**Reconciling Religious Beliefs with Vote Choice**

**A study of evangelical Christians’ basic personal values**

**By Luke Morgan**

Vote choice in a United States’ presidential election is both a simple process and a complex process. Vote choice is not whether or not an individual decides to vote; rather, it is for which candidate the individual decides to vote. It is a simple process because the voter can simply rely on heuristics such as political party labels to choose a candidate, but it is also a complex process because a variety of factors, such as political ideology, positions on policy issues, basic personal values, and religion, all influence each other as well as the voter’s political party identification and vote choice. Normally, these factors come into alignment which allows an individual to vote for a candidate that does not conflict with them or their beliefs and identifications.

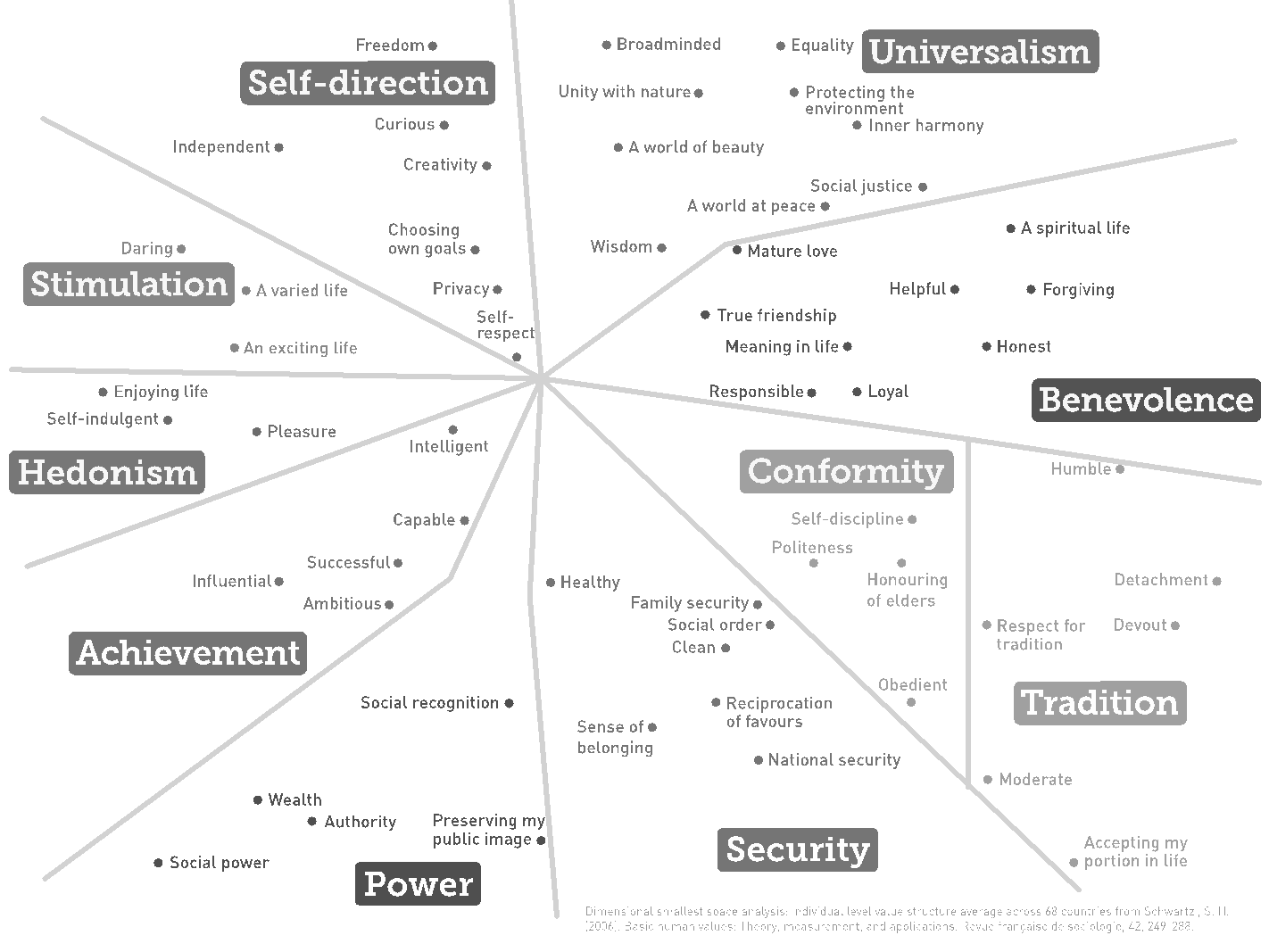
The 2016 Presidential Election provided a particularly interesting example of the complexities and simplicities of vote choice. Presidential Candidate Donald Trump ran under the Republican Party label, espousing a political ideology that was sometimes contradictory and not always the traditional conservative Republican ideology. Trump campaigned in a populist style as he championed the group of middle-Americans who had been left behind both economically and socially and pitted them against the traditional political establishment represented by Hillary Clinton. Throughout the campaign cycle, some evangelical leaders, congregations, and individuals enthusiastically endorsed and threw their support behind Trump. This support could be an illustration of the simplicities of vote choice—voters vote for the candidate from the party with which they have always identified. However, other Evangelical identifiers were slower to endorse and support Trump, viewing him as a slightly lesser evil than Hillary Clinton. His sometimes derogatory and offensive statements as well as his scandalous and flamboyant lifestyle conflicted with some evangelicals’ morals, personal values, and religious beliefs. However, many of them still ultimately supported Trump in the general election, demonstrating the complexities of vote choice. In order to better understand this complex relationship and the effect of Evangelical Christianity on the 2016 Presidential Election, I devised the research question “To what degree do evangelical Christians identify with each of the ten basic personal values?” Investigating evangelicals’ identification levels with each of the ten basic personal values will help to uncover which values evangelicals may tend to hold higher than other values. Consequently, this may shed some light on why evangelicals supported and voted for Donald Trump at such high rates.

**Literature Review**

In order to understand how voters choose between different candidates, one must understand how party identification, political ideology, value systems, and demographics such as religion impact individuals. None of these things can be looked at as the sole cause of vote choice; rather, vote choice is the product of all four of these broad categories interacting with and influencing one another within the individual. A variety of literature exists on these various topics, but the literature rarely or never examines the relationship between all four. First, it shows how political party identification forms and changes over time. Second, the literature shows how political ideology can impact party identification. Third, value systems impact individuals’ political ideology, but the literature does not show they impact political party identification. Finally, demographics, particularly religion, impact party identification and political ideology, but not much literature examines the relationship between religion and value systems.

**Values**

In order to understand more about how an individual arrives at their policy preferences and political ideology, one must analyze the individual’s basic personal values. Researchers have attempted to describe the relationships between values and political beliefs and attitudes, but there is still little evidence clarifying the strength and direction of the relationships (Huddy, Jervis, & Sears, 2003). Shalom H. Schwartz provided a summary of Values Theory in his work “Basic Human Values: An Overview” (2005). Values are the goals individuals prioritize in their lives and which serve as the individuals’ guiding principles (Schwartz S. , 2005). Schwartz originally identified 57 different values, which he included in his Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) by asking individuals to rate the importance of the values in their lives.

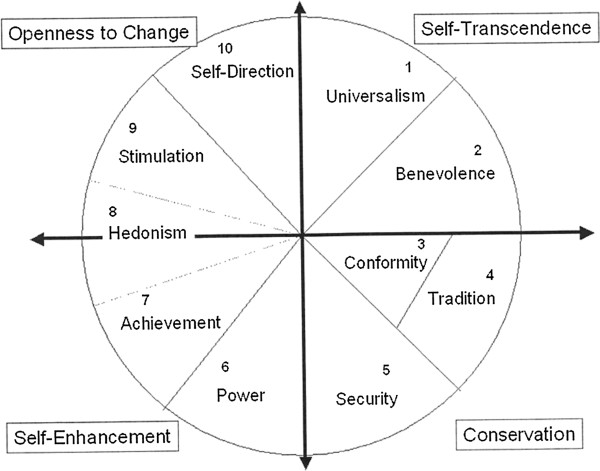
Using the SVS in his 1992 study, Schwartz analyzed the value structures of groups of teachers and groups of students in twenty countries. By plotting the responses to his survey, Schwartz was able to construct a diagram very similar to Diagram 1: Further analysis of the diagram and the survey responses resulted in Schwartz identifying ten distinct motivational value types or basic personal values that appeared consistently throughout the SVS responses (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). The main aspect of each value is the goal or motivation that it expresses (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). Each of the ten basic personal values is listed below along with a brief description of its central motivating goal:

**Diagram 1**

1. **Self-Direction**: Independent thought and action; choosing, creating, exploring.
2. **Stimulation**: Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life.
3. **Hedonism**: Pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself.
4. **Achievement**: Personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards.
5. **Power**: Social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources.
6. **Security**: Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships, and of self.
7. **Conformity**: Restraint of actions, inclinations, and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms.
8. **Tradition**: Respect, commitment, and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self.
9. **Benevolence**: Preserving and enhancing the welfare of those with whom one is in frequent personal contact.
10. **Universalism**: Understanding, appreciation, tolerance, and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature.

