

Georgia State University

ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University

Political Science Dissertations

Department of Political Science

12-2024

Politics from the Pulpit: A Content Analysis of High-Profile Religious Elite in American Politics

Clara Monique Deal Barlow
Georgia State University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/political_science_diss

Recommended Citation

Deal Barlow, Clara Monique, "Politics from the Pulpit: A Content Analysis of High-Profile Religious Elite in American Politics." Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2024.
doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/37515596>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Political Science at ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Political Science Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gsu.edu.

Politics from the Pulpit: A Content Analysis of High-Profile Religious Elite in American
Politics

by

Clara Monique Deal Barlow

Under the Direction of Sarah Allen Gershon, PhD

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2024

ABSTRACT

The relationship between evangelical Christianity and politics surged in the 1980s and intensified with each election cycle. In June 2016, Donald Trump met with a delegation of 1,000 evangelical leaders. Shortly thereafter, Trump released a list of his “born again” advisory panel, reflecting the broad reach of evangelical Christianity in America.

Invoking the ‘Word of God’ is a powerful rhetorical device accessible to the religious elite and not often utilized by other political actors. The literature on framing by high-profile religious elites in politics is scarce. A reflexive thematic analysis of tweets from Trump’s advisory panel (as well as a control group of high-profile evangelical elites *not* on Trump’s advisory panel) will evaluate which issues are most frequently mentioned and how elites discuss them concerning Trump’s executive communications. An inductive analysis of these tweets will measure the effects of framing on their followers through social media interactions. These results illustrate how religious leaders increasingly influence current discussions and debates about key messages and their impact on followers.

INDEX WORDS: Donald Trump, Born again, Advisory board, Evangelical Christianity, Reflexive thematic analysis

Copyright by
Clara Monique Deal Barlow
2024

Politics from the Pulpit: A Content Analysis of High-Profile Religious Elite in American
Politics

by

Clara Monique Deal Barlow

Committee Chair: Sarah Allen Gershon

Committee: Toby Bolsen

Judd Thornton

Electronic Version Approved:

Office of Graduate Services

College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

August 2024

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, whose unwavering support and encouragement have been the cornerstone of my academic journey. To my husband, John, and my children (Thomas and Christian, Lucas, Jack, and Charlotte), and my in-laws, Cheryl, Grumps, and JT, your belief in me has fueled my perseverance through every challenge and triumph. Your love and understanding have made this endeavor possible, and for that, I am deeply grateful. To Helen, you are always in my thoughts.

To my sister, Annie, your wisdom and humor have been a constant source of strength. Your encouragement has been invaluable to me.

To my grad school colleagues, your camaraderie and support have enriched this journey in countless ways. I am grateful for the shared experiences and the encouragement we provided each other.

And to my beloved dog, Theon, whose loyal companionship and unwavering love brightened every moment of my life and whose memory continues to inspire me...you are sorely missed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Sarah Gershon, my dedicated committee chair, for her invaluable guidance, unwavering support, and insightful feedback throughout this dissertation journey. Your expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping this research.

I am also deeply thankful to my committee members, Dr. Toby Bolsen and Dr. Judd Thornton. Dr. Bolsen's expertise and enthusiasm for those entrenched in the prison system enriched my understanding and inspired me to pursue a career in community affairs at the police department—every day, I hope to *be the change*. Judd Thornton's thoughtful critiques and constructive suggestions have significantly strengthened this dissertation.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Michael Fix for his understanding and support, especially his empathy towards working students with children.

Furthermore, I extend my appreciation to Dr. Mia Bloom for her exceptional mentorship. Your unique interest in my academic growth, motivational guidance, and invaluable advice to "never work for free" has not just influenced, but profoundly shaped my approach to scholarship and professional development.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
LIST OF FIGURES	IX
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	X
INTRODUCTION: CONSERVATIVES AND EVANGELICALS—UNHOLY		
	MATRIMONY	1
1	FRAMING, PRIMING, AND ‘GOD TALK’	4
2	METHODOLOGY AND CRACKING THE CODE	28
	2.1 Data and Coding	47
3	HOW DID WE GET HERE? A HISTORY OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY AND AMERICAN POLITICS	50
	3.1 Conservatives and Evangelicals: Birds of a Feather?	59
	3.2 Kingmakers and God Strategies—Ronald Reagan	70
	3.3 Read My Lips—George H.W. Bush	78
	3.4 Witchcraft in the White House	82
	3.5 The Art of the Deal: George W. Bush & Barack Obama	86
	3.6 The Rise of the Anti-Politician	100
4	A CONTENT ANALYSIS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SACRED VOICES IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE	118
	4.1 Abortion	124
	4.2 Immigration	125

4.3	LGBTQIA+.....	125
4.4	Race	126
5	TWEETING FAITH—REACTIONS OF RELIGIOUS ELITES TO TRUMP'S POLICIES	128
5.1	Abortion	128
5.2	Immigration.....	132
5.3	LGBTQIA+.....	135
5.4	Race	136
5.5	Discussion.....	140
6	ECHOES OF BELIEF: MAPPING SENTIMENT IN EVANGELICAL DISCOURSE	150
6.1	Abortion	150
	<i>6.1.1 Advisory Board</i>	<i>150</i>
	<i>6.1.2 Non-Advisory Board.....</i>	<i>157</i>
6.2	Immigration.....	164
	<i>6.2.1 Advisory Board</i>	<i>164</i>
	<i>6.2.2 Non-Advisory Panel</i>	<i>172</i>
6.3	LGBTQIA+.....	182
	<i>6.3.1 Advisory Board</i>	<i>182</i>
	<i>6.3.2 Non-Advisory Panel</i>	<i>188</i>

6.4 Race 194

6.4.1 Advisory Board 194

6.4.2 Non-Advisory Panel 203

6.4.3 Discussion 210

7 CONCLUSION 215

REFERENCES 228

APPENDICES 267

Appendix A 267

Search Terms Within Executive Communications 267

Appendix B 269

Topics of Executive Communications 269

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 6.1 Total Mentions of Abortion-Related Terms Across Issues—Advisory	13029
Figure 6.2 Total Mentions of Abortion-Related Terms Across Issues—Non-Advisory	13231
Figure 6.3	133
Figure 6.4: Total Mentions of Immigration-Related Terms Across Issues—Non-Advisory	134
Figure 6.5: Total Mentions of Race-Related Terms Across Issues—Advisory.....	137
FFigure 6.6: Total Mentions of Race-Related Terms Across Issues—Non-Advisory	13238
Figure 6.7: Issue Mentions in the Random Sample	141
Figure 6.8: Evangelical Elites Issue Mentions By Year in Comparison to Trump’s Executive Communications	145
Figure 6.9: Total Issue Mentions within Other Issues—Abortion, Immigration, LGBTQIA+, and Race.....	13046
FFigure 10: Sentiment Analysis of Abortion Tweets—Advisory	13255
Figure 11: Sentiment Analysis of Abortion Tweets—Non-Advisory	160
Figure 12: Sentiment Analysis of Immigration Tweets—Advisory	170
Figure 13: Sentiment Analysis of Immigration Tweets—Non-Advisory	13078
Figure 7.5: Sentiment Analysis of LGBTQIA+ Tweets—Advisory	13285
Figure 6.3	191
Figure 15: Sentiment Analysis of Race Tweets—Advisory	201
Error! Reference source not found.	209
Error! Reference source not found.	211

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+)

National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)

Republican National Convention (RNC)

Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)

INTRODUCTION: CONSERVATIVES AND EVANGELICALS—UNHOLY MATRIMONY¹

A phenomenon has emerged in the past several decades in American evangelical churches that frequently rally their congregants to support political issues or candidates (Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018). Religious elite, through sermons and other messaging, call their congregants to act around heavily politicized and debated issues such as immigration (McDaniel et al., 2010; Melkonian-Hoover & Kellstedt, 2019; Wallsten & Nteta, 2016), abortion (Hoffmann & Johnson, 2005; Lewis, 2018; Steensland & Wright, 2014) or those involving equal rights within the LGBTQIA+ community (Afshar, 2006; Kanamori et al., 2016; Modi et al., 2020).

Early in Donald Trump's presidential campaign (June 2016), he met with several right-wing evangelical figures, winning endorsements from a few, but most notably, gaining support from Jerry Falwell, Jr. Falwell, Jr. was president of the world's largest evangelical university, Liberty University and heir apparent to the Falwell dynasty begun by his father, legendary televangelist and conservative activist, Jerry Falwell, Sr. Initially, some evangelical leaders were wary of Trump's problematic personal life and crude behavior—but they became more receptive after Trump promised to repeal the Johnson Amendment (a federal law safeguarding the integrity of houses of worship by preventing participation in partisan electoral politics) (Rizzo, 2019). While Falwell, Jr. was the most vocal endorsement, Trump wasted no time choosing hard hitters within the highest ranks of the evangelical elite. Here are a few members of Trump's born-again

¹. Billy Graham's 1981 interview in Parade magazine, in which he expressed concern regarding the marriage of religious fundamentalists and the political right.

advisory board² that lends to the breadth and depth of evangelical Christianity's reach across the United States: televangelists (Paula White and Kenneth and Gloria Copeland), megachurch pastors (Robert Jeffress and Jentezen Franklin), former Southern Baptist Convention presidents (Ronnie Floyd and Jack Graham), bestselling authors (Dr. James Dobson and Johnnie Moore); and politicians or those intertwined with politics (Michele Bachmann and Ralph Reed).

Trump's evangelical advisory board is unique in that no United States president (while they may have had advisors or counsel) has made so open a statement regarding the "desire to have access to the wise counsel of such leaders as needed" by the "endorsement of the diverse issues important to Evangelicals and other Christians," (Gass, 2016). Membership was not contingent on an endorsement for a Trump presidency, but the admittance to the president's evangelical advisory board was not merely ceremonial.

Board members made substantial contributions to administrative policies that impacted Americans. While Trump's advisory panel reflected a small segment of the Christian community, its members held prominent positions within the evangelical faith. They often held extreme far-right or fundamentalist positions on "culture war" issues in religious freedom, reproductive rights, and the role religion should play in public life.

Two board members, evangelical leader and businessperson Reverend Johnnie Moore³ and televangelist Paula White, were instrumental in helping Trump establish the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative. Moore stated in an article for *Religious News Service*:

² A complete list is included in the Methods section

³ Moore began his career at the 100,000-student Liberty University, where he was the Senior Vice President for Communications and traveled as assistant to Jerry Falwell, Sr. (Boorstein, 2011)

There is a long list of progress we have made with this administration because we took our seat at the table... We've provided consequential feedback on policy and personnel decisions particularly affecting religious liberty, judges, the right to life, and foreign policy. We are also actively at work on issues like criminal justice reform, and when we've disagreed, we've had every opportunity to express our point of view (2017).

Moore was vocal about the advisory board's visits to the White House, which included policy briefings from executive staff and agency officials and often culminated in visits to the Oval Office. When discussing the reach of the board, Moore went on to state in an interview with the *Washington Journal* that the board played a "pretty significant" role in "directing or affecting" the administration's policy (2017). White House Deputy Press Secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders agreed with Moore's position, stating that the advisory board occasionally met with Trump to discuss critical issues (Boston, 2018).

As this research will reveal, church politicization is not a recent phenomenon. It has a rich historical context, existing for many years before Donald Trump's 2016 election to the United States presidency. It notably emerged in the 1980s with the rise of the Moral Majority and Religious Right, a fact underscored by the works of (Barton, 2012; Domke & Coe, 2010 Fetner, 2008 Froese et al., 2008 and Stokes et al., 2018). The following chapter discusses the depth and complexity of this issue, providing a comprehensive understanding for readers.

1 FRAMING, PRIMING, AND ‘GOD TALK’

Framing is a theoretical approach to deciphering a text's meaning, interpretation, connotation, and implication (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2022). Entman (2007) states that framing is “the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (p. 164). The religious elite may increase the prominence of issues in a way that influences congregants’ perceptions and interpretations of events through the frames the elites adopt and project. Frames may also help simplify complex issues and information (Entman, 1993).

Frames rely on existing cognitive schemas, making information more accessible to its audiences (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). They may be either generic, dealing with broad contexts, or issue-specific—focusing on the particularities of a topic (de Vreese, 2005). As with news frames, issues framed in religious contexts have devices with recognizable and identifiable elements, such as phrases, images, or keywords, and the “lexical choices of words or labels can impact audience interpretations” (Pan & Kosicki, 1993, p. 62).

Effects of framing can vary depending on how a particular issue is framed by the religious elite and the congregants’ knowledge level of said issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007), and competing or alternative frames can determine the persuasiveness of the framing (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). The success of any frame affecting its audiences’ evaluations increases when “it comes from a credible source, resonates with consensus variables, and does not contradict strongly held prior beliefs” (Chong & Druckman, 2007b, p. 104). The association with popular cultural symbols may also enhance the prominence of those frames (Elmasry & el-Nawawy, 2022).

Several factors are critical in the religious elite's framing of social justice issues. The social norms and values, pressures from the in-group, and ideological or political orientations of the congregants all play a role. However, the religious elite's interpretation and framing of these factors significantly shape the congregant's conception, or decision frame, of "acts, outcomes, and contingencies associated with a particular choice" (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981, p. 453). This underscores the religious elite's considerable influence in shaping the congregants' perceptions and decisions, highlighting the power dynamics at play.

This research operates under Sniderman and Theriault's definition of issue framing (2004) when placed into the context of the citizenry (or, more specifically, congregants), which is heavily oriented in *Public Opinion* (Lippmann, 1922). Lippmann's foundational piece describes the intricate and complex world of public opinion. This complexity underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the challenges the religious elite faces when attempting to hold the attention of the citizen group. Extensive literature builds on Lippmann's foundational explanation of framing through imagery (or issue priming) that attracts the citizenry's attention.

Research finds that issue framing can effectively capture the attention of a community (or the citizenry at large). This strategy is a powerful tool (Berelson et al., 1954; Druckman et al., 2009; Stokes et al., 2018) that may use controversy, current events, or compelling stories (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987) that significantly influences the congregants' attention and receptiveness to the religious elite's framing during sermons. Gamson and Modigliani further support this assertion by claiming that the religious elite typically offers suggestions on a summation of the controversy by

summarizing the essence of the issue, offering “a central organizing idea or storyline that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving connection among, them” (143).

Utilizing Goffman’s (1975) and Entman’s (1993) concepts of framing, articulating framing may be beneficial in understanding the potential impact of a content analysis on tweets by the religious elite to delineate politicization within evangelical church communities. Entman goes on to define, “To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, ethical evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52).

The moral and ethical valuations of political issues provided by the religious elite may surround a particular occurrence or global event (Bateson, 1972). Using this theoretical position, this study uses a reflexive thematic analysis of Twitter feeds—in this instance, on abortion, the LGBTQIA+ community, and race and immigration, during the presidency of Donald J. Trump. Studies have begun to explore the dynamics of the effects of exposures to multiple, contrasting frames and how these exposures may offset the impact of individual frames (Brewer & Gross, 2005; Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). However, few studies have examined communications from social media (Twitter/X) accounts of high-profile religious elites and their interactions with executive communications. Further, little research has assessed the effects of messaging through follower interactions.

Religious leaders play a crucial role in politics and often use their platform to guide their followers. Many are involved in agenda setting, encouraging their parishioners to apply religious values to political decisions and promote civic skills through a vast network of influence and resources (Oldmixon, 2019). These leaders are often at a crossroads, subject to

political influence, even as they try to influence politics and parishioners (Deal Barlow, 2017). Religious leaders frequently have a “predictable set of goals” at the forefront, which may vary based on their demographics (race, gender, ethnicity, and social and religious theology). Consequently, leaders must balance this political goal-setting within the confines of various social, institutional, and environmental contexts—thereby balancing personal convictions and external pressures.

As respondents become more motivated via exposure, they increasingly engage in conscious evaluations of the initial frame, even when introduced to opposing frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007a). Precisely, the introduction of counter-frames activates uncertainty in the listeners as to the logical and empirical merit of the initial frame and “spurs message recipients to critically assess—or at least “subconsciously rationalize”—why one idea or explanation might be better than another (Rowling et al., 2013, p. 2234). Despite this, researchers (Chong & Druckman, 2007b; Rowling et al., 2013; Sniderman & Theriault, 2004) argue that respondents still prefer the frame most consistent with their values and principles. Even when the religious elite introduce competitive frames (such as biblical verses that might be in opposition with framing by the religious elite), these frames may still be culturally resonant.

Further, research expanded to suggest that preexisting values and the strength of competing frames determine the framing effect (Chong & Druckman, 2007b). Although exposure to those contested frames might compel congregants to evaluate the competing messages they hear critically, ideological cues often play a critical role in determining which frame the audience may embrace (Rowling et al., 2013; Zaller, 2011). Hence,

when the religious elite communicates opposing values contradicting the Bible⁴, congregants may tend to conform to the elite views, particularly when those leaders share their political predispositions (Rowling et al., 2013).

Priming refers to, “changes in the standards that people use to make political evaluations” (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987, p. 63). While Iyengar and Kinder focused solely on media framing, Riker (1996) and Druckman et al. (2004) extended the concept of priming by emphasizing framing by other politicians and political actors. Recently, researchers have begun studying whether the same idea of framing applies to the religious elite (Benford & Snow, 2000; Buckley, 2022; Druckman, 2001).

Many political psychologists have replicated treatments that mimic the integration of religion into public life through religious value priming. Researchers have examined the manipulation of candidates’ religious affiliations, behavior, and rhetoric, priming subjects’ religious and political beliefs and values—finding that U.S. voters discriminate against Mormon candidates under certain circumstances (Calfano et al., 2013b). This phenomenon is not exclusive to the United States, as researchers found that evangelical voters in Brazil are more likely to vote for fake candidates when described as evangelical (Smith, 2022). Candidates given stereotypically Muslim and Jewish names reduced voter support for British parliamentary candidates (Campbell & Cowley, 2014).

A vast body of research has shown how candidates and religious elites utilize “God talk” to influence voter perception. Religious rhetoric, or “dog whistles,” can boost candidate support, particularly amongst evangelicals—signaling a shared religious experience that is not apparent to

⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all verses are derived from *Holy Bible: NRSV, New Revised Standard Version*. New York: Harper Bibles, 2007.

outsiders (Albertson, 2015; Chapp, 2012; Djupe & Calfano, 2013c) and can reduce voter prejudice against members of religious and racial outgroups (Calfano et al., 2013a; Calfano & Paolino, 2010). *God talk* has been shown as one of the most effective signals of candidate ideology (Calfano et al., 2013b; Djupe & Smith, 2019; Domke & Coe, 2010), even when evaluating race (Calfano & Paolino, 2010) and gender (Djupe & Calfano, 2013b) and that frames utilizing issues within the frame of religious rights often helps build support for religious liberty for evangelical dissenters (Djupe et al., 2016).

Additional research involved priming respondents' religious beliefs, identity, and practices by asking about concepts like belief in God, the afterlife, and the soul before assessing support for democracy and political tolerance. Researchers found that priming religious beliefs weakened support for democracy, whether measured generally or specifically in issues like immigrant rights or abortion (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015). Priming belief systems also led to dogmatism and exclusion by the in-group, highlighting priming's influence on implicit attitudes (Albertson, 2015; Ben-Nun Bloom & Arakan, 2013; Djupe & Smith, 2019; Saglioglou & Forstmann, 2013).

Djupe and Calfano (2013a, 2013b, 2013c) conducted studies exploring the boundaries between the self, in-group, and others. Utilizing a religious economies approach (which categorized religious groups along a spectrum from inclusive to exclusive based on their offerings), this spectrum was also reflected in how clergy communicated value systems, including how believers should interact with the world. Priming inclusive values, which promotes outreach and welcoming new people while reducing group boundaries, contrasts with priming exclusionary values, which encourage believers to remain inward-focused, construct boundaries, and protect the in-group.

Djupe and Calfano (2013c) discovered that priming inclusive values reduced perceived threats from a disliked group, consequently enhancing tolerance. Another study (Djupe & Calfano, 2013a) found that priming inclusive values within differing religious traditions did not affect attitudes toward American foreign intervention, likely because these values were already present. However, priming exclusive values increased support for unilateral military actions and decreased support for cooperative interventions. They found that priming these values influenced immigration attitudes consistently — inclusive values bolstered support for immigration reform, while exclusive values diminished it (Djupe & Calfano, 2013b). Hsiung and Djupe (2019) found that incorporating primed values into religious worldviews affected social and political trust. Researchers expect these values to fluctuate as the congregation's needs change, resulting in diverse policy attitude outcomes despite previous patterns.

Experimentation at the intersection of religion and politics has followed concerns about causality and the overall growth in experimentation. As Kellstedt and Green (1993) pointed out, measurements of religious affiliation have been ambiguous, and how they are related to characteristics like ethnic histories, doctrinal beliefs, social status, or group attachments, often leading to imprecision and social desirability effects. The literature has repeatedly shown that inferences based on correlations between such subjective measures and political outcomes can be problematic. This recognition has encouraged a shift towards experimental methods, which offer more precise and controlled ways to study the relationship between religion and politics, allowing researchers better to understand the mechanisms underlying interactions between religions and politics.

Research continues to address deep-seated problems in the hopes of better understanding why religious influence is so effective (Djupe & Smith, 2019). Researchers have focused on

communication systems to understand better how religious beliefs, dictates, identities, or information relates to political outcomes or behaviors through explicit connections like priming (Calfano & Oldmixon, 2016; Campbell & Cowley, 2014; Sumaktoyo et al., 2016). A careful consideration one can make in research is which religious influence may be effective. Contextual factors such as perceived threat, majority/minority status, the degree of religious freedom, or other characteristics may influence the effectiveness of religious communications. As such, credibility has been established as an essential asset for communicators (Druckman & Lupia, 2017). Recently, literature (Druckman & Lupia, 2016; Lupia, 2017) has focused on credibility, repudiating earlier beliefs that the characteristics of a speaker (e.g., character, education status, or demographic attribute) were sufficient for a listener to find a speaker credible. Instead, researchers found that “true character does not determine source credibility” (Druckman & Lupia, 2017, p. 10).

Source credibility is " a perception bestowed by an audience" (Druckman & Lupia, 2017, p. 11). This credibility symbolizes how much a congregant *believes* their minister or religious leader. Not only belief in the words or sermons but also the belief that they would benefit from listening to this person. Lupia and McCubbins (1998) determined that there are two main factors behind a source's credibility. The first, *perceived commonality of interests*, is the extent to which the listener feels that the speaker is communicating to stimulate outcomes that will benefit the listener. The second factor is *perceived relative expertise* or the belief that the elite speaker knows things the congregant does not know. At this intersection of congregant perception, quantifiable attributes of the speaker, and research on framing may help researchers

determine how the religious elite can more effectively use framing to impart critical information on political and social issues with its congregants and followers through social media.

Numerous studies have addressed the intersection of politics and religion in the last several decades in the United States (Greenawalt, 1998; Liu, 2008; Public Religion and Research Institute, 2021; PRRI, 2020; Stokes et al., 2018). However, minimal research examined how religious elites discussed politics from social media accounts. Moreover, even less research has analyzed these tweets in response to the executive communications from President Donald Trump.

Framing, or how one determines meaning around a subject, has been the impetus that sparks a political movement, forms the basis of how the faithful evaluate political issues, and influences their voting behaviors, public opinions, and public policies (Brooks, 2002; Heie, 2014; Layman, 1997; Stokes et al., 2018). Regnerus et al. (1998) determined that when effectively implemented by pastors, ministers, and religious leaders, framing may also influence values for issues in local, state, and national elections. Furthermore, “whoever controls the framing of the issue controls the political outcome” (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004, p. 148).

For this study, I will conduct a quantitative reflexive thematic analysis of tweets from high-profile evangelical elites posted on their Twitter/X profile from President Trump’s inauguration on January 20, 2017, to the end of his presidency on January 20, 2021. These tweets will encompass the week surrounding the issuance of an executive communication: three days before, the day of, and three days after. This analysis will identify how high-profile religious elite frame social issues from their social media pulpit and how often they mention a particular concern about executive communications.

Existing research has focused on the distinctions between Christian groups and their political leanings. For instance, evangelical Protestants and Mormons tend to be far more conservative and vote Republican far more often than Black Protestants (Campbell et al., 2014; Guth et al., 2006; Olson, 2001; Olson & Green, 2006). In a study from 2003 (Beyerlein and Chaves), religious leaders from several denominations were surveyed. Researchers determined that while religious leaders from mainline Protestant denominations were more likely to have political discussion groups and invite candidates to speak at church-sponsored events, evangelical congregations were likelier to deliver political cues, such as distributing voter guides to their congregations. The Christian Coalition provided over 30 million voter guides in the 1994 midterm elections, with many of their featured politicians winning their elections, leading to Republicans holding a majority of the seats in the House of Representatives for the first time in forty years. Building on this success, the Christian Coalition produced and distributed 45 million guides for the 1996 elections (Vinson & Guth, 2003). While the guides did not endorse candidates outright, they did provide candidates with scores regarding how the Coalition viewed their voting record and position on various social issues.

Beyond this study, minimal research measuring the frequency and content of messaging delivered in sermons or other communications has been conducted on a minimal scale (Brewer et al., 2003). Due to the rise of the Moral Majority, Religious Right, Christian Coalition, and the Tea Party, evangelicals have received much of the scholarly focus. The research concludes that religious cues delivered by evangelical elites are far more effective than cues delivered by leaders of other religious organizations (Welch et al., 1993). Further, congregants often invest moral authority into

their leaders (more often local than general leadership). In turn, leaders usually ask more of their members' daily lives (such as family structure and media consumption) than congregants of other faiths (Campbell, 2004).

Southern Baptist leaders, in particular, are more likely to call for direct political action. Djupe and Gilbert (2002) concluded that religious leaders are less hesitant to speak out on political issues and are more likely to delve into "hot-button topics" like abortion and marriage equality (p. 72). Congregants are more likely to discuss political matters than other religious groups (Neiheisel & Djupe, 2008). Further, evangelical congregants are more supportive of their group's policies (Steensland et al., 2000) and more receptive to political cues from their leaders as they feel that their leaders have been granted authority to govern their lives (Welch et al., 1993), leading to more political communications from the pulpit on social justice issues by evangelical leaders, compared to Catholic or mainline Protestant congregations (Brewer et al., 2003).

As evangelicals tend to focus more on morality issues and are more often exposed to political cues than their Catholic or mainline Protestant counterparts, there is a greater need for ingroup contact. Therefore, evangelicals are more homogenous in their political party affiliation and political ideology than other congregations (Scheufele et al., 2003). This may be due to the expectation that evangelical members support their ingroup politics more than other denominations (Steensland et al., 2000). That support is often conditioned on the amount of exposure to cues from outside the congregation (Wald et al., 1988).

For many evangelical Christians, elites can include ministers such as Jentezen Franklin and T.D. Jakes, but may also include individuals like Dr. James Dobson and Ralph Reed. These leaders do not lead religious organizations but have hundreds of thousands of supporters and

followers who donate money, attend events, and follow them on social media. These leaders often speak out on political matters, utilizing reverse God talk or coded dog whistles that only members within an organization can understand and decipher (Calfano, 2021).

The effectiveness of these cues depends on factors such as the importance of the issue to the congregant (Djupe & Gilbert, 2008) and whether that importance is vital enough to lead to advocacy (Krosnick, 1990), the political composition of the congregation (Djupe & Gilbert, 2008), and the opportunities to discuss politics within the congregation (Djupe & Gilbert, 2008). Cues from high-profile religious elite are more effective than cues originating from secular sources (Adkins et al., 2013). It stands to reason that politicians would use coded religious language, such as *God talk*, to indicate they are “one of them” and to garner support from their constituents (Djupe & Calfano, 2013b; Domke & Coe, 2010).

Social media is changing how some religious elite communicate with their parishioners, followers, and the public. The effects of these communications, particularly with the brevity of X/Twitter, can challenge previous studies on religious communications that utilized communications such as sermons and interviews. While earlier generations of evangelical elites such as Billy Graham and Jerry Falwell were able to reach their followers in a mostly unidirectional manner through radio and televangelism (Burge & Williams, 2019), today’s social media allows any religious leader, regardless of congregational size or budget, to interact with millions, broadcasting their message for instantaneous feedback. The effects are titanic. On Trump’s inauguration day in January 2017, Bishop T.D. Jakes, a televangelist and bestselling

author, had 2.36 million followers; by the end of Trump's presidency in 2021, Jakes had 3.73 million followers⁵.

Much research has focused on high-profile religious elite and their communications, particularly when messaging might be controversial. Scholars from 1950-1970 showed that many religious elites were overwhelmed by the fine line between sharing messaging and crossing into politics—which could create schisms within their religious communities (Burge & Williams, 2019; Campbell & Pettigrew, 1959; Hadden, 1969; Quinley, 1974). However, as the previous chapter on the history of the intersection between politics and evangelical Christianity showed, clergy do speak out on political issues, and increasingly so, especially when they want to mobilize their congregants to claim their voice in the public sphere to effect social and legal change.

This study also addresses the frequency with which the religious elite from Trump's advisory panel mention specific issues surrounding Trump's executive communications on abortion, race and immigration, and the LGBTQIA+ community. This analysis will determine whether these executive communications result in a discernible shift in the presentation and frequency of content provided in tweets (specifically focused on the aforementioned political issues) from Trump's advisory panel compared to religious elites not on Trump's advisory panel. Next, using data from the tweets, in addition to interactions with posts made by their followers, I will evaluate whether negative wording in elite messaging receives more interactions through followers' likes, retweets, and responses on their views on LGBTQIA+ issues, abortion, race, and immigration. This allows one to consider the impact of an increasingly vocal clergy on fellow evangelicals' public opinions. Although the context analysis does not allow me to make

⁵ <https://www.trackalytics.com/twitter/profile/bishopjakes/>

broad generalizations about evangelical Christianity in the United States, the results may indicate how an increasingly vocal religious elite is fueling modern political discussions and debates from their pulpits and the effect these voices have on the public opinions of their followers.

There is a dearth in the literature examining the social media activity of high-profile evangelical elites, Twitter/X in particular. The majority of previous research focused on subject matter or sentiment analysis in social media activity, although there have been more recent efforts devoted to identifying the political ideology from their tweets and its effects on their political behavior (Burge & Williams, 2019; Tumasjan et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2017). A sentiment analysis is a natural language processing (NLP) tool for mining texts, tweets, or other sources for attitudes, opinions, views, and emotions and involves classifying these texts into “positive,” “neutral,” and “negative.” Researchers have also referred to this analysis as opinion mining, subjective analysis, and appraisal extractions (Agarwal et al., 2011; Kharde & Sonawane, 2016; Pak & Paroubek, 2010). Sentiment analyses can include multiple tasks such extraction and classification of sentiment, classification of subjectivity, summarization of opinions, and even spam detection and strives to analyze sentiment, emotions, and opinions toward individuals, topics, and organizations.

Research on religion and social media often focuses on comparative differences in social media usage between religious and non-religious groups and whether these differences translate into differences in attitudes and policy preferences (Burge & Williams, 2019; Pennycook et al., 2017; Ritter et al., 2014). Though little research exists on high-profile evangelical elites’ use of social media and their engagement in politics,

many media studies featuring celebrity social media accounts suggest some general clues as to motivating factors and constraints that prominent evangelicals may face in their social media postings. The few studies examining the Twitter/X of high-profile evangelical leaders utilized small sample sizes and failed to consider the elites' engagement with political issues (Cheong, 2014; Codone, 2014).

The contribution to existing scholarship is threefold. First, there exists a strong suggestion that there is a fault line widening between evangelical elites: a growing number of centrist and center-left evangelicals versus an increasingly vocal minority who remain staunchly conservative on policy falling along racial and ethnic lines. Second, my results are consistent with emerging research on elite Christian attitudes toward minority groups, as well as the intersections and implications of religiosity on minority and underrepresented groups. Third, my results align with current research on social media usage by high-profile evangelical leaders.

The following sections define conservatism and evangelical Christianity and trace their history from the latter half of the 20th century to the 2016 election of Donald Trump to the US presidency. One cannot overlook the influence of the Moral Majority's self-identification as a political movement in national politics, primarily through the Republican Party (Brint & Abrutyn, 2010; Gifford, 2009; Griffith, 2017; Phillips-Fein, 2011). However, as Wilcox (2009) suggested, it may be less likely that the Religious Right used the Republican Party and more likely that the Republican Party influenced and used the Religious Right. Wilcox goes on to say that many see the Christian Right as not just one entity "but as a set of partisan organizations created to help the GOP woo evangelical voters" (p. 335).

