

Same Battle, Different War: Religious Movements in American State Politics

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Abstract: The Christian Right is a long-standing social movement with a reputation for mobilization and activism at all levels of American politics. The Christian Progressive movement is a manifestation of religiously motivated political activity largely opposed to the policy goals of the Christian Right. Some have questioned, however, whether Christian Progressives have the internal cohesion to mobilize voters, activists, and movement organizations toward their policy goals. In this article, I update an existing measure of Christian Right influence and introduce a parallel measure for Christian Progressives. Analyses of these indices show that the Christian Progressive movement is visible and active in many states, though not the engine of influence that the Christian Right remains.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most visible religious stories of the 2008 election was the decrease in the activity and influence of the Christian Right in the Republican Party and the resurgence of Christian Progressives in the Democratic Party. For Republicans, John McCain's attempts to woo Evangelicals with conservative policy positions and the selection of Sarah Palin as his Vice Presidential candidate seemed to leave conservative religious voters indifferent. Some religious voters seemed to desire the overt religiosity of George W. Bush, while others were weary of the perceived disconnect between the administration's Christian identity and its actions on a range of issue. While there is no evidence that large numbers of religious conservatives stayed away, their general lack of

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enthusiasm neutralized the Christian Right's ability to mobilize new voters to the Republican cause (Smidt et al. 2010).

The religious story of the Democratic Party in 2008 is very different. While the Christian Right seemed to be on the wane, Christian Progressives were on the rise. After years of fielding presidential candidates that seemed to belittle or misunderstand people of faith, Barack Obama entered the ring with a history of participation in the African-American Church and a level of comfort with the concepts and vocabulary of Evangelical Christian faith. Obama's religious expression mirrored many Republican candidates' and seemed, perhaps, even more authentic than John McCain's. The Democrats not only fielded a presidential candidate comfortable with religious appeals, but also focused on outreach to a wide range of religious voters, even employing religious outreach staff (Dionne 2006; Smidt et al. 2010).

This narrative of religion in the 2008 election pushes us to examine the role of the Christian Progressive movement more deeply and to re-assess the role and impact of the Christian Right. Christian Progressives and other religiously motivated left-leaning groups trace their roots back to the Civil Rights movement and even earlier, but have been largely unacknowledged in the conflict over social issues in the last 25 years (Kellstedt et al. 2007; Olson 2007; 2011). While Christian Progressive voices like Jim Wallis of Sojourners have opposed the Christian Right, it took the inclusion of Christian Progressive perspectives in the Democrat's 2008 election strategy to give the movement a new shape and definition.

The Christian Right has gone through a period of retrenchment and organizational change as some of the older generation of movement leadership has died or retired. Contemporary religious conservatives find themselves in a situation where 30 years of political activism has yielded little political or social fruit. They contemplate the growing disaffection of many younger potential supporters who are opposed to the tactics and perceived Republican capture of the movement (Cox 2007). Several of the largest Christian Right political organizations have gone by the wayside (Moral Majority, Christian Coalition), and others have refocused their action to non-political means and ends (Focus on the Family) (Bailey 2011). Many observers believe the movement as it has existed is at an end at the national level, although there is ample evidence of continuing activity and impact at the state level (Conger 2009; 2010; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2003; 2006).

One of the challenges in understanding the sea change that appears to have taken place in the 2008 election cycle is the dearth of information

about Christian Progressives. Scholars have identified this group in voter studies (Kellstedt et al. 2007; Smidt et al. 2010), but we are left wondering whether Christian Progressives are a movement in their own right (Olson 2007; 2011). Perhaps the movement is simply a reaction against the Christian Right that has found a voice in Democratic politics. One approach to this challenge is to attempt to measure Christian Progressive influence in state politics in the same ways we measure Christian Right influence. In this way, we can effectively compare the Christian Right to the Christian Progressives and assess the Christian Progressive movement's potential impact on state politics in the future. Drawing on the insights of Political Process Theory (PPT) (McAdam 1999), we can examine how these parallel movements lend insight into the larger phenomenon of religious political activity in American politics.

In this article, I update the existing measures of Christian Right influence at the state level for 2008, introduce a parallel measurement of the Christian Progressive movement in the states, and examine the degree to which a state's social and political context impacts observers' perceptions of the movements' activity and impact. Because the appropriate measurement of both Christian Right and Christian Progressive influence is foundational to a larger understanding of the movements' place in American politics, I begin by presenting the survey conducted to create these measures. After reporting the influence indices taken from this survey, I move on to examine PPT and how it can help us better understand the variation in movement influence we observe across the states. I further propose a model based on PPT to help us understand how the Christian Right and Christian Progressive movements are similarly constrained by the political context in which they exist. The results of these analyses show that the Christian Progressive movement is active and visible in many states, though not the engine of influence that the Christian Right remains. Finally, I more specifically examine the outlines of the Christian Progressive movement in 2008, reporting the qualitative results of the original survey that provide a picture of the groups involved and issues important to the movement. Both the Christian Right and Christian Progressives are significantly affected by the political context in which they operate, and by the resources they can bring to bear in each context. The high degree of similarity in the factors determining each movement's place in state politics demonstrates that each fights similar battles for influence, but fight a war for very different policy outcomes.

