

until viability. This is a morally muddy compromise. The Supreme Court could very well flip the balance of these competing rights in the near future. But that will not make the situation any less morally compromised. It will not fulfill universal human rights. It will not be a liberal victory. It will just be the continuation of the nation's polarized abortion politics.

***A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars.* By Andrew Hartman. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2015. 384 pp. \$30.00 Cloth, \$19.00 Paper**

doi:10.1017/S1755048316000614

Daniel K. Williams
University of West Georgia

Andrew Hartman's *A War for the Soul of America* gives the culture wars of the late 20th century the serious, critical, historical analysis that they deserve. The culture wars were not merely a distracting political sideshow or a manipulative concoction that conservative Republicans created to win votes from socially conservative, working-class Democrats, Hartman argues. They were a reflection of a substantive conflict over a real change in cultural norms in the United States.

According to Hartman, the culture wars of the late 20th century were a result of the revolution in values that occurred in the 1960s — a revolution that replaced a prevailing consensus about moral norms with a new ethos of personal liberation and a cultural fragmentation that not all Americans welcomed. For the next three decades, culturally conservative Americans fought a series of protracted battles over the changes of the 1960s in an attempt to reverse them. When the dust settled, the new values of the 1960s won widespread acceptance, and the opponents of these changes were forced to grudgingly accept the new reality. But during the moment of these battles — the moment lasting from the origins of the neo-conservative movement in the late 1960s through the controversies over academic standards and federal funding for the arts in the 1990s — the outcome of the culture wars was not always obvious. These intervening years are the focus of Hartman's analysis.

Hartman's study begins with a contrast between the New Left and the neoconservative reaction against it. While New Leftists challenged authority and traditional sexual mores for the sake of achieving personal

liberation and equality, neoconservatives such as Gertrude Himmelfarb and Irving Kristol pushed back against the movement's anti-American rhetoric and disrespect for the values of Western civilization, because of their belief that the New Left threatened the meritocratic, liberal ideals on which the American political and social order depended. If this conflict had remained confined to an intellectual skirmish between a handful of neoconservative, mostly Jewish thinkers (represented mainly by the contributors to *Commentary* magazine) and a minority of leftist campus radicals, it would hardly have merited the moniker "culture wars." But the neoconservative intellectuals were spokespersons for a much larger grassroots movement comprised of millions of others who were equally upset by the moral revolution of the late 1960s. Chief among these grassroots conservative activists were evangelical Christians who were inspired by the writings of the popular evangelical apologist Francis Schaeffer to mobilize against "secular humanism," which, among other things, meant launching political campaigns against feminism, abortion, and gay rights. Though neoconservatives and evangelicals might have differed in their theology and even, to an extent, in their politics, they were united in the belief that American culture faced a crisis of moral decline that could be remedied only by a rediscovery of traditional moral norms.

The rest of Hartman's book chronicles the various manifestations of neoconservatives' attempt to reclaim the liberal values of a bygone era in opposition to the New Left's new value system, along with conservative Christians' attempt to reclaim the nation's Christian identity in the face of a perceived secular assault. Hartman discusses the conflict between "colorblind" conservatism (a project of the neoconservatives) and post-sixties liberalism's increasing focus on the color line through intellectual movements such as Critical Race Theory. He discusses the tension between sexual difference and gender equality, a tension that, as he points out, created divisions among feminists, as well as between cultural conservatives and cultural liberals. He devotes a chapter to the controversy over publicly funded sacrilegious art in the early 1990s, and then dedicates the final three chapters of his book to an analysis of the impact of the culture wars on educational curricula at both the secondary and college level. Given Hartman's expertise in the history of American education during the postwar era (as reflected in his first book, *Education and the Cold War: The Battle for the American School*), it is no surprise that educational debates receive a lot of attention in his study of the culture wars.

A War for the Soul of America is a work of intellectual history, so it focuses on intellectual arguments, not politics. When analyzing battles

over gender, Hartman devotes more space to Midge Decter, George Gilder, and Carol Gilligan than to Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinem, and Phyllis Schlafly. Similarly, his chapter on race says almost nothing about black politics and mentions Jesse Jackson only in passing, but presents a lengthy analysis of debates over Charles Murray and William Julius Wilson's books. As a result, readers will come away with a much better appreciation for the intellectual arguments on both sides of the culture war debates than they would if they merely read a history of recent American politics. Readers who want a history of the political and popular cultural manifestations of the culture wars can get that elsewhere, since books such as Robert Self's *All in the Family: The Realignment of American Democracy since the 1960s*, Bruce Schulman's *The Seventies: The Great Shift in American Culture, Society, and Politics*, and David Courtwright's *No Right Turn: Conservative Politics in a Liberal America* provide the popular cultural and political context that is missing from Hartman's work. But for a judicious, balanced, and detailed analysis of the intellectual debates that framed the culture wars, there are not many choices, and Hartman's book may be the best. It provides the same insightful analysis of postwar American intellectual debates as Daniel T. Rodgers's *Age of Fracture*, but because its analysis is more tightly focused and more directly related to recent American politics, some readers may find Hartman's narrative more accessible.