This suggestion is not a far-fetched conspiracy theory. Republican strategists helped create the Moral Majority with Jerry Falwell, Sr. (1979) and the Christian Coalition with Pat

Robertson (1987). Secular conservatives saw an excellent opportunity to mobilize members of the evangelical community to achieve their goals (Dodds, 2012). Morton Blackwell, Republican activist and strategist, said that white evangelicals were “the greatest tract of virgin timber in the political landscape.” Along with Blackwell, Falwell, Sr., Paul M. Weyrich (founder of the Heritage Foundation, a right-wing think tank), and Richard Viguerie (founder of the American Freedom Agenda, a conservative activist organization) met to strategize how to harvest this new crop of prospective voters (Taliesin, 2018). Blackwell said at this meeting, “Out there is what you might call a moral majority.” And a movement was born.

From the evolution of the Moral Majority in 1979, Republicans worked to recruit and train evangelical leaders, teaching effective organization, communication skills, fundraising, and the use of technology (Dodds, 2012; Wilcox, 2009). Furthermore, the GOP devoted considerable time and money to promoting these leaders and ensuring their followers would become dependable Republican supporters and voters (Wilcox, 2009).

These strategies strongly suggest that secular conservatives have been instrumental in creating the Religious Right. However, it might also mean conservatives have nurtured grievances for political gain (Dodds, 2012). Religious conservatives have received criticism that the political elite drives their motives (and not grassroots populism). Conversely, critiques of Republican elites and secular conservatives suggest that their relationships with the Religious Right are solely for electoral gain (Claassen & Povtak, 2010; Dodds 2012; Fea, 2018). Dodds (2012) suggests this response might be challenging to show but suggests there is evidence for this claim when members of the Religious Right charge that members of the Republican administration were atheists, only

repeating the rhetoric of the Christian Right (Wilcox 2009, Dodds 2012). Despite this resistance from the religious elite, Frank Schaeffer (son of prominent theologian Francis Schaeffer) wrote that by the early 1980s, “Evangelical Christianity was now more about winning elections than about winning souls” (Schaeffer, p. 336).

Considering the political dynamics associated with the sample period, the current study explores the political intensity of conservatism presented by high-profile elites in evangelical Christianity. I will refer to the 2016 Republican Party platform to determine what categories pertain to conservatism (RNC 2016). My first hypothesis considers how political factors influence high-profile religious elites. Various domestic and foreign issues may impact how elites address their followers. However, evangelical Christianity is characterized in scholarship with a singular commonality—political conservatism (Layman, 1997; Pew Research Center, 2020; Stokes et al., 2018; Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018).

For the past several decades, conservatism has been a central tenet of political philosophy in the United States, with the media often mentioning the word “conservative” in their reports. When running for office, most Republican candidates will establish their validity based on the measure of their conservatism, and even Democrats may sometimes differentiate themselves as to their degree of conservatism (Regnery, 2009).

Conservatism built its framework around intellectual ideals from Greek antiquity, the Middle Ages, and 18th and 19th century England. Many scholars suggest that conservatism and Western civilization are irrevocably intertwined and have become the foundational political ideals of the Republican Party (Aberbach, 2017; Brint & Abrutyn, 2010; Regnery, 2009; Regnery, 2019; Sinclair, 2006). Modern American conservatism can be divided into “four pillars

of modern conservatism”: liberty, rule of law, tradition and order, and belief in God (Ceaser, 2010; Hemmer, 2022a; Regnery, 2019).

First, most conservatives believe that Americans are guaranteed freedom to pursue life, liberty, and property and ensure freedom from restrictions of arbitrary force (Edwards, 2018; Regnery, 2019). These entitlements are exercised through free will—translating into following your pursuits, doing what you want (without harming others), and reaping the rewards (or facing the consequences). For most conservatives, liberty translates into freedom from government oppression and protection of the government against oppressions of political (freedom of speech on matters of public policy), religion (to worship as one wishes), and economic liberties (right to own property and participate in a free market).

Second, conservatives rely heavily on the rule of law. Many feel that a predictable legal system informs its citizens of the rules and regulations while equally enforcing those rules amongst all its citizens—the governors and the governed. Individually, this response may look like a father enforcing the rules within his family to produce law-abiding citizens (Edwards, 1999; Wilcox, 2006).

Third, most conservatives center their philosophy on tradition and order, which leads to an orderly society. Maintaining tradition builds a culture that respects rights and repels the forces of evil (Manderson, 2021; Regnery, 2019). Order infers a “systematic and harmonious arrangement” in the individual and the society, and this order suggests that citizens perform specific duties and enjoy certain rights in their society to ensure that the day-to-day mechanics of running a society do not devolve into disorder (Edwards, 2018; Regnery, 2019).

Fourth, most conservatives believe in God (Brint & Abrutyn, 2010; Manderson, 2021), which builds on pillars such as virtue, fairness, duty, charity, and community (Buchanan, 1987). Conservatism ties into allegiance to God, which should transcend politics and set a standard of behavior. This authority is greater than any individual, head of state, or government. Therefore, most conservatives believe that no state can demand absolute obedience as they are not God (Edwards, 2018; Goldwater, 1960; Regnery, 2009). A moral order should undergird a political order (Buchanan, 1987; Suskind, 2004), but that is not to imply conservatives feel politics and religion should mix, or conservatives have a monopoly on God, or that they all believe in God (Dodds, 2012; Goldman, 2021; Pew et al., 2020; Regnery, 2019).

Many faith-based communities across the U.S. are united by conservatism (PRRI, 2021), and elites can make a significant social impact through their political activities at the local and national levels (Guth et al., 1997). Historically, religious elites inspired congregational participation and activism at local, state, national, and international levels (Stokes et al., 2018).

While trends point to uniform conservative activism (PRRI, 2021), the report also suggests that evangelical Christians have a different view of Donald Trump after the 2016 presidential election (Gabriel, 2016). Even so, previous research has shown that when elites promote politically conservative views within an issue framework, religious elites may influence the immediate and broader social context (Layman, 1997; PRC, 2020; Stokes et al., 2018). The following research questions are two-pronged: The former has issues related to religious elites and whether these issues are prevalent in the wake of Donald Trump's presidential election. The first research question addresses specific issues detailing the level of politicization.

RQ1: What issues are high-profile evangelical elites most likely to address in their public discourse?

The second question concerns any potential shift in this study's question framing of the Trump election. Inquiries about issues framed before and after Donald Trump's election detail any potential variance in politicization related to the 2016 election.

RQ2: How does elite discourse content on Twitter/X vary from the executive communications from President Donald Trump's office?

The following research question addresses the frequency of issues mentioned in elite discourse, which may better define the intensity at which high-profile religious elite politicize their platform. Given that high-profile religious elites may communicate opposing values contradicting the Bible, congregants may also conform to the elite views, particularly when those leaders share their political predispositions (Rowling et al., 2013). For this reason, the following research questions are proposed:

RQ3: Do negative tweets receive more interaction from the public?

This research focuses on the issues raised by high-profile religious elites around the executive communications originating from Donald Trump's office, which are measurable and have outcomes that are likely to be predictable. Despite the numerous topics presented by high-profile religious elite before and after the election of Donald Trump during the study's sample period, I narrowed down the framing identifier to one broad topic: politics. Subcategories were added to flag specific and trending questions posed by well-known religious elites, considering the values and attributes associated with the questions posed by elites (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). These values and attributes help define the political party, including conservatism.

Understanding the bonds between politics and evangelical Christianity, the 2016 Republican party's platform was significantly influenced by rhetoric by the religious elite and church politicization (with twenty-six mentions of "faith," 16 mentions of "God,"

and four mentions of “church”). Traditionally, the Religious Right has focused on social issues more than economic issues, so it is little surprise the 2016 Republican platform states, “Traditional marriage and family, based on marriage between one man and one woman, is the foundation for a free society and has for millennia been entrusted with rearing children and instilling cultural values” (RNC, 2016, p. 11).

Additionally, traditional marriage and laws discriminating against the LGBTQIA+ community are driving factors in both Christian activism and elite dialogue (Jones & Brewer, 2020; Kanamori et al., 2017; Modi et al., 2020). While abortion has remained one of the most contentious sociopolitical issues that evangelical Christians opposed in the 21st century (Hoffmann & Johnson, 2005; Stokes et al., 2018), discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community (e.g., marriage equality and transgender bathroom rights) and immigration are two issues that are quickly gaining notoriety within the evangelical community. As such, public debate around the LGBTQIA+ community and immigration, coupled with abortion, leads to the following hypothesis:

H₁: Abortion will have the highest frequency of mentions compared to race, immigration, and the LGBTQIA+ community from the sample of the high-profile religious elite.

Hotly debated political issues (such as marriage equality and abortion) have prompted evangelicals to try to influence legislative outcomes (Hertzke & Peters, 1992; Stokes et al., 2018). The theory is that political advocacy within the evangelical community influences legislation, and, in turn, the legislation affects society (Hertzke & Peters, 1992). The literature provides many examples of how political dialogue and debate affect society and vice versa (Djupe & Calfano, 2014; Heie, 2014; Shields, 2009; Stokes et al., 2018). Using a sample of texts

from the study, high-profile evangelical elites politicized their congregations through questions raised from the pulpit. Gushee (2015) suggests that issues around “sexual minorities” of the LGBTQIA+ community have inspired advocacy groups, including politicized evangelicals.

Research offers many examples where public policy was influenced by evangelical Christians (Djupe & Calfano, 2014; Githens & McBride (Eds.), 2013; Heie, 2014; Taylor & Haider-Markel (Eds.), 2015; Stokes et al., 2018). One of the most noticeable outcomes of issue framing by the religious elite in the United States is their influence on public opinion and legislative policy. Hence, analyzing the frequency of references to the Bible is relevant for understanding the potential impact of elite framing on American society. While the current analysis focuses on the elite framework surrounding executive communications from Trump’s office, in the future, studies may consider the correlations between the impact of public opinion and elite frameworks on legislative development. Previous research shows that conservative framing increased after the presidential election (Stokes et al., 2018). I also expect to see increased biblical literalism and biblical references under Trump. Therefore, I propose the following hypothesis:

H₂: High-profile religious elite will maintain their focus on abortion, regardless of the issue related to the executive communication released from Trump’s office.

For this research, the qualitative analysis focuses on follower interactions. While the Johnson Amendment prohibits religious leaders whose organizations enjoy tax-exempt status from officially endorsing political candidates, a few high-profile religious

elites were overwhelmingly vocal in their support of Donald Trump in the 2016 election. As such, a growing voice of opposition with their followers is increasingly concerned that politics and religion are becoming too intimate. For this reason, the following hypothesis states:

H₃: Tweets with negative phrasing will receive more interactions from their followers through liking, sharing, and commenting.

Much research establishes that messages with negative wording are more persuasive, better capture attention, produce more significant influence on recipient emotion and behavior, and maintain presence in the memory longer than messages with positive wording (Baumeister et al., 2001; Dijksterhuis & Aarts, 2003; Hamilton & Huffman, 1971; Lagerwerf et al., 2015; Liebrecht et al., 2019; Peeters & Czapinski, 1990; Pratto & John, 2004; Wyer, 2019).

There are two reasons why negativity is psychologically effective in messaging. Primarily, the *negativity bias* creates strong evolutionary reasons that behoove its listener to pay attention (Jing-Schmidt, 2007; Lazarus, 2021; Liebrecht et al., 2019; Pratto & John, 2004). Negativity is often associated with fear or danger (or, in evangelicals' case, eternal damnation in a sea of fire), so recipients will usually pay greater attention to unpleasant information.

Second, the expectation is that messages are delivered with a positive tone, as one often uses positive wording in our communications (Jing-Schmidt, 2007; Liebrecht et al., 2019). Even upon receiving negative news, messaging is often viewed from the "bright side of life." People will try to downplay the negative and put a positive spin on the message or make an unfortunate situation positive with a *Pollyanna effect*. Based on these learned conventions and social mores, such as courtesy or observance of body language (Brown & Levinson, 2018), the Pollyanna effect (Boucher & Osgood, 1969) asserts a universal tendency to use positive words more

frequently than negative words in communicating. When this expectation of receiving a positive expectation is spoiled by a negative message—it makes that feeling more intense.

2 METHODOLOGY AND CRACKING THE CODE

Automated text analysis has become a cornerstone in the realm of data analytics. Over the years, researchers have heavily relied on content analysis to explain the intricacies of thought processes, motivations, and interpersonal dynamics (Krippendorff, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019). While automated text analysis has propelled scientific advancement, its reliance on labor-intensive processes and vast amounts of source material (like the nearly 353,000 tweets in this study) introduces potential biases. Text-as-data is a rapidly evolving field within *natural language processing*, employing similar methodologies as quantitative social sciences to translate words into numerical data, facilitating tasks such as word counts and sentiment analysis (Burge & Williams, 2019; Hofmann et al., 2024; Jurafsky & Martin, 2009).

I chose reflexive thematic analysis due to its flexibility in analyzing large datasets and ability to identify key themes. *Reflexivity* encompasses drawing upon your experiences, pre-existing knowledge, and social position, then “critically interrogating” how these characteristics affect and contribute to the analysis, as well as any potential insights that may be gained from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 5). Braun and Clarke (2006) use the term “analytic sensibility” (p.5) to refer to the ability to read and interpret data to produce insights into the dataset that extend beyond surface-level comprehension as well as observing connections between the dataset and existing research, theory, and the broader context. Having grown up as an Evangelical Christian who participated in religious activities such as Christian summer camps and “sword drills” or Bible competitions, my situational experience must be factored into any interactions I may have as the researcher with the data.

Despite automation's rapidly advancing capabilities, one must cautiously approach text analysis. Words gain their whole meaning within sentences or tweets, allowing us to discern

their intended usage (Egami et al., 2022; Grimmer et al., 2022; Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). This project heavily leans on insights extracted through computerized text analysis techniques, including word counts and tweet metadata. Nevertheless, to ensure the accuracy of my analysis, several tweets were manually reviewed, ensuring that the conclusions drawn accurately reflect the nuances within the data.

The longitudinal range of content spans from January 20, 2017 (the day of Trump's inauguration) to January 21, 2021 (Trump's last day in office). The 2016 election of Donald Trump is a crucial variable in testing the study's hypothesis. To narrow the focus of the content analysis, the search terms for the issues of abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ issues⁶ were used to gather Trump's executive communications related to those issues. Trump released executive communications surrounding thirteen main issues⁷, including Immigration and National Security and Defense. The latter two issues were used to gather memoranda, executive orders, statements and releases, and fact sheets on immigration (not every communication on National Security and Defense pertained to immigration). For the remaining issues of race, abortion, and LGBTQIA+, search terms were utilized to extract executive communications related to the abovementioned topics. The communications were then gathered into an Excel spreadsheet and organized based on the specific executive issue under which the communication was released (e.g., healthcare, national security and defense, education, etc.). Following this, tweets from the advisory panel and control

⁶ Search terms are listed in Appendix A.

⁷ Economy & Jobs, Budget & Spending; Land & Agriculture; Veterans; Education; Law & Justice; Energy & Environment; Healthcare; Infrastructure & Technology; Foreign Policy; Coronavirus Response

group surrounding the week of the executive communication were harvested and then analyzed for content within the collection of executive communications surrounding a particular issue.

This study's content is sourced from Twitter/X accounts of the high-profile religious elite on Trump's advisory panel.⁸ (as well as a control group on high-profile religious elite *not* found on Trump's advisory panel). In a June 2016 press release, Trump announced the creation of his "evangelical executive advisory board" designed to advise on issues of faith. Trump said of his list after meeting with evangelicals in 2016, "I have such tremendous respect and admiration for this group, and I look forward to continuing to talk about the issues important to Evangelicals, and all Americans, and the commonsense solutions I will implement when I am President." The members of the advisory board below are as follows:

Dr. James Dobson: psychologist, best-selling author, media mogul, and founder of *Focus on the Family*—a global Christian organization founded to "support families as they seek to teach their children about God and His beautiful design for the family, protect themselves from the harmful influences of culture and equip themselves to make a greater difference in the lives of those around them" (*Focus on the Family*, 2019). Dobson promotes a strict social agenda advocating abstinence-only sex education, gender complementarianism, and creationism.

Dr. Tim Clinton: licensed professional counselor, marriage and family therapist, and best-selling author. He is president of the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC), executive director of the James C. Dobson Center for Child Development, Marriage, and Family Studies, and co-host of Dobson's *Family Talk*. The AACC removed its promotion of

⁸ There are two members of Trump's advisory panel who do not have Twitter/X accounts (Dr. Tom "Coach" Mullins and Tom Winters) and one member whose account was inactive after February 16, 2017 (Michele Bachmann). Therefore, their comparatives' tweets were not harvested and Senator Marsha Blackburn's data ended on February 16, 2017, as well.

conversion therapy for same-gender attraction from its code of ethics in 2014 (and instead encouraged celibacy). Clinton is also the executive director of the Global Center of Mental Health, Addiction, and Recovery at Liberty University (Clinton, 2024).

Michele Bachmann is a Minnesota attorney and former representative (2007-2015). She founded the Congressional Tea Party Caucus and briefly ran for the presidency in 2012. She is currently the dean at the Robertson School of Government at Regent University (Regent University 2021). Bachmann and her husband have been criticized for their ultra-conservative Christian counseling practice and their aggressive stance against same-sex marriage.

Reverend/Pastor A.R. Bernard is a former member of the Nation of Islam; Bernard left a business career to begin the Christian Cultural Center, a ministry and “megachurch⁹” of 37,000 members in Brooklyn, New York. Bernard is president of the Council of Churches of the City of New York and a best-selling author (Bernard, 2017). Bernard left Trump’s advisory board on August 19, 2017, after Trump’s response to the protests and murder in Charlottesville, VA¹⁰. Bernard stated that the president’s characterization of Charlottesville was the linchpin in deciding to leave the advisory board, saying, “I took a lot of heat for joining, and I took a lot of heat for leaving” (Sagona, 2017).

Mark Burns: televangelist and pastor of the South Carolina Harvest Praise and Worship Center. Burns had two unsuccessful run for Congress in 2018 and 2022. He is

⁹ *Hartford Institute for Religious Research* refers to any Protestant Christian church with a sustained average weekly attendance of 2,000 people (adults and children) or more at all its worship locations.

¹⁰Tweets were harvested until August 19, 2017.

also co-founder of the NOW Television Network (a Christian television network that primarily broadcasts his sermons from his church) and was described as Trump’s “top pastor” (Dias & Tsai, 2016).

Kenneth and Gloria Copeland: televangelists from Texas who started Kenneth Copeland Ministries. They are part of the charismatic movement that believes in speaking in tongues and divine healing—ideas from Pentecostalism. The Copelands preach the prosperity gospel.¹¹ Which claims that wealth and other benefits are God-given gifts.

Ronnie Floyd is the former president of the Southern Baptist Convention (2014-2016), the most prominent Baptist denomination in the United States with historical roots in slavery and white-dominated power structures in the American South. He is a prolific writer of books, podcasts, and televised sermons.

Jentezen Franklin: He has appeared on the New York Times bestseller list multiple times (most notably for *The Spirit of Python: Exposing Satan’s Plan to Squeeze the Life Out of You*) and is the senior pastor of Free Chapel Worship Center, a multi-campus megachurch with five locations in Georgia (and one in South Carolina and California).

Jack Graham was ordained at age 20 while a student in Abilene, Texas. Graham served two terms as president of the Southern Baptist Convention (2002-2004). He is also senior pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, a 42,000-member megachurch in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

Bishop Harry Jackson¹² was a bishop of the Pentecostal church, serving as senior pastor of Hope Christian Church in Maryland. Jackson was a staunch advocate for socially conservative causes—particularly gay marriage and abortion. Jackson co-founded The

¹¹ And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:19.

¹² Died on November 9, 2020.

Reconciled Church Initiative, which focused on national racial healing and unity through church leadership.

Robert Jeffress is the senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, a megachurch with over 16,000 members. He hosts the religious television and radio show *Pathway to Victory*, which broadcasts in the United States and twenty-eight other countries. A frequent contributor on Fox News, he has called LGBTQIA+ people “miserable and filthy” (Merritt, 2017), stated that Catholicism was a “satanic” religion (Humphrey, 2011), and that the teachings of Judaism, Islam—which Jeffress accuses its followers of promoting pedophilia (Rayfield et al., 2010), Mormonism, and Hinduism rejected “the truth of Christ” and that their followers “will go to hell if they do not accept Christ” (Scott, 2018).

David Jeremiah is the senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church, a megachurch with six campuses and over 10,000 members near San Diego. He records his sermons for his internationally syndicated radio and television program, Turning Point. He is also the best-selling author of over fifty books.

Richard Land was an advisor to Trump during his election campaign. Now, the president of the Southern Evangelical Seminary in North Carolina, Land, opposes abortion and marriage equality. Land accused the Obama administration of using the killing of Trayvon Martin to incite racial tension and attract Black voters (Feddes, 2012).

James MacDonald is the former minister of Harvest Bible Church, one of Chicago’s largest megachurches. He served a short-lived position on Trump’s panel before resigning on October 13, 2016, after Trump’s comments regarding grabbing

women by their genitalia surfaced on October 7, 2016¹³. Unimpressed with Trump's apology video released after the incident, MacDonald stated that Trump was "lecherous" and "worthless" and said he would refrain from continuing any advisory role on Trump's board until Trump demonstrated "true repentance" (Pulliam-Bailey, 2016b; Showalter, 2016). Not without his issues, MacDonald was found "biblically disqualified" (Shellnutt, 2019b) from continuing his 30-year ministry at Harvest after a series of recorded comments were released that church elders felt were "contrary and harmful to the best interests of the church" (Shellnutt, 2019a). MacDonald was later charged with two felonies after allegedly assaulting a woman in a dispute over a parking spot (Smietana, 2023).

Johnnie Moore, Jr., is a best-selling author (*Defying ISIS: Preserving Christianity in the Place of Its Birth*) and president of the Kairos company, a faith-based public relations and consultancy firm based in California. He is a commissioner for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom and served as an advisor for presidential hopeful Ben Carson.

Robert Morris is the senior pastor of Gateway Church in Texas, a multi-site megachurch in Dallas-Fort Worth's urban "metroplex" with an estimated 100,000 members. Morris warned that "Satan was at work" in local school districts that promoted LGBTQIA+ inclusion in education (Hixenbaugh & Hylton, 2023).

Tom "Coach" Mullins founded the tenth-largest church in the United States, a multi-campus megachurch called Christ Fellowship Church in Florida. Mullins signed a letter in defense of traditional marriage after the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage in 2015.

¹³ No tweets were harvested for MacDonald

Ralph Reed is a long-time conservative political activist; Reed was the first executive director of the Christian Coalition and founded Faith and Freedom Coalition—a “21st-century version of the Christian Coalition”(Malloy, 2012). Reed had an unsuccessful run for lieutenant governor in Georgia in 20016. He was also implicated in a money laundering scandal in 2005 when emails from federal investigators revealed that Reed (and the Alabama chapter of the Christian Coalition) accepted payments from Jack Abramoff to lobby against Indian gaming casinos and oppose an Alabama education lottery (Gibney, 2010).

James Robison founded Life Outreach International, an international relief organization. He was also a prominent conservative religious leader and political influence who lost his regular time slot on Dallas television for preaching a sermon against the LGBTQIA+ community when he called for “God’s people to come out of the closet, out of the churches, and change America” (Clendinen, 1984). Robison dropped out of politics for several years before returning to conservative learning religious circles to campaign against Barack Obama (Kaylor, 2010).

Tony Suarez is the executive vice president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC)—the world’s largest Hispanic Christian organization serving more than 100 million Hispanic evangelicals throughout the Spanish-speaking diaspora. Suarez is also the founder and president of Revivalmakers, a “Spirit-filled evangelistic ministry” that travels from church to church and hosts events, tent revivals, healing services, and crusades worldwide. During Trump’s 2016 campaign, Suarez was the most vocal opponent, stating in a now-deleted Facebook post, “As Donald Trump once again reveals his true character, we are one day closer to this embarrassing reality

show coming to an end. The only thing more embarrassing than his campaign is watching preachers support Trump and even manipulate scripture to invent false prophecies regarding Trump. He's not 'the trumpet.' #goodbyeTrump" (Grant, 2016).

Jay Strack is the president and founder of Student Leadership University—a Bible-based, evangelical conservative leadership training course. He affirmed his program by stating, "God has called us to prepare the next generation to think, dream, lead" (CSU Media, 2018). Strack spoke out in defense of the White House weekly Bible study sessions attended by senior members of the Trump administration (Strauss, 2017).

Paula White is a prosperity theologian and televangelist, best-selling author, and founder of Paula White Ministries. She is the senior pastor of the City of Destiny Church (formerly New Destiny Christian Center) (Kuruvilla, 2019). White was nicknamed Donald Trump's "God Whisperer" during the 2016 election (Glueck, 2016). When she spoke at the Republican National Convention, she asked God to "protect us from all those who aim to destroy us and make America safe again" (Rodgers, 2016). Dr. James Dobson credited White with converting Trump to Christianity (Smith, 2016). She delivered the invocation at Trump's 2017 inauguration.

Tom Winters¹⁴ is an attorney and partner of Winters and King, Inc. He is a literary agent representing several bestselling religious authors, such as Joel Osteen (pastor of the largest megachurch in the United States). Winters's law firm represents churches, ministries, and religious non-profit organizations.

Sealy Yates is an attorney based in California whose primary clients are Christian authors. Yates is also the founder and president of My Faith Votes—a supposedly "non-partisan

¹⁴ Does not have a Twitter/X profile

movement that motivates, equips, and activates Christians in America to vote in every election, transforming our communities and influencing our nations with biblical truth”

(My Faith Votes 2018).

For the control group, I matched similarly yoked,¹⁵ high-profile evangelical elite to those who were on Trump’s advisory panel. I chose a comparable group of high-profile evangelical elites to compare with Trump's "born again" advisory panel to provide a broader and more balanced analysis of religious discourse during Trump's presidency. The study captures a broader spectrum of evangelical perspectives by including figures like Marsha Blackburn alongside Michele Bachmann or Dr. James Dobson alongside Dr. Tony Perkins. This comparison allows for a more nuanced understanding of how leaders within and outside Trump's advisory circle framed and responded to critical social and political issues. It also helps to identify whether certain themes and sentiments were unique to Trump's advisory panel or reflective of broader evangelical trends, thereby enriching the overall analysis of high-profile religious elites' influence on public discourse.

Pastor Tony Perkins (Dr. James Dobson) is a politician and Southern Baptist minister. He has been president of the Family Research Council (founded by Dr. James Dobson) since 2003. Perkins also served as a member of the Louisianan House of Representatives and was appointed to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom by Senator Mitch McConnell in 2019 (USCIRF, 2019).

Pastor Jonathan Falwell (Jerry Falwell, Jr.): brother to Jerry Falwell, Jr., Jonathan is the senior pastor at Thomas Road Baptist Church (Pounds, 2016), a

¹⁵ Do not be mismatched with unbelievers. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship is there between light and darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14

megachurch claiming over 24,000 in Lynchburg, Virginia. The congregation unanimously elected Falwell to assume the duties of pastor after his father, Jerry Falwell, Sr., died in 2007. Falwell is also the campus pastor at Liberty University (the university his father opened in 1971).

Dr. Russell Moore (Dr. Richard Land) is a bestselling author and editor-in-chief of Christianity Today. He was named a top influencer in Washington, D.C. (Alberta, 2017). Moore previously served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission and taught theology and ethics at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he also served as dean and provost.

Beth Moore¹⁶ (Paula White) is an evangelist, bestselling author, and Bible teacher¹⁷ Moore is the president of Living Proof Ministries, a Christian organization she founded to teach women how to love Jesus through studying Scripture. Moore received a great deal of criticism when she left the Southern Baptist church, which ended her decades-long publishing career with LifeWay Christian (Smietana, 2021) after she criticized the evangelical movement's dismissal of sexual abuse (McCammon, 2016) and Christian nationalism (Graham, 2021).

Pastor Andy and Sandra Stanley (Kenneth and Gloria Copeland): Andy Stanley is a bestselling author and the founder and senior pastor of North Point Ministries, a nondenominational evangelical Christian megachurch of approximately 23,000 congregants with several campuses in the metro Atlanta areas. Andy is the son of Charles Stanley, founder of In Touch Ministries.

¹⁶ No relation to Dr. Russell Moore

¹⁷ Moore takes the position that she is a teacher, as opposed to a preacher, to avoid conflict with 1 Timothy 2:11 which states, "Let a woman learn in silence with full submission"

Bishop E.W. Jackson¹⁸ (Pastor Mark Burns) is a consecrated bishop; he founded Exodus Faith Ministries, a nondenominational church in Chesapeake, Virginia. Jackson founded Staying True to America’s National Destiny, a Christian political organization. Jackson was a Democrat until he embraced conservatism in the 1980s. He said, “I had a crisis of conscience. Can I be in a party that holds these views that are antithetical to my worldview? In my personal opinion, it is difficult if you are a Bible-believing Christian to reconcile that to some of the positions that the Democrat Party has taken” (Schmidt, 2019). Jackson had failed runs for United States Senate in 2012 and 2018.

Dr. Charles Stanley (James Robison): father of Andy Stanley, Charles Stanley was a Southern Baptist pastor and author. He was the senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Atlanta, a megachurch in Dunwoody, GA, and the founder of In Touch Ministries—which widely broadcasted his sermons on television and radio. He also served two one-year terms as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Stanley also served on the board of the Moral Majority and was a close friend of Jerry Falwell, Sr. Stanley died in 2023.

Dr. Albert Mohler (Dr. Ronnie Floyd) is an evangelist. Mohler is also the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and host of the podcast *The Briefing*, in which daily news and recent events are analyzed from an evangelical perspective. He served on the board of directors for Focus on the Family. *Christianity Today* called Mohler a leader among American evangelicals, and *Time* called him the “reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the U.S.” (McKinney, 2009).

¹⁸ Last tweet was on April 22, 2019

Dr. Steve Gaines (Dr. Robert Jeffress) is a Southern Baptist minister and president of the Southern Baptist Convention. He also serves as pastor at Bellevue Baptist Church, a megachurch with approximately 30,000 members in Memphis, Tennessee—one of the largest congregations in the SBC. Gaines was caught in controversy in 2006 when he acknowledged he was aware of sexual misconduct allegations against a staff member and did not address it for several months as the staffer was attending counseling. Gaines was purportedly more concerned for the staffer's privacy (Burgess, 2022).

Pastor Chuck Swindoll (Dr. David Jeremiah) is an evangelical pastor, bestselling author, educator, and radio preacher who has written over 70 books. He founded Insight for Living, a radio station that airs eponymous radio programs on more than 2,000 stations around the world in 15 languages. He is currently the senior pastor at Stonebriar Community Church in Texas, which boasts over 20,000 members. *Christianity Today* named him among the top 25 most influential preachers of the past 50 years (1956-2006).

Pastor Greg Laurie (Dr. Jack Graham) is an evangelical pastor and evangelist who leads the Harvest Christian Fellowship, a multi-site megachurch based in California that is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. He also founded the Harvest Crusades, an evangelical organization that organizes evangelical conferences. Laurie is also featured in the 2023 film *Jesus Revolution*, which follows his conversion to Christianity and the beginnings of his ministry during the Jesus movement that began on the West Coast in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During COVID, Laurie and his church were one of the first to start virtual worship services, averaging 200,000 viewers during the height of the pandemic. When Trump tweeted that he would be tuning in, the webcast saw record viewership of over 1.3 million people (Smith, 2020).

Pastor Mark Driscoll¹⁹ (Dr. James MacDonald) is a bestselling author and evangelical pastor. He founded RealFaith Ministries and Trinity Church, a megachurch in Scottsdale, Arizona. He has experienced controversy related to his teachings on gender roles, plagiarism, and a culture of fear and abuse that allegedly existed at his previous church, Mars Hill, a multi-site megachurch that boasted an average weekly attendance of over 12,000 people. Driscoll was removed from the board of the Acts 29 network (a church planting organization) and was asked to resign from his ministry. Upon investigation, it was stated that “This is, without a doubt, the most abusive coercive ministry culture I’ve ever been involved with” (Pulliam-Bailey, 2014).