DATA COLLECTION

In order to gauge the political influence of the Christian Right and Christian Progressives on state politics, I utilize a large national sample of political observers conducted in late 2008 (after the election) and early 2009.¹ Following earlier attempts to gauge the influence of the Christian Right (Conger 2010), I compiled a sample of “political observers” from each state that included Christian Right and Christian Progressive activists, leadership in both the Republican and Democratic parties, academic observers, members of the political media, and political consultants affiliated with both major parties. While this is certainly not a random-sample survey of the possible universe of political observers in each state, great care was taken to ensure that every legitimate observer was contacted. Contact information was gathered primarily through organizational directories and the Internet. For the Christian Right observers, religious conservative organizations, their staff, and supporters were included. For Christian Progressive observers, the publically available Faith in Public Life list of religiously motivated progressive groups was used (Faithinpubliclife.org). For political party observers, the staff and leadership from each state were included. Media included were the political reporters from newspapers and television stations in the three or four largest cities or towns in each state. Political consultants were identified through their membership in the American Association of Political Consultants. In all cases, the most appropriate people in every organization were identified and contacted.

The vast majority of respondents were contacted by e-mail and participated in the survey through an online survey interface. A few others were collected by fax or United States mail. Overall, 1112 responses were collected from an initial contact list of 4664 people. Accounting for bad contact information, these responses represent a 24% overall response rate (see Appendix 1, available online only for more information on response rates). Participants were asked to complete a survey of 31 questions concerning their assessment of the activity and influence of the Christian Right and Christian Progressive movements, and of the political engagement of Evangelicals in their state. While the use of an expert sample may suggest caution in the interpretation of data analysis, the high degree of agreement on movement influence among different groups of expert observers suggests that most were observing and gauging the movements in a similar way.²

MEASURING INFLUENCE

In order to gauge the level of influence that the Christian Right exerts in a state's politics, an index was created that encompasses respondents' assessment of the movement's influence in the overall Republican politics of the state, the 2008 presidential campaign in the state, state-wide elections, district elections, and ballot initiatives or referenda where appropriate. Each area of possible influence was separated into two questions, one about the activity of the Christian Right, the other about the impact of the movement in that particular political sphere. In this way, I capture both the intent to influence and the outcome of the influencing activity. For this reason, it was important to survey respondents after the election so that their responses reflect more accurately the impact of movement activity.

For the Christian Right, I follow previous research in constructing an index of perceived influence (Conger 2010). The index is comprised of eight questions that ask respondents to rate the activity and impact of the Christian Right in presidential elections, state wide elections, district elections, and state ballot initiatives (where appropriate). Two more questions gauge the respondents' perception of the movement's influence in state politics as a whole and in state Republican politics in general. One question gauges the success with which the Christian Right mobilized its supporters to turn out to vote. The final question measures the respondents' perception of the percentage of the state's Republican committee that could be identified with the Christian Right. In all cases, these questions were converted to scale 0 (low) to 4 (high) measurements and averaged across each respondent. Respondent scores for each state were then averaged to create the composite influence index for each state. These questions form a comprehensive picture of the areas in which the Christian Right can impact state Republican politics. They account for the roll-down effect of campaign activity as well as the role of the movement inside the party structure itself, and the unique impact that direct democracy gives social movement to impact state politics. These questions also appear to fit together well based on statistical tests ($\text{Alpha} = 0.93$; for more information on the construction of the indices, see Appendix 2, available online only).

Table 1 reports the Christian Right influence index scores for 2008. For comparison, the table also lists the change in influence score from 2004 (calculated from Conger (2010)). While, overall, there is a statistically significant drop in the perceived influence of the Christian Right from 2004 to 2008 (overall average 1.88 for 2008 vs. 2.20 for 2004, $p < 0.01$), the

Table 1. Christian right influence index scores by state for 2008. Ordered highest to lowest influence

