 12.8% of tweets in the control group contained political words, while only 5% of evangelical tweets contained political words. This means that, according to this data, evangelicals are significantly *less* likely to tweet about political issues than the general population. However, they are significantly *more* likely to tweet about political issues than the evangelical elites in Burge's analysis of political tweets. He found that 1.8% of the tweets contained political words, while non-elite evangelical Twitter users' tweets contained political words 5% of the time in my sample. This supports my hypothesis that evangelical users are more likely to tweet politically than evangelical elites and also confirms my belief that evangelical users will be less likely to tweet politically than the control dataset users. These findings are not entirely surprising. Many religion and politics scholars have found that evangelicals are

otherworldly focused (Jelen 1993a; Olson 2000); therefore, it makes intuitive sense that they would spend less time tweeting about political issues.

In order to assess the different emotions attached to *kinds* of political topics, I split the “political words” search list into two distinct lists, a non-social political words (NSPW) dataset, and a social political words dataset (SPW). When tweeting politically, evangelicals and the control group were equally as likely to tweet about non-social political issues as they were to tweet about social political issues. In other words, neither dataset showed a clear proclivity to discuss NSPW or SPW more than the other. Thus, a random user from the control dataset, if they are tweeting politically, is just as likely to be tweeting about a NSPW and they are to be tweeting about an SPW and I found the same to be true for evangelical users.

I also ran a simple sentiment analysis on all tweets for the evangelical and control dataset. I found that, overall, evangelical tweets are significantly more positive in nature than the control tweets, even though both datasets skew slightly positive on -1 to 1 sentiment analysis scale. I found that, for both datasets, between NSPW tweets and SPW tweets, the SPW tweets displayed a slightly more *positive* sentiment than the NSPW tweets. In other words, for both datasets, the tweets that contained *social* political words were more positive in nature than tweets discussing non-social political issues. This is surprising given the generally divisive and emotional nature of social issues.

I also found that between the two datasets, it was tweets in the *control* dataset used the word “Trump” more often—in fact, four times more frequently than the evangelical dataset. The word “Trump” showed up 4,561 times in the control dataset and only 953 times in the evangelical dataset. Given the high evangelical support of Donald Trump in

the 2016 presidential election, this is unexpected. Below are the top ten words from each dataset's political tweets.

These word frequencies are distinct from each other. The top ten words in the control dataset of political tweets are highly political while the top ten words in the sample of evangelical political tweets are less overtly political and seemingly more spiritual, with words like “God” and “love” appearing. For both datasets, the word “Trump” is the most frequently used, while unlikely words such as “children” or “think” also show up in the sets of words.