Scott Dawson (Dr. Jay Strack) is a bestselling author, preacher, and founder of the Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association. Dawson ran for governor of Alabama in 2018, coming in third at the primary. He called for mandatory drug testing in all Alabama schools, which would have cost approximately \$24 per student per test (Sharp, 2018).

Marsha Blackburn²⁰ (Michele Bachmann) is the senior senator from Tennessee. She was a state senator representing the seventh congressional district in the House of Representatives from 2003-2019. She was rated as one of the House’s most conservative members by the *National Journal*. Blackburn has stated she is “a hard-core, card-carrying Tennessee conservative” (Hakim, 2018). She supported the Tea Party movement and was estimated to be the most ideologically conservative member of the

¹⁹ As no tweets were harvested from James MacDonald during the Trump presidency, none will be harvested for Mark Driscoll.

²⁰ Last tweet harvest on February 16, 2017, to coincide with Michele Bachmann’s last tweet

Senate. Blackburn is also a staunch supporter of Donald Trump and abstained from voting on creating the January 6 Commission.

Dr. Pat Robertson (Dr. Ralph Reed) was a religious broadcaster, political commentator, presidential candidate, and charismatic minister. He was the founder and head of Regent University and his media company, the Christian Broadcasting Network. He is most notable for founding the Christian Coalition and hosting The 700 Club, an international syndicated Christian news and TV program. Robertson was a controversial figure, known for his staunch opposition to Islam and Buddhism, LGBTQIA+ rights, feminism, and abortion, as well as his questionable business dealings with former president of Liberia, Charles Taylor (BBC, 2013) and former Zaire president Mobutu Sese Seko (Blumenthal, 2005).

Pastor James Gailliard²¹ (Reverend A.R. Bernard) is the senior pastor of Word Tabernacle Church, a multi-campus megachurch in North Carolina (and an international broadcaster). He was a former Democratic member of the North Carolina House of Representatives. In 2023, Gailliard was awarded the Joseph R. Biden Lifetime Achievement and Presidential Service Award.

Pastor Ed Young (Pastor Robert Morris) is the founding and senior pastor of Fellowship Church, a multi-site megachurch based in Fort Worth, Texas. He is also a bestselling author with an international ministry that includes televised broadcasts. Young has been criticized for his luxurious lifestyle, which includes an annual housing allowance of \$240,000 and a salary of \$1 million (Wynn, 2013).

Dr. Rod Parsley (Jentezen Franklin) is senior pastor of World Harvest Church, a nondenominational, multisite megachurch based out of Ohio with a weekly attendance of over 10,000

²¹ Last tweet harvested on August 19, 2017, to coincide with A.R. Bernard's last tweet.

congregants. He is the founder and chancellor of Valor Christian College and founder and president of The Center for Moral Clarity—a Christian grassroots advocacy organization. Parsley is a political independent, maintaining conservative positions on abortion and marriage equality while supporting prison re-entry legislation, women’s rights initiatives, and anti-poverty programs. Parsley observes dominionist theology, which seeks to merge church and state based on biblical law.

Bishop T.D. Jakes (Bishop Harry Jackson) is a motivational speaker, bestselling author, film producer, founder, and senior minister of The Potter’s House, a nondenominational megachurch of approximately 30,000 members (with 17,000 attending weekly) and 50 programs based out of Dallas, Texas. A firm proponent of sexual abstinence, Jake states that his views on LGBTQIA+ rights are evolving (Wetzstein, 2015). Jakes has seen recent controversy related to the sex abuse and trafficking lawsuits against Sean “Diddy” Combs and whether Jakes was part of Combs’s network of supporters. In December 2023, social media posts suggested Jake attended sex parties hosted by Combs, and Jake referred to the rumors in one of his sermons, stating, “The worst that could happen, if everything was true, all I got to do is repent sincerely, from my heart. There’s enough power in the blood to cover all kinds of sin. I don’t care what it is, the blood would fix it. . .But I ain’t got to repent about this” (Quilantan, 2024).

Dr. John C. Maxwell²² (“Coach” Dr. Tom Mullins) is a bestselling author and motivational speaker. He is currently the pastor at Christ Fellowship, an evangelical

²² As Tom Mullins does not have a Twitter/X account, no tweets were harvested for Dr. Maxwell.

multisite megachurch in Florida with more than 28,000 congregants in weekly attendance.

Shane Claiborne (Reverend Johnnie Moore, Jr.) is a speaker, activist, and bestselling author. Claiborne is a founding member of The Simple Way in Philadelphia, an intentional community and non-profit focusing on food insecurity. He is best known for establishing the *Red Letter Christians*, a movement of Christians who follow the “red letters” that Jesus spoke in the Bible. His primary focus is on abolishing the death penalty and stopping gun violence.

Dr. Jay Alan Sekulow (Sealy Yates) is an attorney, conservative talk show host, and media personality. He is chief counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice. Sekulow served on Trump’s legal team and was the lead outside counsel for Trump’s first impeachment trial (Williamson, 2020). He founded the nonprofit Christian Advocates, which serves Evangelism and is the general counsel for Jews for Jesus. He has come under fire for allegations that he built a financial empire generating millions of dollars through his string of interconnected nonprofit and for-profit entities (Mauro, 2005). He was ranked the 13th highest-paid executive of a charitable organization in the United States. Sekulow was accused of making several changes to false statements made to the House Intelligence Committee during their investigation of Donald Trump (Smith & Welker, 2019).

Michael J. King²³ (Tom Winters) is an attorney and partner of Winters and King, Inc. He is a literary agent representing several bestselling religious authors, such as Joel Osteen (pastor of the largest megachurch in the United States). King’s law firm represents churches, ministries, and religious non-profit organizations.

²³ As Tom Winters does not have a Twitter/X profile, no tweets were harvested for Michael King.

Dr. Gregory Jantz (Dr. Tim Clinton) is a bestselling author and authority on behavioral health issues. He founded The Center, a facility for the treatment of depression, designed around “Whole Person Care”—a multidisciplinary approach focusing on physical, mental, and spiritual well-being (Jantz, 2021).

Pastor Samuel Rodriguez (Pastor Tony Suarez) is an evangelical minister, movie producer, bestselling author, and civil rights activist. He is the president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference. Rodriguez advocated for bipartisan discussions on immigration reform and has served as an advisor for Presidents Bush, Obama, and Trump. Under Obama, Rodriguez also served on the President’s Advisory Council for the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Abortion Reduction Task Force (Clarkson, 2012). He was also named one of the “20 New Reformers” for his faith work in “challenging the conservative movement to change” concerning granting immediate citizenship to immigrants (Dallas & Graham, 2022).

Trump’s advisory board was often vocal about its influence on the presidency. In one example, White House staffers met with members of the board in June, and the issue of transgender troops was briefly discussed. After the meeting, advisors wrote a letter to Trump, strongly urging him to reverse an Obama-era policy that ended discrimination against transgender individuals in the military. Sidestepping discussions with military leaders (many of whom did not support the ban), Trump decided to follow the board’s advice (Boston, 2018).

Johnnie Moore boasted in a 2017 C-SPAN interview that the board paid regular visits to the White House and participated in policy briefings with staff and officials,

sometimes culminated in meetings with the president to discuss issues that were important to the evangelical community (Boston, 2018; Johnston, 2018). The influence of Trump's evangelical advisory board on administrative policies is almost immeasurable. Their recommendations often shaped policies that impacted many Americans, and their role in policymaking and the potential implications for future advisors in future administrations cannot be underestimated. This is why their Twitter communications concerning Trump's executive communications are being analyzed.

This dissertation will embark on a comprehensive exploration of the dynamics between high-profile, elite Evangelical members of Trump's advisory board. First, I will delve into the historical nexus of evangelical Christianity and its intersection with U.S. politics. This will help establish a foundation of understanding crucial in contextualizing the relationships between high-profile evangelical elites and politics and illuminating how evangelical leaders have become increasingly engaging with political figures. This intensifying relationship sets the stage for how religious elites respond to Trump's executive communications.

The subsequent chapter on reflexive thematic analysis of tweets from evangelical elites on Trump's "born again" advisory panel (and evangelical elites not serving) will provide nuanced insights into their reactions and alignments with White House messaging. This methodological approach facilitates the identification of key themes and patterns and enables a deeper understanding of the nuances in their public endorsements or criticisms. Moving beyond the analysis, I will provide a discussion of findings that will offer implications for understanding the evolving role of evangelical elites in shaping and influencing political discourse and policy directions within the contemporary American landscape.

2.1 Data and Coding

Abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ issues were the main issues themes analyzed from Trump's executive communications. During the Carter presidency, white evangelicals began flocking toward the Republican party. While many evangelicals were not immediately on board with the pro-life movement and the *Roe v. Wade* decision, by the 1980 presidential election, abortion had become a cornerstone of American politics (Black, 2016).

Reagan's campaign recognized the importance of the evangelical vote after the 1976 presidential election in which Jimmy Carter won the presidency, partly due to the evangelical vote. In 1980, Republicans began actively seeking evangelical support by trumpeting causes like school prayer, pro-family agendas, and defining life as beginning at conception. Voters responded in kind, supporting Reagan in his 1980 and 1984 campaigns.

By the end of the 1980s, evangelical voters were a fundamental part of the Republican base, with candidates and party leaders actively seeking evangelical support. George H.W. Bush and his campaign focused on issue appeals to win support from conservative evangelicals (Black, 2016). Bush's candor in discussing his faith, along with social issues (such as abortion) and his judicial appointments, appealed to many evangelical voters.

Following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, national security, immigration, and foreign policy became priorities for many in the Christian Right, and many leaders within the movement worked aggressively to ensure George W. Bush was reelected. However, by the middle of his second term, many former supporters openly

criticized Bush for neglecting domestic issues, particularly their campaigns against abortion and marriage equality. Many leaders suggested that the Republican party was taking evangelical voters for granted and openly examined their support for candidates who never seemed to follow through on their campaign promises.

While older generations of evangelical leaders were raising alarm bells, younger activists gained influence with more pragmatic approaches that focused on incremental changes having greater likelihoods of success (Black, 2016), which ultimately led to the passage of several successful pro-life bills, including the Born Alive Infants Protection Act (2002); the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act (2003); and the Unborn Victims of Violence Act (2004).

According to the National Association of Evangelicals, after the legalization of gay marriage in 2015 (*Obergefell v. Hodges*), the most significant political challenge is the “growing tension between religious freedom and LGBTQIA+ rights” (Black, 2016). Many feel that LGBTQIA+ advocates are seeking changes that threaten the free exercise of religion and freedom of conscience and that the passage of any affirming bills might destroy evangelicals’ fundamental religious rights.

A content analysis will analyze which issues are mentioned most frequently in response to Trump’s executive communications from individuals in the sample. Afterward, the data will be analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s thematic analysis for “identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data,” and this thematic analysis allows for an analysis that is “essentially independent of theory and epistemology” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 78-79). For this study, I will use four social issues below for text extraction:

1. Abortion
2. Race
3. Immigration
4. LGBTQIA+

From these primary nodes, subtopics will be designated by search terms (such as abortion: abortion, Planned Parenthood, unborn, womb). It may also be necessary to create tertiary search terms during the analysis.

When high-profile religious elites mention other social issues in their transcripts, the text will be highlighted and included under the matching subcategory. In addition to analyzing which issues were most frequently mentioned, the social issue node will be important in analyzing which social issues gained the most attention from the religious elite in the study.

Twitter/X accounts of high-profile evangelical elites can be measured by how often a user tweets and whether the messaging is effective. The former is calculated by counting the number of tweets released during the analytical period, and the latter can be measured by follower interactions (likes/favorites, retweets, and responses). Greenwood (2013) determined a strong correlation between the attitude toward fame and desire for visibility and the frequency of active online engagement in posting and responding to posts instead of passively reading posts and scrolling to the following tweet.

3 HOW DID WE GET HERE? A HISTORY OF EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANITY AND AMERICAN POLITICS

In this chapter, I will offer a history of the crossroads of evangelical Christianity and politics from the 1920s to today. Christianity is often divided into two factions: Protestantism and Catholicism. The main difference between Protestantism and Catholicism is that Catholics give authority to the Pope. Protestants attribute authority to God, citing the Bible as the progenitor in allocating authority (Melton, 2005; Stokes et al., 2018; Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018).

While Protestants are one of the most influential group identifications in the United States, the subgroup labeled “evangelical Christians” has become increasingly influential over the past several decades (PRRI, 2021). White evangelicals aligned with the Republican party during the rise of the Moral Majority/Religious Right in the 1980s. These evangelicals were very conservative, becoming a cultural engine that has driven politics since the 1980s and is still in the driver’s seat four decades later. And now, they remain the single largest religious group among Republican voters, moving political agendas and advancing policies—which have included book bans, healthcare restrictions for transgender people, and anti-abortion bills (Brownstein, 2022; Deal Barlow, 2021; Petri, 2023; Sullivan, 2021).

Four distinct characteristics comprise evangelical Christianity (Bebbington, 1989): *Biblical inerrancy*—high regard for and obedience to the Bible as the ultimate authority; *Conversionism*—that lives need transformation through a “born-again” experience and a life-long process of following Jesus; *Crucicentrism*—focus on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as making possible the redemption of humanity, and *Activism*—the expression and

demonstration of the gospel in missionary and social reform efforts²⁴, also known as "The Great Commission."²⁵

The latter branch emphasizing evangelicals' desire to bring people to know Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior is the root of evangelicalism. From the Greek euangelion (εὐαγγέλιον), meaning a reward for bringing good news, many conservative Protestants feel called to evangelize the secular world (Smith, 1998; Stokes et al., 2018; Wellman, 2008). However, through this evangelism, interactions and potential conflicts may occur with "out-groups" when people deny Christ (Stokes et al., 2018).

Conversely, those who accept Christ further fortify the group's overall strength, in-group identity, and in-group affiliation (Kelly, 2020; Smith, 1998; Stokes et al., 2018). While various scholars have defined relatable qualities in Protestant Christianity—there are differences among its many denominations (Wald & Calhoun-Brown, 2018). While evangelicals compose only 14% of Americans (of the 44% who identify as white Christians), they are the single largest religious group among the overall electorate at 28%, and white Christians represent more than 90% of Congress, as well as governors (Harwood, 2021). For this research, only evangelical Christians were included in the analysis of this study of high-profile religious elite to narrow the scope and focus on the framing prevalent in this subset of Christianity.

²⁴ Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture will derive from *Holy Bible: NRSV, New Revised Standard Version*. 2007. New York: Harper Bibles.

²⁵ Based on Matthew 28:19-20 in which Jesus implores his disciples to: (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

American elections are candidate-centric, which makes it easy for religious movements (such as the Christian Right) to influence candidates. And strong candidates help these movements advance their agendas in electoral politics (Green, 1995). Evangelicals have traditionally leaned toward the GOP for most of the twentieth century as its members became increasingly concerned with what they interpreted as a loss of personal liberties and religious freedom. Fear and anger were a successful mobilizing force and continued its success in contemporary politics for conservative, religious voters. As the country becomes less white and Christian, evangelicals cling to their previous cultural and political power (Lopez, 2023). In 2023, the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) conducted a study and found that more than half of the Republican party believes the United States should be either a Christian country (21%) or sympathized with those views (33%).

Despite constitutional provisions separating church and state, American history is abundant with intersecting narratives of religion and politics (Burleigh, 2007). Many researchers suggest that the closeness of government and religion has increased over the past several decades (Chamberlain, 2009; Shields, 2009; Stokes et al., 2018; PRC, 2020). Religiopolitical elites and socially conservative politicians combined forces to encourage the politicization of evangelical activism in the late 20th century, propelling evangelicalism onto politics' center stage. Fetner (2011) found that fundamentalist believers participating in political campaigns discovered they could acquire support from their constituents and congregations, enabling followers to spread their conservative Christian messages to millions.

Many individuals in the evangelical crusade feel that if Christians lose sight of their religiopolitical goals, it is a deviation from God's preordained plan; Satan deceived them and is enacting more harm than good (Shields, 2009; Stokes et al., 2018). This idea may be the primary

reason that the evangelicals remain active in politics—doing otherwise may enact the natural fear of angering God. Many evangelicals believe that wavering on social issues like abortion and marriage equality may set off a domino effect of repercussions affecting their place in eternity (Barton, 2014; Froese et al., 2008; Stokes et al., 2018).

High-profile religious elites' rhetoric may strongly influence followers, especially during election cycles (Domke & Coe, 2010). Hence, as Gonzalez (2012) indicates, political leaders frame their issues in an appeal to their constituents, promoting that “theology becomes a political commodity” (p. 571). This study suggests that the intersections of religion and politics were just as profound during the 2016 presidential election as it has been at any other point in the United States' history, emphasizing the need for this study.

The political mobilization of white evangelical Christians has been over a century in the making. By most accounts, the Religious Right movement traces back to the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial (*The State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes*) in Dayton, Tennessee. William Jennings Bryant, a three-time Democratic presidential candidate, prevailed in the case (Adams, 2005). John Scopes was convicted of violating *The Butler Act* (a 1925 Tennessee law prohibiting public school teachers from refuting the biblical account of humankind's creation) by teaching evolution, but religious forces were ridiculed by the public at large (Dodds, 2012; Griffith, 2017; Lindsay, 2008).

H.L. Mencken further ridiculed fundamentalists in his essay, *Fundamentalism: Divine and Secular*, by stating, “Homo boobiens is a fundamentalist for the precise reason he is uneducable...no amount of proof of the falsity of their beliefs will have the slightest influence on them” (Linder, 1996). Despite his colorful opinions, Mencken

firmly asserted that the freedom to speak directly on religion was crucial while denying that religious views were immune to scrutiny. Many faithful have claimed their opinions steeped in religion are sacrosanct and maintain that the government intrudes into areas in which it has no legitimate authority.

Succeeding the Scopes trial and the failure of Prohibition (with the passage of the 21st Amendment), evangelicals and other fundamentalists retreated from the political stage in what some historians called the “great reversal” (Wilcox, 1996; Dodds, 2012). Many evangelicals viewed politics as a futile endeavor. Not only did they withdraw from the national political stage, but they severed ties with corrupt mainstream America, choosing instead to build their institutions and society in a “city on the hill.”²⁶ While historians might suggest that fundamentalists faded into the background after the Scopes Monkey Trial in 1925, several events throughout the mid-late 1900s suggest this was not the case (Griffith, 2017).

Fundamentalists began building denominations with clergy networks, and more importantly, they were developing a “dense, sophisticated, multi-centered national cultural infrastructure” around church-connected institutions (Harding, 2018, p. 76). This cultural empire included schools, colleges, and media (publishing houses, radio, television, and direct-mail operations). This subculture situated life's technological and institutional realities within literalist, biblical beliefs to reengage with society. Calling themselves “evangelicals,” they formed the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 and established the Fuller Seminary.²⁷ In 1947, National Prayer Breakfasts were instituted in the early 1950s to unite political and religious leaders—a tradition that continues today.

²⁶ A sermon from John Winthrop’s book, *A Model of Christian Charity: A City on a Hill* (1630).

²⁷ A private, non-profit interdenominational Christian seminary dedicated to Biblical education.

In the 1960s, opposition to sex education in public schools created a collaboration between Catholics and evangelicals. Evangelical Protestants, as well as Catholics, have opposed birth control, abortion, and other sexual controversies of the early twentieth century. One might argue that the most vital mobilizing force among conservative white evangelicals was their opposition to feminism. Additionally, biblical literalism (the Bible is the inerrant Word of God), ecumenism (Christian churches are united), gender complementarianism (each gender has a specific role to fill—men as the protector/earners, and women as the caretakers who should maintain a very passive role in the church), along with the birth control movement and concerns about the sexual behavior of women further drove this antipathy (if not outright hostility) toward feminism in the 1960s and 1970s (Martin, 2014; Gifford, 2012).

Gifford (2012) suggests these debates were parts of a more significant conflict over the church's role in society (for example, *Engel v. Vitale*, which found that school prayer authorized by the New York public school system violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment). Concerns of teenage rebellion and second-wave feminism generated schisms, producing more ideologically homogenous denominations and polarizations. Denominational conservatives in various Christian faiths found commonalities with like-minded evangelicals from outside more rigorously traditional denominations, such as Catholicism. While feminism was a strongly galvanizing issue within the evangelical community, Butler (2021) suggests that racism also motivated the evangelical mission to maintain America's "status quo of patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and nationalism" (p.4). this outlook was one of the leading factors contributing to the exodus of an overwhelmingly white evangelical majority to the Republican party (Martin,

2023). The Civil Rights Movement and black freedom struggle (such as *Brown v. Board*, which prohibited segregation in public schools)—were significant factors in this shift, with white evangelical communities opening private schools to avoid integration (Martin, 2014).

Evangelicals framed their hostility toward the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision as infringements on religious freedom, as opposed to racial segregation (Martin, 2014; Martin, 2023). The emergence of private Christian educational institutions in the South (termed "segregation academies") created an exclusive Christian subculture that viewed itself as responsible for preserving Christian fundamentals from the dangers of secular society. Elementary schools, secondary schools, and colleges (such as Bob Jones University and Reverend Jerry Falwell, Sr.'s Lynchburg Christian School and Liberty University), founded in response to *Brown v. Board*, maintained discriminatory admissions policies set to combat the effects of the court decision (Gifford, 2018; Martin, 2014). As Butler (2021) argues, "Racism is a feature, not a bug, of American evangelicalism" (p. 2). The discriminatory admissions policies continued unchecked until the passage of the Civil Rights Bill in 1964. At this point, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) threatened to revoke the institutions' tax-exempt statuses if admissions boards did not reverse their policies.

In May 1969, Black parents in Holmes County, Mississippi, sued the Board of Education (*Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*) to prevent further delays in integration. In the first year of desegregation, the enrollment for white students in Holmes County public schools dropped from 771 to 228. In 1970, that number fell to zero. The Supreme Court wrote in its decision, "The obligation of every school district is to terminate dual school systems at once and to operate now and hereafter only unitary schools."

That same year, William H. Green and other parents from Mississippi sued the U.S. Treasury Department in *Green v. Kennedy* (David Kennedy was Secretary of the U.S. Treasury), arguing that three new “whites only” K-12 private academies should not be considered charitable organizations. As such, these schools should have their tax-exempt status revoked based on their discriminatory admissions policies. The plaintiffs won a preliminary injunction that denied tax-exempt status for the “segregation academies” until further review.

The government solidified its position on segregation academies as, later that year, President Richard Nixon directed the IRS to revoke tax exemptions to all segregated schools in the United States (Balmer, 2021). Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts, discriminatory schools were not (because of their racial segregation and discrimination) charitable educational organizations. This, in turn, meant that not only did they not have claims on tax-exempt status, but that donations to these organizations would no longer qualify as tax-deductible donations.

In 1971, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued its ruling in *Green v. Connally* (renamed as John Connally, replaced David Kennedy as Secretary of the Treasury), upholding the new IRS policy, which stated:

Under the Internal Revenue Code, properly construed, racially discriminatory private schools are not entitled to the Federal tax exemption provided for charitable, educational institutions, and persons making gifts to such schools are not entitled to the deductions provided in case of gifts to charitable, educational institutions.

The *Green v. Connally* captured the attention of evangelicals, especially when the churches began receiving questionnaires from the IRS regarding racial policies in faith-

based segregation academies. One school included in this inquiry was Falwell's Lynchburg Christian School and Liberty University, which infuriated Falwell to the point that he made the oft-quoted statement, "In some states, it's easier to open a massage parlor than a Christian school" (Balmer, 2014b; Floyd, 2015; Todd, 2022).

Bob Jones University, the eponymous fundamentalist college in Greenville, South Carolina, was particularly unyielding in their response to the IRS. The school responded defiantly in November 1970 that they did not admit Black students. Bob Jones, Jr. argued that the Bible mandated segregation and that their admissions policies were based on religious freedom rather than racism. Falwell, Jones, and others boasted that their educational institutions did not accept federal funding (excluding their tax exemption). Therefore, the government could not tell them how to operate their schools or whom they had to accept or reject in their admissions policies. Unfortunately for the segregation academies, the Civil Rights Act changed their reasoning.

Following the IRS's initial inquiries into the school's admissions policies, Bob Jones University attempted to appease the IRS by admitting one Black student as a part-time student (Balmer, 2014b)—he dropped out a month later. In 1975, in another attempt to prevent IRS sanctions, BJU began admitting Black students. However, fears of miscegenation stipulated that admissions only accept *married* Black students. Expulsion policies were set in place for those engaging in interracial dating or who were in any way associated with racial advocacy.²⁸

The IRS was not assuaged. After years of warnings, the IRS revoked Bob Jones University's tax-exempt status in January 1976. For many evangelical leaders caught up in the

²⁸ Bob Jones University banned interracial dating until 2000 and didn't regain its tax-exempt status until 2017.

religious freedom movement following *Green v. Connally*, this was the *coup de grace*. In an interview, Elmer L. Rumminger, a longtime administrator at the university who became politically active in 1980, stated that the IRS actions against Bob Jones University provoked him and many others associated with the school to become involved in political activism as well (Graves-Fitzsimmons, 2020). The IRS action “alerted the Christian school community about what could happen with government interference” in the affairs of evangelical institutions. “That was really the major issue that got us all involved.”

When Rumminger was asked whether it was an abortion issue that ignited political activism in evangelicals, he said emphatically:

No, no, that wasn’t the issue. This wasn’t an anti-abortion movement per se. That was one of the issues we were interested in. I’m sure that some people pointed to *Roe v. Wade*, but that’s not what got us going. For me, it was government intrusion into private education (Balmer, 2014b, p. 14).

At this point, religious conservative Paul Weyrich, political activist and founder of the Heritage Foundation, saw his opportunity for a political power reversal, and evangelicals and politics became inseparable.

3.1 Conservatives and Evangelicals: Birds of a Feather?

Modern conservatism emerged earnestly after World War II, promoting traditional institutions, customs, and values (Allitt, 2017; Heywood, 2004). Understanding how these principles are reflected in the modern conservative movement may be challenging. With the end of WWII in 1945, America was culturally, but not politically, conservative (Regnery, 2019; Richardson, 2021). The government dominated

the economy during the war (through emergency measures) and after through programs like the New Deal. Democrats controlled the government's executive, legislative, and judicial branches and agreed on politics and economics.

Evangelicals had mostly retreated from the political stage—at least in an organized way (Balmer, 2021) before the 1950s. Scholars have suggested that the 1940s and 1950s were a time of an “unparalleled rhetorical escalating of the American civil religion” (Hart, 1977, p. 12). During this time, conservative intellectuals expressed two fears about the dangerous slide toward socialism. Libertarian economist Friedrich Hayek (1944) argued that socialism was “the road to serfdom.” He further suggested free-market economies as the only way the United States could combat Russia’s communist threat. In 1952, another intellectual, Ludwig von Mises, advocated for limited government, self-reliance, private property, and entrepreneurship instead of socialism, the welfare state, and central planning. A free economy was the only alternative to global poverty and chaos (Hayek 1944, Von Mises 1952).

However, anxieties from the Cold War, suspicions of Catholicism, and the highly publicized relationship of the world-renowned evangelist Reverend Billy Graham with Dwight Eisenhower and Richard Nixon led evangelicals (particularly Northern white evangelicals) to begin drifting toward the Republican Party. “Godless communists” compelled clergy to organize revivals and “crusades,” merging Christian teachings with patriotism. During the Cold War, many conservatives believed the primary threat to the Western world was the spread of communism, which was rapidly spreading through China and the former Soviet Union. There was apprehension that communism would somehow exert its influence throughout the globe and internally subvert the American way of life (Graham 1954, Regnery 2019). Many viewed communism’s socialism, atheism, tyranny, and radicalism as antithetical to democratic values.

Communism's goal was the destruction of the pillars of conservatism so revered as it forced its ideology on the world (Graham, 1954).

Even more than this, many conservatives believed liberalism was a predecessor to communism. As liberalism shared similar goals with communism, conservatives saw liberalism as complicit in the spread of communism (Buckley, Jr. 1959; Phillips-Fein, 2011; Richardson, 2021). The peace settlements after WWII appalled conservatives, who were incredibly frustrated that Franklin Roosevelt gave the Soviet Union most of Eastern Europe. Growing anticipation and concern for the growing power of the Soviet Union, the fall of China to communism, and the unwillingness of American liberals to defend the United States against communism increased concerns that leftist sympathizers and communist agents infiltrated the federal government (Lum & Martin, 2017). McCarthyism, the anti-communist movement of the 1950s, drew in more people than any other aspect of the conservative movement (Fitzgerald, 2006; Phillips-Fein, 2011; Regnery, 2019; Kelly, 2020).

The desire to maintain American values was a central focus for most conservatives. Permissiveness and vulgarity threatened tradition, faith, and the preservation of American culture and civilization. Many conservative thinkers of the time believed that political and cultural liberalism was an affront to American ideals and that ethics, honor, belief in God, and the importance of the church and traditional education were the only ways to effectively reverse Western decay (Kirk, 2016; Weaver, 2013). Influential postwar conservative thinkers challenged the status quo, lamenting the decline of the United States during the first half of the 20th century, confident that "liberalism's assaults on individual liberties, limited government, free markets, and

Western culture ran counter to everything they believed in” (Regnery, 2019). For its purpose, Weyrich reasoned that by organizing this drift of voters behind conservative causes, he could create a formidable voting bloc behind Republican candidates. However, the Republican Party experienced numerous setbacks in the 1960s.

Losing the presidential nomination to Catholic John F. Kennedy in 1960 and in a landslide victory to Lyndon B. Johnson against Barry Goldwater (whose anti-civil rights campaign captivated white evangelical Republican interests in the South) in 1964 were painful defeats for the party. The Voting Rights Act in 1965 and President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society programs continued to alter America’s legalized racial hierarchies (Martin 2023). School integration, inclusive busing policies, integration and its threat to white evangelical schools, increased entitlements for social welfare programs, and the proliferation of Black voters to the Democratic party were rapidly changing the American racial landscape.

While the Civil Rights Movement relied heavily on the religious Black community, it became a divisive issue among whites. While many white Christians accepted segregation after *Brown v. Board of Education*, an equally vocal segment of white evangelicals and religious elites (such as James Dobson, Falwell, Sr., and Weyrich) resented the federal government for not only invading local and state autonomy but for actively favoring Black and Latino voters while turning its back against white voters (Kobes Du Mez, 2020; Martin, 2014; Rohlinger & Quadagno 2009; Smith & Walker 2012). They drew from the ire of religious rhetoric and institutions in their opposition to segregation—organizing church protests and aligning with sympathetic religious leaders (Domke and Coe 2010).

Over the next decade, many conservatives dominated the media, setting the national stage for an upsurge in conservative politics (Kelly, 2020). With the passage of the Civil Rights Act in

1964, as well as the RNC nomination for Barry Goldwater (a staunch conservative who voted against the act), many Southerners began questioning their established loyalty to the Democratic Party. And while Goldwater was unsuccessful, with Lyndon B. Johnson winning the presidential race by a landslide, his campaign cemented the conservative movement into US politics by introducing young conservatives across the country to national politics, moving the Republican party away from the middle-of-the-road domination by Easterners and transforming it into a more conservative party led primarily by the West and especially the South (Huntington & Glickman, 2021; Phillips-Fein, 2011; Regnery, 2019.). With these splits, southern Republicans voted their nominees into seven new House seats in the South (Williams et al., 2016; Sinclair, 2006). In the 1960s and 1970s, conservatives became increasingly influential in politics, and the motivation compelling American conservatives to engage in politics was one of reaction (Regnery, 2009). Many believed there was no choice but to fight against the Left's assault on their country and the world (Brint & Abrutyn, 2010; Phillips-Fein, 2011; Adkins, 2018; Renn, 2021). Conservatives saw the issues of Communism, overregulation of capitalism, growing power in labor markets, expansion of the welfare state, breakdown of the family, sexual permissiveness, and deterioration of schools and churches as broken and in desperate need of solutions (Brint & Abrutyn, 2010; Haberman, 2018; Phillips-Fein, 2011; Regnery, 2009). Where liberals saw progress, conservatives saw a decline and deterioration in family values.