State	2008 Index	Change from 2004
TN	2.912	0.232
MS	2.687	0.237
AZ	2.636	-0.334
OK	2.607	-0.283
LA	2.507	-0.203
AL	2.468	-0.352
TX	2.462	-0.418
GA	2.422	-0.448
MO	2.399	-0.061
NE	2.388	-0.812
KS	2.366	-0.604
UT	2.345	-1.145
ID	2.328	-0.072
AR	2.302	-0.318
FL	2.283	-0.057
CO	2.230	0.120
SC	2.180	-0.370
IA	2.160	-0.480
IN	2.118	0.128
MI	2.108	-0.562
KY	2.078	-0.952
NC	2.069	-0.021
CA	2.062	0.442
MT	2.030	-0.350
SD	1.981	-0.259
AK	1.968	-0.192
VA	1.963	-0.237
MN	1.919	-0.521
WV	1.917	-0.153
WI	1.907	-0.353
OH	1.764	-1.026
WA	1.762	-0.218
PA	1.683	-0.657
ND	1.576	-0.414
OR	1.564	-0.886
NH	1.504	0.504
NM	1.428	-0.642
NV	1.400	-0.370
WY	1.324	0.094
IL	1.294	-0.676
DE	1.233	-0.687
MD	1.229	-0.181
ME	1.223	-0.787
RI	1.189	0.689
CT	1.129	0.119

Continued

Table 1. Continued

State	2008 Index	Change from 2004
HI	1.066	-0.854
VT	1.016	-0.754
NJ	0.973	-0.487
NY	0.953	-0.087
MA	0.834	-0.326

relative influence of the movement by state has not seen significant alteration. Most states have remained near their 2004 rank with a few notable exceptions. Ohio and Kentucky have significantly decreased, along with Oregon and Nebraska. The most precipitous drop from 2004 to 2008 is in Utah. Because Utah presents some significant challenges for measurement of Christian Right influence (because of the strong presence of Mormons in the state), its volatility is of less concern than it might be. Oregon and Ohio had marriage definition ballot measures in 2004, so perhaps the movement's drop in those states is based more on elevated visibility for the movement in those states in 2004. Overall, [Table 1](#) demonstrates strong face validity in the influence index scores with states in the South and the Mid-west populating the top half of the scores, while the Mountain West and Far West populate the middle and the states of New England and the Mid-Atlantic occupy the bottom tier of influence. It appears that while the overall impact of the Christian Right decreased between 2004 and 2008, the movement retains significant influence in quite a few states.

Christian Progressive Influence

Measuring the influence of Christian Progressives in state politics presents some unique challenges because the movement is newly active in politics and has not established the long-term reputation of the Christian Right. It can be argued that 2008 may be the first time Christian Progressives could be measured effectively at the state level. The national prominence of the movement made it more salient at the state level, and practically, made it easier to find political observers familiar with the movement and its activities. However, it is important to understand that Christian Progressives were still less visible and well established than the Christian Right in 2008. Therefore, while the approach to measuring respondents'

perceptions of Christian Progressive influence is similar to that of the Christian Right, the questions themselves necessarily varied. The measurement of the perceived influence of Christian Progressives in state politics is based on four questions. The first three follow the index calculated for the Christian Right; the first assesses respondents' overall perception of the movement's impact on their states' politics, the second measures respondents' perceptions of the movement's ability to mobilize their supporters to vote, and the third gauges the percent of the state Democratic committee that can be identified with Christian Progressives. To more directly capture the resurgence of Christian Progressives, a fourth question was added to the index, an assessment of respondents' perception of the movement's visibility. In all cases, these questions were converted to scale 0 (low) to 4 (high) measurements and averaged across each respondent. Respondent scores for each state were then averaged to create the composite influence index for each state. While the Christian Progressive influence index lacks the focus on measuring both intent and outcome present in the Christian Right index, it more appropriately gauges the potential for Christian Progressive influence by examining the movement's visibility. The Christian Right is already visible, so its perceived influence is more tied to movement activity and impact, while Christian Progressives' influence is tied to their new visibility. These questions fit together well as an index ($\text{Alpha} = 0.84$) and represent the first comprehensive attempt to measure Christian Progressive influence in state politics (for more information on the construction of the indices, see Appendix 2).

Table 2 reports the state scores for the Christian Progressive composite index. The state scores for Christian Progressives do not show the stark regional variation apparent for the Christian Right, though there are more southern states in the lower tier of influence than other regions. This pattern is not a mirror image of Christian Right influence because religious influence is not a zero-sum game. The Christian Right and Christian Progressives frequently operate in overlapping policy areas, but likely mobilize very different types of religious citizens. As discussed below, the state characteristics that encourage Christian Right activism have a similar impact on Christian Progressive activism. More important, for both the Christian Right and the Christian Progressive movement, the underlying motivation is religious. So, state contexts with a larger proportion of secular citizens may inhibit both movements in their activities.