Several leading scholars, ranging from James Davison Hunter to Stephen Prothero, have produced widely acclaimed studies of the culture wars, but Hartman's book differs from other works by grounding the modern culture wars in a particular historical moment — the 1960s and its aftermath — and explaining the way in which the culture wars were shaped by an alliance between neoconservatives and Christian conservatives. Hartman's insistence that the culture wars are a product of the 1960s does not necessarily negate the arguments of Matthew Avery Sutton, Darren Dochuk, and others who have located the origins of the Christian Right in political controversies of earlier decades. Nor is Hartman's argument incompatible with Prothero's view that the United States has experienced a long series of different culture wars over the past two centuries. There were certainly polarizing cultural conflicts in the United States long before the 1960s, but Hartman is right to insist that the culture wars of the last third of the 20th century were unique in their scale and in their wide-ranging effects on politics, education, and

national culture. The cultural changes of the 1960s really were a revolution, and it took the country several decades to accept those changes.

But are the culture wars really over? Hartman argues that they are and that capitalism won. Americans have become more liberal in their cultural politics at the same time that they have become more conservative in their economic views. The free market made it impossible for cultural conservatives to regulate society, but it also prevented liberals from sustaining a social welfare state, whose construction, Hartman says, depends on a “cultural stability” that the nation no longer enjoys.

Capitalism’s influence on conservatives’ project of cultural regeneration was not entirely negative, of course. The free market enabled the growth of mega-churches, religious broadcasting, Christian colleges, and a plethora of other institutions that benefited cultural conservatives, so even if capitalism undermined their campaign to regulate pornography or impose moral order on the nation, it may be hard to convince most cultural conservatives that free enterprise has not ultimately worked in their favor. But Hartman is probably correct in saying that cultural conservatives’ project of moral regulation foundered, to a certain extent, on the shoals of American commerce.

Yet I question Hartman’s assertion that the culture wars have reached an end. Pundits have been proclaiming the death of the Christian Right for more than 30 years, yet conservative evangelical political activism continues unabated. The same could be said for a broader range of culture war debates. Hartman concedes that “cultural conflict” in America continues, but he insists that contemporary cultural controversies “feel less poignant and more farcical” (284), because the outcome of the culture wars has been more-or-less resolved. That may be the case on some issues — especially gay rights — but I think that some readers will have a harder time accepting that all of the culture war debates (especially debates over racial discrimination and abortion, which have both provoked violence and grabbed a lot of headlines during the 12 months since *A War for the Soul of America* was published) are as settled as Hartman suggests. The continuing conflict surrounding Supreme Court nominations — a conflict that is never far removed from culture war issues such as abortion — suggests otherwise.

Regardless of the ultimate outcome of the culture wars — and regardless of whether the culture wars are essentially over or whether polarizing debates on some of these issues will continue indefinitely — Hartman’s study is a superb work of insightful historical analysis that will enrich anyone’s understanding of the issues involved in the late twentieth

century American culture wars and the reasons for those conflicts. In its effort to provide a fair-minded, thoughtful analysis of the best intellectual works on both sides of the culture war divide, Hartman's *A War for the Soul of America* is unsurpassed.

Response to Daniel Williams

doi:10.1017/S175504831600064X

Andrew Hartman
Illinois State University

I am honored that Daniel Williams reviews my book so favorably. It is truly gratifying when the author of the best political history of the Christian Right (*God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right*) and now the best history of the pro-life movement (*Defenders of the Unborn*) calls my book "a superb work of insightful historical analysis."

The only substantial complaint Williams levels against my book is to take issue with my concluding argument that the logic of the culture wars is largely exhausted. I admit that my conclusion is intentionally provocative. I also admit that as an historian, not a prophet, I am on thin ice making such a claim. Moreover, I concur with Williams that some of the issues that defined the culture wars during their heyday in the 1980s and 1990s, such as the struggles over racial justice and abortion, are far from settled. But all that notwithstanding, let me defend my conclusion a bit.

Although I do not repeat the mistake made by so many observers over the last 30 years — by asserting that the Christian Right is dead — I do think the Christian Right is currently in a "Lost Cause" phase. Instead of arguing that their own particular religious identity represents the nation — which is how they framed the debate in the 1980s and 1990s — religious conservatives have conceded defeat. They now seek autonomous zones, such as the state of Indiana (a cause that also, ultimately, failed), where they can express their cultural identities free from government compulsion. Many conservative Christians continue to believe that homosexuality is an abomination in the eyes of God and a threat to national values. But they are less likely to make that argument politically in the ways that they did during the AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) crisis of the 1980s. Instead, their main tactic is to assert their "religious liberty" to discriminate based on sexuality.