Richard Nixon, accompanied by evangelist Billy Graham (the only time Graham ever invited a president to join him onstage), capitalized on this newly formed resentment with his "Southern strategy" (Martin, 2023). The Southern strategy harnessed the voting

power of specifically white evangelicals (who previously voted for the Democratic party), uniting the largest number of white nationalist prejudices without also fragmenting its existing alliances within the Republican party (Abramowitz & Knotts, 2006; Fea, 2018). From this point, many southern white evangelicals began a long and discernible migration to the GOP. As Kevin Phillips (the Republican Party strategist partially responsible for Nixon's "southern strategy") argued in 1966, "The more Negroes who register as Democrats in the South, the sooner the Negrophobe whites will quit the Democrats and become Republicans" (Boyd, 1970). Despite the veracity of his statement, Phillips understood that successful candidates would need to avoid overtly racist language, especially when speaking to white converts outside the Deep South (Martin, 2014). Nixon won Republicans in the Midwest and Sun Belt (southeastern and southwestern states within the United States), which required a measured conservatism to capture the Christian vote (Brint & Abrutyn, 2010; Martin, 2023).

Weyrich wrote in the 1970s, "The new political philosophy must be defined by us [conservatives] in moral terms, packaged in non-religious language, and propagated throughout the country by our new coalition." He believed that the moral majority (still lowercase at this time) would have an opportunity to restore the United States to its previous greatness and that the political possibilities from this coalition were endless. Weyrich went on to suggest, "The leadership, moral philosophy, and workable vehicle are at hand just waiting to be blended and activated. . . If the moral majority acts, results could well exceed our wildest dreams."

Today, many conservatives universally support limited government (Pew Research Center, 2021). Gerald Ford echoed conservative sentiments on free-market capitalism, decreased regulation of economic responsibility, and fiscal responsibility when he said, "A government big enough to give you everything you want is strong enough to take everything you have." Many

conservatives feel the best way to spur economic growth is to promote entrepreneurship and lower taxes. Some conservatives have become divided on monetary policy over profits from corporations and whether the wealthy pay enough taxes (Kobes du Mez, 2020).

However, it was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that the GOP became firmly enmeshed with white evangelicals. The merger of the Religious Right and conservatism was a reaction to fear. Evangelicals feared that the removal of prayer and the Bible from schools and the intrusion of the government into the segregated Christian academies of the South, coupled with legalized abortion and growing diversity mitigated by the Immigration Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act), undermined the uniquely Christian (white) American identity (Fea, 2018; Kobes Du Mez, 2020).

For two decades, Weyrich tried out different issues in the hopes that he could find an issue in which he could rally his “moral majority.” Pornography, school prayer, the Equal Rights Amendment, even abortion, and nothing ignited the passions of evangelical Republicans. In a conference in 1990, Weyrich reminisced, “I was trying to get these people interested in those issues, and I utterly failed” (Martin, 2016). Despite his discouragement, Weyrich felt he had the beginnings of a religious movement—which is why he and other high-profile evangelical leaders joined forces, blaming President Jimmy Carter for the IRS sanctions against segregated schools.

In an interview with William Martin (2005), Weyrich explained that Christians could maintain their pro-life stance, enroll their children in private Christian schools, and raise their families how they wanted—all without concerns about government

intervention in public policy. However, the threat from the IRS enraged Weyrich's evangelical Christian base:

What galvanized the Christian community was not abortion, school prayer, or the ERA. I am living witness to that because I was trying to get those people interested in those issues. ... What changed their mind was Jimmy Carter's intervention against the Christian schools, trying to deny them tax-exempt status on the basis of so-called de facto segregation...and they looked upon it as interference from government, and suddenly it dawned on them that they were not going to be able to be left alone to teach their children as they pleased. It was at that moment that conservatives made the linkage between their opposition to government interference and the interests of the evangelical movement, which now saw itself on the defensive and under attack by the government. That was what brought those people into the political process. It was not the other thing (173).

Even though the Nixon administration was responsible for the IRS's actions against the segregated schools, Bob Jones University lost its tax exemption a day before the Carter inauguration. Undeterred by the political realities of the Nixon administration's involvement in BJU's revocation of their tax-exempt status²⁹, Weyrich and other high-profile evangelical elite were determined to do anything to prevent another Democratic president (even another evangelical like Carter) from another term in the White House (Balmer, 2014a).

²⁹ The school's appeal reached the Supreme Court in 1982. The Reagan administration announced that it planned to argue in favor of Bob Jones University's racial policies. However, a public backlash forced the administration to reconsider, and Reagan walked back his position stating the legislature should determine the matter—not the courts. In 1983, the Supreme Court's decision ruled against the university 8-1. William Rehnquist was the sole dissenter and was later elevated, by Reagan, to the position of Chief Justice three years later.

Falwell, Weyrich, and others understood they hit a nerve with evangelical leaders regarding the IRS. They were also practical enough to understand the challenges of organizing grassroots evangelicals around racial discrimination. The leaders knew they needed a different issue if they wanted a large-scale mobilization of evangelical voters.

By the late 1970s, many Americans (and not only Catholics) were uncomfortable with the rapid increase in legal abortions following the *Roe v. Wade* decision (1973). Feminism, progressive sexual and gender politics, and abortion, more specifically, drove white evangelicals into the voting booth (Griffith, 2017). The *Roe* decision propelled the Moral Majority and Phyllis Schlafly's Eagle Forum into pro-choice activism (Kobes Du Mez, 2020; Phillips-Fein, 2011). Schlafly, a devout Catholic, expanded on abortion in her syndicated column in *The Washington Times*:

The pro-abortionists who claim they are so eager to keep the government out of a woman's bedroom are at the same time demanding that the government actively get into the abortion business by subsidizing it with our tax dollars. The taxpayers should not be forced to aid or finance this shameful, profitable industry (F4).

For instance, two major Senate races in 1978 demonstrated to Weyrich and other high-profile religious elites that abortion might be the missing lynchpin in motivating conservatives. In Iowa, the weekend before Election Day, Catholics leafleted church parking lots with pro-life messages to voters. On Election Day, "sure thing" Democratic incumbent Dick Clark (ahead in every poll by at least ten percentage points) lost his seat to his Republican pro-life challenger (Balmer, 2014b). Next, pro-life Republicans captured both the governor's mansion and both Senate seats in Minnesota (including

Hubert Humphrey's unexpired term) after Catholics once again papered the church parking lots.

The 1978 elections were the baby steps toward electrifying evangelical voters. Evangelical leaders were ecstatic, with Weyrich boasting the wins as a "true cause for celebration." At the same time, Robert Billings, Christian educator and eventual founder of the Moral Majority, enthusiastically proclaimed in a letter to Falwell that the pro-life movement would "pull together many of our 'fringe' Christian friends" (Balmer, 2021; Balmer, 2007; Stewart, 2022). At this point, *Roe* had been law for approximately five years.

In the late 1970s, Falwell, Weyrich, and other leaders enlisted Francis Schaeffer in advancing the war against abortion. Schaeffer, an unlikely ally, was an evangelical theologian with little experience in political activism. Considered by many to be the intellectual father of the "Religious Right," Schaeffer was zealous in his preaching against "secular humanism" and the decline of Christian values (Balmer, 2014b). One of the most vocal opponents of the *Roe v. Wade* decision, Schaeffer, claimed that abortion would lead to infanticide and euthanasia.

Schaeffer, in collaboration with son Frank (director) and pediatric surgeon and future U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, produced *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?*, a film and book series that depicted the menace of abortion in our society (Stewart, 2022). Primarily directed toward evangelical audiences, Schaeffer and Koop toured the country with their propagandist films portraying abortion in the most graphic terms (including a scene with plastic babies scattered along the shore of the Dead Sea. Through this imagery, Schaeffer and Koop argued that any society that tolerated abortion was caught in the "moral decay" of human secularism (Stewart, 2022; Balmer, 2014b).

By the end of the film tour in early 1979, the abortion issue gained significant traction with its evangelical audiences. With Weyrich's maneuverings and Schaeffer's lamentations,

Schaeffer later wrote to Weyrich that because of his film and book series, Protestants (especially evangelicals) who “have been so sluggish on this issues of human life... [the movie] is causing real waves, among church people and governmental people, too.”

Schaeffer’s son, Frank, made a more decisive declaration in his book *Crazy for God: How I Grew Up as One of the Elect, Helped Found the Religious Right, and Lived to Take All (or Almost All) of It Back* (2007), “[they] were calling for civil disobedience, the takeover of the Republican Party, and even at overthrowing our “unjust pro-abortion government” (p.293).

In July 1976, a reporter asked then-Governor Jimmy Carter, the Democratic presidential candidate, to address the Democratic Party platform on abortion. Carter responded:

I personally would have expressed the Democratic Platform plank on abortion a little bit differently. Under the Supreme Court ruling, I will do everything I can as President to minimize the need for abortions. I think abortions are wrong, and I think we ought to have a comprehensive effort made by the President and the Congress, with a nationwide law, perhaps, adequately financed to give sex instruction and access to contraceptives for those who believe in their use, better adoptive procedures just to hold down the need for abortion.

By 1980, while President Carter had attempted to reduce the incidences of abortion, many conservative evangelicals saw his refusal to pursue a constitutional amendment that would overturn *Roe v. Wade* as an unpardonable sin.

3.2 Kingmakers and God Strategies—Ronald Reagan

In 1980, conservatives began cementing the groundwork for today's philosophy. That pivotal year saw the nomination and election of Ronald Reagan, widely regarded as the epitome of conservative ideology in American politics. Many influential conservative figures launched their careers through association with Reagan, serving in various capacities under his administration (Regnery, 2019).

After Republicans lost the White House to Democrats, Falwell and his cohort were determined to elect a Republican president. Even though then Ronald Reagan signed one of the most liberal abortion bills into law in California as governor in 1967—Falwell, Weyrich, and others were more than prepared to ignore facts. Moreover, they were willing to do anything to prevent another Democratic President in the White House—even another evangelical like Jimmy Carter (Balmer, 2014a; du Mez, 2020; Griffith, 2017). Even though Reagan made no mention of abortion when addressing 10,000 evangelicals at a political rally in 1980, leaders of the Religious Right doggedly chased the issue. Abortion became a litmus test for evangelical voters, with leaders encouraging support for those candidates who would trade support of a constitutional amendment outlawing abortion in exchange for votes.

The odds of winning the 1980 presidential election were stacked against Carter, particularly as he faced opposition from the Religious Right. Facing competition from within his party by Edward Kennedy, liberal support waned for Carter. Furthermore, the greatest failure of the Carter presidency was the Iran Hostage Crisis, the anniversary of which fell on Election Day. The media publicizing Carter's inability to free the hostages was another nail in the coffin. The affections Americans may have once had for the evangelically righteous, soft-spoken peanut farmer from Georgia waned with a flailing economy with staggering inflation rates (Krugman,

1991), chronic oil and gasoline shortages (*Time* 1979), U.S. proxy wars (Riedel, 2014), and the Soviet Union's renewed vigor for world domination (Feifer, 2010). With these drawbacks and ample evangelical support, Reagan was almost guaranteed the 1980 presidential election.

In 1979, nine days after the Iran hostage crisis began, Reagan had the perfect words when he announced his presidential run in the most expensive presidential campaign announcement in history. In a moment of grave national doubt, Reagan declared that America was a “shining city on a hill,” encouraging Americans to celebrate their freedom, material prosperity, and American supremacy—Reagan's speech called on Americans to renew their confidence in the nation and themselves. From Jesus's Sermon on the Mount to John Winthrop's “City on a Hill” metaphor, Reagan articulated American exceptionalism to his audience—as he declared in the *Washington Post*, Winthrop “didn't say ‘shining,’ I added that” (Hendrickson, 1979). Reagan expertly combined God and country to become the anti-Carter, becoming more of an evangelical president than an evangelical president. And the response was immediate. Within weeks of his speech, over fifty Christian professionals organized and donated approximately \$450,000 to support Reagan's campaign (Dart, 1979; Domke & Coe, 2010).

Religious communications rose to a never seen high in modern American presidencies (Domke & Coe, 2010). Reagan's persistent usage of “God bless America” to end his 1980 convention speech and every speech after that for his two presidential terms became commonplace in future presidential discourse. Before Reagan, “God bless America” appeared only once during a presidential speech as Nixon attempted to downplay the Watergate scandal in 1973. It was no coincidence that “God bless

America” became the newest rhetorical tool that aligned with Christian rights' opinions of the American tradition of civil religion.

While Jerry Falwell stepped into his “kingmaker” status, other prominent evangelicals pulled away from the political spotlight. In a 1981 conversation in *Parade* magazine with televangelist Billy Graham and Falwell, Graham cautioned:

I don't want to see religious bigotry in any form. It would disturb me if there was a wedding between the religious fundamentalists and the political right. The hard right has no interest in religion except to manipulate it (Michaels, 1981, p. 2).

To be fair, Billy Graham told an interviewer later in life that, given the chance to do anything differently, he would have “steered clear of politics” (Pulliam-Bailey, 2011).

Falwell had no such apprehensions. As the landslide election results came in, with Reagan capturing 489 of 538 electoral votes, Falwell boasted about the impact of the Religious Right on Reagan's votes, crowing, “I knew that we would have some impact on the national elections, but I had no idea that it would be this great” (Balmer, 2014b). While the evangelical vote may not have been decisive given Carter's political troubles, what is certain is that the once solid evangelical base that propelled him to the White House vehemently and dramatically turned against him four years later. Thus, the “Reagan Revolution (Reagan, 1989) began. While many claim that abortion was the catalyst and rallying cry for evangelicals by 1980, the origins of the Religious Right are rooted not in the rights of the unborn but in defense of racial segregation.

Following Reagan's “god strategy,” conservative candidates added themes of deep morality and decency, law and order, normalcy, family values, and self-reliance into their speeches (Domke & Coe, 2010). White evangelicals understood and internalized these issues as

profoundly religious values (Martin, 2023). While not all evangelicals joining this emerging subculture did so for racially motivated reasons, it is difficult to ignore the origin story (Gifford, 2018; Martin, 2014). From this point, the Democratic party was exclusively associated with the party of big government, support of minorities, and support of social programs, and most white evangelicals identified exclusively with the modern Republican party (Kobes Du Mez, 2020).

Social changes, such as the increased visibility of abortion and divorce, as well as the corresponding increase of women in the workforce, led many white evangelicals to believe the venerated God-designed two-parent home was in decline. The GOP stepped in—drawing sharp contrasts between them and the Democrats (which previously included white southern and blue-collar workers) on LGBTQIA+ rights, abortion, feminism, and the downfall of traditional family values (Gillon, 2021).

While Reagan's first term was mixed in terms of conservative policy--federal government expanded with protections for Social Security; Sandra Day O'Connor was nominated to the Supreme Court; the promised outlawing of abortion was never earnestly pursued; and he compromised with the Soviets on arms control (Gelb, 1983; Green, 2003; Pear, 1984; Thomas, 2019,)--Reagan continued his parlay with the Religious Right. Reagan viewed his evangelical base similarly to his other GOP constituencies (big business, war hawks)—and knew that to succeed, he would have to provide some clear victories to his new coalition partners (Miller, 2014).

At the 1984 Republican National Convention (RNC), Reagan saw an opportunity to use the Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast to cement his position in the South and confirm his standing as the preferred candidate. Ever the one to push the line between church and

state, Reagan stated, “Religion needs defenders against those who care only for the interests of the state. The truth is, politics and morality are inseparable—and as morality’s foundation is religion, religion, and politics are necessarily related...If we ever forgot that we’re one nation under God, then we will be a nation gone under.”

Reagan’s 1984 reelection campaign mirrored the evangelical agenda with a continued “no exceptions” ban against abortion, appointing pro-life federal judges, supporting voluntary school prayer, ignoring the Equal Rights Amendment, and rejecting equal pay for women (Gillon, 2021). Moreover, the alliance made sense, as “born again” Christians increased from 24% in 1963 to 40% in 1978, with the number of Southern Baptists growing from 10.8 to 13.6 million (Gallup, 2007). Falwell was happy to tolerate Reagan’s choice of running mate for George Herbert Walker Bush, proclaiming to the crowd at the RNC that the incumbent ticket was “God’s instruments in rebuilding America” (Gillon, 2021; Miller, 2014).

The next four years were a flurry of activity designed to rally religious conservatives to his cause. On January 13, 1984, Reagan designated January 22, 1984, as the first *National Sanctity of Human Life Day*.³⁰ In successive speeches, Reagan appealed directly to evangelicals, urging lawmakers to pass tuition tax credits and voluntary school prayer while persistently affirming support in his State of the Union Address to “restore the protection of the law to unborn children.”

While the Christian Right and the Moral Majority were heavy hitters in Reagan’s reelection (with 80% of evangelicals voting for Reagan), their power was on the decline (Miller, 2014; Marley, 2006). Even with Reagan’s landslide victory, no one group could take responsibility for his reelection. The last time the Moral Majority met at the White House was in

³⁰ Proclamation 5147.

1986, and some have suggested the Christian Right was “unable to recognize sincere from half-hearted administration efforts” (Moen, 1989, p.134). Though many consider the Reagan presidency to be the pinnacle of the Christian Right, the opposite may be true. While the Moral Majority enjoyed photo ops and platitudes, they were given little else from the White House. Despite this, Falwell claimed victory, stating he accomplished all his goals, leaving many questioning whether he created any real policy change. Evangelicals scrutinized Vice President Bush’s conservative credentials, including his family’s questionable record advocating for the benefits of family planning in developing countries and for Bush’s enthusiastic congressional support for federal funding for family planning organizations, including Planned Parenthood. A legacy in support of family planning, Prescott Bush (Bush’s father) served as treasurer for Planned Parenthood’s (formerly known as the American Birth Control League) first national fundraiser in the 1940s. A decision that would end Prescott Bush’s senatorial career in 1950 (Haddock, 2005; Levy, 2015).

Bush became the principal backer of family planning legislation, creating Title X—a program that funneled millions of federal dollars to Planned Parenthood annually (Levy, 2015). The legislation had bipartisan support, and Republican President Richard Nixon signed the bill into law in 1979. Bush’s support was so infamous within evangelical circles that it earned him the moniker “Rubbers” (Young, 2018).

Bush even boasted he repealed a federal prohibition on sending contraceptives and information about contraceptives in a letter to a constituent in 1970. Bush stated:

I introduced legislation earlier this year which would provide federal funds for research in family planning devices and increased services to people who need

them but cannot afford them. We must help our young people become aware of the fact that families can be planned and that there are benefits economically and socially to be derived from small families.

After Bush's election to the House of Representatives from Texas, he and his wife, Barbara, continued their support for Planned Parenthood's efforts.

As U.S. Representative to the United Nations and chairperson of the Republican Task Force on Population and Earth Resources, Bush supported solid population control and international family planning initiatives, writing a foreword for a report presented to the United States Agency for International Development in 1973. Bush wrote, "Success in the population field, under United Nations leadership, may, in turn, determine whether we can resolve successfully the other great questions of peace, prosperity, and individual rights that face the world." Like his father, Bush continued to promote easy access to birth control at a global level. Doubling down, when asked by an anti-abortion activist whether he would support adding a human life amendment to the Constitution, Bush blasted the individual, calling them a "one-issue person" and ending his tirade by angrily telling the man, "Go f--- yourself" (Young, 2018).

However, Bush understood that while supporting birth control and abortion was necessary, it also had the potential for political suicide. For his part, Bush was perceptibly uncomfortable with evangelical involvement in politics and was not the proponent of the Religious Right that Reagan had been (Young, 2018; Marley, 2006). To resolve this setback, Bush hired Doug Wead, evangelical advisor and political strategist, to design "an effective, discreet evangelical strategy" to combat Jack Kemp's decades-long association with evangelicals, as well as Pat Robertson—who ran against him in the primaries (Weisberg, 2008).

Wead designed a dossier of almost 200 evangelical “targets” and rated them on their scale of influence inside and outside the religious movement, as well as their impact on early caucus and primary states. These evangelicals would be the most influential in the upcoming presidential elections—with Billy Graham receiving the highest score of 315, closely followed by Jerry Falwell at 236 (Weisberg, 2008). However, Bush could not rely on relationships alone. As evangelicals wielded more significant influence in politics and swung harder to the right, Bush took two decisive steps to promote anti-abortion policy as Reagan’s vice president.

In a dramatic reversal, Bush agreed that, as Reagan’s running mate, Bush accepted and embraced the GOP’s call for a constitutional amendment banning abortion. Next, Bush threw his support behind opposing Medicaid funding for abortions, except in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the mother (Haddock, 2005). Bush began openly discussing his religious beliefs and used these discussions to build a relationship with the evangelical movement.

However, Bush was never able to explain his reversal on abortion clearly. Initially, Bush stated that the adoption of two of his grandchildren (by his son, Marvin) changed his beliefs, saying in a presidential debate (Johnston, 2018):

I think human life is very, very precious. And, look, this hasn’t been an easy decision for me to make. I know others disagree with it. But when I was in that little church across the river from Washington and saw our grandchild christened in our faith, I was very pleased indeed that the mother had not aborted that child and put the child up for adoption.

In another interview, Bush expressed sorrow and dismay at the number and frequency of abortions performed in the United States (Haddock, 2005; Johnston, 2018; Young, 2018).

Despite Bush's about-face, the Religious Right never trusted Bush—even as they backed his 1988 presidential run.

While evangelicals expressed hesitance with Bush's discontinuity and his preference for international affairs over domestic policy, Bush's reversal paid off in his campaign against Michael Dukakis (who supported abortion rights). Evangelist and conservative Pat Robertson, disillusioned with Regan and his inability to exact significant enough policy change, ran against the vice president. Falwell and others threw their support behind Bush—believing Bush was the “more electable” of the two (Young, 2018). Initially, Falwell strongly opposed adding Bush to the Reagan ticket in 1980. However, by 1988, the evangelical Falwell had become a devoted Republican, hoping his efforts would be rewarded by policy change. When the hoped-for policy changes did not materialize during Reagan, a disillusioned Falwell realized the limits of religiopolitical action groups and withdrew from the political stage after the Bush presidential election. Falwell closed the Moral Majority in 1989.

3.3 Read My Lips³¹—George H.W. Bush

After winning the presidential nomination in 1988, where 81% of evangelicals voted for Bush (Weisberg, 2008), Bush continued the Reagan-era policy of eliminating funding to the UN family planning efforts. Despite his previous advocacy, as president, Bush made a dramatic reversal and blocked funding to international family planning organizations that provided information about or access to abortions (Levy, 2015). Bush recognized the necessity of

³¹ A phrase spoken by [Bush](#) at the [1988 Republican National Convention](#) as he accepted the nomination

appealing to religious conservatives and chose a conservative (and evangelical) running mate, Dan Quayle, and nominated Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court to appease the essential evangelical base in his election. However, the Religious Right (led by Robertson), believing Bush used their support to get to the White House and seeing little hope of their agenda advancing, gathered in Atlanta in September 1989 to consider the next steps for the movement.

In the first three years of his presidency, President Bush's approval ratings soared with the fall of the Berlin Wall (Nagorski, 2018), the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Johnston, 2018), and the Persian Gulf War (Moore, 2001a). However, by the fourth year, with a troubled economy and stalled congressional budget negotiations resulting in a temporary government shutdown—Bush had little choice but to compromise with Congress and renege on his campaign promise of “Read my lips: no new taxes” (Elving, 2018). Burgeoning military spending (Moore, 2001b), a growing recession and staggering unemployment (Talton, 2020), and a collapse of the Savings and Loan industry (Talton, 2018; Knott, 2016) combined with an overall lack of sentimentality about the Cold War meant that after twelve years of Republican promises; Americans were ready for a more domestically focused president.

With a failed presidential bid and lingering frustration over the Reagan and Bush presidencies, Robertson recognized that evangelicals could only be influential in politics by holding office themselves. No longer willing to take a supporting role, the Religious Right rallied behind a common goal—that another George H.W. Bush would never attain presidential candidacy (Young, 2018). The organization was not retreating; they were reorganizing.

Robertson's group identified dismantling the GOP establishment as its primary goal. While some in the group suggested splitting off from the Republicans to form a third party, others suggested that would only alienate their base. Robertson understood that the most effective way to change politics was for evangelicals to hold office. Robertson's Christian Coalition (formed in 1987) began focusing on supporting electable, conservative evangelicals who would secure power within the party and enact the organization's social and political agenda.

President Bush's popularity plummeted by 1992 when he faced challenger Pat Buchanan in the presidential primaries. Buchanan, advisor and speechwriter to Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, was a darling of the Religious Right. In the primaries, with his platform of social conservatism—Buchanan promised a reduction in immigration, as well as running in opposition to globalism and multiculturalism, abortion, and LGBTQIA+ rights (Hemmer, 2022a; Hemmer, 2022b; Kobes du Mez 2020).

In his call for a "new nationalism," Buchanan warned that the United States was slipping as the first among nations, questioned whether Americans should continue footing our allies' defense bills, condemned the dilution of our Western heritage, and implored Americans to become new patriots and "put the needs of Americans first" (Greenfield, 2016). At least in the primaries, Buchanan's tactics worked, and he garnered approximately 23% of the votes (Klein, 1993). In response, Bush mounted what Ralph Reed, executive director of the Christian Coalition, termed "the most conservative and the most pro-family platform in the history of the party" (Kobes du Mez 2020, p.139). Bush defended school prayer and homeschooling, opposed LGBTQIA+ rights, and continued his opposition to abortion.

Buchanan went further. Using a scorched earth approach, Buchanan torched the Bill Clinton/Al Gore ticket as supporters of “abortion on demand” and “militant gay rights.” Buchanan’s most important contribution, with 18.9% of the popular vote in the 1992 presidential election, was that he put political elites on notice. His (and, to a lesser extent—Ross Perot’s) voters held contempt for politicians. They wanted a candidate who eschewed Reaganism, vilified the opponent in a growing religious culture war, and played to the concerns of the forgotten voter (Potter, 2022).

Despite Buchanan’s success in the primary, Buchanan handed his “Buchanan Brigades” delegates to incumbent George H.W. Bush at the 1992 Republican National Convention. Reaganism had taken its last breath (at least for the moment), with Buchanan igniting the grievance politics of the Old Right and embedding them into the increasingly influential media culture (Hemmer, 2022b). Buchanan warned the RNC that “There is a religious war going on in this country...a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself. This war is for the soul of America.” While he could not unseat Bush—he did move the party further right.

But it wasn’t enough in the short term. Not only did the Religious Right lose its position with the failed Buchanan candidacy, but in the 1992 three-way presidential race, Bill Clinton soundly beat Bush and Ross Perot. If Bush’s performance disappointed evangelicals, the Clinton nomination was disastrous.

3.4 Witchcraft in the White House³²

Clinton was everything the Religious Right hated—a draft-dodging, marijuana-smoking Democrat. And then, there was his wife—a feminist professional who initially refused to take her husband’s name. Hillary Clinton eschewed the life of a homemaker and kept her position at her law firm, where she advocated for civil and children’s rights.

On paper, Clinton would have been the perfect evangelical candidate—he grew up in Arkansas's “Bible Belt” when the school day began with Bible verses and prayers read over the loudspeaker. Ministers led school meetings and assemblies (Linder, 1996; Yancey, 1994). While his family was nonreligious (excluding his grandparents), Clinton began attending church around age eight to escape a violent home life. When he was ten, Clinton made a public profession of faith and was baptized. The following year, he attended a Billy Graham crusade and began sending donations to the minister—admiring Graham’s stance on his refusal to segregate the seating at his crusades. Clinton’s devotion was so great that his teachers thought he might become an evangelist.

Despite his evangelical upbringing, Clinton embodied all that the Christian Coalition felt was wrong with America. Evangelicals were concerned with Clinton’s “radical social agenda” that promoted abortion, LGBTQIA+ rights, and sex education (Kobes du Mez, 2020; Smith, 1998). The backlash was so intense that when Billy Graham agreed to deliver the benediction at Clinton’s inauguration, he was vilified by pro-life activists who claimed Graham’s decision was “a great embarrassment for all who call themselves evangelical” (Yancey, 1994).

In a 1994 interview for *Christianity Today*, Clinton hypothesized there were two reasons for the alienation from his spiritual kin:

³² Taken from the titled chapter in *Day of Deception* by John Hagee (1997)

First, over several years, the leaders of the evangelical community have gotten more and more identified with the conservative wing of the Republican party. Second, some of those same people have made abortion and homosexuality the litmus test of whether you're a true Christian. Certainly, these are not the most-mentioned issues in the Bible, but they're the things that have become the litmus test, and if you're wrong on them, it's almost like saying you're a fraud, you can't really be a Christian.

Clinton talked the talk—he was second only to Reagan in mentions of faith in his State of the Union addresses—with a median of 20.2 to 21.6, respectively (Domke & Coe, 2010). The elevated usage of faith language in Clinton's speech suggests he was comfortable with Black voters (receiving 83% of the Black vote in 1992 and 84% in 1996) (Simon & Washington Bureau, 1998) and southern, white voters without high school degrees and earning less than \$15,000 (Edsall, 1992). One backer stated, "He's put the blacks and the rednecks back together," indicating the possibility that Democrats could gain success in religious politics (Edsall, 1992).

During his first term, Clinton focused on fiscal policy, passing budgets that taxed the wealthy and cut government spending—reducing the debt and decreasing poverty levels and unemployment rates (Schick, 2000) and with Republican support, passed the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) removing trade barriers between the United States and Mexico and Canada (Glass, 2018). Clinton promised to end the ban on gay people serving in the military but appeased neither side with his controversial "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy (National Defense Research Institute, 2010).

Clinton dismantled Reagan and Bush's abortion restrictions on his third day in office, stating, "Our vision should be of an America where abortion is safe and legal but rare." Most notably, by executive order, Clinton ended a five-year ban on fetal tissue research; overturned the "gag rule" that previously restricted abortion counseling at family planning clinics, allowed abortions at U.S. military hospitals overseas; reversed the Mexico City Policy that prevented the U.S. from providing foreign aid to international organizations that promoted or performed abortions; and revoked prohibitions of the importation of RU486, the so-called "abortion pill" (Tumulty & Cmons; 1993). For evangelicals, Clinton's pro-life stance equated him to a mass murderer, and nothing he said about his faith and practices counteracted the effects of that policy.

Clinton's second term was equally burdened by scandal. When the Monica Lewinsky scandal broke in 1998, Clinton lied about his extramarital affair during a federal grand jury testimony. However, Lewinsky provided startling details of the years-long affair during the trial, as well as a dress containing samples of the President's DNA.

Following the testimony, the president addressed the nation, apologized for his "inappropriate" conduct, and admitted he misled the nation and embarrassed his family. However, Clinton denied having lied, instructing anyone else to lie, or orchestrating a cover-up involving anyone else during the investigation during the televised event. The House Judiciary Committee (on a strictly partisan vote) adopted two articles of impeachment: lying under oath (perjury) and obstructing justice (Riley, 2019).

Clinton became only the second president³³ in American history to have been impeached by the House. Conservative evangelicals reveled in Clinton's downfall, comparing his deceit

³³ Andrew Johnson was the first.

and moral failures to the fall of King Saul in 1 Samuel. To many, the only options left for Clinton were impeachment or resignation.

Throughout his impeachment trial, Clinton weathered a barrage of attacks from evangelicals, including, most notably, Dr. James Dobson, evangelical author and founder of Focus on the Family, who wrote in a newsletter to his followers:

You can't run a family, let alone a country without it [character]. How foolish to believe that a person who lacks honesty and moral integrity is qualified to lead a nation and the world...Can both fresh water and saltwater flow from the same spring (James 3:11, NIV)? The answer is no.

During the subsequent hearing, it became clear the Senate would not produce the two-thirds majority needed for impeachment (voting 45:55 on the first charge and 50:50 for the second). Clinton was acquitted and remained in office, completing the two years remaining in his second term. While the American public approved of Clinton as president, an equal majority of Americans (79%) disapproved of Clinton as a moral leader (Newport, 1999), denoting a noticeable shift in cultural values and conservative Christianity.

Despite this shift, the "bland moderation" of GHW Bush and eight years of Clinton transgressions caused the Religious Right to take a more ambitious approach—recruiting conservative candidates to suppress moderate Republicans and build their control of the party from within. Their organizing efforts yielded results as the members of the Christian Coalition comprised more than half of the delegates at the Republican National Convention in 1996 (Young, 2018). Roberston's goal became electing a pro-family, socially conservative Republican majority in Congress by the mid-1990s with a

Republican president by 2000. Few could have imagined that the meeting of the Christian Coalition in 1989 after the election of GHW Bush would have set the foundation for a new conservative savior, his son, G.W. Bush.