The Christian Progressive index average is significantly lower than the Christian Right average (1.22 for Christian Progressives, 1.88 for Christian

Table 2. Christian progressive influence index scores by state for 2008. Ordered highest to lowest influence

State	2008 Index
RI	2.083
HI	1.783
MA	1.723
MT	1.642
MN	1.619
IL	1.594
IA	1.572
MD	1.547
WA	1.544
NC	1.483
NH	1.481
AR	1.458
TN	1.402
OH	1.397
UT	1.394
ID	1.325
OR	1.312
TX	1.295
KY	1.285
NJ	1.278
ME	1.273
IN	1.260
WI	1.254
CO	1.252
VT	1.246
CT	1.240
SC	1.224
CA	1.206
PA	1.200
AZ	1.187
AL	1.173
NV	1.159
NY	1.151
DE	1.144
KS	1.139
MI	1.134
MS	1.100
WY	1.091
SD	1.058
FL	1.024
MO	0.992
WV	0.980
VA	0.971
ND	0.933
AK	0.919

Continued

Table 2. Continued

State	2008 Index
LA	0.912
GA	0.892
NM	0.881
OK	0.792
NE	0.767

Right $p < 0.000$). However, the Christian Right scores demonstrate a larger range than do the Christian Progressives' (0.83–2.91 for the Christian Right and 0.77–2.08 for Christian Progressives). One possibility is that the differences in index measurement are driving some of variation between the two indices. To examine this possibility, I examined a reduced index for both movements that includes the same questions (results not reported). These indices are comprised of the respondents' perceptions of the overall influence of each group in the state, the perceived success of the movements at turning out their supporters, and the percentage of the movements' influence in their respective political parties. These indices exhibit greater range than the more comprehensive indices, but they perform nearly identically³ to the comprehensive indices in the multivariate analysis reported below. Thus, I use the comprehensive index measures because of their greater construct validity.

EXPLAINING INFLUENCE VARIATION AMONG THE STATES

Examining how the movements interact with the politics of the states they inhabit is equally as important as understanding how much influence each has. The context of state politics is important because it is where the bulk of the movements' political activity takes place. In both cases, the movements concentrate on issues that are largely decided at the state level: abortion and marriage policy for the Christian Right, and social welfare policy and opposition to the Christian Right for Christian Progressives. However, we know that the activity and success of these movements is not simply a function of the number of religious supporters in each state. As we have seen, Christian Right and Christian Progressive influence varies widely from state to state. In order to more fully understand both the Christian Progressive movement and its relationship to the Christian Right, we need to examine what impacts Christian Progressive influence in state

politics. Further, we need to explore the similarities in political context that may impact the ability of both the Christian Right and Christian Progressives to be effective. These contextual factors, considered through the lens of larger theoretical understandings of social movement behavior and evolution, may also help us understand the relative influence of the two movements over their lifespans.

Theoretical Approach

One of the most profitable ways to examine the political activities and impact of social movements (and the approach used by many political scientists when analyzing social movements) is through PPT (Engel 2001; McAdam 1999; McAdam et al. 1996). This sociological theory seeks to explain social movement behavior through an examination of a movement's resources, its problem framing processes, and its political opportunity structure. The resources of a movement include its actual and potential constituency, the skills and network possessed by its leadership, and the financial capabilities at its disposal. The problem framing processes of a movement are its ability to mobilize supporters through demonstrating the personal impact of social problems and the creation of a group identity that filters new information. Political opportunity structures are the institutional constraints under which a movement operates. It is the political context; the laws, rules, and processes — formal and informal — that create the outer bounds of movement behavior. The PPT approach to understanding social movements has allowed scholars to understand social movements in their context, particularly how movements interact with outside forces. Most important for our purposes, PPT explains how movements deal with the constraints and opportunities they face. Because it is a general explanation of social movement behavior, it should apply equally well to both the Christian Right and Christian Progressive movements.

In the study of the Christian Right, PPT has bolstered our understanding of the movement's relationship with American politics, particularly at the state level. Following previous work on the impact of political context on the Christian Right's influence (Conger 2009; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2001), I test a model of movement influence based on each movement's resources and the state level political context it faces. By examining the fit of the PPT-based model to both the Christian Right and Christian Progressive movement in the 2008 election

cycle, we can explore the broader impact that political opportunities play in explaining the influence of religious political movements overall.

Political Process Theory Applied: Predicting Influence

In order to understand religious movement influence, I operationalize political opportunity structure, resources, and framing processes to fit religious movements' context. Religious social movements' ability to influence state politics should be strongly impacted by their access and ability to influence state political parties. While some social movements and political groups explicitly seek a bipartisan approach, most focus on a long-term relationship with one of the parties. Some scholars believe that modern American political parties are almost entirely made up of social movements, which provide the parties' support and issue focus (Baer and Bositis 1988; Bawn et al. 2012). Several avenues exist by which movements seek influence in political parties. The state laws that regulate political party behavior allow outside movements to have access to the party organizations. Similarly, internal party rules and the presence of caucuses have a significant impact on a movement's ability to insert its policies and personnel into the party's decision-making.