Word Frequency of Top 10 Words in Control Dataset's Political Tweets

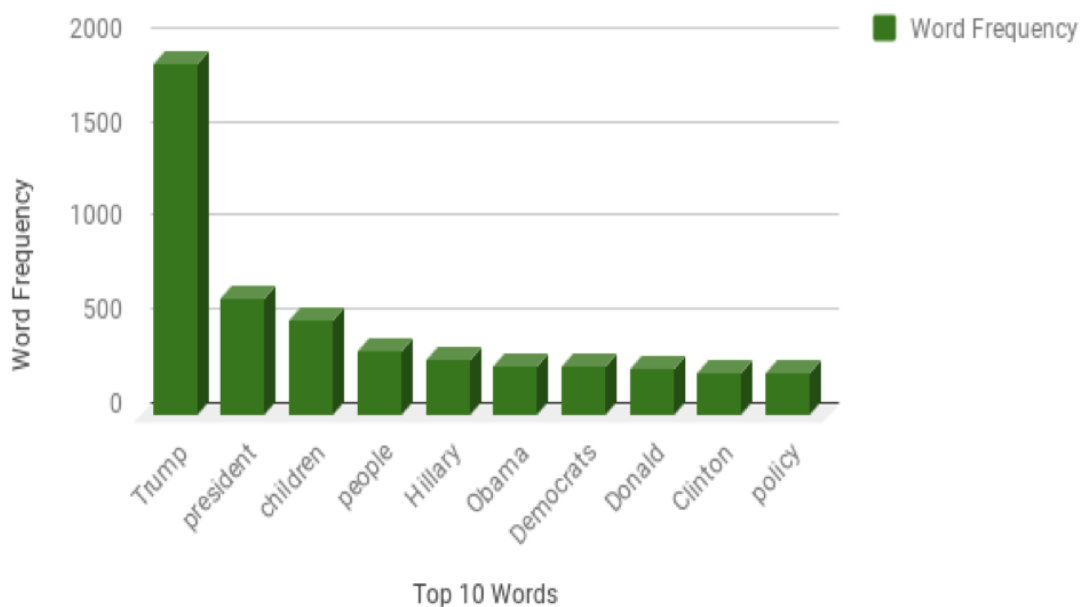


Figure 6.1 Word Frequency of Top 10 Words in Control Dataset's Political Tweets

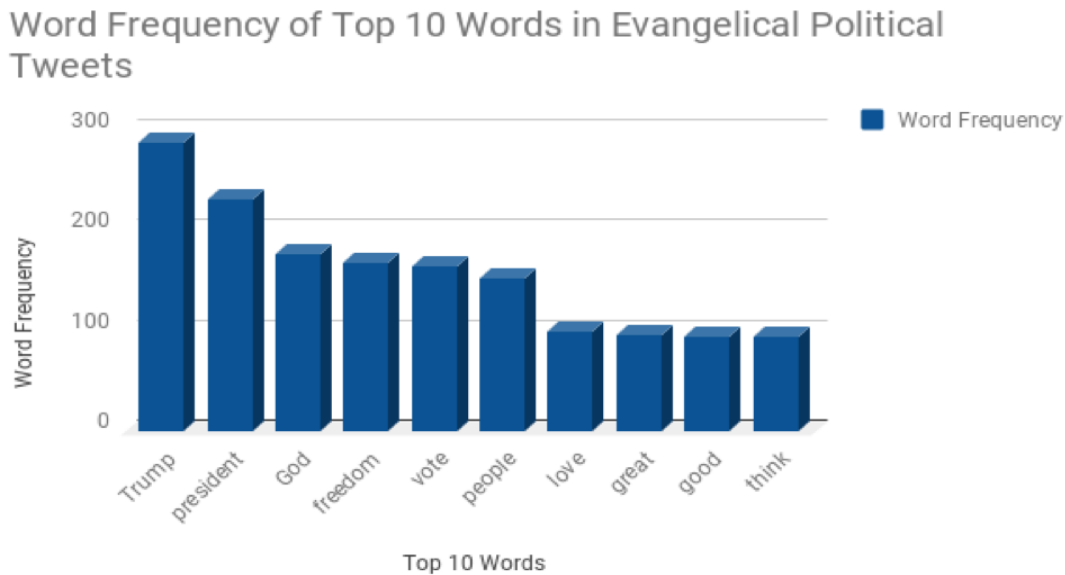


Figure 6.2 Word Frequency of Top 10 Words in Evangelical Political Tweets

Conclusion

The original data in this chapter offers a few new and informative nuggets of information regarding the political mobilization of evangelical Twitter users in comparison to a control group of likely nonevangelical Twitter users. The first is that evangelical Twitter users are much less likely to discuss politics on Twitter than general Twitter users. They are, however, substantially *more* likely to tweet something political than the evangelical elites from Burge’s (2018) analysis of 88 evangelical elites, confirming my expectation that evangelical parishioners are on average more likely to engage in online media expression than evangelical clergy.

However, counter to my expectation, evangelicals displayed more positive sentiment in all of their tweets, including political ones, when compared to the tweets in the control group. Further, the negative sentiment was higher for both datasets when discussing non-social political issues compared to social-political issues. While this is counter to my

hypothesis, it is not that surprising to find that evangelicals overall display more positive sentiment given what Preotiuc-Pietro et al. (2017) found regarding liberal versus conservative Twitter use. However, it is unique to find that tweets with SPWs, issues that are generally more emotional, displayed less negative sentiment than NSPWs for both datasets.

In conclusion, I find that evangelicals are not as interested in using non-institutional forms of expression such as Twitter I had previously assumed. Instead, they seem more interested in discussing spiritual issues while non-evangelicals were far more engaged in political discussions. This data gathered chapter warrants much more future research and more in-depth analysis to better understand the nuanced differences between evangelicals and non-evangelicals, and between evangelicals of different races within evangelicals.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This dissertation is a first step to understanding what it takes to instigate expressive, extra-institutional forms of mobilization among a historically dominant group—white evangelical Protestants. I provide evidence of perceived social marginalization in the evangelical community through interviews with evangelical pastors. This social marginalization is key to understanding the movements and actions of the evangelical community. It is not the only relevant variable, but it is an important one and one that, up to this point, largely has been overlooked. Additionally, the perceptions of social marginalization displayed by the pastors I interviewed is unique in that it stems from their Biblical worldview and values. Thus, they are less concerned about how society views them personally but rather their values. Gaining a better understanding of the complex factors at work in generating this perception of marginalization—incorporating the role of race, partisan politics, and elite-level priming and framing—is an important next step.