3.5 The Art of the Deal: George W. Bush & Barack Obama

Growing up as a high-profile politician's son, George W. Bush understood, even better than his father, that the evangelical vote would be imperative to his political aspirations. In 1987, GW Bush met with Wead, his father's former advisor, to express his political interest. His campaign had analyzed each state's primary electorate before Super Tuesday 1988. When reviewing the data, Bush told Wead, "This is great! I can become governor of Texas just with the evangelical vote" (Weisberg, 2008).

With no Republican challengers in the Texas governor's race, Bush ran against popular incumbent and Democrat Ann Richards. The younger Bush ran on a platform focusing on tort reform, welfare and education policies, and juvenile justice. In a "stunning upset" (Verhovek, 1994), Bush shocked most of the political world when he (53.5%) beat Richards (45.9%) by a large margin (Office of the Secretary of State 1994) and gained access to the national political spotlight.

Ever willing to work across the aisle, Bush pushed through tax reform, tax cuts, and faith-based initiatives to support social services offered by churches and other private organizations. Bush won reelection by 69% in 1998 and began sharing a national vision of "compassionate conservatism" with the country (Gregg, 2016; Turek, 2014). Eager to reclaim the White House, political and religious elites began discussing a Bush candidacy.

Eschewing pressure from Republicans, Bush searched for inspiration beyond public opinion. While attending church one morning, Bush was influenced by the minister's sermon stressing the biblical values of making the most of every moment.³⁴ Shortly thereafter, Bush contacted Karl Rove, their principal political advisor, to prepare for a 2000 presidential campaign.

Bush had many advantages leading to the presidential election: national name recognition as Texas governor, family connections and political legacy, and a self-deprecating, affable character that secured a steady stream of donations. While these factors contributed to a strong showing in the presidential primaries, Bush's appearance at the Republican presidential debate in Iowa in December 1999 catapulted his faith to center stage. When asked who his favorite philosopher was, Bush answered, "Christ, because he changed my heart."

While Bush walked back his response with reporters a week later, stating he slightly misunderstood the question, many evangelicals described it as a "coming out moment" where Bush openly shared his faith and popularized the usage of religious metaphors in contemporary politics (Gregg, 2016). Richard Land, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), commended Bush's response, stating that Bush "...talks their language" and further emphasized his support by claiming, "Most evangelicals who heard that question probably thought, 'That's exactly the way I would have answered that'" (Rosin, 1999). Others were not so convinced.

³⁴ Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Ephesians 5:15-17

Some felt that Bush reduced Jesus to a “sound bite” and felt Bush was pandering “to use religious faith for partisan purposes” (Rosin, 1999). Even former family friend and advisor Doug Wead acknowledged that while Bush’s faith “is real...there’s no question that it’s calculated.” Whatever Bush’s motives were at the debate, he clearly understood the weight his conversion story carried during his campaign.

In 2000, George W. Bush won the presidential nomination with 68% of the evangelical vote (Pew Research Center, 2004). Many evangelicals saw the election and its successive legal battles preceding the inauguration as divine intervention from God in which the power of prayer was instrumental in Bush’s eventual and historic Electoral College victory (271 to 266) against Al Gore, who won the popular vote by more than 500,000. Evangelicals viewed the younger Bush as an “exceptionally religious president leading an extraordinarily religious administration” (Ribuffo, 2006).

Evangelicals pointed to three main factors in their support of the new president—Bush’s religious conversion and his clean lifestyle abstaining from alcohol; Bush’s major appointees (Michael Gerson, speechwriter and John Ashcroft, attorney general) were evangelical or Pentecostal; and Bush’s position on abortion and stem-cell research, LGBTQIA+ rights, and evolution closely aligned with most of his evangelical base. Additionally, Bush created a White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (FBCI) on January 29, 2001 (United States Dept of Justice 2007). The FBCI used federal funding to support the delivery of social services by faith-based organizations and private institutions.

Only months into his presidency, President Bush was confronted by a nation under attack. September 11, 2001, became, for many evangelicals, including the President, a modern-day Crusade. Evangelicals now had a “cowboy president back in the saddle,” and Bush’s

campaign message of a “compassionate conservatism” melted into a crusader fighting against the War on Terror (Kobes du Mez, 2020, 180).

Most evangelicals enthusiastically supported a military response to the attacks from 09/11. And they were not alone. In October 2001, over 80% of Americans supported a ground war in Afghanistan (Moore, 2001). A 2003 study from Beliefnet’s Ethics and Public Policy Center found that 77% of evangelical leaders maintained an overall unfavorable view of Islam. Three primary arguments informed this view of Islam. First, apologetics attempts to establish the truth of Christianity over Islam; second, prophesying literature portending Muslims as the main actors in end-times prophecy; and charismatic literature applying teachings of “spiritual warfare” to Islam (Cimino, 2005).

In 2003, Dr. Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, and four other evangelical leaders³⁵ sent a letter to President Bush assuring him that a preemptive strike against Iraq met the criteria for “just war” (Kobes du Mez 2020). Leaders advised President Bush that the use of U.S. military force belonged only to the United States government to “punish evildoers³⁶.” Following Jerry Falwell’s sermon “God is Pro-War” in 2004, evangelical leaders echoed their support for men to lean into aggression (and violence if necessary) to uphold the virtues of biblical protectors.

With the War on Terror still raging, George W. Bush campaigned on continuing the war, modernizing Social Security and overhauling the tax code, continuing his No

³⁵ Charles Colson, Bill Bright, D. James Kennedy, and Carl Herbster

³⁶ For it is God’s servant for your good. But if you do what is wrong, you should be afraid, for the authority does not bear the sword in vain! It is the servant of God to execute wrath on the wrongdoer. (Romans 13:4)

Child Left Behind and faith-based initiatives, and reforming Medicare and immigration policies. Bush quickly secured a second term as president with 51% of the overall vote (up 3% from the previous election) and 78% of the evangelical vote—up from 68% in 2000 (Pew Research Center, 2004).

Bush reversed Clinton's pro-choice abortion policies and increased Title X funding in 2007 (Levy, 2015). Like his father before him, GW Bush appointed several pro-life federal judges (including John Roberts and Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court), thereby removing government support for family planning his father established prior to his presidency.

However, as the insurgency escalated in the Middle East and American casualties rose—the Iraqi War (and, by extension, the president) became more unpopular (Eichenberg et al., 2006). In 2005, after Hurricane Katrina, the costliest natural disaster in U.S. history, relief was met with delay and ineptitude as the president vacationed on his Texas ranch (Walsh, 2015). Scandals plagued the 2006 congressional elections, undermining party support, and Republicans lost control of the Senate and the House and many governorships across the country (Gregg, 2016).³⁷

While lower than other religious groups and seculars, 41% of evangelicals were glad that Democrats won control of Congress in November 2006 (PRC, 2007). At the end of the midterm campaigns, John McCain (senator from Arizona) formed an exploratory committee and gave a

³⁷ Representative Mark Foley entered alcohol rehabilitation after he exchanged inappropriate emails with a teenage congressional page. House Majority Leader Tom DeLay was investigated for misappropriation of campaign funds. Representative “Duke” Cunningham was found guilty of tax evasion and conspiracy charges and sentenced to jail. Lobbyist Jack Abramoff was found guilty of honest services fraud and conspiracy and tax evasion related to his work with native and Indigenous tribes. Representative Bob Ney pled guilty to improperly accepting gifts totaling approximately \$170,000 dollars. Representative William Jefferson was found holding approximately \$90,000 in cash at his home that was allegedly part of a bribe.

speech drawing comparisons to Reagan and branding himself as a “commonsense conservative” (National Public Radio, 2006). However, after a friendly exchange between McCain and Hillary Clinton at the presidential debate, James Dobson attacked McCain in a statement read by Laura Ingraham on her eponymous radio show, “I am convinced Sen McCain is not a conservative, and in fact, has gone out of his way to stick his thumb in the eyes of those who are...[McCain] sounded more like a member of the other party” (Garry, 2008). And Dobson was not the only high-profile religious elite that McCain alienated.

McCain’s record of reaching across the aisle and refusal to openly meet with evangelical leaders hardened attitudes and deepened resentment. His acceptance, then rejection, of support from controversial evangelical ministers, John Hagee (televangelist and founder of Cornerstone Church, a megachurch³⁸ in Texas and founder of John Hagee Ministries and Christians United for Israel) and Rod Parsley (pastor of World Harvest Church, a megachurch in Ohio), caused a betrayal so profound that many leaders suggested it would have been better if McCain had never sought their backing (Sinderbrand, 2008). As neither the RNC nor the McCain campaign asked for help, disillusioned evangelical leaders opted to sit out the election cycle or focus on down-ballot races. Democrats took advantage of the opportunity in Barack Obama.

Obama’s unique religious and political intersections frequently advantaged him in his career and, just as frequently, disadvantaged him. Obama was raised by an agnostic anthropologist mother and an absent Muslim father. He grew up in Indonesia and

³⁸ For this research, megachurch is defined as “a Protestant church that averages at least 2000 total attendees in their weekend services” (Thumma and Davis 2007).

attended a Catholic school. As a community organizer in Chicago, he discovered Black Protestant and Catholic traditions and eventually joined the politically active congregation, Trinity United Church of Christ. Obama also developed a deep understanding of religious traditions, which he acquired when reading Christian realist Reinhold Niebuhr in college and, later, Black liberation theologians like James Cone and his pastor, Jeremiah Wright (Guth, 2011).

As a community organizer, Obama grasped the potency of religious institutions in driving social reform programs. His 'nondogmatic, ecumenical religious liberalism' gradually merged with 'basic ideological pragmatism' (Guth, 2011, p. 79). In his address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention (DNC), Obama astutely recognized the need to bridge the 'God gap' between conservative religious voters and the Democratic party. His memorable declaration, "We worship an awesome God in the blue states," cleverly appropriated evangelical rhetoric to reclaim religious convictions predominantly associated with conservatively religious Republicans (Guth, 2009; Remnick, 2010).

As the Obama campaign observed McCain's difficulties with evangelical leaders, his campaign began an intensive outreach effort with various high-profile evangelical, Protestant, and Catholic elites in Chicago in June 2008. Obama openly associated with and attended events with leaders such as T.D. Jakes (pastor of megachurch The Potter's House based out of Texas), Rick Warren (author of *A Purpose Driven Life* and former pastor of Saddleback Church, an international, multi-site megachurch based out of California), and Joel Hunter (former pastor of Northland Church, a multi-site megachurch in Florida). Evangelicals led Obama's religious outreach staff (Sullivan, 2008), and Obama campaigned not only in Black churches but in evangelical as well as mainline Protestant churches.

While Obama gained steady support from Black Protestants and Catholic and Protestant Latinos, his early backing from white evangelicals, working-class whites, and churchgoers in general waned. His campaign grappled with the narrative that evangelicals may not favor McCain, but they were even less enthusiastic about Obama. However, Obama's early capture of the secular vote and his ability to maintain that strength throughout his candidacy were significant advantages.

Obama embarked on an ambitious plan to attract young evangelical and Catholic voters. A strategic move in this direction was his selection of Joseph Biden, a Catholic, as his running mate. Additionally, Obama garnered support from the Christian political action committee (PAC) Matthew 25 Network.^{39,40} Obama created a new outreach program, the *Joshua Generation Project*,⁴¹ to entice younger evangelicals and Catholics (Pitney, 2008). These overtures capitalized on the excitement of younger evangelicals (even those attending Christian universities and colleges) about issues beyond abortion and marriage equality.

As Tony Campolo, progressive Christian minister and advisor to the DNC, stated:

There is a broadening of the agenda among younger evangelicals. Young people are tired of the homosexual issue. They have class and sit in the

³⁹ A political action committee (PAC) supporting progressive Christian candidates.

⁴⁰ Based on Matthew 25:35-36 in which Jesus states to his followers, “for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.”

⁴¹ Joshua refers to the biblical reference in which the young Joshua led the Israelites into the promised land of Canaan (modern day Palestine and Israel).

commons of their colleges and have open discussions with gay people. They know the things they hear on conservative radio about gays aren't true (Goldman, 2008).

Mike Farris, founder of the similarly named Generation Joshua⁴² and the Home School Legal Defense Association saw increasing support for Obama at religiously and politically conservative Patrick Henry College and acknowledged, "The Democrats have learned how to reach out to religious voters...I think Republicans have forgotten" (Sinderbrand, 2008).

This is not to suggest that outreach to evangelical leaders was easy. Two serious missteps early on could have ended the campaign before it began. First, Obama had to distance himself from his previous minister, black liberation theologian Reverend Jeremiah Wright, after he made troubling statements during one of his sermons in which he stated, "Blacks should not sing 'God Bless America' but 'God damn America,'" and that the United States contributed to the 9/11 attacks with its own "terrorism" (Ross & El-Buri, 2008). Obama himself stated in a fundraising appearance that resentment due to job loss and lack of infrastructure by citizens in small Pennsylvania and Midwestern towns by stating:

And it's not surprising then they get bitter, they cling to guns, or religion, or antipathy toward people who aren't like them, or anti-immigrant sentiment, or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations (Smith, 2008).

In addition to these vast missteps, the Obama campaign took away another important lesson from other Democrats' miscalculations in previous elections—it is politically dangerous

⁴² A Christian youth organization that encourages youth participation in government and politics grounded in conservative Christian values. Founders of Generation Joshua (known by member as GenJ) who supported President GW Bush in his reelection, planned to sue the Obama campaign for copyright infringement (Brody 2008, Gonzales 2008).

to dismiss a constituency that makes up a quarter of the electorate, regardless of the difficulties in finding common ground. And at the same time, you would lose your voters if they sensed insincerity or pandering. Therefore, despite facing criticism that his administration led a “war on religion,” Obama’s campaign still ran in support of marriage equality and abortion rights (Wear, 2016a; Wear, 2016b). Obama addressed issues evangelicals (especially younger voters) deemed important: religious freedom, concern for the poor and vulnerable, climate change, ending the war in Iraq, reducing abortion—and then gave candid reasons why evangelicals should vote for him.

A historically demanding election between Obama and John McCain ended in a substantial victory for Obama. With a sizable electoral shift toward the Democratic Party, as well as his appeal to both Republican and Democratic moderates (as well as independents), younger voters (66% among voters who were younger than 30), a majority of low/moderate income voters (as well as affluent voters); 2/3s of the Latino vote and 95% of Black voters all contributed to Obama’s considerable win (Rosentiel, 2008). And while 75% of religiously unaffiliated voters voted for Obama, he earned more than a quarter of the evangelical vote (Liu, 2008).

Less than a month into his presidency, at the National Prayer Breakfast in 2009, Obama renamed President Bush’s White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives to the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. Obama appointed several high-profile evangelicals⁴³ to his Advisory Council on Faith-

⁴³ Richard Stearns, former president of World Vision—an international Christian relief charity, Jim Wallis founder of *Sojourners*—a Christian magazine and social justice Christian community; Dr. Frank Page (former president of the Southern Baptist Convention), and pastor Dr. Joel Hunter former pastor of Northland Church—a megachurch based out of central Florida.

Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, whose primary goals focused on a father initiative and reducing abortion (Monsma & Carlson-Thies, 2009).

During his first one hundred days, Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act (EEOC, 2009). Obama expanded children's healthcare through the State Children's Health Insurance Program (Rovner, 2009) and lifted the ban on federal funding for embryonic stem cell research (Murugan, 2009). Obama endorsed the United Nations statement calling for the worldwide decriminalization of same-sex attraction—which George W. Bush refused to sign during his presidency (Pleming, 2009; Ritchie, 2009), signaling a break from previously conservative administrations in support of the LGBTQIA+ community.

In 2009, Obama named June “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride Month,” and in 2010, he passed legislation for the Don't Ask, Don't Tell Repeal Act of 2010 stating, “The ability of service members to be open and honest about their families and the people they love honors the integrity of the individuals who serve, strengthen the institutions they serve...and is one of the many reasons why our military remains the finest in the world” (Lee, 2010; Slack, 2012). Obama also passed the Affordable Care Act (NPR, 2010), which offered comprehensive health reform and protection against abusive practices by health insurance companies. On the foreign policy side, Obama ordered the closure of the Guantánamo Bay detention center⁴⁴ (Mazzetti & Gleeson, 2009), increased troop presence in Afghanistan (Garamone, 2011), and ended military intervention in Iraq (Compton, 2011). Obama ordered military involvement in Libya, resulting in the eventual overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi (Obama, 2011), and ordered the counterterrorism raid that killed Osama bin Laden (Phillips, 2011).

⁴⁴ Though it currently remains open.

While some evangelical elites had mixed emotions regarding Obama's approach to Libya (Grant, 2011) and Iraq (Epstein, 2014), Obama lost support from some evangelicals regarding his attitude toward Israel. Many felt Obama was too comfortable aligning himself with those expressing anti-Jewish sentiment and their opposition to Obama's call for a two-state solution (Ben Barka, 2012; Lasky, 2008).

Domestically, evangelicals were disappointed with Obama's non-issuance of a policy related to hiring practices in faith-based and religious organizations by hiring only those compatible with the organization's belief systems (Monsma & Carlton-Thies, 2009). While Obama's faith-based initiatives initially brought praise from the Religious Right, evangelicals felt the initiative was a "smokescreen" for the promotion of liberal policies on abortion, gay rights, and social welfare programs (Guth, 2009). Joel Hunter, advisor to Obama, suggested that for every religious moderate supporting Obama on specific cultural issues, "there is another equal and opposite reaction [from the congregation] that says, 'Well, it's all a trick'" (Phillip, 2010). Overall, Obama was stuck amid a culture war—not liberal enough for progressives and moderates and not conservative enough for evangelicals.

Unsurprisingly, Obama lost ground among evangelicals during his first term. While Obama could not make inroads with evangelicals, a good economy eclipsed many cultural issues. Obama was able to narrowly win reelection against Mitt Romney in the popular vote by a margin of 50% to 48%. However, he lost 6% of the evangelical vote in the 2012 presidential from the previous election—down from 26% to 20% (PRC, 2012). Studies showed that while evangelicals hesitated to vote for a Mormon, their antipathy toward Obama outweighed their anti-Mormon bias (Benson et al., 2012).

In his second term, Obama filed briefs urging the Supreme Court to strike down the *United States v. Windsor* and *Obergefell v. Hodges* as unconstitutional, and gay marriage was legalized in 2015 (Neuman, 2015; Taylor et al., 2015). Obama also signed an executive order prohibiting federal contractors from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity (Hudson, 2014). Obama also issued final rules and guidance against healthcare and housing discrimination toward the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as issuing guidance regarding law enforcement and enforcing criminal provisions in cases of same-sex relationships (The White House Office of the Press Secretary, 2016).

In response to several mass shootings during his presidency, Obama supported a ban on assault weapons. Since he had not campaigned on gun control, Obama found it difficult to convince lawmakers that there was broad support for gun legislation (Scher, 2019). Not only was there no successful legislation regarding gun safety, but gun sales nearly tripled during the Obama presidency⁴⁵ (National Shooting Sports Foundation, 2020).

The Obama administration released an executive action on Immigration Accountability in November 2014 (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015), offering legal reprieve to undocumented parents of U.S. citizens and permanent residents who lived there for at least five years. Additionally, the action expanded the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), granting people who were brought into the United States as children and who have lived in the U.S. continuously since 2010 protection from deportation (Lopez & Krogstad, 2014; USCIS, 2014). Additionally, the action facilitated a visa program for students pursuing degrees

⁴⁵ 847,808 during the month that Obama was sworn in to 1,790,154 four years later and 2,237,731 in December 2012.

in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields, modified detention procedures, and added resources to strengthen border security (USCIS 2015, Ehrenfreund 2014).

By the end of Obama's second term, his favorability among Black Protestants, the religiously unaffiliated, and non-Christians was among the highest in modern presidential history (Blumberg, 2017). White Christians (including mainline Protestants, Catholics, and evangelicals) rated Obama the lowest, particularly among evangelicals. As Obama lost the white vote by 12 points in 2008 to 20 points in 2012 (Cillizza & Cohen, 2012), the one thing evangelicals couldn't forgive Obama for . . . was being Black.

At the end of his presidency, only 24% of white evangelicals gave Obama a favorable job approval rating (Jones et al., 2016). After 9/11 and the war on terrorism, the financial crisis of 2008, and the election of Barack Obama, it was an opportune time for white evangelicals to create an organized electoral coalition from within that, ironically, played on voters' contempt for politicians—the Tea Party (Williamson et al., 2016). Republicans abandoned the “sunny style” of Reagan, belittled and disparaged the opposition, and embraced the contemporary concerns of the “forgotten” lower, middle-class constituency (Potter, 2022). What emerged was the anti-politician: someone who was just like them—proud, hardworking, strong patriots, and those who were not were disgraceful, lazy traitors. And those anti-politicians were even more successful if they knew how to use the media to their advantage.

3.6 The Rise of the Anti-Politician

Donald Trump emerged from a carefully crafted Republican brand marketed by populists and media moguls alike (Potter, 2022). It was puzzling that a thrice-married reality television star with a history of bankruptcies and legal troubles could garner so much evangelical support. Jerry Falwell, Jr., gave the first endorsement at Liberty University on January 26, 2016; others soon followed.

The Democratic nominee, Hillary Clinton, did not stand a chance with evangelical voters. She symbolized for many Americans (not only evangelicals) everything that ran contrary to their beliefs on what a woman and mother *should* be. Evangelicals detested Clinton's stance on abortion rights and feminism, and critics often called her "feminazi" (Pulliam Bailey, 2016a; Ward, 2021). Leaders also nursed a deeply held grudge grounded in gender complementarianism from the early 1990s when Clinton responded to questions about her job as an attorney and her husband's job as governor, "I suppose I could have stayed home, baked cookies, and had teas" (Pulliam-Bailey, 2016). Many perceived her time as First Lady during Bill Clinton's presidency as a symbolic loss of Christian values in a conservative culture war.

On paper, Clinton should have been an ideal presidential candidate for evangelical Christians. Hillary regularly attended a Methodist church and taught Sunday school. As First Lady and later a senator, she attended weekly prayer breakfasts with the Fellowship⁴⁶, a gender-segregated alliance of political, corporate, and military elites who believe they are in power by the will of God and are devoted to spiritual warfare for Jesus Christ.

⁴⁶ Also known as "The Family," Doug Coe, selected as one of the nation's 25 most powerful evangelicals in 2005, is a notoriously hidden, somewhat apolitical figure in politics began this organization and serves as "a genuinely loving spiritual mentor and guide to anyone, regardless of party or faith, who wants to deepen his or her relationship with God" (Sharlet and Joyce 2007).

Clinton reached across the aisle as a senator, collaborating with Senator Sam Brownback on a nationwide tour raising awareness of human trafficking (Wear, 2016a) and with Senator Rick Santorum on the *Workplace Religious Freedom Act of 2005*. Clinton supported faith-based initiatives and the Defense of Marriage Act (Lee, 2015; Sharlet & Joyce, 2007). Despite her moderate liberalism, Clinton could not escape the judgment that she embodied all that conservative evangelicals feared: “a woman who is intelligent, articulate, independent—in other words, out of control” (Balmer, 2000, p.88). It was not that white evangelicals loved Trump as much as it was that they hated Hillary.

While Trump was often portrayed as a twice-divorced “immoral charlatan,” Trump made several campaign appearances to rally around evangelical causes. On January 18, 2016, Trump made his first pilgrimage to Liberty University (founded by Jerry Falwell, Sr.), where he promised to appoint conservative judges to the Supreme Court, protect the unborn, defend Christians against threats ranging from the “attack on Christmas” to religious violence against Christians in the Middle East, and preserve 2nd Amendment rights (Severns, 2020). While speaking to record crowds (of which student attendance is mandatory), Trump claimed that his book *The Art of the Deal* was second only to the Bible, cursed twice (which is punishable by reprimands and fines to Liberty students), and mispronounced 2nd Corinthians by saying “Two Corinthians” (Taylor, 2016). Despite his missteps, Jerry Falwell, Jr. publicly endorsed Trump for president at another campaign event a week later. Six months later, Trump appointed several high-profile evangelical religious leaders, businesspeople, and politicians to his advisory council. Those gaffes mattered little to evangelicals. Despite Trump’s inflammatory remarks on Muslims (Martin & Burns, 2016), immigrants (McGreal, 2015), people with

disabilities (Gorman, 2015), women (Cohen et al., 2020), and other minorities (Mahler & Eder, 2016), Trump maintained a significant lead among evangelicals for most of the 2016 election cycle.

Furthermore, when the infamous comments regarding grabbing women's genitalia hit the news cycle, Trump still managed to hold his lead with top evangelicals. Franklin Graham, son of evangelist Billy Graham, stated in an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* that Americans were foolish for succumbing "to the notion that what a person does in private has little bearing on his public actions or job performance, even if he is the president on the United States" (1998). High-profile evangelicals who called for Bill Clinton's impeachment surrounding his sexual indiscretions were noticeably silent regarding Trump.

Ralph Reed, the unofficial head of Trump's advisory board, maintained that, compared to abolishing abortion and defunding Planned Parenthood, "...a 10-year-old tape of a private conversation with a TV talk show host ranks pretty low on the hierarchy of their concerns" (Scott et al., 2016). High on their hierarchy of concerns was the economy. While white evangelicals were somewhat better off than other American racial or economic demographics (the median household income of Trump supporters was \$72,000), many evangelicals (nearly 87%) were still concerned with their economy and saw themselves lagging financially (Renaud, 2017). With his *Make America Great Again* slogan, Trump promised the electorate that he could restore them to their previously affluent lifestyles.

While Hillary Clinton received more votes than any other losing presidential candidate in U.S. history (65,844,954 to 62,979,879), Trump won the majority in the Electoral College—304 to 227 (Federal Election Commission, 2017). Additionally, Trump secured the presidential nomination with over 80% of the white evangelical vote—with a 65-percentage point margin

among these voters (Martinez & Smith, 2016). Trump's election gave many evangelicals the hope that their party was politically "born again."

Trump's populism spoke to evangelicals disillusioned with the perceived loss of religious liberties. The contradictions between Trump's principles and evangelicals ignore the strategic alliances formed between the religious right and the GOP since Nixon. Evangelical support is neither a surprise nor a precedent.

What was, and continues to be, unique is high-profile evangelical elites' social media's reach on its followers. Televangelist and megachurch leader Paula White stated, "The way we reach people has changed...People that normally wouldn't be political were much more engaged, and that showed" (Dias, 2016). Within seconds, elites could intentionally and strategically share their messages with vast and instantaneous reach.

Based on their interactions with President Trump, his advisory board cheerfully shares value messages to their followers on issues such as abortion, marriage equality, anti-Black prejudice, immigration, and 2nd Amendment rights (Walters & Morris, 2017). Framing these issues as a loss of rights for those who once held privileged positions in society is an increasingly effective means of disseminating anti-establishment messaging wrapped in religious ideology.

New adherents to the Religious Right brought issues ranging from concerns of law and order to abortion to the LGBTQIA+ community and the role of women in society into the movement—creating its subculture of media, organizations' affiliations, and lobbying efforts to spread their political views, disseminate information, and influence public policy. While the significance of groups, institutions, and structures has been explained, one must also consider the individual roles that religious elites played in

transforming, mobilizing, validating, and energizing the movement of the Moral Majority. Jerry Falwell, Sr.'s "come to politics" moment occurred in 1979 when he declared to his followers that he mistakenly abstained from politics and would stand by no longer; he jumped in the political pool with both feet and created the Moral Majority. Falwell, a trusted leader and man of God, placed his stamp on political activism by reputation alone. While the evangelical political movement did not begin in 1979, Falwell's declaration, along with the unapologetic activism of the Moral Majority, was instrumental in establishing evangelicals as an enduring political force.

The leaders of the Religious Right felt the best way to reclaim their identity was to gain control of all three branches of government. A self-proclaimed "born-again Christian," Jimmy Carter did not champion the concerns of evangelical Christians to the degree that many conservatives in the party would have wished. As a result, evangelicals gravitated toward Ronald Reagan—a candidate who understood evangelical concerns or was willing to placate evangelicals, at the very least.

Anti-feminism, particularly in Hillary Clinton's campaign, was a continuation of the antipathy toward feminism found in the 1980s. Added to this, fear and anger toward immigrants and people of color mobilized conservative religious voters to an extraordinary degree. While there is currently a debate in the politics of race in white evangelical voting patterns, there is considerable support suggesting that white working-class men in many communities have internalized a narrative of victimization in that they are left behind and replaced by "outsiders"—immigrants, people of color, etc. (Armaly et al., 2022).

Perhaps, not surprisingly, a majority of white evangelical women also support this view and identify with these men's victimization (which is fueled by anger and paranoia), internalizing the misogyny of the narrative of the outsider (Brisbane, 2022; Miller, 2020). This

idea is in no way exclusive to evangelical Christians. Still, many expressing the sense of victimization are evangelicals who are hearing these messages from the pulpit of ministers like James Dobson and other Trump supporters. The evangelical belief honed by John 17:14⁴⁷, which states, “the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world,” and, as such, willingly takes on the status of a visitor to a sinful world, which lends easily to the idea of one’s victimhood.

Since the 1970s, the Religious Right has utilized fear, the pursuit of power, and public policies built on unhealthy doses of nostalgia. It is a playbook that has served them well; members want to elect the right president who will, in turn, nominate the right Supreme Court justices, who will then overturn decisions undermining America’s Christian foundation. This playbook was inseparable from the morality of the candidate—until 2016 when the Christian Coalition threw a *Hail Mary* pass on a candidate known for sexual escapades, xenophobia, nativism, racism, and misogyny. The playbook survived despite (or perhaps in spite of) the candidate. This place is a witness to the power and role leaders of the Religious Right, such as Pat Robertson, play in reshaping the American political landscape.

Since the 1980s, evangelical voters have struggled as an increasingly reliable GOP voting bloc that routinely articulates desires and policy preferences. Still, these policies often fail to gain traction once in office. For instance, Reagan’s courting of the pro-life movement but an inability to pass significant policy revisions stands as a

⁴⁷ Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture will derive from *Holy Bible: NRSV, New Revised Standard Version*. 2007. New York: Harper Bibles.

significant failure. Conservatives recognize that maintaining the status quo for evangelical aspirations is more critical than legislation or policies conforming to these aspirations. But for now, that recognition is safety—the Democratic party’s social positions, particularly in sexual policy, rendering them an abomination to most voters. Even though many Republican candidates are authentic evangelical conservatives with genuine commitments to their policy ideals expressed during the campaign, the evangelical voting bloc remains more effective in driving rhetoric than making policy--new groups of ideological blocks in the GOP (e.g., economic conservatives who with an inclination to lean toward libertarianism) have exacerbated the situation.

One example of opposition to free-market fundamentalism is the Green family, owners of Hobby Lobby, and supporters of evangelical organizations and white Christian schools such as Oral Roberts University and Liberty University. Their family was at the forefront of the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* Supreme Court decision, which claimed their evangelical faith forbade them from complying with the general regulations requiring that they provide contraception through their health insurance. The court ruled in their favor, declaring that Hobby Lobby and other “closely held” companies can exempt themselves from laws they feel violate their religious freedom. The continuing belief that a global religious conspiracy against Christianity exists, debates about abortion, the long-lasting persistence of white supremacist ideology, and the influence of “godly businessmen” is revealing in that the election of President Donald Trump, a businessperson with no previous position in political office, exposed and accelerated many problematic trends within the evangelical community.

While evangelical leaders from the 20th century, such as Jerry Falwell, Sr. or Billy Graham, navigated the evolution of the Moral Majority and the Religious Right, their

contemporary counterparts came of age at a time when evangelical conservatism was already a significant part of the GOP. Jerry Falwell, Jr. was only a teenager when his father formed the Moral Majority. Similarly, Franklin Graham, who was first involved in mission work in the 1970s, was not elected the president of Samaritan's Purse (an evangelical humanitarian aid organization) until 1979; his first headlining evangelism event wasn't until 1989—many years after the alignment of the Christian Right with the Republican party.

There have been many instances when evangelical leaders have aligned themselves with specific political candidates. The relationship between Billy Graham and Richard Nixon is particularly interesting, given the results post-Watergate, which irreparably damaged Graham's reputation and was the conviction Graham needed to remain apolitical for the remainder of his life. As Ezekiel 18:20 states, "The son shall not suffer the iniquity of the father," Franklin Graham did not remain in his father's footsteps, instead voicing full and unceasing support for Donald Trump.