There is more to a state's political context than just its political party structure, however. Even movements with strong influence in a political party must contend with the larger political landscape in a state. The structure and laws of the state provide for — or block — avenues of political influence in both the parties and the larger political arena such as money and mobilization. Party competitiveness is important to understanding the state political environment because it explains the electoral context in which the parties operate and defines parties' capabilities in winning elections. A state's interest group system is an important part of the context that constrains social movement influence. In states where interest groups have significant power, social movements gain an institutional entry into politics and policy making that they do not have in states where interest groups wield less power. Public opinion is a less direct, but no less important, constraint on a movement's ability to impact state politics. Public opinion forms the backdrop of much political conflict within a state and proscribes the bounds of debate on state policy issues. A movement will see its greatest successes when public opinion is supportive or indifferent and its greatest losses when its behavior engenders significant opposition within the general public. In these ways, the

state political context creates the boundaries for what a movement is able to do in state politics.

In order to take advantage of the opportunities or face the challenges presented by a state's political opportunity structure, social movements must marshal their resources. Most of the evidence concerning Christian Right political activity points to the strong importance of mobilization and activism over money (Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2001; 2003; 2006). Thus, when one examines the resources that religious social movements bring to their attempts to influence state politics, it means primarily non-monetary "people" resources. Perhaps most important is a movement's ability to draw on a large pool of supporters and mobilized grassroots. Important characteristics of social movements are the networks and connections created outside of politics. Supporters have a reason beyond politics to be connected to one another. Thus, a large pool of such interconnected supporters and potential supporters is a key resource for social movements. Second, a movement must have leadership that can take advantage of constituents' interconnectedness both in their own networks and their ability to charismatically motivate new constituents. Social movements need a pool of supporters and a person to focus the power of those supporters in the service of public policy goals.

Finally, problem framing processes allow social movements to explain social and political problems in ways that motivate constituents and help them understand how they fit into a larger social narrative. Demonstrating the threat that particular policies or groups pose to a group of religious people encourages them to see themselves as part of a disadvantaged group and motivates them to be active in changing policy in order to protect themselves.

This application of PPT to social movement influence in state politics has demonstrated some efficacy in explaining the variation in Christian Right influence across the states in the past (Conger 2009; 2010; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998). Because the Christian Progressive movement mirrors the motivation and behavior of the Christian Right, and both movements are clearly social movements, this model should help us explain the variation in Christian Progressive influence across states as well.

ANALYSIS OF MOVEMENT INFLUENCE

In order to examine the similarities and differences in the variation in Christian Right and Christian Progressive influence, I operationalize this

theoretical approach in the following ways. Using the influence index for both groups calculated above as dependent variables, I take measures of political context and movement resources from a variety of sources. Party context is operationalized as two independent variables. First, the level of party permeability in each state is measured by a scale of party openness determined by the degree to which state law governs internal party organization and the presence of state term limits (Appleton and Ward 1996). Second, it is operationalized as a dummy variable indicating whether the state party held caucuses to select a presidential nominee in 2008. I expect that fewer state rules and more caucuses will signal party control over its own destiny and more opportunity for religious insurgents.

General state political context is operationalized in four ways: party competitiveness, interest group strength, conservative advantage, and initiative usage. Party competitiveness demonstrates the general partisan environment of the state and is measured by a folded Ranney party competitiveness index for 2007–2011 (Holbrook and LaRaja 2012). Interest group strength measures the degree to which interest groups dominate state policy decision-making and is operationalized as a five-point scale ranked from subordinate to dominant (Thomas, Hrebenar, and Nownes 2008). More competitive parties and stronger interest groups should increase movement influence by allowing more openings for insurgents in the political system. Conservative advantage, an ideological measure of general public opinion from each state is the percent of self-identified liberals in each state subtracted from the number of self-identified conservatives, calculated from 2008 general election exit polling (CNN 2008). For the Christian Right, more conservatives should mean more influence as they have a large base of supporters on which to draw. For Christian progressives, the effect should be the opposite. Initiative usage is measured as a proportion of the number of initiatives that made it to the ballots of each direct democracy state divided by the number of years the state has had the power (calculated by the author from initiative and referendum Institute data). Higher levels of initiative usage should indicate more movement influence on both sides as activists can participate in politics using direct democracy to get around intransigent parties if necessary.

Movement resources are operationalized as the proportion of the state's population that identify as Evangelicals for the Christian Right analysis and Mainline and African-American Protestants and Catholics for the Christian Progressive samples (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2008). Jews are also included in the analysis. Although they are obviously not part of the Christian Progressive movement per se, there are quite a

number of Jews involved in progressive politics in general and may have an impact on the ability of the Christian Progressive movement to mobilize. As a further measure of the religious resources available to the movement, average state-level attendance at religious services is included as a gauge of religious adherence and the potential social movement network. This measure is taken from the 2008 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (Ansolabehere 2011). Higher levels of religious identification and adherence should increase the amount of influence both movements can have as they utilize religious believers as a resource. The resource of leadership is operationalized as the perceived quality of the leadership in each movement. This was measured in the survey used to construct Christian Right and Christian Progressive influence indices for each state. Respondents were asked whether they thought each groups' leadership was of high quality; the variable is scaled 0 (low) to 4 (high). Good leadership should similarly impact both movements as they seek political influence.