White evangelicals are situated in a unique position in society. Their unfettered support for President Trump has led to onlooker confusion about their ostensibly highly devout religious beliefs. Are evangelicals that are white simply feeling racial and status anxiety that leads them to a new fervency for white identity? My research was not intended to answer this question as much as it was intended to look at the mechanisms needed to stimulate evangelicals who are feeling marginalized, whether for theological/values or

racial/status reasons or something else, into unconventional expressive forms of mobilization.

My findings suggest that it is difficult to stimulate evangelicals to engage in unconventional expressive mobilization. However, when they are stirred to action, they may do so vigorously. Social constructionist theory dictates that collective identity, emotion, elite framing, and culture are all necessary conditions for collective action. I argued that these are all true, but the marginalization need only be social (rather than political) and that there must be a catalyst event that stirs evangelicals into action. I found support for these assertions, meaning that perceived *social* marginalization seems to be enough to spur mobilization of a subset of evangelicals.

The pastors from my interviews showed varying levels of perceived social marginalization but were not stimulated into any sorts of auxiliary forms of expression because of it. This could be because of the missing variables from the social constructionist theory; however, something tells me even these variables would not cause these pastors to change their behavior. I take them at their word. A few of them explained that if things were to “get bad enough” they would take a corporate and public stand. This means that the task for us, as researchers, is to figure out what that threshold is. This dissertation begins to uncover this question, although there is much work left to do.

Future Research

All of this leads me to the question: what further research is there to do on this subject? How else can we uncover what the threshold for collective action is for evangelicals? There are many different avenues for research moving forward. Perceived social marginalization among evangelicals and concurrent engagement in alternative forms of mobilization are

just the tip of the iceberg. First, I think a full-scale survey of a representative random sample of evangelicals asking about their engagement in protest marches, boycotting, and social media would offer a much clearer picture about how mobilized evangelicals are both individually and collectively. Further, the survey should also include questions about evangelical emotions; how are they feeling about society right now? How does society make them feel? Do they feel like outcasts? Moreover, how are these perspectives interwoven with their historical position of cultural and political dominance? The fact that many evangelicals claim to feel more discriminated against than Muslims is quite revealing regarding the importance of perception in understanding their psyche (Green 2017).

My Twitter analysis only uncovers a small number of questions regarding evangelicals and their individual forms of expression on Twitter. Only a small portion of evangelicals engaged in political and social issues on Twitter; however, these users displayed evidence of perceived social marginalization. This shows that at least the ones who are engaged in politics are showing signs of social strain. However, a time-sensitive assessment of these online activities would do wonders for our understanding of evangelical emotions and mobilization. How were they feeling before 2016? Are they pre-disposed to mobilize more under a president they view as unfriendly as opposed to one they view as sympathetic to their cause? In other words, were they expressing these signs of social marginalization *more* before the Trump election since the social marginalization they perceive may have been amplified by political marginalization? *Alternatively*, are they more likely to express themselves in a more politically favorable environment, meaning they may retreat if the next president is someone they do not support? Some of these trends on Twitter would lend themselves to time-series analysis. Of course, Twitter is not representative of all

evangelicals, but it can provide some valuable insight into how some of the more engaged citizens are feeling and responding to things.

More rigorous research needs to be done on other forms of alternative evangelical mobilization. For instance, though the American Family Association does sponsor boycotts, they only sponsor a select few and are only interested in boycotting those few organizations whose fiscal bottom line will not be affected by the boycott. However, they are much more engaged in individually motivated collective activism. By that I mean, they encourage evangelicals to call, write letters, and make personal contact with the leaders at different companies and corporations who are promoting values or agendas that do not align with their Biblical perspectives. These forms of activism have proven highly effective, which means that AFA members are responding to the AFA's calls to action with actual mobilization. These forms of mobilization are not as highly visible and therefore draw less media attention. They do provide evidence for my theory, though, and act as a proxy for the issues and concerns within the evangelical population.

To point out the obvious, the AFA is not the only evangelical organization in the United States and boycotting is not the only form of form of alternative expression available to them. In fact, there are many alternative forms of expression. Perhaps another one that needs to be better explored is that of local evangelical demonstrations and organization. For instance, the Nehemiah Network, recently founded in South Carolina, is an inter-denominational network of 365 South Carolina pastors who have joined together to act as a catalyst for a fellowship of church leaders that will "1) Obey the tenets of 2 Chronicles 7:14 together. 2) Work in communities together to engage in culture and meet spiritual and temporal needs. 3) Earn influence with elected officials together in defense of Judeo-

Christian values" (palmettofamily.org). This is a unique and powerful coalition. These pastors have come together on the steps of the South Carolina statehouse to make their presence known and influence state politics. They are the first coalition of this kind to have a member in each Senate and House district in South Carolina. This means that members in each district work to hold their legislator accountable. What other organizations have been started of which we may be unaware? What does the existence of these organizations mean for evangelical mobilization both socially and politically?