A key difference in contemporary politics is the prevalence of ideologically specific media—particularly religiously specific- that allows people to unite across large geographic spaces. While partisan press isn't exactly new—the degree to which the media polarizes Americans is a newer development. As conservative evangelicals remain in "echo chambers" in the congregation, they may neither receive (nor be receptive to) criticism against their leaders. Exposure of their leaders by "mainstream media" may have a negligible impact on an evangelical Christian who watches Fox News, One America's News Network, the Christian Broadcasting Network, and the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

It is difficult to ignore the parallel between Trump and Falwell, Jr. While Reverend Jerry Falwell, Sr., an ordained Baptist minister, was a crucial figure in modern white evangelicalism and the Moral Majority and founded Liberty University, Falwell's son, the (recently) former president of Liberty University, has become influential in those same circles despite his embodiment of an entirely distinctive style of leadership. Despite never being ordained, Falwell, Jr. (who has an undergraduate degree in religion and a law degree) was a spokesperson for the Christian right. And Falwell, Jr. embodies a new trend with lawyers in front of the movement, whereas before, ministers were the mouthpieces of the Moral Majority.

Next, Falwell, Jr. maintains his disdain for the respectability his father's generation sought. Falwell, Jr. boasts about being a "redneck" and seems unconcerned with public displays of professionalism, decorum, and piety of elected officials (and as recent scandals would show, he holds the same lack of concern for himself). He claimed that evangelicals found their "dream president" in Trump and issued calls for true Christians to elect more leaders like Trump, who will protect the country from fascists.

Falwell, Jr. has even gone as far as tweeting, "Conservatives [and] Christians need to stop electing 'nice guys,'" he tweeted. "They might make great Christian leaders, but the US needs street fighters like [Donald Trump] at every level of government [because] the liberal fascists Dems are playing for keeps [and] many Repub leaders are a bunch of wimps!" Additionally, Falwell, Jr. embraces conservative talk show hosts and welcomes the attention that religious media outlets have on white evangelicals. He nicknamed Liberty University "the Fox News of academia," relishing the influence the university has on its students and followers beyond the walls of the campus.

Understandably, some white evangelicals and former students have felt called to speak against Falwell, Jr. and his leadership—particularly concerning his support of Donald Trump. Following Falwell, Jr.’s support of Trump, Mark DeMoss, a former aide to Falwell, Sr., and chairperson of Liberty University’s Board of Trustees executive committee, resigned, stating that Falwell, Jr.’s support of Trump and his advocacy for white evangelicals to do the same, were antithetical to the values, principles, and beliefs of Liberty University and Falwell, Sr. This clash of leadership and its influence on ordination and piety belies a generational divide and suggests a shift in ideals within white evangelical circles.

The Southern Baptist Convention has not escaped unscathed by the generational shifts experienced in other facets of evangelical Christianity. Paige Patterson, President of the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1992-2003 and President of the SBC from 1998-2000, and Paul Pressler, an integral figure in the conservative resurgence of the SBC, as well as others of their generation, are now elderly. Even as the #MeToo movement plagues their organizations on the charges of sexual harassment, assault, and other misconduct—younger generations of evangelicals are much more disturbed by the misogynistic attitudes of their elders. While most of the younger generation still opposes abortion, they may be more willing to seek a compromise on choice than their predecessors.

In 2016, the average Trump voter was 57 years old; in 2020, it was 61. Most evangelicals who supported Trump came of political age during the ascendancy of the Christian Right and Moral Majority. Those evangelicals believed the pursuit of political powers and engagement in civic life was the only way to function as a witness to spread

the Christian gospel to the world. Rank-and-file white evangelicals have ignored other approaches (such as the Dutch Reformed thinkers at Calvin College who promote theological liberalism), which is a testament to the power of the Christian Rights political machine.

Political expressions of white evangelicals have shifted over the past several decades. However, some policy approaches have not changed—including the use of lamentations in religiopolitical discourse, beliefs in worldwide conspiracies, abortion, and the LGBTQIA+ community, courting white supremacist views through nativism and unfailing support of capitalism as channeled through the prosperity gospel.

Many evangelists (Reverends Jerry Falwell, Oral Roberts, Billy Graham) gained prominence by framing the woes of America through lamentations—meaning that America was once a “nation of God” built on godly principles but experienced a marked and rapid religious decline as materialism, changing gender and sexual norms, and a lack of religious commitment plagued the society. They argued that the only solution was to look to the past and its status as a “city on the hill” to guide the religious and political agendas, ensuring its transcendent global mission reclaimed America’s morally superior status. White evangelicals’ embrace of Reagan and Trump’s “Make America Great Again” campaign revived the moral and rhetorical jeremiads that evangelicals leaned toward to explain America’s downfall—a return to the past is the only way to make America great again.

Many followers feel a revival is necessary, an opportunity for born-again Christians in the public sphere that will save the world; a Crusade was needed. In 1954, Billy Graham preached against the ills of communism as “Satan’s religion.” Graham would go on to state that

communism was a religion of godlessness, a conspiracy bent on destroying Christian America through atheism, devotion to the state, and belief in the “big lie.”

Recently, foreign policy issues have divided conservatives as well. Traditionally, conservatives believe war should be avoided. They also tended to feel that a strong national defense was vital to American survival. Many former Democrats who were liberal on domestic policy but eager to co-opt hawkish tendencies from the Cold War became neoconservatives and tend to be more willing to use the military for purposes other than defending American interests (Ahmari et al., 2022; Antle, III; 2022, Maxwell and Shields 2021).

Social conservatives continue to promote traditional family values (Haberma, 2018; Regnery, 2019). Opposing abortion, marriage equality, and sex before marriage, conservatives promote strengthening traditional standards in education and a more prominent role for religious faith in public life, including school prayer (Calfano & Djupe, 2009; Chamberlain, 2009; Haberman, 2018; Renn, 2021).

Recently and more frequently, conservatives differ on marriage equality, legalizing abortion, and whether the government should interfere in private corporations’ policies on healthcare for its employees (Bennett, 2017; Chamberlain, 2009). There are also differences in comfort levels when they hear languages other than English spoken in public places (Montanaro, 2021). Beyond that, there are stark differences in whether conservatives feel that election changes making it easier for Americans to vote would also compromise the integrity of the elections (Montanaro, 2021; PRC, 2022).

While the gulf that separates liberals and conservatives seems to be ever-widening, there are clear divisions within conservatism (Pew Research Center, 2022).

Conservatives generally believe the government is overinvolved, all Americans have equal opportunities to succeed, race and gender are no longer institutional impediments, political correctness is problematic, Black people benefit more from societal advantages than white people, and a well-funded military is integral in maintaining our stronghold as an international superpower (Montanaro, 2021). However, this chapter has no concise definition of a conservative. Politically, socially, and economically, and most conservatives do not fit precisely into one linear typology.

Today, the idea remains the same—only the enemy has changed. White evangelicals, such as Jerry Falwell, Jr. and James Dobson, claim that Islam and its followers of Sharia are the greatest threats to America. The only hope in winning this biblical war is to recommit as a Christian nation of godly followers who will elect politicians who will not be “duped by Satan” (Graham, 1954) and can win the cosmic battle against the global conspiracy.

Many white evangelical groups continue to engage in white supremacist ideas and support. White evangelists and religious leaders such as James Dobson, Bob Jones, and Franklin Graham have endorsed racist ideals around segregation, opposition to civil and human rights, and anti-Semitism (taken from populist and far-right minister, Gerald L.K. Smith). Their opposition to civil rights was not, as they claimed, rooted in racism but in the belief that, at best, it was a communist plot by the government that took away local rights and, at worst, a demonic evil that threatened the very sanctity and purity of the nation’s Christian foundations.

Currently, prominent evangelical theologians have distanced themselves from anti-Semitic rhetoric; however, prominent evangelical leaders such as Pat Robertson and (the now-

disgraced) Jerry Falwell, Jr.⁴⁸ continue to lobby thinly veiled and explicitly xenophobic arguments against the increase and presence of “ethnic” or religious others (especially those who are Muslim). They claim that Islam has the potential to destroy America’s Christian (white) foundation. Additionally, the Trump campaign accepted, albeit passively, endorsements from known white supremacist organizations and officials. These groups disavow the old ideas of racism and anti-miscegenation in place of modern ideas of “colorblindness.” Even so, decisions about religious expectations and practice and decisions consistently privilege white male heterosexuals while “othering” everyone else.

In her book *Moral Combat: How Sex Divided American Christians and Fractured American Politics*, R. Marie Griffith (2017) strongly argues for greater attention to the intersections of misogyny and racism in American politics. She suggests that evangelical followers were converted to the cause by fear directed primarily toward women, the LGBTQIA+ community, and people of color. Christian leaders (in both evangelical and Catholic churches) rely heavily on the ideals of biblical literalism and gender complementarianism to maintain the gender hierarchy in their institutions.

When women achieve positions of power, it upends the natural order, particularly in conservative churches where they are not permitted to occupy positions of the highest leadership. For conservative men and women, there may be something inherently unsettling about seeing a woman like Hillary Clinton come close to achieving the highest leadership position in the United States—the presidency. All these factors are essential

⁴⁸ Falwell, Jr. had a meteoric fall from grace as a series of scandals (including marital infidelity) ended in his resignation from Liberty University in August 2020 (Ortiz et al 2020).

and often inseparable from one another in explaining this history of how politics and evangelical Christianity are woven together.

Fear has often been a driving force in the history of American evangelicals. Fear that a white Christian America is disappearing led most evangelical conservatives to support Trump's Muslim ban (Smith, 2017) and the border wall (Sargent, 2019). Fear muted evangelicals when Trump's policies separated immigrant children from their parents (Boorstein, 2018) and silenced dissent when Trump claimed there were "good people on both sides" at the Charlottesville rally in August 2017 (Posner, 2017). Further, Christian nationalism is built on the idea that the United States was founded as a Christian nation, a "city on the hill" (Rodgers, 2020) that acts as a beacon—fulfilling a unique role in God's plan. By fulfilling this role, God will bless the United States with a strong economy. As such, many white conservative evangelicals believe the government should do everything in its power to protect America's economic interests (Fea, 2018; Whitehead et al., 2018). By doing so, it is a sure sign for many white conservative evangelicals that God wants America to prosper through his financial blessings to his followers. Trump channeled the precepts of the prosperity gospel into a successful political movement.

If nothing else, the recent culture wars have pushed evangelicals into a weaponized divide. Immigration debates have become a referendum on crime and a critique of American culture. Is the United States a nation of immigrants welcoming diversity, or is there a threat to Americans from foreigners unwilling to assimilate? Racism has been pivotal in forming evangelical political identities.

Recently, foreign policy issues have divided conservatives as well. Traditionally, conservatives believe war should be avoided. They also tended to believe that a strong national

defense was vital to American survival. Many former Democrats who were liberal on domestic policy but eager to adopt hawkish tendencies from the Cold War became neoconservatives and tend to be more willing to use the military for purposes other than defending American interests (Ahmari et al., 2022, Antle III, 2022; Maxwell & Shields, 2021).

Social conservatives continue to promote traditional family values (Haberman, 2018; Regnery, 2019). Opposing abortion, marriage equality, and sex before marriage, conservatives promote strengthening traditional standards in education and a more prominent role for religious faith in public life, including school prayer (Calfano & Djupe, 2009; Chamberlain, 2009; Haberman, 2018; Renn, 2021).

Recently, and more frequently, conservatives differ on marriage equality and legalizing abortion and whether the government should interfere in private corporations' policies on healthcare for its employees (Chamberlain, 2009; Bennett, 2017). There are also differences in comfort levels when they hear languages other than English spoken in public places (Montanaro, 2021). Beyond that, there are stark differences in whether conservatives feel that election changes making it easier for Americans to vote would also compromise the integrity of the elections (Montanaro, 2021; PRC, 2022).

While the gulf that separates liberals and conservatives seems to be ever-widening, there are clear divisions within conservatism (Pew Research Center, 2022). Conservatives believe the government is overinvolved, all Americans have equal opportunities to succeed, race and gender are no longer institutional impediments, political correctness is problematic, Black people benefit more from societal advantages than white people, and a well-funded military is integral in maintaining our stronghold as

an international superpower (Montanaro, 2021). However, this chapter has no concise definition of a conservative. Politically, socially, and economically, and most conservatives do not fit precisely into one linear typology.

Further, ideas of masculinity and misogyny spur concerns about American values. Gender complementarianism easily translates into debates about the proper roles for men and women. Ideas about gender and immigration often intersect with concerns about the economy and social status of the white male when asked what his role is, if not as an honest working man.

As Donald Trump's candidacy pushed against the structural status quo, his election and continued unfailing support by evangelical conservatives demonstrated the enduring strength of this structure. The combination of Trump's poor personal behavior (name-calling, bullying, and rampant infidelity) with a staunch rhetorical dedication to the policy preferences of evangelical voters suggests that it matters little how reprehensible the behavior is as long as the rhetorical line is upheld. Trump's ability to act on a scale at least equivalent to that of George W. Bush's administration only fuels their support.

Pro-Trump evangelicals seem beholden to forgive behavior that would result in dismissal from many of the Christian schools who support him as long as Trump continued to emphasize their policy priorities and nominate conservative candidates to the Supreme Court (of which he did two). It seems that Trump feels he is above asking for forgiveness and engaging in acts of repentance (Boorstein, 2016). As Trump infers he will seek another term in 2024, evangelicals must decide if supporting Trump compromises their witness and destroys their credibility. It remains to be seen whether this support will result in "profit[ing] them to gain the whole world and forfeit[ing] their life" (Mark 8:36).

Opposition to feminism has been responsible for culminating in successful religiopolitical organizations for Christians at large, such as the Moral Majority and Christian Coalition. As Anthea Butler (2021) claims in her book *White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America*, evangelicals have often defined themselves through the “ubiquitous” support for the Republican party and its crusade to maintain the American “status quo of patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and politically “white” representation” (p. 3).

Evangelicalism has been shaped by racial discrimination and a pursuit of political influence for the past half-century. The trajectory of evangelical history intertwined with support of slavery, the Lost Cause, Jim Crow, lynching, redlining, and other racially based policies of discrimination forecasted the continued support of many evangelicals who continue to use scriptures, morality, and political power to support contemporary politicians and their conservative policies. Butler (2021) forcefully and unapologetically asserts that racism deeply permeates evangelicalism, leaving no part untouched. She goes on to affirm, “Racism is a feature, not a bug, of American evangelicalism” (p. 2).

4 A CONTENT ANALYSIS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SACRED VOICES IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE

In this chapter, I present a unique approach to understanding the discourse of high-profile evangelical elites on social media. I uncover patterns in their thematic emphasis and sentiment by conducting a content analysis of their responses to Trump's executive communications. This approach, which focuses on crucial issues such as abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ topics, provides novel insights into how these elites shape and reflect broader religious and political narratives.

Over the past twenty years, researchers have described qualitative content analysis as a robust and crucial research method. It is designed to interpret data subjectively through a systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes and patterns. Using step-by-step models, this method is designed to make sense of volumes of materials to identify core consistencies and meanings. It involves a comprehensive and integrated view of speech or texts within specific contexts, delving deeper into understanding a text's occasionally coded meanings, themes, and patterns. Qualitative content analysis bridges the gap between quantitative methods and the desire to understand subtle messaging and dog whistles, making it a crucial and convincing tool in this study.

Given the size of the data, various sampling options were considered for this content analysis. The textual content analysis involved several steps, with the first stage being to familiarize oneself with and collect the data. I chose four issues that have had prominence at the intersection of politics and evangelical Christianity: abortion, immigration, LGBTQIA+ issues, and race. Then, I gathered all of Trump's executive communications from his office, including memoranda, remarks, statements, speeches, roundtables, and executive orders from the White

House archives for his presidential term, 2017-2021. This comprehensive data collection process ensured no significant communication was overlooked, providing a robust view of the subject matter.

Trump's executive communications on abortion were marked by a series of policy decisions (Ahmed, 2020) and public statements aimed at reinforcing a pro-life agenda. His administration focused on restricting federal funding for organizations that provide or support abortion services (Ollstein, 2019) and sought to advance legislative measures that would limit access to abortion. These communications were strategically designed to appeal to conservative and evangelical voters, positioning abortion as a key issue in his political platform. Trump's actions and rhetoric on abortion underscored his commitment to aligning with the values of the pro-life movement and solidified his support among evangelical elites who view abortion as a critical moral issue (Mangan, 2016). Between 2017 and 2021, the Trump office issued 88 executive communications on abortion (13 for 2017, 20 for 2018, 24 for 2019, 29 for 2020, and 2 for 2021). After eliminating repeat occurrences, 1,900 tweets were harvested for 76 communications.

For immigration, the high number of executive communications can be attributed to several significant policy actions during Trump's presidency, including his campaign promises to build a wall along the southern border of the United States (Davis & Shear, 2021), the "Muslim Ban" (Amnesty International, 2020)⁴⁹, asylum policies (Chishti et al., 2018), and deportation

⁴⁹ The Muslim Ban refers to a series of executive orders that Trump issued prohibiting travel and refugee settlement from predominantly Muslim countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen in 2017), a third version blocked government officials from Venezuela and North Korea in 2018, and a final order restricted travel from Eritrea, Kyrgyzstan, Myanmar, Nigeria, Sudan, and Tanzania.

enforcement (Capps et al., 2018). To analyze this issue, I randomly sampled 4,175 tweets from 167 executive communications on immigration.

Despite Trump's assertion that he "is the least racist person you've ever encountered" (Fisher, 2016), his presidency was plagued with several issues ranging from the murder of George Floyd (Colvin & Long, 2020), the protests and resulting murder of a protester in Charlottesville (Rascoe, 2018), the removal of Confederate monuments and statues, as well as his labeling the coronavirus "Kung flu" (Itkowitz, 2020) and the "China virus" (Rogers et al, 2021). Trump's office issued an enormous 312 executive communications on issues of race from 2017-2021 (30 in 2017, 75 in 2018, 71 in 2019, 131 in 2020, and 5 in 2021). After weeding out multiple communications on the same day, 252 communications remained for a data sample of 6,300.

Compared to abortion, immigration, and race, Trump's office was relatively silent on LGBTQIA+ issues. However, between his office's opposition to the Equality Act (Fitzsimons, 2019), instating a transgender military ban (Fadulu, 2020), and attempts to ban gender-affirming care (Simmons-Duffin, 2020), while few—his communications were formidable. His office issued 24 executive communications (3 in 2017, 7 in 2018, 7 in 2019, 7 in 2020, and 0 in 2021). Despite the small number of communications, I could still sample 600 tweets from these 24 communications.

Subsequently, I meticulously gathered tweets from the twenty-five members of Trump's advisory board and twenty-five comparable high-profile religious elites during the week of the issuance of the Trump communication. This rigorous process resulted in a collection of over 350,000 tweets. There were no shortcuts in this arduous process, and each piece of data had to be carefully read and sometimes re-read. Cleaning the data was necessary, as some users engage

their followers in multiple posts related to mundane daily activities, which could skew the analysis.

Following this, I embarked on the initial coding of the data. The process was thorough, as the recurring themes had already been established through previous research. Each tweet was meticulously categorized by issue, and the data was rigorously reviewed for ideas and patterns that might have been overlooked. This systematic data collection process was designed to eliminate any potential “cherry-picking” or selection bias, as all tweets from the entire week surrounding the communication were included. The impartiality of the data analysis process was a key focus, ensuring that the study's findings were objective and reliable.

Typically, the third stage of Braun and Clarke (2006) involves searching for themes that summarize the “patterning of meaning across the dataset” (p. 76). These tweets were clustered together based on the executive communication. The themes of race, immigration, abortion, and LGBTQIA+ issues were deliberately chosen based on extensive political, religious, and historical data. This process was deeply intensive and self-involved and relied heavily on my position, experience, and knowledge of evangelical Christianity. Additionally, I can answer positively regarding Braun and Clarke’s three questions around thematic data collection and have gathered all the tweets surrounding the executive communications:

1. Does this provisional theme capture something meaningful?
2. Is it coherent, with a central idea that meshes the data and codes together?
3. Does it have clear boundaries? (p. 84)

Additionally, I provided an extensive narrative as to why the themes of race, immigration, abortion, and LGBTQIA+ issues were chosen and why they matter to this research.

Afterward, the data was reviewed to see whether the themes were related to the executive communications (e.g., did the tweet mention abortion during the week of an executive

communication?) and then compared between the advisory and non-advisory panels (e.g., does one group mention an issue more than the other?). This first part of this two-part stage requires reviewing all the data and considering whether they formed a coherent pattern. When there was coherence, I moved to the following sample. When there was no coherence, I had to decide whether the theme was problematic or some data did not fit. For this study, it was the latter. While I could establish a coherent pattern within most high-profile messaging, I discovered that many tweets did not necessarily relate to the issue at hand (e.g., Beth Moore).⁵⁰

After analyzing the data, I moved to a more general overview of the entire dataset. While I had previously established the themes. I reviewed the entire dataset comprehensively, assessing whether individual tweets accurately reflected the established themes. This involved meticulously examining each tweet within the context of its issue dataset to confirm its alignment with the relevant theme (e.g., abortion, immigration, race, or LGBTQIA+ issues). To adequately address this, each tweet required analysis for themes within the particular issue dataset. Some elites use their accounts for strictly religious purposes, others use theirs for political positioning, and others for self-advertisement. Additionally, an additional coder was employed to assess the consistency of theme identification and categorization. This process involved independently coding a subset of the data and comparing results to measure intercoder reliability. This ensured that the identified themes were not subjectively biased and were

⁵⁰ “Don't mess with me about fried chicken now. I'll be fixated on it till it's on my plate. Can't wait!”—Twitter, February 28, 2017

consistently applied across the dataset. Discrepancies between coders were discussed and resolved to refine the coding framework further.

The study's scope does not extend to additional themes at this research stage. However, future studies could delve into the differentiation between themes in individual Twitter feeds. Adhering to the pre-determined themes was necessary, as re-coding each recurring theme unrelated to the executive communication issue could lead to endless re-coding and add little substance to this study.

The fifth analysis stage was a pivotal point in the research, marking the collection and organization of executive communications on abortion, immigration, LGBTQIA+ issues, and race by issue, year, and membership on the advisory board. The overarching themes of the tweets were then analyzed to determine what aspect of the data each theme captured. It was crucial to identify what was fascinating within the tweets and why it was engaging in a specific dataset rather than just paraphrasing the tweets' contents in the results section. As stated earlier, not every tweet pertains to the issue, and given a tweet, I would be able to explain why the tweet did not fit within the particular parameters of a problem and that it was collected within the timeframe of the issuance of the communication.

A stratified random sampling of 25 tweets from each week surrounding Trump's communications established which issues were most frequently mentioned during the week of Trump's executive communications. From the sample of 12,975 tweets collected from the advisory board and 12,975 tweets collected from high-profile evangelical elites who were not on Trump's advisory board on days that Trump issued communications, 537 tweets mentioned abortion; 290 tweets mentioned immigration; 57 tweets mentioned LGBTQIA+ issues; and 309 tweets mentioned race.

I then conducted a quantitative analysis to answer how high-profile religious elites engage with Trump's executive communications via X. A quantitative content analysis offered a deductive way to test my hypothesis regarding how high-profile religious elites engage with Trump's executive communications through Twitter/X. Comparing the qualitative content analysis with a quantitative analysis allows us to better understand the enormous dataset in this research. The qualitative analysis enabled us to explore the deeper meanings of the messaging, as well as provide a more precise sentiment analysis of the tweets. On the other hand, the quantitative analysis allows researchers to tabulate repetitive terms found in the data quickly. The systematic qualitative content analysis approach, as described by researchers over the past twenty years, involves familiarizing oneself with the data, initial coding, and theme development.

4.1 Abortion

The dataset on tweets issued in response to executive communications about abortion reveals a nuanced landscape of religious and political sentiment. From 2017-2021, Trump's advisory panel issued 25,061 tweets during the week surrounding an executive communication on abortion. After cleaning the data to eliminate tweets unrelated to politics or religion, 12,557 tweets remained in the sample. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 6,532 tweets from Trump's advisory panel related to abortion were positive (52.02%), 4,505 tweets were neutral (35.88%), and 1,520 were negative (12.10%). From 2017-2021, comparative elites who were not on Trump's advisory panel issued 35,636 tweets surrounding the week in which an executive communication was issued on abortion. After cleaning the data to eliminate meaningless tweets unrelated to politics or religion, 11,879 tweets remained in the sample. In

the non-advisory group, sentiments from the reflexive text analysis were categorized into positive (6,103 tweets—51.38%), neutral (4,241 tweets—35.70%), and negative (1,535 tweets—12.92%).

4.2 Immigration

From 2017-2021, Trump's advisory board members issued 45,996 tweets surrounding the week in which an executive communication was issued on immigration. After cleaning the data to eliminate meaningless tweets unrelated to politics or religion, 12,536 tweets remained in the sample (6,454 were positive, 4,663 were neutral, and 1,419 were negative). Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 6,454 tweets from other high-profile evangelical elites not on Trump's panel were positive (51.48%), 4,663 tweets were neutral (37.20%), and 1,419 tweets were negative (11.32%). From 2017-2021, high-profile evangelical elites who were not on Trump's advisory board issued a staggering 72,482 tweets surrounding the week of issuance of executive communications related to immigration. After scraping the data to eliminate superfluous tweets, 20,914 tweets remained in the sample for analysis. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 10,698 tweets were positive (51.15%), 7,558 tweets were neutral (36.14%), and 2,658 tweets were negative (12.71%).

4.3 LGBTQIA+

From 2017-2021, Trump's advisory panel issued 20,929 tweets during the week surrounding an executive communication on LGBTQIA+ issues. After cleaning the data to eliminate tweets unrelated to politics or religion, 7,439 tweets remained in the sample. After determining the tone of each tweet using reflexive text analysis, I found that 3,421 tweets were

positive (45.99%), 2,134 tweets were neutral (28.69%), and 1,884 tweets were negative (25.32%). Members of Trump's advisory panel issued 30,951 tweets during the week surrounding an executive communication on LGBTQIA+ issues. After cleaning the data to eliminate tweets unrelated to politics or religion, 20,921 tweets remained in the sample. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 8,651 tweets were positive (41.36%), 7,439 tweets were neutral (35.56%), and 2,777 tweets were negative (13.28%).

After scraping the data to eliminate unessential tweets, 6,729 tweets remained in the sample for analysis. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 3,440 tweets expressed positive sentiment (51.12%), 2,505 tweets expressed neutral sentiment (37.23%), and 784 tweets held negative sentiment (11.65%). A sample of 1,897 tweets was harvested from the week of the highest postings on X during a Trump executive communication mentioning LGBTQIA+ issues from 2017-2020 (as no executive communications were issued on LGBTQIA+ in 2021).

4.4 Race

From 2017-2021, high-profile evangelical elites who were not on Trump's advisory board issued 33,152 tweets surrounding the week of issuance of executive communications related to race. After scraping the data to eliminate superfluous tweets, 20,914 tweets remained in the sample for analysis. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 10,698 tweets were positive (51.15%), 7,558 tweets were neutral (36.14%), and 2,658 tweets were negative (12.71%). High-profile religious elites who were not part of Trump's "born again" advisory board were equally vocal on Twitter. Between 2017 and 2021, they issued 90,2015 tweets; after removing extraneous content, 73,706 tweets remained in the sample for analysis. Using the

reflexive text analysis, I determined that 37,802 tweets were positive (51.29%), 9,962 tweets were neutral (13.52%), and 25,942 tweets were negative (35.19%).

The final stage of Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was to provide a report on the dataset. I aimed to analyze the overarching themes of high-profile evangelical discussions on Twitter about race during the Trump presidency (excluding Trump's evangelical advisory board members) and understand the reasons for the overwhelmingly positive responses on Twitter/X and why they conflict with other studies that show negative messaging receives more interactions. Statistical analysis also occurred, where variables were assigned to the elites based on the tone of their tweets (positive, neutral, or negative). Afterward, the statistical analysis of the tweets was compared with previous literature regarding the tone of the messaging and interactions.

In conclusion, qualitative and quantitative content analyses offer complementary insights into the messaging strategies of high-profile evangelical elites in response to Trump's executive communications. While qualitative analysis provides a deeper understanding of the nuanced meanings within these messages, quantitative analysis allows for the identification of patterns and trends across a large dataset. The findings from this study highlight the complexity of social media engagement and the potential for further research into the interplay between tone, message content, and audience reactions.

5 TWEETING FAITH—REACTIONS OF RELIGIOUS ELITES TO TRUMP'S POLICIES

The qualitative results of this content analysis provide a nuanced exploration of the themes and patterns within the discourse of high-profile evangelical elites on Twitter during Trump's presidency. This section delves into the ways these religious leaders framed their responses to Trump's executive communications, mainly focusing on issues like abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ rights. By analyzing the content of their tweets, this study uncovers the underlying narratives, values, and rhetorical strategies employed by these elites to engage their followers and influence public opinion. The findings offer insights into the complex interplay between religion, politics, and social issues, revealing how these leaders navigated the political landscape to advance their agendas and resonate with their audiences.

5.1 Abortion

Abortion is situated firmly within the gender binary ideals found within evangelical Christianity. Gender differences are fundamental to understanding the social order and the idea that men and women, while perhaps created equally, are often created as very distinct, if not opposite, one from the other complements. As such, a woman's primary calling is to be a wife and mother, and abortion can dissolve that relationship between biology and societal expectations. In a 2022 interview, Kristin Kobes Du Mez stated that it was that relational dissolution that struck at the heart of the evangelical understanding of gender roles and how God has regimented our society.

Communications from Donald Trump's office predominantly focused on policy announcements and executive actions highlighting his commitment to protecting life, upholding religious freedoms, and reinforcing conservative values. The primary emphasis was on

restricting abortion access and safeguarding the rights of individuals and religious organizations that oppose abortion based on their beliefs.

Trump's administration frequently underscored initiatives aimed at limiting abortion services and promoting pro-life policies. This included supporting legislative efforts to restrict abortion access and enforcing regulations that align with conservative values. Additionally, the communications stressed the importance of protecting religious freedoms for those who oppose abortion on moral or religious grounds.

While Trump's communications addressed a broad range of government topics, discussions related to abortion were primarily situated within the domains of law and justice and healthcare. This approach focuses on integrating abortion-related policies into the broader context of legal and health-related issues, demonstrating how these policies align with the administration's overall approach to law and public health.

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from members of Trump's advisory board, 237 tweets mentioned an abortion-related issue (33 in communications on abortion, 76 mentions of abortion in immigration, 11 mentions in LGBTQIA+ issues, and 117 in race). The search terms used in this analysis were: abort (which ensures terms like abortion, aborted, and aborts were included), Mexico City (Mexico City Policy was the policy Trump repealed which eliminated funding for organizations that offered abortion—a decision many pro-life advocates applauded), Planned Parenthood, pro-life/prolife, Roe/Roe v. Wade (the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion), sanctity, unborn, womb. During the analysis, I realized there were other terms evangelicals were using that had not hit the mainstream vocabulary regarding abortion rights, and this could be used for future research (e.g., pre-born) on how

language is changing to discuss these complex issues. Figure 6.1 below shows the distribution of abortion-related terms across communications from 2017-2021.