Some of these values clearly have close relationships, such as achievement and power (Schwartz S. , 2005, p. 3). If an individual values achievement, they may be drawn to positions of power as a way to fulfill their achievement desires. While some values have close relationships, other values are opposed to each other, such as universalism is opposed to power (Schwartz S. , 2005, p. 3). Therefore, as Schwartz states, “action taken in the pursuit of each value type have psychological, practical, and social consequences that may be compatible or may conflict with the pursuit of other value types” (Schwartz & Berkowitz, Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries, 1992, p. 4). For example, if an individual values universalism, they will be unlikely to value power as well because power focuses on the individual over others. If an individual values conformity, their actions are likely to conflict with the value of self-direction.

Interestingly, Schwartz’s 1992 study hypothesized that spirituality would be an eleventh value in addition to the ten others (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). Spirituality is concerned with answering the questions of ultimate meaning in the universal, the meaninglessness of reality, and the existential crisis, while traditions and religion often serve as the mechanisms that allow people to do so (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). Spirituality values would express the motivations of meaning and inner harmony achieved from transcending the concerns of everyday reality (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). However, the search for meaning and coherence is a sophisticated process in which the average person does not engage (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). Consequently, instead of turning to spirituality values, individuals use other values such as tradition, security, and conformity to find coherence and meaning (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). While Schwartz’s and Berkowitz’s hypothesis that individuals use other values in lieu of spirituality is a logical conclusion. It would seem that most people do not think about ultimate meaning and the existential crisis on a routine basis. Therefore, they would not need religion to answer questions related to those topics. However, the prominence of various religions across the globe and throughout different societies and cultures shows that religion still serves some purpose within the individual—most likely allowing the individual to conform to society, participate in traditions, and feel secure. Future research could focus on to what extent religion provides access to the basic motivational values. The placement of the SVS value *a spiritual life* within the motivational continuum can show the varied nature of spirituality between different people and different cultures. For example, in Schwartz and Sagiv’s study “Identifying Culture-Specifics in the Content and Structure of Values,” *a spiritual life* appeared most frequently in either the benevolence, universalism, or tradition regions of the continuum (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). All three of these regions signify a transcendence of material self-interests for different reasons. Benevolence transcends the self for the welfare of close others, universalism for the welfare of all others, and tradition for the demands of a higher authority (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). In samples of Muslim and Catholic teachers, *a spiritual life* appeared most frequently in the traditions region, signifying these two groups’ association of spirituality with a super-natural authority. While an eleventh value representing spirituality did not appear in all cultures and societies, the ten basic motivational values that did appear universally or almost universally have relationships with each other. Schwartz represented these relationships with the following chart:



**Diagram 2**

(Buuri & Maercker, 2014))

The motivational values fall into a circular continuum: the closer any two values are to each other in either direction, the more similar are their motivations (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). Because the values are on a continuum rather than in discreet, inflexible categories, the exact locations of the partition lines between the motivational value categories are essentially arbitrary (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). A specific value found near the border of two motivational value type categories in Diagram 1 will reflect a combination of the motivational goals attributed to the values types on either side of the partition line in Diagram 2 (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). For example, within the universalism value region, the specific value of social justice is located near the border with benevolence, while the value of wisdom is located near the border with self-direction. This most likely shows that social justice is concerned for the welfare of both all human kind and those close to an individual (benevolence), while wisdom shares motivation with self-direction’s reliance on one’s own thoughts and actions (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992). In his 2012 work, *An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values*, Schwartz describes the nature of the continuum by noting the shared motivations of adjacent value types:

1. “Power and achievement--social superiority and esteem;
2. Achievement and hedonism--self-centered satisfaction;
3. Hedonism and stimulation--a desire for affectively pleasant arousal;
4. Stimulation and self-direction--intrinsic interest in novelty and mastery;
5. Self-direction and universalism--reliance upon one's own judgment and comfort with the diversity of existence;
6. Universalism and benevolence--enhancement of others and transcendence of selfish interests;
7. Benevolence and tradition--devotion to one's in-group;
8. Benevolence and conformity--normative behavior that promotes close relationships;
9. Conformity and tradition--subordination of self in favor of socially imposed expectations;
10. Tradition and security--preserving existing social arrangements that give certainty to life;
11. Conformity and security--protection of order and harmony in relations;
12. Security and power--avoiding or overcoming threats by controlling relationships and resources.” (Schwartz S. H., An Overview of the Schwartz Theory of Basic Values, 2012)

Schwartz’s value theory assumes that only motivational value types that are adjacent to each other in the circular continuum can blend together because they share similar motivational goals. However, a study by Sonia Roccas et al. found blending in the middle of the circular continuum between motivational values in nonadjacent regions when she examined the Big Five personality trait conscientiousness. Conscientiousness correlated highly with both achievement and conformity—two values that are usually orthogonal in the motivational circle (Roccas et al., 2002). This example of values blending across the circular continuum raises the possibility that other values may blend together in unknown and unanticipated ways (Roccas et al., 2002).

Analyzing the circular motivational continuum, Schwartz identified two main relationships represented by two diagonal axes. The first axis, beginning at the self-direction and stimulation values and ending at the security, conformity, and tradition values, represents the dimension that Schwartz labels “openness to change vs. conservation” (Schwartz S. , 2005). The second axis, beginning at the universalism and benevolence values and ending at the power and achievement values, represents the “self-enhancement vs. self-transcendence” dimension (Schwartz S. , 2005). Schwartz analyzes how these dimensions and their related values can impact policy views such as gay marriage. He found that between the statement “gays should be free to live as they like” and the ten values, conformity and tradition correlated most negatively to freedom for gays—most likely because heterosexual marriage has been the cornerstone of society for centuries and any changes to it could be viewed as a threat to society (Schwartz S. , 2005, p. 4). Meanwhile hedonism and universalism correlated most positively with freedom for gays—most likely due to hedonism’s focus on personal pleasure and universalism’s focus on tolerance and the welfare of all (Schwartz S. , 2005). This shows the “openness to change vs. conservation” dimension on the motivational continuum. While Schwartz analyzes how these dimensions and their related values impact policy views such as gay marriage, he does not discuss their impact on political ideology in this overview of his theory.

Whereas Schwartz in his 2005 work only described his value theory, author Stanley Feldman added political implications while supporting Schwartz’s value theory in *Values, Ideology, and the Structure of Political Attitudes* (Huddy, Jervis, & Sears, 2003). Analyzing Schwartz’s 1994 work, Feldman discusses the two axes that Schwartz discovered: openness to change vs. conservatism and self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement. Feldman notes that Schwartz related the first axis to classical liberalism, or “whether government should devote more to guarding and cultivating individual freedoms and civil rights or to protecting the societal status quo by controlling deviance from within or enemies from without” (Huddy, Jervis, & Sears, 2003, p. 494). This dimension shows the conflict between the government protecting individual rights and freedoms (openness-to-change values) or protecting social customs and traditions (conservation values). The second axis, representing the dimension of economic egalitarianism, “refers to whether government should devote itself more to promoting equality by redistributing resources or to protecting citizens’ ability to retain the wealth they generate in order to foster economic growth and efficiency” (Huddy, Jervis, & Sears, 2003, p. 494). This dimension shows the conflict between an unfettered free market and capital accumulation (self-enhancement values) on one hand and a system of wealth redistribution and social justice on the other hand (self-transcendence values). Feldman adds that this two-dimensional structure in Schwartz’s diagram of the ten basic values would be useful for thinking about conflicts in society, both in the political and social spheres of life (Huddy, Jervis, & Sears, 2003). Also, Feldman notes that slight shifts in an individual’s orientation in Schwartz’s two dimensional representation could create different political beliefs and ideologies (Huddy, Jervis, & Sears, 2003). Thus, a change in an individual’s values could drastically alter their political ideology. For example, if an individual valued tradition they would very likely be a conservative on the political ideology spectrum. However, if their views shifted so that they valued stimulation over tradition, their political ideology would likely also shift from conservative to liberal.