Race and evangelicalism is another area of research in religion and politics that still needs further attention. Most research thus far focuses exclusively on the white Christian Right and neglects any study of Black evangelicals. How many African American evangelicals are there and what is going on in their ranks? Are they also feeling social marginalization for the same reason that white evangelicals are? The results of my interviews show that there are African American evangelicals who share some of the same religious and social concerns as white evangelicals. This finding exposes an overlooked and understudied area of evangelicalism that is still in need of further research and unpacking.

Evangelical *inaction* is also an area of research that needs more fine-tuning. This dissertation shows that a good proportion of evangelicals are rather silent when it comes to public forms of expression. The pastors I interviewed rejected the notion of church-wide activities or expression and were individually uninvolved, save for one Southern Baptist minister. Given this finding and the fact that the proportion of evangelical Twitter users engaging in political rhetoric was minimal, as was the number of evangelical boycotts, we must assume that most evangelicals are not highly involved in alternative forms of

mobilization. Of course, this is likely true of the population more broadly. However, there is a subset that is involved and that makes much noise. Who are these evangelicals? Who is the "they" that the evangelical pastors I interviewed wanted to distance themselves from? What portion of the evangelical population represents John Piper's belief and understanding of the Christian's role in society and what portion share Larry Taunton's belief? The answers to these questions matter to American politics and democracy given the size and potential influence of the evangelical population.

Another area of research in need of more attention that I discovered while writing this dissertation is the politicization of corporations. Is this a new phenomenon or have corporation always wielded their power politically? The North Carolina HB2 corporate boycott was successful and incredibly powerful. I have not done extensive research at this point on corporations and their impact on social and political norms, but I would be interested to see what research does exist and begin to dabble in this area myself. Corporations wield an immense amount of power, both politically and socially; therefore, political scientists cannot miss their contribution and influence on the political and social world. I believe so much time, effort and research has been put into studying interest groups, lobbyists, political parties, and big business and their influence on politicians, we miss the agenda-setting power of big business. This is an area that has yet to be fully explored and one that I am interested in exploring.

Conclusion

There is still much research to be done and much about the evangelical population to understand. However, the influence of their perceived social marginalization is not something to take lightly and shrug off. I believe it played a pivotal role in the Trump

election—almost certainly magnified by partisan, racial, and perhaps economic overtones—and is likely to serve an important function in future elections, as well as in future conversations about social and political issues. I started this dissertation with a quote, and I will end with a quote that encapsulates the perceptions of social marginalization grounded in group identity that elites are trying to stir up to mobilize the evangelical base.

I end with these words written by Larry Taunton to his evangelical base: “I urge you instead to be offended by the way our God’s name is blasphemed in our country every day; by the 54 million children murdered in the holocaust of abortion since 1973; by the sordid sexual agenda that is eroding the fabric of Western civilization; by the fact that Christians are dying for their faith, largely at the hands of Muslims, at a rate of 100,000 per year; and most of all, by the reality that these things are being ignored, trivialized, or celebrated. These are things that offend me deeply, and I hope they offend you, too. Righteous anger has a place within the Christian life. Tap into it. In the words of Ephesians 4:26 “Be angry and do not sin” (Larry Taunton 2017).

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APPENDIX A

CLERGY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself and your ministry.
2. Do you consider yourself to be evangelical? Do you believe this term can also be applied to your congregation?
3. How do you feel society views you or people like you?
4. What are your thoughts on society and politics today, from your perspective as either a Bible-believing Christian or as a pastor?
5. What do you think about the direction society is headed in both socially and politically and how does it make you feel?
6. What issues do you believe are the most important in society today? What issues do you think are most important to evangelicals today?
7. Do you, as an individual and as a congregation, feel that you have or can have, an impact on the political process?
8. Has Donald Trump's election or his presidency so far had any effect on your answers to my previous questions?
 - If so, how so?
 - If not, why not?
9. How, if at all, do you and your congregation express yourselves politically and socially?

10. Have you changed your political tactics at all in the past few years?
11. Do you see boycotting as an appropriate outlet for establishing political positions and/or expressing your feelings about today's society?
12. Do you see Twitter as an appropriate outlet for establishing political positions and/or expressing your feelings about today's society?
13. Is there anything else you would like to add?