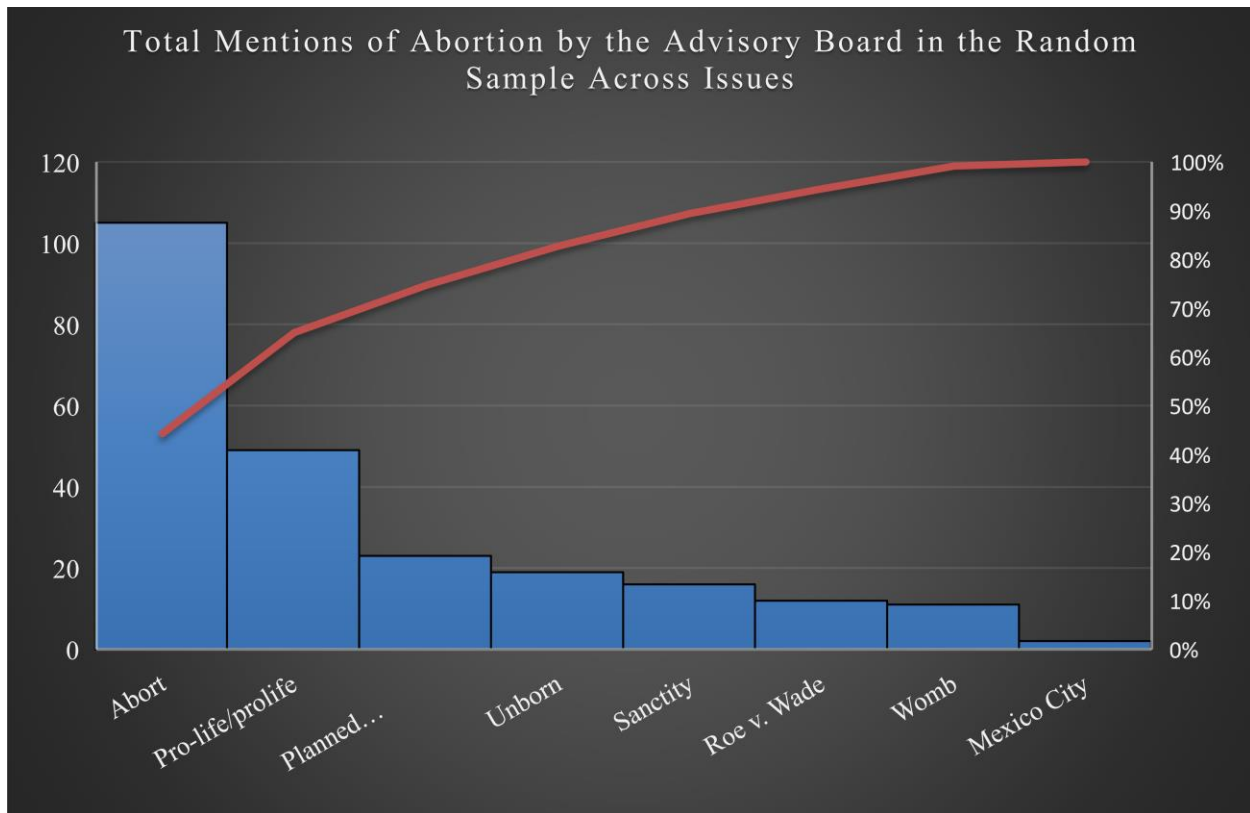


Figure 6.1: Total Mentions of Abortion-Related Terms Across Issues—Advisory

This visualization helped identify the vocabulary that accounts for the majority of the content on abortion, which can influence the overall tone, themes, or focus. This gives us insight into what evangelicals talk about and how they use specific words to inform their conversations.

A Pareto curve was created by plotting a bar chart where each bar represented a word, with the height of the bars corresponding to their frequency. A cumulative percentage line was added to the chart, representing the cumulative contribution of the words to the total content, moving from most to least frequent. This visualization helped identify the vital themes that account for the majority of content—often showing that a few words dominated the discourse.

When analyzing the dominance of specific words within a topic, such as "abort" or "pro-life," in the context of abortion, the percentage helps us understand not just the frequency of

these words but their relative importance within that particular discourse. For example, if "abort" and "pro-life" consistently make up a significant percentage of the content related to abortion, this indicates that these terms are central to how the topic is being framed and discussed. The cumulative percentage line on a Pareto curve would show how quickly these few dominant words account for the majority of the discourse on abortion.

This is distinct from what frequency counts alone tell us because the percentage reveals the concentration of language around specific concepts. It shows that while many words might be used in discussions about abortion, a few key terms overwhelmingly shape the conversation. This concentration suggests that the discourse is not just about abortion in general but is heavily oriented around particular aspects of the issue, like the morality of the procedure, which is encapsulated by terms like "abort" and "pro-life/prolife."

Understanding this dominance is significant for my conclusion because it not only highlights which aspects of a topic drive the conversation and influence public opinion, it helps to clarify that within the broader topic of abortion, the discourse is heavily centered on specific, highly charged terms, which can shape the narrative and influence the audience's perception of the issue. This insight is crucial for interpreting how evangelical elites, for example, are framing the abortion debate and mobilizing their followers around specific talking points, which is essential for understanding the broader impact of their messaging.

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from those members not on the advisory board on days that Trump issued communications on abortion, 300 tweets mentioned an abortion-related issue (73 in communications on abortion, 97 mentions of abortion in immigration-related tweets, 19 mentions in LGBTQIA+ issues, and 111 in race). Figure 6.2 below shows the distribution of

abortion-related terms across communications from members not on the advisory board from 2017-2021.

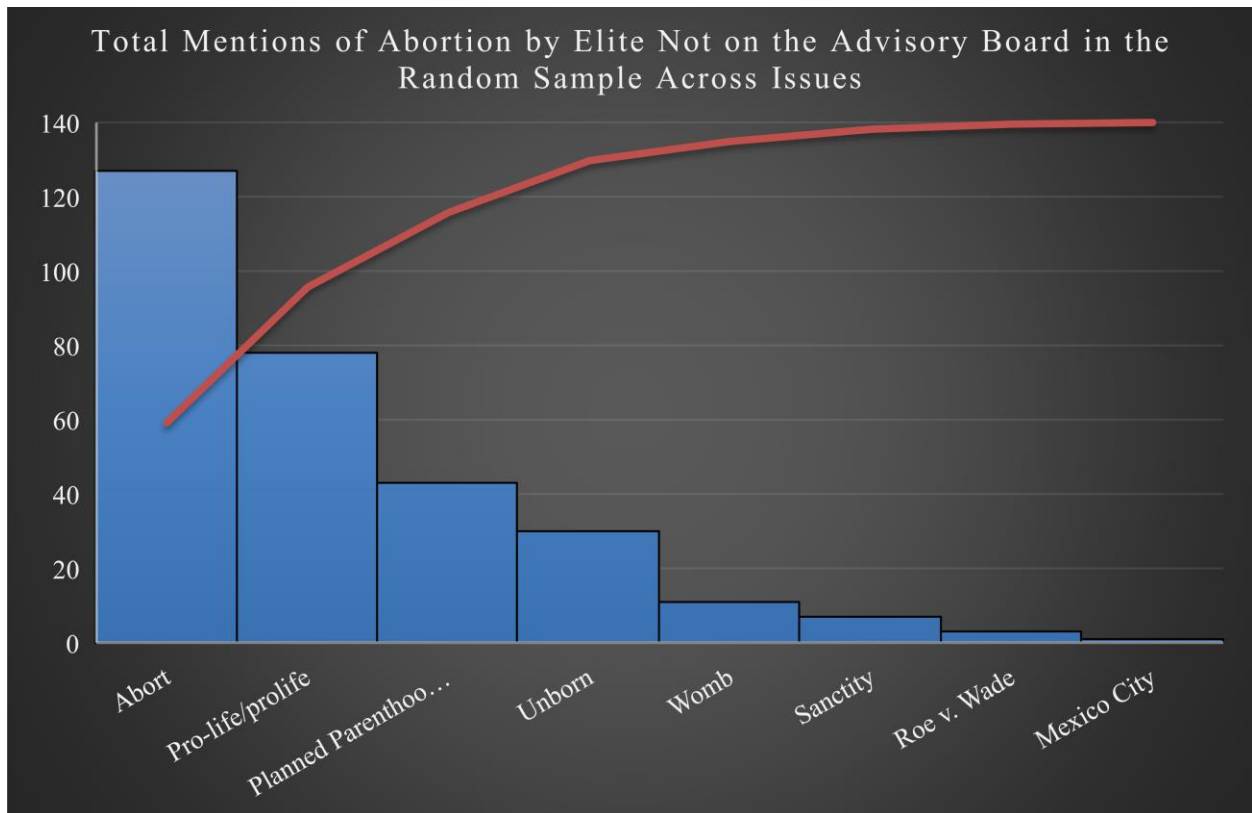


Figure 6.2: Total Mentions of Abortion-Related Terms Across Issues—Non-Advisory

5.2 Immigration

Executive communications from President Donald Trump's office adopt a policy-focused approach to immigration, prioritizing national security, enforcement measures, and the protection of the nation from perceived threats. These communications typically emphasize concrete actions to enhance immigration controls and fortify national interests, such as implementing stricter border security measures and enforcing existing immigration laws. While many of Trump's executive communications focused on economic policies, healthcare, and international relations related to immigration, the emphasis was on national defense and security.

Trump's approach is characterized by a focus on tangible policy outcomes and administrative actions. The communications often detail specific strategies and legislative efforts to achieve policy objectives, reflecting a pragmatic stance on immigration. His communications prioritized operational effectiveness and strategic national interests over discussions of moral or religious implications, aiming to address immigration issues through a lens of practical governance and national security concerns.

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from the advisory board on days that Trump issued communications using search terms: border, DACA, Deferred, Illegal, Immigrant, Immigration, Muslim Ban/MuslimBan, Refugee, Sanctuary, Terrorist, 128 mentioned an immigration-related issue (22 in communications on abortion, 42 on immigration, ten on LGBTQIA+ issues, and 54 on race). Figure (6.3) below shows the distribution of abortion-related terms across communications from 2017-2021.

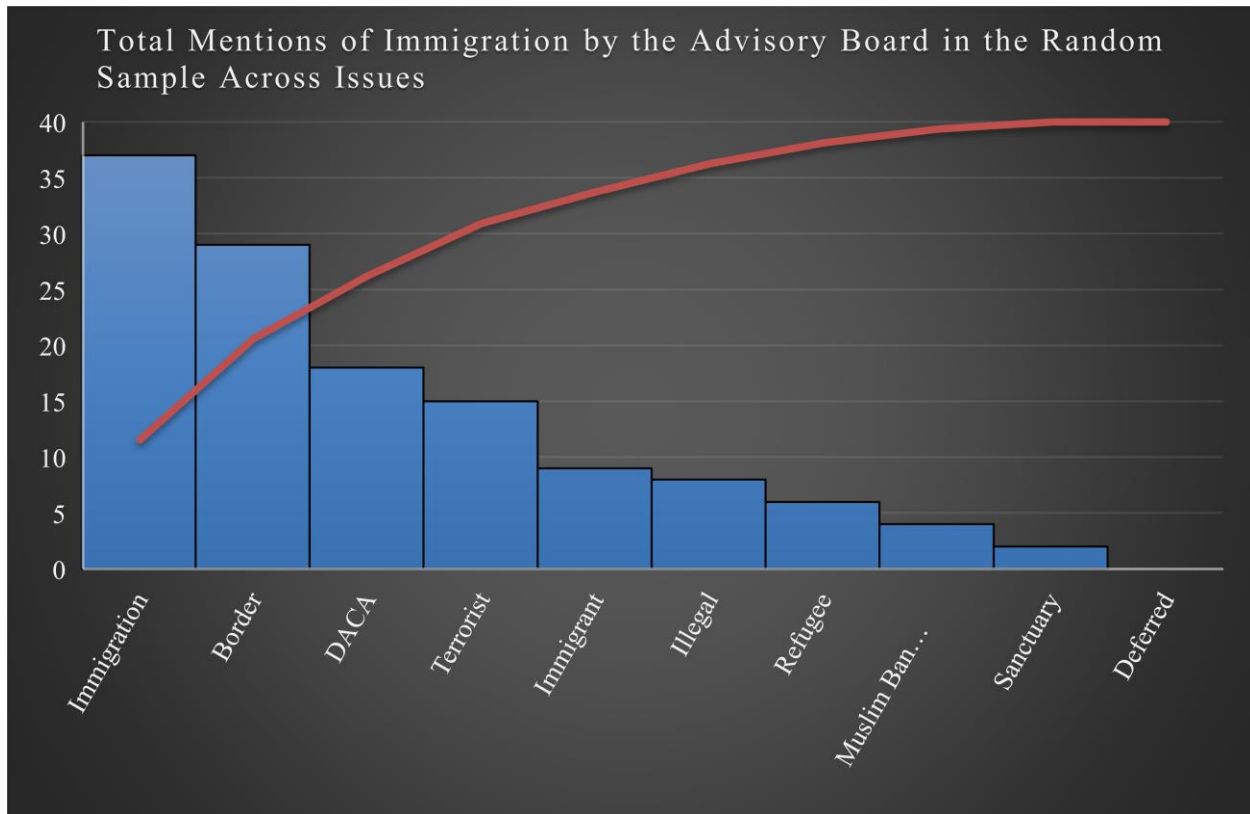


Figure 6.3: Total Mentions of Immigration-Related Terms Across Issues—Advisory

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from elites not on the advisory board when Trump issued communications, 108 mentioned an immigration-related issue (12 in communications on abortion, 51 on immigration, three on LGBTQIA+ issues, and 42 on race). Figure 6.4 shows the distribution of abortion-related terms across communications from 2017 to 2021.

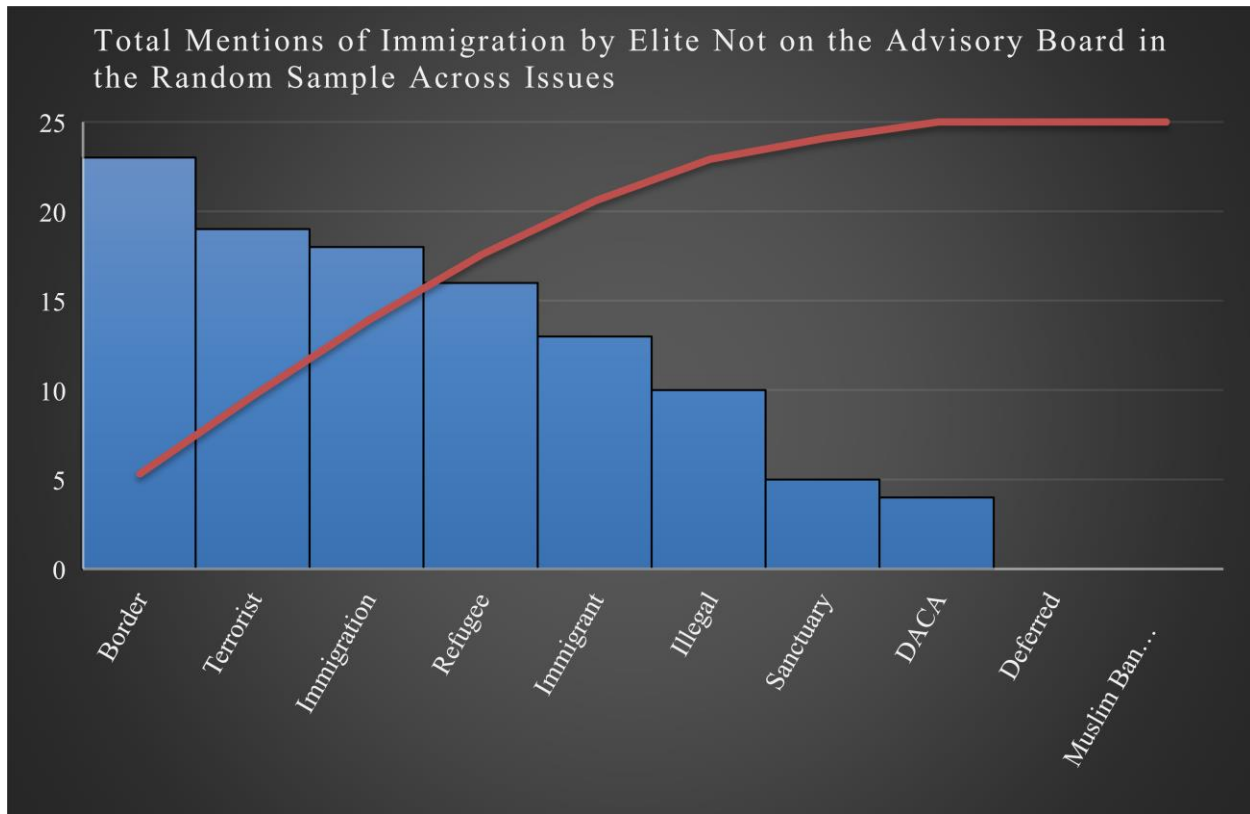


Figure 6.4: Total Mentions of Immigration-Related Terms Across Issues—Non-Advisory

5.3 LGBTQIA+

During his presidency, Donald Trump frequently communicated about LGBTQIA+ issues through sporadic executive communications and frequent public statements (which were not in the purview of this research) that sparked significant controversy and debate. Early in his term, Trump revoked guidelines that had allowed transgender students to use bathrooms matching their gender identity, arguing that states and local school districts should make such decisions. His administration also announced a ban on transgender individuals serving in the military, a policy that faced multiple legal challenges and was widely seen as a setback for LGBTQIA+ rights. While not included in the 24 executive communications Trump issued during his presidency, Trump's Justice Department argued in court that the Civil Rights Act of 1964 does not protect employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender

identity, further fueling concerns within the LGBTQIA+ community. Despite these actions, Trump occasionally expressed support for LGBTQIA+ individuals, though critics contended that his policies did not align with his statements. This duality in his executive actions and rhetoric created a complex and often divisive landscape for LGBTQIA+ issues during his administration.

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from elites Trump's advisory board on days that Trump issued communications, 25 mentioned an LGBTQIA+-related issue (2 in communications on abortion, 10 on immigration, 2 on LGBTQIA+ issues, and 11 on race). Search terms included: Bisexual, Gay, Homosexual, Lesbian, LGBT/LGBTQ, Queer, Transgender. This does not include tweets about religious freedoms, as those were not explicitly discussed in Trump's executive communications. For further research, I would include terms with legal connotations such as Title IX (the federal civil rights law prohibiting sex discrimination in education programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance), Title VII (part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting employment discrimination based on stereotypes about gender-related traits and abilities), and bathroom.

Similar to members on Trump's advisory board, LGBTQIA+ issues received the fewest mentions of any other issue in this study. From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from elites not on the advisory board on days that Trump issued communications, 32 mentioned an immigration-related issue (3 in communications in abortion, 17 in immigration, 3 in LGBTQIA+ issues, and 9 in race).

5.4 Race

Donald Trump issued the most executive communications (431) from the White House regarding race, which included various statements and remarks, executive orders, and policy

proposals that frequently generated significant public and media attention. In August 2017, following the violent white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, Trump's response was widely criticized. He initially stated that there were "very fine people on both sides," which many saw as an equivocation of condemning white supremacy. However, Trump also signed the First Step Act into law in December 2018. This bipartisan legislation aimed to reform the criminal justice system, reduce recidivism, and address disparities in sentencing, particularly those affecting African Americans.

Trump often highlighted economic policies he believed benefited African American communities, such as the Opportunity Zones program, which aimed to spur investment in economically distressed areas, and historically low African American unemployment rates during his administration (pre-pandemic). Following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and the subsequent nationwide protests, Trump's rhetoric and actions focused on law and order. He signed an executive order on safe policing for safe communities, which sought to incentivize police reforms. However, his administration's handling of the protests, including the clearing of Lafayette Square for a photo op, was heavily criticized for being overly aggressive and dismissive of the protesters' grievances.

One key aspect was the Executive Order on Combating Race and Sex Stereotyping issued in September 2020, which aimed to prohibit federal agencies, contractors, and grantees from conducting training that included concepts like critical race theory or "divisive" concepts related to race and sex. This order was controversial and faced legal challenges, with critics arguing it hindered efforts to address systemic racism.

Throughout his presidency, Trump frequently faced criticism for his language and tweets regarding race and racial issues. Critics argued that his rhetoric often emboldened white supremacists and did not adequately address systemic racism. These communications and actions reveal a complex and often polarizing approach to issues of race during Trump's presidency, characterized by efforts at criminal justice reform and economic initiatives juxtaposed with controversial rhetoric and policy decisions.

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from the advisory board during the week surrounding the issuance of a Trump communication on race. Using search terms such as African-American/African American, Black, Black Lives Matter/BLM, Charlottesville, Confederate, George Floyd, Kneel, Memorial, Monument, Racism, Statue, there were 159 mentioned race-related issues (14 in communications on abortion, 46 in immigration, 7 in LGBTQIA+ issues, and 92 in race). Figure 6.5 shows the distribution of race-related terms across communications from 2017-2021.

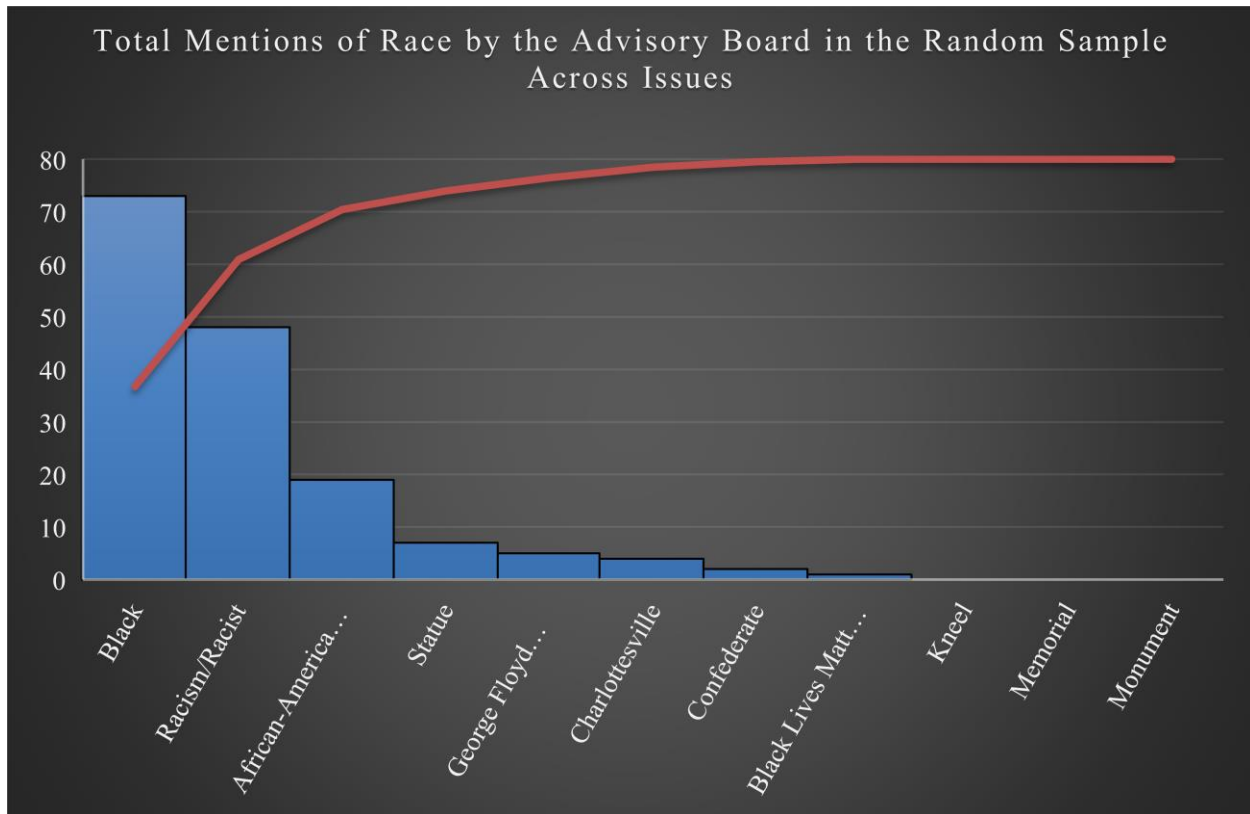


Figure 6.5: Total Mentions of Race-Related Terms Across Issues—Advisory

From the stratified random sample of 12,975 tweets collected from the advisory board during the week surrounding the issuance of a Trump communication on race, 150 mentioned a race-related issue (20 in communications on abortion, 47 in immigration, 7 in LGBTQIA+ issues, and 76 in race). Figure (6.6) shows the distribution of race-related terms across communications from 2017-2021.

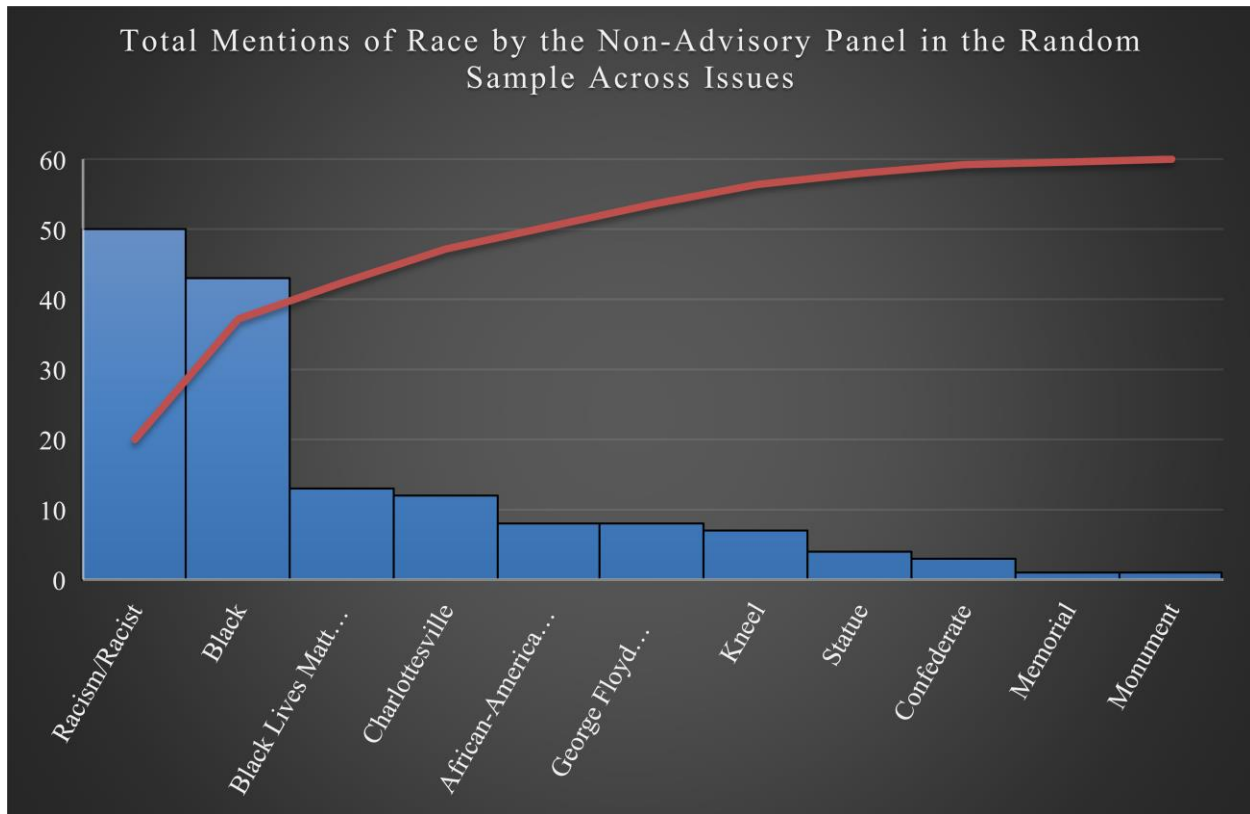


Figure 6.6: Total Mentions of Race-Related Terms Across Issues—Non-Advisory

5.5 Discussion

Abortion was the most frequently mentioned issue by high-profile evangelical elites during the Trump presidency due to its deep moral and theological significance, being framed as a matter of life and death. The political climate, with significant legislative and judicial actions on abortion, galvanized evangelical leaders to focus on influencing policy. The anti-abortion movement's long history of organized activism ensured its prominence and the unified stance against abortion within the evangelical community allowed leaders to speak with a strong, collective voice. Additionally, emphasizing abortion helped mobilize evangelical voters, a crucial demographic for the Trump administration. From a stratified random sampling of 25 tweets per day when an executive communication was issued, 12,975 tweets were collected for the advisory group and the comparison group, equaling 25,950 tweets. The search terms yielded

a result of 537 mentions of abortion throughout the sample: 300 mentions (2.31%) for the comparison group and 237 for the advisory board (1.83%), or 2.10% of the total sample. Race was the second most mentioned issue in the cumulative sample. This may have been a result of the racial reckoning that occurred early into the Trump presidency and continued throughout the rest of his term with incidences like Charlottesville, the murder of George Floyd, and the debate centering on the removal of historic statues, memorials, and monuments. The comparison group mentioned race 150 times (1.16%), and elites on the advisory board referenced racial issues 159 times (1.23%) for 309, or 1.19% of the sample.

Next, immigration had the third highest mentions overall, with 290 mentions (1.12%) of related search words in the sample. The advisory board mentioned the search terms 128 times in the sample (0.99%), and the comparison group had 108 mentions of immigration-related issues in their sample (0.83%). The higher frequency of mentions of race compared to immigration by high-profile evangelical elites during the Trump presidency can be attributed to several factors. The historical context of systemic racial inequality and high-profile events like the Black Lives Matter movement heightened the urgency of racial issues. Moral imperatives tied to biblical calls for justice likely drove more frequent discussions on race. Additionally, the media's extensive coverage of racial violence and protests prompted more responses. In contrast, immigration policies, while significant and polarizing, did not elicit the same universal condemnation and were discussed more cautiously. This strategic prioritization reflects the perceived impact and relevance of racial issues within their communities and the broader social justice movement.

Lastly, LGBTQIA+ search terms received the fewest mentions. From the cumulative sample, search terms received only 57 mentions in the random sample (0.22%). Elites on Trump's advisory board mentioned LGBTQIA+ topics 25 times in their sample (.019%), and the comparative group of elites not on Trump's advisory board posted tweets mentioning LGBTQIA+ issues 32 times (0.25%). The relative infrequency of mentions of LGBTQIA+ issues by high-profile evangelical elites during the Trump presidency can be attributed to several factors. Evangelical leaders likely prioritized issues they perceived as more immediately impactful or urgent, such as abortion and racial injustice. There were fewer high-profile legislative or judicial changes targeting LGBTQIA+ rights during this period, leading to less media coverage and public debate. Additionally, leaders may have focused their messaging on issues where they believed they could achieve more immediate impact and likely chose topics that unified their base rather than those that might cause division. Finally, the media's extensive coverage of other issues also influenced the focus of evangelical leaders' communications.

The results of the analysis confirmed the first hypothesis (H1) that abortion had the highest frequency of mentions compared to race, immigration, and the LGBTQIA+ community among the sample of high-profile religious elites. This finding was consistent across both groups: members of Trump's evangelical advisory board and another set of high-profile evangelical elites who were not on the advisory board. The data revealed a predominant focus on abortion-related topics, with this issue dominating the discourse in both groups' communications, highlighting its importance within their agendas. Figure 6.7 below indicates issues mentioned throughout religious elites' tweets during the week of Trump's executive communications, as well as Trump's mentions of abortion, immigration, LGBTQIA+ issues, and race from his executive communications issued throughout his presidency. While abortion was

overwhelmingly mentioned by high-profile evangelical elite during his presidency, it was not a tantamount issue to President Trump.