Problem framing processes were operationalized as the threat each movement perceives in a state. This was also measured in the political observer study. Respondents were asked to rate the amount of threat each of the movements felt in their state, and it was scaled 0 (no threat) to 4 (significant threat). A higher degree of perceived threat should increase both movements' influence by providing an incentive for action. One concern with the leadership and threat variables is that they come from the same survey that is used to measure state-level movement influence. Substantively, however, these are the only measures available that capture the operationalization of leadership and threat posited in this project. I analyze these data using OLS regression with robust standard errors to correct for possible heteroskedasticity in the errors of the state-level independent variables.

Table 3 reports the coefficients and standard errors for both the Christian Right and Christian Progressive model. For the Christian Right, the obvious result is that conservative advantage, movement leadership, and attendance at religious services have the greatest impact on the amount of influence the movement can exert in state politics. All three are positively and significantly related to the Christian Right influence index. These results suggest that there is a complex combination of state political context and movement resources at work in creating Christian Right influence. The movement needs large numbers of conservatives with their general support for the movement's agenda. The Christian Right particularly needs more conservatives than liberals in a state in

Table 3. 2008 components of Christian Right and Christian Progressive influence in state politics: OLS regression results with robust standard errors

Independent Variable	Christian Right	Christian Progressive
Party Characteristics		
Party Caucus	0.014 (0.07)	0.103 (0.05)#
Party Permeability Index	-0.013 (0.02)	-0.028 (0.02)
Party Competitiveness	0.100 (0.49)	-0.390(0.23)#
Overall State Context		
Initiative Use	0.054 (0.40)	-0.012 (0.02)
Conservative Advantage	0.010 (0.00)*	-0.014(0.01)**
Interest Group Strength	-0.034 (0.04)	0.052 (0.02)*
Movement Resources		
Leadership Skill	0.613 (.08)***	0.620 (0.07)***
Proportion Evangelicals	0.006 (0.00)	—
Proportion Mainline Prot.	—	-0.006 (0.00)
Proportion Black Protestants	—	-0.0004 (0.01)
Proportion Catholic	—	0.006 (0.01)
Proportion Jewish	—	-0.054 (0.03)*
Attendance at Religious Svcs.	1.726 (0.58)**	0.774 (0.54)
Framing Processes		
Perception of Threat	0.069 (0.12)	0.028 (0.08)
Constant	-0.055 (0.42)	0.607 (0.36)#
R^2	0.895	0.754
N	50	50

$p < 0.10$, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$; two-tailed

Dependent Variables: Christian Right: Index of influence, activity, and impact on state Republican Politics. Christian Progressive: Index of influence and visibility in state Democratic Politic

order for its influence to be felt.⁴ It also seems to need a relatively large proportion of regular church attenders and good leadership in order to take advantage of the openings provided in a state's politics by a larger proportion of conservatives.⁵ While none of the other posited independent variables had a significant relationship to Christian Right influence, the model as a whole fares well, with an R^2 of 0.895. Overall, these results mirror the outcome of the model testing the same index for 2000 and 2004 (Conger 2010), with conservative advantage and movement leadership playing important roles. The 2000 and 2004 analyses also found that the proportion of Evangelicals is an important factor in determining Christian Right influence, but did not include church attendance in the model. I suspect that church attendance is the more precise measure, gauging behavior as well as belief and highlighting the role of church networks. The variables are similar enough to point to an overall agreement across all three election cycles.

Testing the model of the index of Christian Progressive influence at the state level returns related but distinct results. Christian Progressive leadership is strongly related, positively and significantly, to the Christian Progressive influence index.⁶ Conservative advantage is negatively and significantly related to Christian Progressive influence. Thus, Christian Progressives have more influence in states with a higher proportion of liberals. Unlike the Christian Right, attendance at religious services is unrelated to the perception of Christian Progressive influence. However, the proportion of Jews in a state is negatively and significantly related to Christian Progressive influence. I suspect this is due to the relatively larger proportion of Jews in very liberal states like New York and New Jersey, and overall, Christian Progressive influence is not strongly related to religious beliefs or behavior. Again the model fares well, exhibiting an R^2 of 0.754.

Structural characteristics of state politics seem to have a somewhat larger impact on the Christian Progressive movement's ability to impact state politics than they do for the Christian Right. Christian Progressives are seen to have more influence in those states in which the Democrats held caucuses in 2008 (significance approaching traditional levels). The presence of Christian Right activists in state Republican caucuses has been significantly documented and anecdotally has a definitive effect on Republican politics (Conger 2009; Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2000; 2003; 2006). In this analysis, the effect is null for the Christian Right, but exists for Christian Progressives. This finding is complicated by the fact that the less competitive the political parties are in the state, the more influence Christian Progressives seem to have. This suggests that Christian Progressives are more successful in states where the parties are relatively static. Party competitiveness has no impact on Christian Right influence. The marginally significant coefficients for these independent variables suggest caution in drawing any strong conclusions about these results, but they may suggest that while the Christian Right is fully integrated into the Republican Party, Christian Progressives retain some qualities of insurgency.