In their 2013 study of fifteen different countries, Shalom Schwartz et al. produced results that supported Schwartz’s earlier discovery of the conservation vs. openness-to-change dimension and the self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement dimension (Schwartz et al, 2013). Focusing on basic personal values, the study analyzed how these values affect core political values. Schwartz et al defined basic personal values as “cognitive representations of individuals’ broad goals that apply across specific situations,” and core political values as “overarching normative principles and belief assumptions about government, citizenship, and society” (Schwartz et al, 2017, p. 902-903). The study showed that the structure of motivations that organizes the basic personal values also organizes the core political values (Schwartz et al, 2017). Therefore, it is apparent that core political values are simply public expressions of basic personal values in the political realm (Schwartz et al, 2017). Unfortunately, it is not currently clear whether basic personal values or core political values form first. While core political values are expressions of basic personal values, basic personal values could also be derivatives of core political values. It is likely, however, that both directions of causality are present in the relationship between basic personal values and core political values. More research is needed to examine this relationship more closely.

While Schwartz et al established that basic personal values and core political values are inherently intertwined, a study by authors Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, and Chittick examines the relationship between basic personal values and political attitudes. The authors note that political values and issues are not synonymous; rather, a political value will be closely related to the policy option it explains (Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, & Chittick, 2016). For example, the political value of the morality of warfare is closely related to the policy option of the use of military power (Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, & Chittick, 2016). The study found that in the United States, basic personal values do drive policy opinion formulation (Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, & Chittick, 2016). However, not all basic personal values are consequential or relevant to the formulation of opinions (Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, & Chittick, 2016). This could indicate that certain values take precedence over other values within an individual. The values of self-transcendence and conservation drive public opinion formulation, while self-enhancement and openness-to-change do not have nearly as much of an effect (Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, & Chittick, 2016). This is an understandable trend because conservation values focus on social stability, obedience, and devoutness, while self-transcendence values focus on social justice, equality, and helpfulness. The foci of the conservation and self-transcendence values manifest themselves routinely in public opinion in the form of public policies areas such as law and order as well as welfare. These results show that “public opinion in the United States depends on beliefs about the good and just society to a much greater extent than beliefs about the virtue of private gain” (Goren, Schoen, Reifler, Scotto, & Chittick, 2016, p. 24).

Shalom Schwartz concluded in his 1992 study that there were no more universal motivational value types to be found. He wrote, “Hence, pending evidence to the contrary, the 10 value types here may be taken as tentatively exhausting the distinctive, near universal, motivational types of values” (Schwartz & Berkowitz, 1992, p. 37). Although individual cultures or geographic regions may have some of their own distinct motivational values, the ten listed in his study are the only ones that could be applied universally. However, Schwartz did acknowledge that future research could uncover new universal motivational value types that his study had failed to identify. In order to fit the definition of “universal” as laid out by Schwartz, a value would have to be found in at least 90% of all countries.

Clearly, basic personal values are an important component of an individual’s personal identity. They influence political values as well as political attitudes. This then leads to basic personal values influencing specific public policy positions and political ideology. Regarding Bardes and Oldendick, political ideology directly affects party identification which Sears and Levy established was the most reliable predictor of vote choice. Therefore, it appears that basic personal values and vote choice are intrinsically related. More research is needed into whether basic personal values or core political values develop first although this would not necessarily affect vote choice. However, while values are important in forming political ideology and policy positions, they are not the only factors that contribute to political ideology’s and policy positions’ formation. Demographics also have an impact on policy positions and political ideology with a particularly large influence coming from religion.

**Voting Behavior**

When thinking about how individuals decide who to vote for, one might assume that individuals would weigh candidates’ positions on issue or examine the candidates’ political ideologies. Elites in society may do this, but large portions of the general population do not (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). One may also assume that members of the public can be placed on the dimension regarding controversial policy issues that have caused intense political debate among elites for many years. Once again, this is not the case (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). Editors Richard Niemi and Herbert Weisberg, in their book *Controversies in Voting Behavior*, show that large portions of the public “simply do not belong on the dimension at all” (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976, p. 93). Therefore, they should not be included in that policy’s particular issue public—the group of individuals who have an active stake in the particular policy. Because the political effects of a controversy are only felt among the members of an issue public, the mass public fragments into a multitude of smaller, more specific issue publics (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). Individuals within these groups have formed strong opinions and positions regarding the issue and may vote based upon these positions. Within the general population as a whole, issue beliefs tend to fluctuate over time (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976).

In addition to not having positions on most policy issues, members of the mass public do not have a set ideological position (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). The authors state that the mass public does not even think in ideological terms as they are defined by political scientists (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). The general public seems to combine and constrain ideas in different ways than do the elites (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). Consequently, members of the mass public experience a lack of constraint even when they are informed on the issues that are highly controversial at that time (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). This means that even if an individual holds an extremely conservative position on one particular issue, one could not necessarily expect him to hold extremely conservative positions on all or even most other issues. Although the general public shows an ideological lack of constraint along with unstable issue positions, beliefs about political parties remain remarkably stable over time (Niemi & Weisberg, 1976). This indicates that an individual’s political party identification may be the primary factor in the individual’s voting behavior.

**Political Party Identification and Political Ideology**

Due to the fact that political party identification serves an important role in voting behavior, researches have tried to determine what draws an individual to a particular political party. Authors David O. Sears and Sheri Levy discuss the sources of political party identification in *Childhood and Adult Political Development*. They state that “party identification turns out to be by far the strongest and most consistent prediction of Americans’ voting preferences, and seems to have been so for over a century” (Sears & Levy, 2003, p. 76). Sears and Levy outline three particular time periods in an individual’s life that show distinct party identification trends: childhood, early adulthood, and adulthood (Sears & Levy, 2003). In childhood, the greatest source of party identification by far is the parents (Sears & Levy, 2003). Parental transmission of their own party identification is “substantial,” although it is not perfect (Sears & Levy, 2003). In early adulthood, however, the party identification transmitted by the parents begins to weaken as the child’s own views and policy preferences begin to play a larger role in shaping their party identification (Sears & Levy, 2003). After early adulthood, when the child has reached full adulthood, party identification does not decline any further (Sears & Levy, 2003). This means that the events one experiences and the ideas one is exposed to during young adulthood can create long-lasting beliefs and attitudes within the individual that could cause them to identify with a particular political party for the remainder of their life. Interestingly, economic issues and other issues of self-interest in adulthood show little statistical evidence of changing an individual’s sociopolitical attitudes and party identification (Sears & Levy, 2003). Sears and Levy address how “the times”—current political events, sociocultural changes, and economic conditions—can result in the “generational effect” in which age cohorts share “powerful experiences that will mark them as distinctive for life” (Sears & Levy, 2003, pp. 84-85). For example, American youth in the 1960’s were subject to “left-liberal” political and social events (Sears & Levy, 2003, p. 85). Since then, the “left-liberal distinctiveness” has persisted among this age cohort, not just among those who engaged in the protests, but also those who merely passively observed them (Sears & Levy, 2003, p. 85). Consequently, as this age cohort has grown older, it has remained reliably more liberal than older or younger age cohorts. This generational effect stands in opposition to the life cycle effects which state that conservatism correlates positively with age. Evidence shows that the elderly from the pre-New Deal age cohort tilted toward the Republican Party, while the elderly from the New Deal age cohort favored the Democratic Party, thus resembling the generational effect (Sears & Levy, 2003). Additionally, party identification strength increases with age (Sears & Levy, 2003). Due to the fact that generational effects exist and that party identification strength increases as individuals age, one could expect voters who developed left-liberal leanings in their youth as a result of socio-political events to support the Democratic Party at increasing rates as they age.

Whereas Sears and Levy seem to view changes in political party identification in the electorate as the result of significant sociopolitical events or economic conditions affecting the identification within an age cohort, Alan Abramowitz and Kyle Saunders posit that “dramatic changes in the distribution of party loyalties over the course of several election cycles” can occur not as the result of a “cataclysmic precipitating event,” but as the result of changes in the parties’ issue stances (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998, p. 648). Increased ideological differences between the Democratic Party and Republican Party in the Reagan and post-Reagan eras drove the policy stances of the two parties further apart (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998, pp. 636-637). This increased distance between the policy stances of the Democratic Party and Republican Party made it easier for voters to recognize the differences between the policy stances of the two parties (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998). Consequently, voters have been choosing the party they identify with based upon their own individual policy preferences, not based upon the political party identification transmitted to them by their parents (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998, p. 647). The authors show that conservatives raised by Democratic parents abandoned their parents’ party and switched to the GOP (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998, p. 645). For liberals raised by Republican parents, 54% preferred the Democratic Party, while only 39% stayed with the GOP (Abramowitz & Saunders, 1998, p. 646). This shows that contrary to Sears and Levy’s articulation, party identification can change in adulthood without a major precipitating event if the parties’ ideologies and policy stances move further apart. Therefore, individuals’ ideologies and policy preferences are necessary factors in order for them to identify with a political party.

While Abramowitz and Saunders examine changes in party identification and political ideology within and between different age cohorts, authors Bardes and Oldendick discuss the trends in both political party identification and political ideology within the United States as a whole from 1972 to 2012. Although party identification in the U.S. can be volatile, it has shown some relatively stable trends (Bardes & Oldendick, 2017). The number of individuals who identify as either Democrats or Republicans has declined over the course of the last sixty years—Democrats fell from 49% to 33% and Republicans fell from 28% to 22%--while the number of individuals who identify as Independents has risen to more than 40% of the electorate (Bardes & Oldendick, 2017). Independents may lean towards one party or another, but they do not actively identify with one. One may think that this change in political party identification may be indicative of changes in political ideologies, but the overall trend for political ideology identification remained fairly stable from 1972 to 2012 (Bardes & Oldendick, 2017). Roughly 25% of individuals self-identify as liberal, 40% as conservative, and 33% as moderate (Bardes & Oldendick, 2017). Liberals tend to identify with the Democratic Party, and Conservatives tend to identify with the Republican Party, while the Democratic Party enjoys the identification advantage (Bardes & Oldendick, 2017). This means that liberals identify as Democrats at a higher rate than conservatives identify as Republicans. The authors do not address why the identification advantage exists for the Democratic Party and why conservatives identify as Republicans at lower rates. Forty percent of the electorate identifies as conservative but only twenty-two percent identify as Republicans. Future research should focus on why this identification gap is so high for conservatives and the Republican Party.

**Demographics: Religion**

Party identification’s measurement and stability have been embroiled in debate at the aggregate level. At the individual level, however, there are demographic groups that predictably identify as either Republicans or Democrats (Jackson & Carsey, 2002). In their study *Group Effects on Party Identification and Party Coalitions across the United* States, authors Robert Jackson and Thomas Carsey examine the political party identification trends of demographic groups. The authors identify three broad cleavages that divided American politics today. First, cleavages from the New Deal era manifest today in the form of economic interests. Second, different attitudes toward race, stemming from the legacy of slavery and historical attitudes towards African-Americans, provide another cleavage line. Third, new, modern cleavages exist around ideological and value-based differences which often results in differences in lifestyles. As the authors note, due to the diversity of electoral coalitions, “…it is simply not possible to describe in one or two sentences the nature of party cleavage in the United States. Any effort that attempts to do so is demonstrably reductionist” (Jackson & Carsey, 2002, p. 84).

The authors identify three main demographics that most reliably predict political party identification: race, gender, and income. African-Americans, women, and low-income individuals provide the base of support for the Democratic Party, while whites, men, and higher income people tend to support the Republican Party. Across the country, the three types of cleavages appear in different geographical regions. In the South, the racial cleavage is most apparent as African Americans comprise the largest group of net supporters for the Democrats, but it is not the only cleavage at play in the South. Women and poor individuals are also large blocks of support for the Democratic Party in the South. In addition to race, gender, and income, Jackson and Carsey highlight the influence of religion in party identification. Protestants generally support the Republican Party, and Catholics and secularists tend to support the Democratic Party. (Jackson & Carsey, 2002).

Religion as a demographic is unique because it is more a product of personal choice than other demographics are. Researchers David Leege and Michael Welch examine the impact of religion and other demographics on political orientation in their article, *Religious Roots of Political Orientation Variations among American Catholic Parishioners*. The authors acknowledge that Catholics are more Democratic and more liberal than white, gentile non-Catholics. Historically, this trend made sense because Catholics typically had lower levels of education and lower incomes. Due to the fact that Catholics as a whole have experienced the greatest upward social mobility in the past few decades, one might expect more Catholics to move into the Republican Party as their incomes and education levels increased. However, this party identification has not actually occurred, thus opposing Jackson and Carsey’s income-based cleavage. Leege and Welch also acknowledge that the relationship between party identification and gender has not been discovered for Catholic samples. Age does seem to play a role in Catholic views on policy issues; young Catholics are more liberal on social issues and conservative on economic issues, while the opposite relationship holds for older Catholics. (Leege & Welch, 1989).

Leege and Welch also focus on the role of foundational religious beliefs in shaping political ideology. Foundational beliefs “may involve symbols learned through religious institutions, but they are also operating beliefs that interpret and give meaning to the reality perceived by the individual” (Leege & Welch, 1989, p. 140). Previous scholars have asserted that religion is a system of symbols that address the ultimate ills of humanity, procedures and doctrines to alleviate these ills, and loyalty to organizations that promote the procedures and doctrines. However, the reality that the religious organization an individual is a member of addresses may not be the reality the individual actually experiences. In order to deal with the disjunctive realities, individuals turn to foundational religious beliefs. Foundational religious beliefs allow individuals to understand what is problematic in the world, find ways to deal with or avoid the problems, and possibly give solutions for the problems (Leege & Welch, 1989). Seeing as how foundational religious beliefs can shape an individual’s perspective and guide his choices, it seems that they could fall under the various categories in Schwartz’s basic personal value theory.

Leege and Welch’s analysis of foundational religious beliefs uncovered an individualism/communitarianism spectrum within members of religious groups. Individuals who view religion through an individualism lens perceive religion as an agentic system of self-preservation. Those who view religion through a communitarianism lens perceive religion as serving a communal or community building purpose. This particular spectrum held political implications for the Catholic individuals in Leege and Welch’s study: Catholics with stronger communal attachments to other Catholics were more likely to be Democratic than those at the individualism end of the spectrum. Furthermore, the authors’ study of the Catholic population revealed that the individualism/communitarianism spectrum overlaps with demographic characteristics such as income to produce different results for different demographic groups of Catholics (Leege & Welch, 1989).

Leege and Welch’s study concluded that religious beliefs do provide a foundation for, or at least influence, political orientations. Since foundational religious beliefs shed light on political values that are attitudinal in character, the spectrum of individualistic and communitarian beliefs serves as a strong predictor of political liberalism or conservatism within an individual. Additionally, foundational religious beliefs can predict basic political values. Different foundational religious beliefs lead to predictable differences in political ideology as well as political policy positions. While foundational religious beliefs predict more of an individual’s positions in the private sphere than in most public policy issues, the ongoing shift of public policy from the economic sector to the cultural sector may result in foundational religious beliefs becoming even more useful in predictor public policy positions. (Leege & Welch, 1989).

In terms of public policy issues, most Americans view the country as being split along moral-cultural lines as a result of different religious preferences. This viewpoint resulted in the perception of a “culture war” in American society. In Chapter 7 of their book, *Religion and Politics in the United States*, authors Kenneth Wald and Allison Calhoun-Brown discuss the opinions of members of different major religions regarding economic liberalism, moral-cultural issues, social justice, and foreign policy. The religions the study includes are Mormonism, Evangelical Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Mainline Protestantism, Hispanic Protestantism, Atheism/Agnosticism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, African-American Protestantism, and Buddhism. This examination of the relationship between religion and politics shows some interesting trends that suggest the supposed “culture war” is not as pronounced as some people believe. Americans generally are concerned about more people being born out of wedlock. Most support women in the workforce and believe that evolutionary theory is real. Homosexuality has growing support. Conservative religious traditions such as evangelical Protestantism, Mormonism, and Islam tend to hold more conservative policy positions, particularly in economics and social justice areas, but large minorities of these groups hold liberal views. Interestingly, religious liberals are more concerned with social justice issues, while religious conservatives are more concerned with sexual-morality questions (p. 187). This seems to be indicative of the influential role basic personal values and core political values play in forming individuals’ policy preferences. Even though the religions seem to have reached a consensus regarding most major issues, differences in the views of the religions still exist. However, Wald and Calhoun-Brown posit that observed differences among the religions are indicative of racial and socioeconomic differences rather than true religious differences. (Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018).