Particularly interesting is the importance of the overall strength of interest groups in a state for predicting Christian Progressive influence. This suggests that Christian Progressives may be using slightly different tactics than the Christian Right. We know the Christian Right uses extensive church networks for information and mobilization (Conger 2009; Green, Guth, and Wilcox 1998; Green and Guth 1988) and the importance of church attendance for that movement evidences this. Because none of the religious belief or behavior variables were significant for Christian

Progressives, perhaps more of their network and mobilization is occurring through specific interest groups (see below).

RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS IN STATE POLITICS

The analysis of the varying influence of both the Christian Right and Christian Progressive movements gives us some insight into the outlines of movement influence in state politics. Most obvious from this analysis is the vital importance of good leadership. This comes as no surprise since both social movement and interest group literatures strongly support the same conclusion: good leadership is vital to the success of a movement or attempt to influence public policy. In those states where the movements had strong and visible leadership, the Christian Right and Christian Progressives were perceived to have impact both with decision makers and in grassroots mobilization and turnout. In this case, it is clear both movements have overlapping logics of success.

Second, and more directly linked to earlier work on religious movement influence, is the importance of the political and religious context in which the movement operates. Good leadership can only take a movement so far if the structures and networks of political influence in a state are closed to them. While political parties appear to be less constraining overall than originally hypothesized, the opinion environment and networks on which each movement can draw in their states seem to have definitive impact on their ability to influence state politics.

Constituencies that can be mobilized matter in terms of the state context faced by the Christian Right and Christian Progressives. The Christian Right needs highly churched people and conservatives; the Christian Progressive movement needs liberals. Most previous research demonstrates that the Christian Right's main venue is grassroots politics (Green, Rozell, and Wilcox 2000; 2001; 2003; 2006). Christian Progressives seem to be following a slightly different pattern, focused more on elites, and not necessarily linked by religious belief or practice.

Further, state political opportunity structures seem to differentially impact religious social movements. It may be that the relative ages of these incarnations of religious right and left matter here. Social movement theory is clear on the necessity of sympathetic political opportunity for the emergence of movements (Costain and McFarland 1998; Engel 2001; Gerlach and Hine 1970; McAdam 1999; McAdam et al. 1996), it is somewhat less clear on the role of structure in shaping older movements.

Overall, this analysis helps us understand the underlying factors that impact religious movements' ability to influence state politics. Even though the movements' religious dimensions make participants' motivations unique, both the Christian Right and Christian Progressives operate within the bounds of traditional understandings of social movements in politics. For both movements, the significant reliance on non-religious support and political context may suggest that the religious dimension matters less for the political activities and success than it does for the movements' larger social and moral goals.

OUTLINES OF A NEW CHRISTIAN PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

Beyond the general picture of religious movement influence, these results help us understand the outlines of the Christian Progressive movement at the state level. In some senses the movement is old, tracing its roots back to the social gospel of the 1930s and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s (Olson 2011). The Christian Progressive movement of 2008 seems to be a re-awakening of more established issues and activists and perhaps a new mobilization of younger people less familiar with the movement in its earlier form. One key to this new incarnation of the movement may be in their self-definition as the "Anti-Christian Right" (Kellstedt et al. 2007). Many activists in the movement desire larger changes in society and see politics as one avenue to pursue those changes. This makes Christian Progressives a classic social movement and appropriately the mirror image of the Christian Right. The Democratic party obviously and specifically courted the Christian Progressive movement in the 2008 election (Olson 2011; Smidt et al. 2010). This parallels Republican efforts to woo the Christian Right in the 1980s and may produce the same effect: the flowering of a nascent movement through the relationship between movement and political party elites.

One way to look more closely at this renewed movement is to examine the issues, personalities, and organizations that are visible to political observers in state politics. Respondents to the survey reported earlier were also asked to elaborate on some of their answers by giving details about these movement characteristics. When discussing leaders, many respondents pointed to specific leaders in each state. Only a few pointed to more national leaders like Jim Wallis, the Evangelical leader of the Sojourners movement. Quite a few respondents noted the role of clergy in the Christian Progressive movement. While some identified specific

individuals who are clergy, many suggested that it was categories of clergy, a state's Catholic or Episcopal priests for example, who were the most visible leaders for movement. This substantiates Olson's (2011) assessment that the religious left has few visible national leaders.