**Evangelicalism**

The 2016 Presidential Election saw an increased focus on the American Evangelical Christian population and its political support for Republican candidate Donald Trump. Scholars differ in their exact definitions of what it means to be an Evangelical Christian, but regardless of the differentiating minutiae of definitions, scholars agree on four central aspects of what defines an evangelical: the bible, the cross, conversion, and activism. Some authors, such as Randall Balmer in his book *Evangelicalism in America*, combine the cross and conversion into one aspect. However, separating the cross and conversion into two different defining aspects allows for greater understanding of evangelical beliefs. First, evangelicals believe in the divine and inerrant nature of the Bible. This often resulted in a literal and serious interpretation of Scriptures (Balmer, 2016, p. xi). As the American Free Methodists’ newspaper announced in 1884, “There is but one final standard of Christian living, or Christian doctrine. That standard is the Word of God, revealed to man in the Holy Scriptures” (Free Methodist, 1884, p. 1). Consequently, evangelical theology is rooted directly in Biblical text and is intellectually constrained to the Scriptures (Bebbington, 2005).

Second, evangelicals are defined by their belief in salvation by the cross. According to the evangelical interpretation of the Bible, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross was the act that bought humanity’s salvation (Bebbington, 2005). Evangelical theology emphasizes that the sinful nature of humanity that would damn mankind to hell created an imperative need for redemption and reconciliation to God. This reconciliation to God took place through the process of substitution: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was sacrificed on the cross in humanity’s place as its representative so that believers in Jesus’ sacrifice might be forgiven (Bebbington, 2005). Crucial to this belief was the doctrine of incarnation: the belief that Jesus was the physical manifestation of God (Bebbington, 2005). Following the example of the Apostle Paul, evangelicals placed extreme emphasis on the cross as the means by which souls received salvation for their sins (Bebbington, 2005). Evangelicals differed from other groups of Christians such as Catholics by not placing emphasis on the physical details of the crucifixion—the nails, the crown of thorns, or the crucifix—but on the “spiritual power of Christ the redeemer” (Bebbington, 2005, p. 29).

The third defining aspect of evangelicalism is conversion. Conversion is considered to be the human side of the process of salvation in which the individual has to deliberately turn away from sin, or repent, and trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior through faith (Bebbington, 2005). A theological term for this process is justification by faith: God sees a sinner surrender to him and acquits the sinner of their sin (Bebbington, 2005). This leads to the divine side of conversion known as regeneration: the process of the God regenerating the sinner’s soul (Bebbington, 2005). Conversion is a highly personal process, often born out of an individual’s sense of despair. Those who go through the process of conversion are often referred to as having been “born again” (Bebbington, 2005, p. 32). The term “born again” comes from John Chapter 3 in the Bible in which Jesus speaks to a member of the Jewish ruling council named Nicodemus:

**“3**Jesus replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”

**4**“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”

**5**Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. **6**Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. **7**You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again… **16**For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Thus, the term “born again” does not refer to a physical rebirth, but rather to a spiritual rebirth. A person is considered to be born again once they believe in Jesus’ sacrifice and believe that Jesus is their personal Savior who has taken away their sins.

The fourth and final defining aspect of evangelicalism is activism. Evangelicalism is marked by an eagerness to be doing things in order to spread the Gospel to non-Christian people (Bebbington, 2005). This process is known as evangelism—the namesake of the evangelical movement (Balmer, 2016). As the main American Baptist newspaper announced in 1868, “It is the duty of every one who knows *the good news* of salvation through Christ to *tell* the good news, as he has opportunity and ability, to his companion who does not know it, that he too may be saved” (Examiner and Chronicle, 1868). This idea comes from the Great Commission in the Bible in which Jesus, just prior to His ascension to heaven, directed His followers to go out into the world and spread the news about Him (Balmer, 2016). Today, instead of going on missions trips themselves, many evangelicals will support missionaries who go out into the world and spread the Gospel for them (Balmer, 2016).

**Conservative vs Liberal Theology**

During the later years of the 19th century, there was a liberalizing trend in evangelical theology that caused it to broaden in both tone and content (Bebbington, 2005). However, at the same time, this liberal movement was counteracted by conservative trends favoring stricter doctrines, especially in the areas of mission, prophecy, and sanctification. The conservative backlash against the liberalization of evangelicalism was a product of the cultural setting as well as the relatively new Romantic mood that provided an alternative to the predominant Enlightenment view. Regarding mission, evangelicals throughout the 18th century through the first half of the 19th century supported missionary societies that were “based on what the era considered sound business practice…modeled on joint stock companies, with shares, boards of directors, and annual accounts” (Bebbington, 2005, p. 185). This business-like approach to missions was meant to be an efficient, fiscally-responsible manner through which evangelicals could share the Gospel with the most people they could possibly reach. Although this Enlightenment-inspired, pragmatic approach to mission was based in fiscal conservativism, it was not theologically conservative enough for some evangelicals. In 1824, the minister Edward Irving proposed an alternative view to mission based on Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s idea that “the expediency of the age had banished ideal methods from all spheres of life” (Bebbington, 2005, p. 185). Irving believed that much as the apostles had been sent into the world with few worldly possessions or human support, so too should missionaries forgo the intricate, business-like support structures that funded them and rely only on God to meet their needs and provide for them (Bebbington, 2005). Therefore, evangelical missionaries should avoid prudence and rely completely on faith in God. This concept became known as the faith principle, a form of increased supernaturalism. Those who accepted the faith principle believed that God would supply all of their needs, including financial needs, through his supernatural power as long as they believed and trusted God to do so. Therefore, those who adhered to the faith principle did not find it necessary to be fiscally-minded, because they believed God would take care of all of their needs. While Irving’s views did not immediately gain support with evangelicals, younger generations increasingly gave credence to the faith doctrine, leading to a more theologically conservative view of missions.

In addition to mission, the doctrine regarding prophecy also experienced a conservative shift. Most notably, Edward Irving’s introduction of premillennialism in 1827 shifted the way many evangelicals interpreted Biblical prophecies. Prior to Irving, evangelicals believed that the gospel would advance throughout the world until a millennium of peace and prosperity was ushered in. After this millennium, the second advent of Christ would occur. Irving, however, postulated that the present age would end with the second coming of Christ and after this event the millennium would begin with Christ ruling over the earth. This view gave evangelicals hope that they would see their Savior physically return and right the ills of world, causing them to actively look for the signs of the end times in their contemporary lives. The premillennial worldview fostered a distinct hermeneutic among its adherents. While evangelicals in general believed in accepting as true everything in the Bible while at times allowing for broad metaphorical interpretations, premillennialists believed in interpreting the Bible literally, even to the point of limiting metaphorical interpretations.

Within this premillennialist hermeneutical approach, evangelicals were divided between historicists and futurists regarding their different interpretations of the book of Revelation. On one hand, the historicists tried to “relate the various portions of the book to events that had already taken place in world history” (Bebbington, 2005, p. 196). For example, historicists agreed that the pouring out of the sixth bowl of God’s wrath on the Euphrates River described in Revelation 16 was indicative of the decay the Ottoman Empire experienced in the 19th century. On the other hand, futurists believed that the prophecies contained in Revelation would not occur until the future. Many futurists adhered to the theology of dispensationalism—the concept “that world history could be divided into distinct eras called ‘dispensations,’ each characterized by a particular way in which God dealt with humanity” (Bebbington, 2005, p. 197). The current dispensation was to end with a series of cataclysmic events known as the tribulation that would usher in the millennium. The differences in interpretation of the book of Revelation caused historicists and futurists to have different views of how to interact with the current world. Historicist premillennialists could often be devoted to improving society, but futurist premillennialists tended to view political developments as “most important for presaging the time of the end” therefore causing them to reject the world and withdraw from politics (Bebbington, 2005, p. 199).

Along with the faith doctrine of missions and the premillennialist view of prophecy, evangelical’s understanding of sanctification underwent a conservative shift in the 19th century with the introduction of holiness teaching. The Keswick Movement, named after a region in New England, taught that Christians could achieve a state through faith in “which it is the privilege of God’s children to enter into where sin is vanquished, where the heart rests in God’s peace, and where a joyous ability to do God’s present will is realized” (Life & Light , 1895). The tendency to sin was not eradicated from a person’s life, but it was suppressed by the power of the Holy Spirit (Bebbington, 2005). Believers of holiness teaching placed great importance on the functioning of the Holy Spirit or the Holy Ghost in a believer’s life. They often looked for a baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by glossolalia—the experience of speaking in an unknown tongue (Bebbington, 2005). This emphasis of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, possibly occasioned by glossolalia, eventually formed into Pentecostalism around the turn of the century (Bebbington, 2005).

Regardless of conservative or liberal theology, the four defining aspects of evangelicalism remained the same. Evangelicals view the Bible as the inerrant, divine word of God. Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice on the cross provides the means for a personal conversion to take place within an individual. In order to spread the Gospel of Jesus to nonbelievers, evangelicals support missionaries who travel around the world. As these four aspects remained the same, a conservative undercurrent within evangelicalism began to emerge during the middle and end of the 19th century. The increase in conservative thinking in the areas of missions, prophecy, and sanctification would lead to a split between fundamentalists and non-fundamentalists within evangelicalism.

**Transition from 19th to 20th century: Fundamentalist vs Non-Fundamentalist**

The emergence of these more conservative theological views did not manifest fully until the beginning of the 20th century. As a backlash against the theologically liberal and modernist evangelicals, the conservative evangelicals went on the offensive with the publication of *The Fundamentals* in 1910 (Wilcox, 1988). These volumes clearly outlined the beliefs of fundamentalist Christians which caused a schism between fundamentalist and non-fundamentalist Christians (Wilcox, 1988). The doctrine of fundamentalism built upon three main concepts: premillennialism, dispensationalism, and biblical inerrancy. Premillennialism in particular played a heavy role in fundamentalists’ world view and political beliefs (Wilcox, 1988). According to premillennialism, the imminent second advent of Christ was to be triggered by a period of turmoil and chaos on earth, thus making political solutions—such as peace treaties, arms reduction agreements, or multinational organizations such as the United Nations— to the world’s problems utterly impossible in the minds of fundamentalists (Wilcox, 1988). Fundamentalists also embraced the doctrine of ecclesiastical separation—the belief that it is important to remain separate from a sinful world—causing them to separate themselves from politics and even non-fundamentalist Christians. Surprisingly, while fundamentalists embraced many of the conservative theological doctrines, they responded to Pentecostalism in a strongly negative manner (Wilcox, 1988). This negative reaction was largely due to differences in views regarding the gifts of the Spirit, namely supernatural healing and glossolalia. Pentecostal Christians believed that gifts of the Spirit were part of the current dispensation; however, fundamentalists believed the gifts of the Spirit ended with the previous dispensation and viewed the Pentecostal movement as “the last vomit of Satan” (Wilcox, 1988, p. 662).

Although fundamentalists’ beliefs caused them to avoid political participation, events in the 1920’s caused fundamentalists to become increasingly more engaged in the political process. While fundamentalists had strongly supported the Prohibition movement, the teaching of evolution in public schools caused them to mobilize more. Evolution directly contradicts Biblical literalism, so fundamentalists were naturally strongly opposed to it being taught to children in public schools. Anticommunism also proved to be a rallying point for fundamentalist political participation due to the communists’ geographic location and atheist beliefs. Biblical prophecies foretold that the armies of the Antichrist would arise from the geographic area that is modern-day Russia, thus leading some premillennialists to view the communist nation as a spawning ground for the Antichrist and his followers. Premillennialism prompted fundamentalists to view the geopolitical stage as “a battleground between a nation of God and a nation opposed to God, from which the forces of the Antichrist were to come” (Wilcox, 1988, p. 663). Although fundamentalists became more politicized during the 1920’s, this politicization was “haphazard,” occurring largely as a defensive response to the teaching of evolution and the emergence of communism (Wilcox, 1988, p. 663). Therefore, fundamentalists’ political participation did not extend much past these two areas.

During the 1930’s and 1940’s, fundamentalists withdrew from the levels of political participation they engaged in during the 1920’s. The Great Depression fit into the premillennialist teachings regarding the collapse of the social order that would precipitate the second advent of Christ. Consequently, fundamentalist leaders focused some efforts on opposing the New Deal, but this proved to be an unpopular position (Wilcox, 1988). Revivals returned as the primary expression of the fundamentalists’ beliefs as they continued their withdrawal from politics in light of the “perceived imminence of the second coming” of Christ (Wilcox, 1988, p. 664). Fundamentalists did not return to strong political participation until after the Second World War when America was rife with McCarthyism. Fundamentalist leaders cooperated closely with McCarthy as they revived their anticommunist fervor of the 1920’s (Wilcox, 1988). The creation of many Christian political activist groups, such as the Christian Anti-Communism Crusade, led to the formation of the Christian Right within American society. Unsurprisingly, the Christian activists were almost exclusively Republican, but surprisingly, the fundamentalists were less conservative than other supporters of the Christian Right (Wilcox, 1988). Wilcox found that the Christian Right was also supported by secular rightists whose views were more conservative than the fundamentalists’ and supported the movement solely due to its political conservativism (Wilcox, 1988).

The third wave of fundamentalist and evangelical political action emerged in the early 1970’s. A large number of evangelicals shifted their support from right-wing political candidates, such as Barry Goldwater in 1964, towards the more leftist presidential candidate McGovern in 1972 (Wilcox, 1988). Even though evangelical doctrine still held that evangelicals should avoid politics, evangelicals became increasingly politically active during the 1970’s, largely as a result of Jimmy Carter, the first openly evangelical presidential candidate in more than fifty years (Wilcox, 1988). The Carter candidacy mobilized evangelical political support as no campaign ever had before, resulting in large numbers of both fundamentalist and evangelical Christians voting for Carter in the 1976 election (Wilcox, 1988). Carter’s candidacy also helped break down evangelicals’ beliefs that they were not supposed to engage in politics as Carter openly argued that Christians were morally obligated to participate (Wilcox, 1988). In the later years of the 1970’s, Christian activists formed the Christian Voice and the Moral Majority—two groups that would serve as the foundation for the New Christian Right that would help propel Ronald Reagan to the White House in 1980 and 1984 (Wilcox, 1988).

**Fundamentalists vs Non-Fundamentalists beliefs and political views and tendencies**

While fundamentalism emerged in America primarily as a backlash against modernism, non-fundamentalists were hesitant to embrace all of the doctrinal beliefs and political activities of the fundamentalists. Beginning in the 1940’s, a new movement formed within fundamentalism that “repudiated both the temperament and the theological and cultural excesses associated with fundamentalism” and split from the fundamentalists, becoming non-fundamentalist evangelicals (Smidt, 1988, p. 603). These non-fundamentalist evangelicals still shared the fundamentalist desire to defend Biblical inerrancy and the divinity of Jesus, but they disagreed with three main fundamentalist beliefs: 1) anti-intellectualism, 2) total otherworldliness focus, and 3) extreme ecclesiastical separation (Smidt, 1988). Fundamentalists often attacked intellectualism that might oppose Biblical inerrancy such as evolutionists opposed the seven-day creation story in the book of Genesis. Fundamentalist also maintained a focus on heaven, thus causing them not to create solutions for worldly problems. This otherworldly focus also manifested itself in the form of ecclesiastical separation—the practice of staying separate from worldly people, such as non-Christians, in order to remain as holy and spiritually pure as possible. The non-fundamentalists who disagreed with these fundamentalist beliefs and practices became the contemporary evangelicals of the 1980’s and continuing to today.

While fundamentalists and non-fundamentalist clearly have some different theological and doctrinal views, they also have different views regarding political beliefs and activism. A 1988 study by Corwin Smidt titled *Evangelicals within Contemporary American Politics: Differentiating between Fundamentalist and Non-Fundamentalist Evangelicals* sought to uncover the exact political differences between the two groups of evangelicals. Smidt found that:

“The data indicate that, after the introduction of the control variables, fundamentalist evangelicals tend to be more likely than non-fundamentalist evangelicals to classify themselves as political conservatives, to adopt more conservative positions on political issues, to express greater salience for their religion politically, to be politically active, and to be more Democratic in their partisanship” (Smidt, 1988, pp. 616-617).