When asked about visible organizations, however, respondents did note quite a few state level organizations. Most seem unique to the individual state and mainly focused on social justice and poverty issues. These include groups such as *Alabama Arise*, *We Believe Colorado*, *Kansas for Faithful Citizenship*, and *Progressive Christians Uniting*, etc. The only social movement organization that showed up consistently in respondents' answers across multiple states was *The Interfaith Alliance*, a national group formed in 1994 to specifically counter the influence of the Christian Right. Other groups regularly mentioned were Christian denominations, particularly the United Church of Christ, the Unitarian Universalists, and the Catholic Church. Just as much of the mobilization and activity for the Christian Right takes place in the churches and parachurch organizations of Evangelicals, Christian Progressives seem to have grown out of the more liberal Protestant denominations and among progressive Catholics (Kellstedt et al. 2007; Olson 2007). Many respondents also volunteered "I don't know" when asked about leaders or organizations. Perhaps many observers noticed the presence of Christian Progressives, but for some this was a general rather than specific impression.

There was much more agreement about the types of issues on which Christian Progressives were visible in 2008. Most respondents mention some combination of issues such as immigration, poverty/hunger, gay rights, the environment, health care, and pro-choice issues. Some secondary issues mentioned periodically were peace issues, gambling, and the minimum wage. There was remarkable consistency across the states in the issues mentioned. Issues do not seem to be unique to each state, nor do specifically state-oriented issues seem to be important to more than a few Christian Progressives. So while each state does seem to have its own Christian Progressive movement, some with visible leaders and groups, the movement seems focused as a whole on a shared set of issues. This echoes the Christian Right and its focus on a core of specific issues.

CONCLUSION

The Christian Right is a long-standing religious political movement in American politics and has been intensely studied by political scientists

over the past 20 years. While the Christian Progressive movement is even older, its long-term decline reduced its visibility over the last generation. The Christian Progressive movement's recent resurgence during the 2008 election has provided an avenue for the movement's re-examination. It is becoming clear that this new version of Christian Progressive activity is following the lead of the Christian Right — and other movements — by seeking influence in state politics and party politics in order to achieve its goals. This article provides an important picture of the Christian Progressive movement as a movement. While other scholars have provided analyses of potential constituents, here we can see a picture of the movement itself, its relative strength and influence at the state level, and the leaders, organizations, and issues that frame and define the movement and its activities in American state politics.

Measuring Christian Progressive influence in state politics allows us to better understand the ways in which state politics supports and constrains the Christian Progressive movement, just as it does the Christian Right. The context of political influence clearly matters. While many observers concentrate on the religious aspect of religiously motivated movements and voters, this research demonstrates the degree to which politics and state characteristics play a definitive role in shaping the strategies and success of religious political movements.

The importance of resources for sustaining each movement in their specific contexts suggests that both movements will continue their political activities geared toward social change for the foreseeable future. Coming election cycles will give us a better picture of the future of Christian Progressives. Their continued engagement with politics in opposition to the Christian Right is likely to endure at the state level, regardless of both movements' fortunes at the national level. The issues that engage the movements on both sides are largely decided at the state level, and newly energized Christian Progressives are not likely to disengage.

NOTES

1. Funds for the study were provided by the Ray Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron.

2. While some types of observers supplied assessments that were significantly above or below the mean of the rest of the observers, these outlier groups balanced each other out numerically within the sample. This was true for both Christian Right and Christian Progressive analyses. Further, the standard deviations for the influence index for each movement in each state were calculated and demonstrate reasonable stability in influence assessments. Standard deviations range from 0.410 to 0.863 for the Christian Right for 48 states. Utah's SD is 0.99 and Rhode Island's SD is 1.27. The Christian Progressive influence measures are a bit more volatile, ranging from 0.418 to 0.991 for 46 states.

Rhode Island's CP influence index SD is 0.275, while in three states, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Vermont, are just slightly over 1.0.

3. Interest Group Strength falls below statistical significance in the reduced index for the Christian Progressive movement.

4. While there may be considerable overlap between those states with high proportions of conservatives, Evangelicals, and people who attend religious services weekly or more, these variables are not so highly correlated as to raise concerns. Conservative Advantage/Evangelical (0.658 $p < 0.001$), Conservative Advantage/Church Attendance (0.720 $p < 0.001$), and Evangelical/Church Attendance (0.579 $p < 0.001$).

5. Because of concerns about the endogeneity of the leadership variable, I tested the Christian Right influence model without the leadership variable. There was no change to the primary results of the original Christian Right model; conservative advantage and church attendance remain the only two fully significant independent variables.

6. Because of concerns about the endogeneity of the leadership variable, I tested the Christian Progressive influence model without the leadership variable. Conservative advantage and Jewish religious identity remain important, but removing the leadership variable seems to impact the structural variables. All three of these variables (interest group strength, party competition, and Democratic caucuses) were significant in the original model and now fall below traditional levels of statistical significance. While such model instability might suggest dropping the leadership variable, in the absence of similar measures of leadership quality and in the interest of testing parallel models between the two movements, I choose to keep the leadership variable in the models and approach the structural variable results with caution.

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