The fact that Smidt found that fundamentalist evangelicals tend to be more Democratic in their political party identification is particularly curious since the majority of evangelicals today identify as Republicans. This finding could be a result of the time at which Smidt conducted his study. Evangelicals’ support for George H.W. Bush in 1988 and the moral questionability of Bill Clinton both before he was in office and while he was in office could have moved evangelicals more solidly into the Republican camp. Regarding the evangelicals today who do identify as Democrats, it is currently unknown whether they are fundamentalist or non-fundamentalist evangelicals. More research is needed to answer this question.

Regarding the escalation of religion in presidential campaigns, Phillip Hammond made several observations. First, he agrees with Wilcox that the 1976 Carter campaign brought religion into an American presidential campaign to a degree that had not been present in decades. Hammond adds that religion was present in the 1984 presidential election to a greater degree than the 1980 presidential election which had a greater emphasis on religion than the 1976 campaign (Hammond, 1985). Second, he notes that Reagan’s support among Christians in 1984 came mainly from the “‘moderately’ Christian rightist” rather than the strongly conservative or fundamentalist Christians (Hammond, 1985, p. 189). This observation is in line with Smidt’s finding that fundamentalists tended to be more conservative but also more Democratic than other evangelicals. Hammond also states that being a member of the Christian right is not equivalent to being a Republican supporter. As he writes, “certain fundamentalist views are so fundamental…that, unless politicians are ‘correct’ on those, their [evangelicals’] other views are largely irrelevant to voting choice” (Hammond, 1985, p. 189). So, if a politician is not “correct” on a certain fundamentalist view that a fundamentalist holds very closely, that politician will very likely not get the fundamentalist’s vote. For example, if the moral questions surrounding abortion make abortion the most important issue to a fundamentalist, they may be unwilling to support a candidate they otherwise might support if the candidate supports abortion rights.

Hammond posits that the recent increase in politicized religion was a result of the United States’ democratic system. As he points out, the two-party, federalist system complete with numerous checks and balances causes parties to have to move toward the ideological center in order to be able to accomplish anything (Hammond, 1985). While political parties do serve as the vehicle for those hoping to effect change, they also serve as the vehicle for those hoping to effect change of all kinds, resulting in many oppositional policy ideas that largely cancel out (Hammond, 1985). Consequently, Americans turn to religion as the mechanism for effecting social change, such as the various moral crusades of American history have shown (Hammond, 1985). Thus, religion, not party, becomes the mechanism for political change. Additionally, Hammond states that the reemergence of religion used politically in the 1970’s and 1980’s was a conservative response to the perceived moral degradation of American society during the 1960’s (Hammond, 1985). This reactionary politicization of evangelicalism is consistent with Bebbington’s and Wilcox’s articulations of how evangelicalism tended to be defensive rather than offensive throughout American history.

**Religion and Values**

An individual’s value system as well as their religion clearly impact their political ideology, party identification, issue positions, and vote choice. However, it is unclear what the strength and direction of the relationship between values and religion are. In her 2005 study, Sonia Roccas found that “both directions of causality between religion and values are very likely” (p. 757). The cross-cultural study found that people with different levels of religiosity have different value priorities. Individuals who are more religious “attribute relatively high importance to values that express the motivation to avoid uncertainty, and relatively low importance to values that express the motivations to follow one’s sensuous, hedonistic desires, and the motivation to be independent in thought and action” (Roccas, 2005). Regarding different religious groups, Roccas found that this pattern of correlations holds for many monotheistic religious groups, particularly in Western culture. Additionally, Roccas found that as a society’s socioeconomic development increases, the relationships between values and religiosity attenuates (Roccas, 2005). While Roccas’ study does outline the relationships between values and religiosity, it does not uncover what the value priorities of specific religious groups such as evangelical Christians may be. Therefore, understanding how different religions identify with the ten basic motivational values in Schwartz’s value theory may be instrumental in examining religious groups’ political behavior, specifically the voting trends among evangelical Christians.

It is clear that throughout American history, evangelicals have played influential roles in politics and social movement. Right-leaning Christian groups have lobbied the legislature and voted at the ballot box to attempt to influence American government, primarily during the 1920’s and the 1980’s. Christian groups, including high percentages of evangelicals, reemerged at the center of political debate in the 2016 Presidential Election as they threw their support behind Donald Trump’s controversy-riddled campaign. Whether or not this proves to be a continuing movement for the Christian Right remains to be seen. Regardless of whether or not the trend is long-lasting, evangelicals hold significant political clout, especially when they work together with the other groups on the Christian Right.

**Hypotheses:**

1. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show higher levels of identification with the Benevolence motivational value type.*
2. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show higher levels of identification with the Conformity motivational value type.*
3. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show higher levels of identification with the Tradition motivational value type.*
4. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show higher levels of identification with the Security motivational value type.*
5. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show higher levels of identification with the Power motivational value type.*
6. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show lower levels of identification with the Achievement motivational value type.*
7. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show lower levels of identification with the Hedonism motivational value type.*
8. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show lower levels of identification with the Stimulation motivational value type.*
9. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show lower levels of identification with the Self-Direction motivational value type.*
10. *In a study of the electorate, those who identify as Born Again or Evangelical Christians will show lower levels of identification with the Universalism motivational value type.*

**Methods and Preliminary Results**

There are three main ways to measure an individual’s values. The first of these is the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS). Used in Schwartz’s foundational 1992 work, “Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries,” the SVS asks a respondent to rate the importance they would assign to 57 different value items as life-guiding principles using a 9-point scale (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). A full list of the different values in included in Appendix A. The second way to measure values is with the Short Schwartz Value Survey (SSVS). In the shortened form, respondents are presented with the name of each of the ten motivational value types along with its value items. For example, a participant would be asked to rate the importance as a life-guiding principle such as “Power, that is, social power, authority, and wealth” (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). Responses in this survey type are also rated on a 9-point scale. Lindeman and Verkasalo, in their study “Measuring Values With the Short Schwartz Value Survey” found that the spatial structure of value relationships created using the SSVS showed “high similarity” with the structure obtained by the SVS.

While both the SVS and the SVSS require respondents to rate their value priorities, the third measuring technique—the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ)—does not. Instead, the PVQ provides the respondent with a “short verbal portrait” of different people and asks the respondent how much the person in the portrait is like them (Schwartz, Melech, & Lehmann, 2001). Responses are ranked on a 6-point scale. Each verbal portrait describes a person’s goals or motivations without stating a specific value but inherently and implicitly reflecting a specific value (Schwartz, Melech, & Lehmann, 2001). Schwartz et al. found that the PVQ and the SVS yield very similar measurements of the ten values (Schwartz, Melech, & Lehmann, 2001). While the PVQ measures values indirectly, it is not as intellectually challenging as the SVS can be (Schwartz, Melech, & Lehmann, 2001). Therefore, it is an ideal survey type to use with less educated or intellectually mature respondents.

The survey we created featured thirty questions from the PVQ as well as other questions relating to things such as demographics, political party identification, political ideology, and Donald Trump job approval. Appendix B provides a full copy of the survey used in this study. Each of the ten motivational value types was measured by three separate questions with answers to each question measured on a 5-point scale.

We distributed the survey through the online survey company Survey Monkey. Once an individual began the survey, the first question asked them if they identified as an Evangelical Christian, Born Again Christian, or both. Respondents could choose from the answers Yes, No, or Not Sure. Those who answered “Yes” were able to continue with the rest of the survey, while those who did not answer “Yes” were unable to continue with the remaining survey questions. This allowed us to survey our target population—self-identifying evangelical or born again Christians.

In order to analyze the ten motivational value types more effectively, I created an additive index for each value type. These ten different additive indexes became the main variables under analysis. Within each index, the highest possible value was fifteen, while the lowest possible value was three. In order to determine whether respondents exhibited high or low levels of identification, we determined that a value of nine would serve as an average multiplying the middle value of three by the three questions that were included in a given value index. By running frequencies on each of the value index variables, the following measures of central tendency were produced:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Mean** | **Median** |
| Universalism | 12.06 | 12\*\*\* |
| Benevolence | 13.06 | 13\*\*\* |
| Conformity | 11.85 | 12\*\*\* |
| Tradition | 10.68 | 11\*\*\* |
| Security | 12.38 | 13\*\*\* |
| Power | 7.99 | 8\* |
| Achievement | 9.07 | 9\*\* |
| Hedonism | 9.79 | 10\*\*\* |
| Stimulation | 9.56 | 9\*\* |
| Self-Direction | 12.12 | 13\*\*\* |
| \*=below normal expected value, \*\*=at normal expected value, \*\*\*=above normal expected value | | |

The surprising results showed that two of the value index variables were at the normal expected value, seven were higher than the normal expected value, and only one was below the normal expected value. The first four hypotheses were supported—individuals who identified as born again or evangelical Christians did show a higher level of identification with the benevolence, conformity, tradition, and security motivational value types. However, the hypothesized relation between evangelicalism and the power value type did not manifest, as evangelicals showed lower levels of identification with power. Of the values we hypothesized evangelicals would show lower levels of identification with, none supported the hypothesized relationships. Two of them—achievement and stimulation—fell at the normal level, while all others showed higher levels of identification.

**Discussion**

The data largely match the concept of a motivational values continuum identified by Schwartz. The four motivational values with the lowest levels of identification among evangelicals—power (median=8), achievement (median=9), hedonism (median=10), and stimulation (median=9)—are all adjacent on the continuum. All of these four values fall on either the openness-to-change or self-enhancement end of one of the two dimensions Schwartz identified, showing that evangelicals identify less with values that emphasize physical experiences and personal success. Evangelicals showed high levels of identification with the values at the opposite ends of the two dimensions. In the self-transcendence quadrant, evangelicals identified strongly with both universalism (median=12) and benevolence (median=13). This fits with the evangelical teachings of charity and missions work.

Similarly, in the conservation quadrant, evangelicals strongly identified with the values of security (median=13), conformity (median=12), and tradition (median=11). Surprisingly, tradition showed the lowest level of identification among those values in the self-transcendence and conservation quadrants. This is surprising due to evangelicalism’s focus on tradition and social conservativism. The preliminary results show that the security value may be more important than the tradition value in gaining the support of evangelical voters. If security values truly hold precedence over tradition values in the minds of evangelicals, the political consequences are apparent. Candidates expressing need for increased national security including arms build-ups could gain the support of many evangelical voters. This may be a direct cause of evangelicals’ support for Donald Trump, as Trump espoused many security-based policy views such as increasing the military budget and building a border wall with Mexico.

In the openness-to-change quadrant, the high level of identification for the self-direction value (median=13) is contradictory considering its theoretical opposition to the values of security, conformity, and tradition within the motivational continuum. An individual with high scores for the conservation values would not be expected to also have a high score for self-direction because conservation values such as conformity emphasize following the herd and obeying customs and traditions, while the self-direction value emphasizes choosing one’s own path in life. Evangelicals, however, showed high levels of identification with both. Their high identification with self-direction could be a result of the evangelical doctrine of separation from the world, or it could merely be a result of the conservative affinity for self-made men and independence. Evangelicals did show relatively low identification with the stimulation value (median=9) which fell at the normal level. This relationship is not surprising considering evangelicalism’s teachings to avoid worldly pleasures and stimulants such as alcohol.

Hedonism falls in both the openness-to-change quadrant and the self-enhancement quadrant as it represents a self-centered desire for affectively pleasant arousal or satisfaction. Hedonism is often thought of in evangelicalism as directly opposed to both the teachings of Christ and evangelical doctrines, so its identification score (median=10) within the survey results was extremely surprising. One possible explanation of this is the particular survey question that were used to measure hedonism. These questions focused mainly on whether or not an individual wanted to have a “good” life which is a relative term and something that most people want to have, regardless of religion. This idea did not appear in any of the literature and, therefore, merits further research. Another possible explanation is the prevalence of the “prosperity Gospel” within some circles of evangelicalism.

Evangelicals showed relatively low levels of identification with the other two values in the self-enhancement quadrant. Achievement (median=9)—understood as accruing wealth, receiving recognition above others, or acquiring accolades—is opposed to the values of benevolence and universalism, so its score is not surprising. Furthermore, while some evangelicals subscribe to the prosperity Gospel, others believe that God does not want them to have worldly achievements. Similarly, evangelicals’ low identification with the power value (median=8) fits within the motivational continuum. It also fits within the evangelical teachings of staying separate from the world including staying out of politics due to the fact that positions of authority and political influence fall under the classification of the power value.

**Conclusion**

It is clear that evangelical Christians’ levels of value identification match Schwartz’s Value Theory’s concept of a motivational value continuum. Evangelicals identified most with the values in the self-transcendence and conservation quadrants in the continuum and least with the values in the self-enhancement and openness-to-change quadrants. It appears that a relationship between evangelical Christian beliefs and evangelicals’ basic personal values does exist, but the direction of this relationship is unclear. Future research should focus on whether evangelical Christian beliefs influence values or values cause someone to be more likely to subscribe to the evangelical faith. While it seems as if evangelicals’ high identification with security values correlates nicely with Trump’s strong rhetoric about security over the course of his campaign, this relationship is worth more examination. Additionally, future research could focus on which other values Trump emphasized most during his campaign and how strongly they correlate with evangelicals’ value identifications. Due to the fact that a high majority of evangelical Christians consistently vote Republican, discovering which values that politicians might express hold the most influence over evangelicals’ voting decisions is important. Understanding these relationships will help political scientists understand which messages evangelical Christians respond to most. Hopefully, this future research will uncover why evangelicals choose to vote for the candidates they do other than simple party identification.

**Appendix A**

1. Equality (equal opportunity for all)
2. Inner Harmony (at peace with myself)
3. Social Power (control over others, dominance)
4. Pleasure (gratification of desires)
5. Freedom (freedom of action and thought)
6. A Spiritual Life (emphasis on spiritual not material matters)
7. Sense of Belonging (feeling that others care about me)
8. Social Order (stability of society)
9. An Exciting Life (stimulating experiences)
10. Meaning in Life (a purpose in life)
11. Politeness (courtesy, good manners)
12. Wealth (material possessions, money)
13. National Security (protection of my nation from enemies)
14. Self-Respect (belief in one’s own worth)
15. Reciprocation of Favors (avoidance of indebtedness)
16. Creativity (uniqueness, imagination)
17. A World at Peace (free of war and conflict)
18. Respect for Tradition (preservation of time-honored customs)
19. Mature Love (deep emotional and spiritual intimacy)
20. Self-Discipline (self-restraint, resistance to temptation)
21. Detachment (from worldly concerns)
22. Family Security (safety for loved ones)
23. Social Recognition (respect, approval by others)
24. Unity with Nature (fitting into nature)
25. A Varied Life (filled with challenge, novelty, and change)
26. Wisdom (a mature understanding of life)
27. Authority (the right to lead or command)
28. True Friendship (close, supportive friends)
29. A World of Beauty (beauty of nature and the arts)
30. Social Justice (correcting injustice, care for the weak)
31. Independent (self-reliant, self-sufficient)
32. Moderate (avoiding extremes of feeling and action)
33. Loyal (faithful to my friends, group)
34. Ambitious (hardworking, aspiring)
35. Broad-Minded (tolerant of different ideas and beliefs)
36. Humble (modest, self-effacing)
37. Daring (seeking adventure, risk)
38. Protecting the Environment (preserving nature)
39. Influential (having an impact on people and events)
40. Honoring of Parents and Elders (showing respect)
41. Choosing Own Goals (selecting own purpose)
42. Healthy (not being sick physically or mentally)
43. Capable (competent, effective, efficient)
44. Accepting My Portion in Life (submitting to life’s circumstances)
45. Honest (genuine, sincere)
46. Preserving My Public Image (protecting my “face”)
47. Obedient (dutiful, meeting obligations)
48. Intelligent (logical, thinking)
49. Helpful (working for the welfare of others)
50. Enjoying Life (enjoying food, sex, leisure, etc.)
51. Devout (holding to religious faith and belief)
52. Responsible (dependable, reliable)
53. Curious (interested in everything, exploring)
54. Forgiving (willing to pardon others)
55. Successful (achieving goals)
56. Clean (neat, tidy)

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