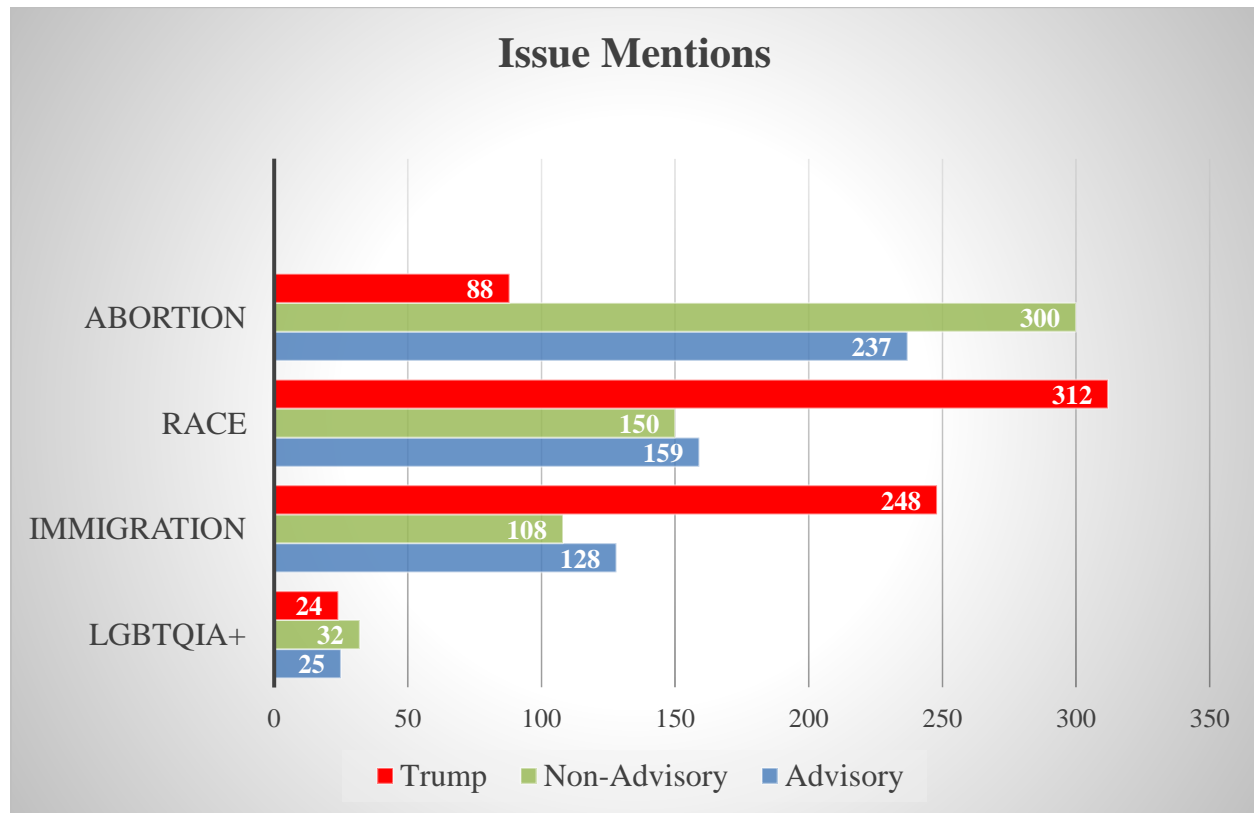


Figure 6.7: Issue Mentions in the Random Sample

The consistency of these findings across different subsets of the evangelical elite underscores the centrality of abortion in their public engagement and advocacy efforts. This emphasis on abortion indicates a strategic prioritization driven by deeply held beliefs and the desire to influence public policy and societal norms. The analysis highlights how abortion continues to be a pivotal issue for high-profile evangelical leaders, shaping their communications and reinforcing their influence within the broader religious and political landscape.

The analysis further confirmed the second hypothesis (H2) that high-profile religious elites would maintain their focus on abortion, regardless of executive communications released from Trump's office. Both Trump's evangelical advisory board

and the set of high-profile evangelical elites not on his advisory board consistently highlighted abortion more frequently than other issues, demonstrating a sustained emphasis on this topic despite the content of Trump's executive communications. This finding underscores how abortion remained a central concern within their public discourse and advocacy. Not only that, but they will discuss abortion most, even when executive communications pertain to other issues, therefore supporting the second hypothesis that high-profile religious elites would maintain their focus on abortion, regardless of the subject of the executive communications released from Trump's office.

The data revealed that, even when Trump's executive communications from 2017-2021 addressed other critical issues such as immigration, race, or LGBTQIA+ rights, abortion continued to dominate the conversations and public statements of these religious leaders. Whereas, Trump's executive communications from the Oval Office frequently centered on immigration and race, reflecting a strategic emphasis on these issues. His administration's policy agenda included a hardline approach to immigration, such as efforts to build a border wall and enforce stricter immigration controls. Immigration and race were also prominent topics in media coverage and public discourse, providing Trump with a platform to push his messages and maintain visibility. His focus on these issues also tapped into broader cultural and identity politics, aligning with populist rhetoric that appealed to specific voter concerns. This approach reinforced political polarization and mobilization of his base, ensuring that these topics remained central to his political narrative.

Figure 6.8 illustrates how evangelical elites mentioned various issues over time, with a few noticeable spikes in the data. For instance, there was an increase in immigration-related mentions in 2018 among Trump's advisory board members, potentially corresponding with a

nearly 40% increase in immigration-related executive communications from Trump's office. In contrast, elites not on Trump's advisory board showed a smaller increase in immigration-related mentions (22%), suggesting that those on the advisory board more often discussed immigration during that period.

The lesser increase in mentions of immigration among evangelical elites not on Trump's advisory board compared to those on the board could be influenced by several factors. Evangelical elites on Trump's advisory board may have been more closely aligned with the administration and thus more inclined to engage with its policies, including immigration. In contrast, those outside the advisory board may have focused more on other issues, such as abortion or religious freedom. Additionally, leaders not associated with Trump's advisory board might have had more diverse or critical perspectives on the administration's immigration policies, leading to a more cautious approach to addressing the topic. Audience expectations might also have played a role, as these leaders could have tailored their discourse to reflect their followers' priorities, who may not have been as focused on immigration.

There was a considerable surge in mentions of abortion among evangelical elites not on Trump's advisory board from 2018 to 2019 (over 77%). During this period, political actions such as the passage of restrictive abortion laws and the appointment of conservative Supreme Court justices like Brett Kavanaugh likely contributed to the intensified discourse among evangelical elites who viewed abortion as a central moral issue. Heightened cultural and media attention on abortion during this time may have prompted even those not aligned with Trump to amplify their stance, possibly as a

strategic move to maintain influence within the conservative movement and reaffirm their commitment to core evangelical concerns amidst broader debates on other issues.

Lastly, mentions of race by Trump's evangelical advisory board increased by nearly 152% from 2019 to 2020, and among elites not on Trump's panel, there was a similar increase of 150%. Several factors likely contributed to this considerable increase in mentions of race among high-profile evangelical elites between 2019 and 2020. The killing of George Floyd in May 2020 and the subsequent nationwide protests brought racial injustice to the forefront of public discourse, prompting many religious leaders to address the issue publicly. The broader social and political context, including the 2020 election cycle and heightened tensions around race and policing, likely also influenced evangelical elites to engage more openly with these topics. Additionally, growing pressure within some segments of the evangelical community to address racial issues more directly, coupled with institutional responses from churches and religious organizations (such as the Southern Baptist Convention), may have further contributed to the increased discourse on race during this period.

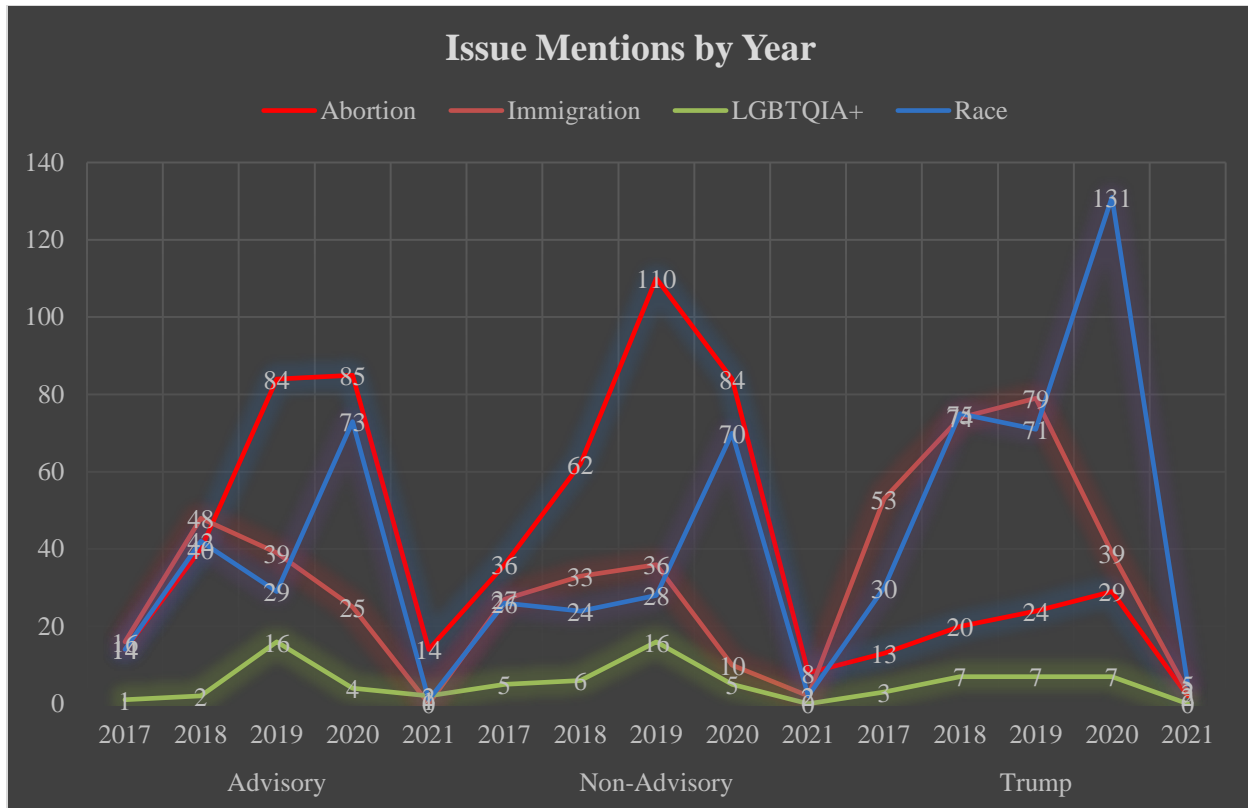


Figure 6.8: *Evangelical Elites Issue Mentions By Year in Comparison to Trump's Executive Communications*

This persistent focus reflects the profound moral and theological weight attached to abortion within evangelical communities, as well as its strategic importance in mobilizing their base and shaping political discourse. The unwavering attention to abortion, regardless of shifting political priorities, highlights its fundamental role in the agenda of high-profile evangelical elites and their broader efforts to influence public policy and societal norms. Figure 6.9 below shows cumulative issues mentioned by all high-profile evangelical elites in the study. There are four sections: abortion mentions, immigration mentions, LGBTQIA+ mentions, and race mentions. For instance, the first section shows mentions of abortion-related issues first, within abortion, immigration, LGBTQIA+, and race, followed by mentions of immigration-related issues in immigration, abortion, LGBTQIA+, and race, and so on.

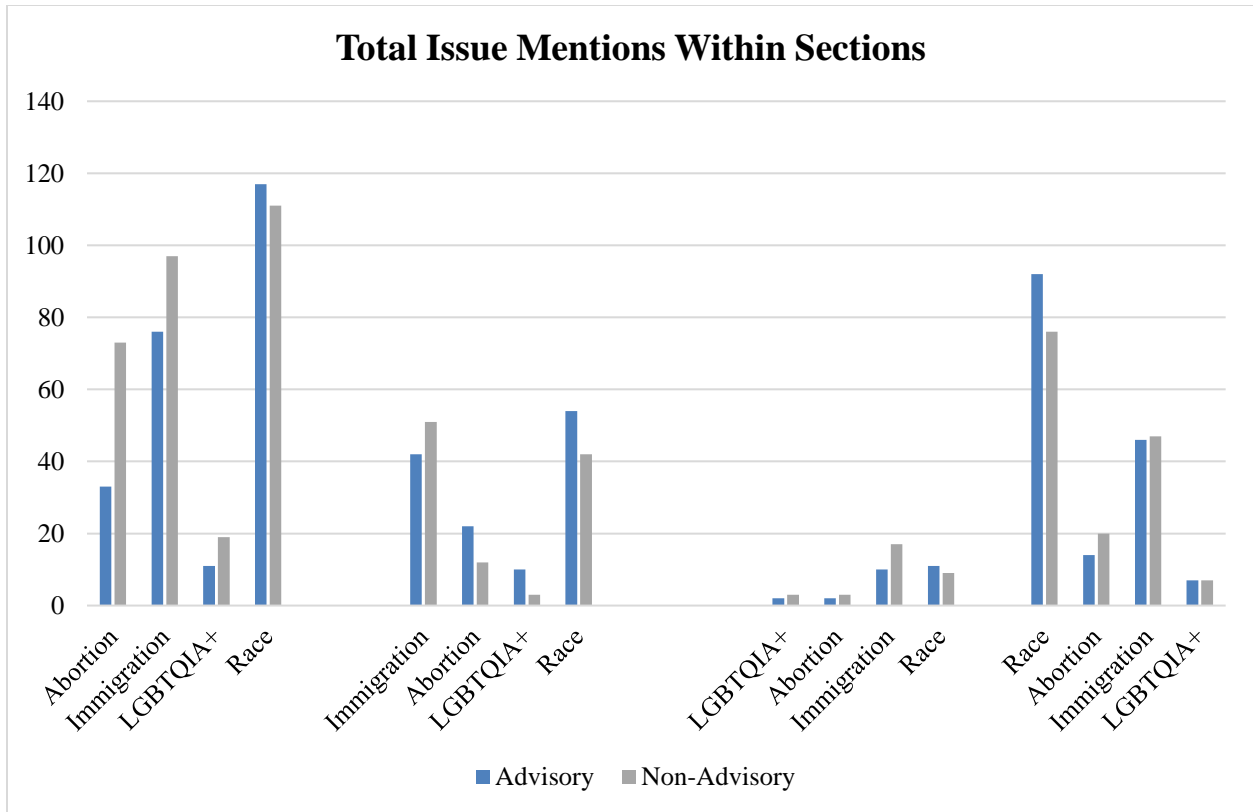


Figure 6.9: Total Issue Mentions within Other Issues—Abortion, Immigration, LGBTQIA+, and Race

To illustrate how discourse patterns evolved, the data can be visualized to track the frequency of issue mentions—abortion, immigration, race, and LGBTQIA+ rights—in the tweets and public statements of the high-profile religious elite. A timeline of Trump's executive communications served as a backdrop to this analysis, allowing for a comparison of how often these leaders mentioned each issue. By plotting these frequencies in the line graph, it is evident that, even when Trump's communications addressed other crucial issues like immigration, race, or LGBTQIA+ rights, abortion consistently dominated the conversation. In summary, the analysis's results confirmed that not only did evangelical elites mention abortion most frequently, but high-profile evangelical elites maintained a predominant focus on abortion, regardless of the issues addressed in Trump's executive communications. The following section builds on the frequency analysis of the issue mentioned and delves deeper into these discussions' tone and

emotional undercurrents. By conducting a sentiment analysis, I aim to uncover whether the discourse surrounding each issue leans more positive, negative, or neutral and how this sentiment aligns with the broader narrative strategies of the evangelical elites.

6 ECHOES OF BELIEF: MAPPING SENTIMENT IN EVANGELICAL DISCOURSE

The sentiment analysis of the dataset provides a comprehensive understanding of the tone and emotional content embedded in the Twitter discourse of high-profile evangelical elites during the Trump presidency. By analyzing their responses to executive communications on abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ issues, this section reveals the prevailing sentiments that shaped public statements and interactions. The analysis not only highlights the overall sentiment trends but also uncovers patterns of engagement, offering insights into how positive and negative sentiments were received by followers. These findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the rhetorical strategies employed by religious leaders and the impact of sentiment on public discourse within this influential community.

6.1 Abortion

The issue of abortion holds a central place in the discourse among evangelical elites, often seen as a pivotal moral and political concern. For many elites, abortion is not just a policy issue but a deeply rooted ethical battle that defines their broader worldview. The strong emphasis on anti-abortion rhetoric within this community reflects its importance in shaping evangelical identity and political engagement, particularly in the context of supporting or challenging political figures like Trump who align with their pro-life stance. This centrality underscores the unwavering commitment of evangelical elites to influence public policy and societal values through their platforms.

6.1.1 Advisory Board

While the abortion debate encompasses a wide range of themes and perspectives, high-profile evangelicals focused primarily on equating abortion to murder (“Since 1973, medical

science has proven that life begins much earlier in pregnancy than the SCOTUS justices knew when *Roe v Wade* became law. 100 yrs from now when science proves that millions of unborn have been murdered will there be cries to remove statues of pro-abortion Dems?"—Jerry Falwell, Jr., February 2, 2019), emphasizing the right to life for unborn children (Over the next 4 years, we will teach our children to love our Country, honor our history, and always respect our great American Flag—and with God's help, we will defend the right to life, religious liberty, and the right to KEEP AND BEAR ARMS!"—Dr. Jack Graham, November 3, 2020), and condemning abortion as an unjustifiable act ("I shudder in horror at the number of aborted Chinese babies: 336 million,"—Dr. Ronnie Floyd, March 30, 2017).

In contrast, a small minority within the advisory board will occasionally tweet support ("Thank you @CecileRichards for your extraordinary leadership over the last 12 years as president of Planned Parenthood - and for getting up every single day to fight for a world where women's rights truly are human rights. #ThankYouCecile"—Dr. Jack Graham, May 1, 2018) or endorse a conditional legality for abortion under rape, incest, and to protect the life of the mother ("As most people know, and for those who would like to know, I am strongly Pro-Life, with the three exceptions - Rape, Incest and protecting the Life of the mother - the same position taken by Ronald Reagan. We have come very far in the last two years with 105 wonderful new....."—Dr. Jack Graham, May 19, 2019).

As expected, high-profile communications also include religious and ethical objections ("Calling abortion 'reproductive health' is intellectually dishonest and morally reprehensible. Taking a human life is murder whatever you call it."—Dr. Jack Graham,

November 22, 2020), legal and political opinions (“Those who are ok with killing babies are praying, if they even believe in God, for Ruth Bader Ginsburg to stay on the #SCOTUS as long as possible. This is why a Trump 2nd term is so important. Rep. Cotton, who's been named as a possible #SCOTUS stated today that #RoeVWade must go.”—Pastor Mark Burns, September 10, 2020), and calls for personal responsibility (“There are a number of unhappy and unintended consequences of sex beyond and before marriage.”—Dr. Jack Graham, September 30, 2017). Socioeconomic factors (“There is nothing in this world more valuable than a human life. This means, that regardless of race, gender, place of birth or socioeconomic status, every human life has intrinsic, unalienable, value. From the womb, all the way to the tomb, life is precious.”—Dr. Ronnie Floyd, January 17, 2021), emotional and psychological impacts of abortion (“Pro-life advocates and ministry leaders are challenging the results of a new study that found that most women do not suffer emotionally after an abortion, and that over time, they are less likely to express regret.”—Sealy Yates, January 24, 2020), and the influences of cultural norms (“@davidbadash @LouDobbs “Unrestricted abortion” and “a woman’s right to choose” mean abortion for any reason and at anytime [sic] in the pregnancy up until the baby is in birth canal of mother.”—Dr. Robert Jeffress, August 21, 2020) were also significant themes of the abortion discussion.

Finally, there are criticisms of abortion supporters (How to [sic] you reconcile being a Christian and supporter of the Democrat Party who promotes the murder of unborn babies. Just curious.—Pastor Mark Burns, August 13, 2020), advocacy for better support networks for pregnant mothers (“Proud of these student leaders from @Students4LifeHQ organizations from colleges & high schools who are extending hearts & hands of compassion to young women in crisis pregnancy. I truly believe this is the PRO-LIFE GENERATION in America.

#ProLifeGen”—Dr. Jack Graham, January 19, 2018), and reflections on male perspectives (RT @DrJamesDobsonFT: A Dad’s Greatest Life Pursuit | #FatherhoodChallenge #FamilyTalk”—Dr. James C Dobson, September 25, 2018) in the abortion debate.

Misunderstandings and misinformation about abortion procedures (“Thank you @realDonaldTrump for standing strong for the unborn and against the hideous acts of full term [sic] abortion! Thank you for standing for all Americans, our security, our economy, second chances, children with cancer, on & on! The State of the Union was brilliant and amazing!”—Paula White, February 6, 2019) and the consequences of abortion (“Abortion is traumatizing for every mother. Postpartum depression, shame, guilt, and sometimes even suicide can be a direct result. Dr. William Lile and Dr. Tim Clinton point post-abortive women to God’s redeeming grace for true healing.”—Dr. James C. Dobson, January 15, 2021) further complicates the discourse, but this is outside the scope of the current project.

The data shows that members of the advisory panel most often address abortion-related issues through the lenses of religious and ethical principles. Their messaging often emphasizes the sanctity of life and the moral implications surrounding abortion. They commonly advocate for restrictive abortion policies and frequently participate in public and media events to promote their pro-life stance. Their messaging also calls for prayers, spiritual reflections, and adherence to biblical teachings in response to abortion. Their discourse reflects their commitment to integrating their religious values into policy discussions on abortion.

Positive tweets focused on advocacy and supporting the mother during her pregnancy and frequently championed access to healthcare, medical, therapeutic, financial resources, and prenatal and post-natal support. Members of the advisory board also commended politicians for advancing pro-life policies and legislative actions emphasizing restrictions on reproductive rights. The successes of women who rose above challenging circumstances and decided to have their children and utilize pregnancy center resources were celebrated.

In contrast, negative sentiment focused heavily on moral and religious objections to abortion. These tweets often focused on the ethical and moral implications of abortion and the sanctity of life, reflecting the majority that opposed abortion on the religious grounds of murder. Elites frequently shared others' personal experiences related to abortion, delivering a narrative of psychological and emotional challenges faced by the choice to abort. Criticisms of government policies that did not do "enough" to restrict access to abortion were also prevalent, mirroring the broader evangelical dissatisfaction toward pro-life policies.

To determine whether followers interacted more with tweets with negative sentiment, I conducted a stratified sampling to analyze the executive communications with the most Twitter postings during the week of issuance. I chose the week with the most tweets surrounding a Trump executive communication. A stratified sampling of the week with the most tweets was a strategic choice, representing a period of peak engagement and providing a rich dataset that captured a wide range of opinions, reactions, and discussions. Dividing the data into meaningful strata—such as the week surrounding an executive communication—captured the full diversity of evangelical elites' engagement, preventing the sample from being skewed by dominant voices or topics. This approach ensured a balanced analysis that reflected the various dimensions of the discourse.

This method was particularly effective for sentiment analysis, as it proportionately represented different segments of the discourse, allowing for a more accurate assessment of the sentiments expressed. Stratified sampling helped identify shifts in tone and focus across the four themes of abortion, immigration, LGBTQIA+ issues, and race, providing a clearer picture of how sentiment fluctuated in response to specific events or announcements. By choosing the week with the most tweets, the study captured the most intense and varied expressions of sentiment, enhancing the reliability and depth of the analysis. This supported a deeper understanding of the overall communication strategies used by evangelical elites during this critical period.

From there, a sample of 2,495 tweets was harvested, and the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies were extracted for 150 interactions (one per year, with three interactions). Below, Figure 7.1 shows that out of 150 tweets, the most user interactions occurred, with 115 positive tweets (76.67%), 23 neutral tweets (15.33%), and 12 negative tweets (8.0%), rejecting the hypothesis that tweets with negative tone will receive more follower interactions. Positive tweets, particularly those emphasizing issues like abortion, garnered higher engagement of likes, retweets, and responses from their followers. Of the 150 tweets in the sample, 77% (or approximately 116) of the tweets with the most likes, retweets, and responses from followers had a positive tone. This surprising pattern suggests that, within this context, positive sentiment was more resonant and mobilizing for the followers of these religious leaders than negative sentiment.

Research has shown that negative content generally receives more interactions and visibility from followers (Bellovary et al., 2021; Jalali & Papatla, 2019; Lazarus & Thornton, 2021; Schöne et al., 2023). Harmful or provocative content generally garners

more interaction and visibility (Tsugawa & Ohsaki, 2015), sometimes by more than 200% (Rathje et al., 2021). The literature suggests that tweets with negative tones often generate higher engagement due to their provocative nature. Negative tweets often evoke strong emotional responses, prompting users to interact more frequently by liking, retweeting, or commenting. This phenomenon aligns with the idea that controversy or negativity draws more attention, leading to increased engagement metrics. Additionally, several studies have shown that negative tweets (in general) receive more interactions than positive tweets (Rowe, 2022). My study revealed that positive tweets (64% of interactions for elites not on Trump's panel and nearly 70% for elites on Trump's advisory panel) have a higher level of interaction. While there was some engagement with negative tweets, positive tweets received a far higher engagement. This finding directly challenges one of the study's third hypotheses, which suggested that negative tweets would receive more interactions in the form of likes, retweets, and responses from followers. One possible reason for this variance is that evangelical Christianity emphasizes hope, redemption, and the "power of positive thinking, (Graham, 2017). This cultural aspect influences the tone of their communications as they reflect the optimism of the faith. Additionally, there is biblical support for positivity, as Philippians 4:8 encourages believers to focus on what is true, honorable, and praiseworthy.

The discrepancy between my study's findings and the existing literature can be attributed to the unique context in which high-profile evangelical elites operate. Their alignment with Trump's advisory panel and shared ideological and theological perspectives with their followers create a distinct environment. In this context, positive messages from religious figures are more likely to resonate with their followers, leading to higher interaction rates for such tweets.

This outcome challenges the conventional understanding that negative content typically generates more engagement on social media. It suggests that in the discourse of high-profile evangelical elites, particularly around morally charged issues, positive affirmation of shared values and beliefs might be more potent in rallying their audience. This insight adds depth to the analysis, indicating that the emotional tone and issue salience are crucial factors in understanding engagement patterns within this community.

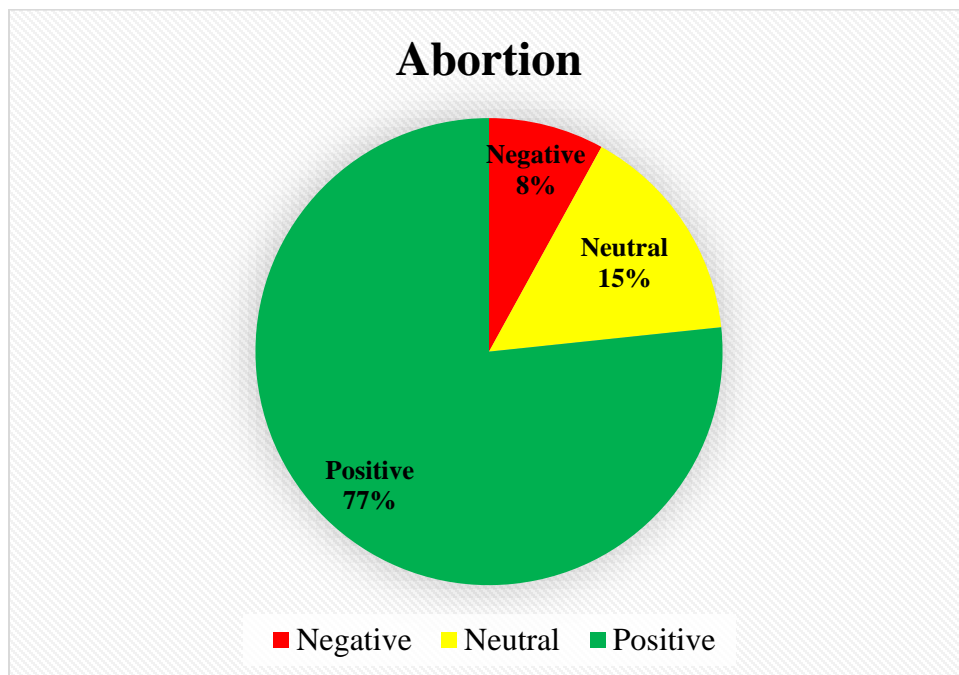


Figure 10: Sentiment Analysis of Abortion Tweets—Advisory

6.1.2 Non-Advisory Board

The dataset on tweets from high-profile religious elite not on Trump's advisory board issued in response to executive communications about abortion also provides insight into elite messaging on their Twitter/X account.

While the abortion debate similarly encompasses a wide range of themes and perspectives as the advisory panel, high-profile evangelicals who were not on Trump's advisory panel offered a wide variety of opinions on reproductive rights. Elites

channeled their opinions primarily through biblical teaching from Psalm 139 (“You formed my inward parts; You knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are Your works...” Ps. 139:13-14. Why is a Picasso valuable? Picasso painted it. Why are you of even greater value? God made you!”—Pastor Tony Perkins, August 22, 2020).

Many tweets focused on issues of the moral and ethical decline of society due to abortion (“Ultrasound as “stealth warfare”? Pro-abortion article defies science, rationality, and morality. #TheBriefing—Dr. Albert Mohler, January 15, 2017), and the use of abortion as a means of racism and genocide (“The Ralph Northam controversy is rightly drawing attention to the twin evils of racism and abortion. But even so, there is something here we shouldn’t miss. #NorthamResign”—Dr. Russell Moore, February 2, 2019).

Users expressed immense satisfaction with the Trump administration’s laws restricting access to abortion (“We must pray & work to end abortion until every child is welcomed into the world and protected under our laws. Today is a great first step.”—Pastor Tony Perkins, January 24, 2017, in response to the repeal of the Mexico City Policy). Many tweets expressed dissatisfaction with legislation surrounding access to reproductive care (Absolutely. And yet, Senate D's blocked @SenSasse's “unanimous consent” request to pass the Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act. This is unacceptable. Urge your senators to support this life saving bill.”—Pastor Tony Perkins, February 5, 2019) and condemned organizations that offered abortion, particularly when they received federal funding (“#Abortion giant #PlannedParenthood receives millions of dollars from #American taxpayers every year. The unspeakable evil has to stop. We must defend life. Sign our petition to defund Planned Parenthood.”—Dr. Jay Alan Sekulow, October 30, 2018).

Others expressed a deterioration of the family unit with a lack of sexual morality (“Abortion and the American conscience: 60 million dead, sacrificed at the altar of sexual freedom. #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, January 27, 2017). As an option, users called for alternatives to abortion through adoption (“An 18-year-old changes her mind as she's about to undergo an abortion, chooses adoption, and gives birth to a son who grows into a powerful voice for the unborn. Watch or read more of this powerful story”—Dr. Pat Robertson, August 1, 2020). And many members of the advisory board called for pregnant women to be supported throughout their pregnancy (“it's inappropriate to merely seek to end abortion; we must make it possible for women to become mothers, and we are proud to do that. -Join us on this observance of the Roe decision and throughout the year in praying to end abortion -#MarchForLife”—Dr. Rod Parsley, January 25, 2020).

As with the advisory panel, some tweets framed the reproductive rights discussion around supporting and protecting women (Where's "prenatal care" at @PPact? Meanwhile, the abortion industry demonizes pregnancy resource centers that do care for pregnant women.”—Dr. Russell Moore, January 25, 2017). Although there was not the support for exceptions of rape, incest, and the life of the mother, that was tangentially mentioned in tweets from the advisory board. Instead, tweets primarily focused on abortion as murder (“If someone kills an adult by dismembering their body, it's "murder." But when it's done to an unborn child, it's "health care." #diaobolical”—Dr. Steve Gaines, October 5, 2017).

The data shows that evangelical elites who were not on Trump’s advisory panel most often address abortion-related issues through the lenses of religious and ethical

principles. Their messaging emphasizes the sanctity of life and the moral implications surrounding abortion. They commonly advocate for restrictive abortion policies and frequently participate in public and media events to promote their pro-life stance. Their messaging also calls for prayers, spiritual reflections, and adherence to biblical teachings in response to abortion. Their discourse reflects their commitment to integrating their religious values into policy discussions on abortion.

In the non-advisory group, sentiments from the reflexive text analysis were categorized into positive (6,103 tweets—51.38%), neutral (4,241 tweets—35.70%), and negative (1,535 tweets—12.92%). Elites celebrated policies that restricted access to abortion and birth control. These tweets highlighted the perceived benefits of such policies, often framing them as measures that protect the sanctity of life and promote traditional family values. Users expressed their approval and support for political figures and officials who championed these restrictive policies, praising their efforts to uphold moral standards and protect the unborn.

Additionally, these tweets often supported and encouraged women who chose to use pregnancy and adoption resources provided by Christian counseling centers. They emphasized the importance of these centers in offering guidance, support, and alternatives to abortion. Many tweets shared stories of women who benefited from these resources, highlighting their positive experiences and successful outcomes through adoption or parenting with the help of these centers. The overall tone of the tweets was one of celebration and endorsement of these policies, officials, and support systems aligned with Christian values.

Members from the non-advisory sample also focused on moral and ethical objections to abortion. These tweets often emphasized the belief that abortion is morally wrong and unethical, citing religious or philosophical arguments about the sanctity of life. Users expressed deep

concerns about the protection of unborn children, viewing abortion as a violation of their right to life.

Furthermore, many tweets highlighted the emotional and psychological impact of abortion on women. These tweets shared personal stories or cited studies about the potential long-term emotional and mental health consequences that some women may experience after undergoing an abortion. The aim was to underscore the gravity of the decision and the potential for lasting trauma.

Criticisms of government policies that support or expand access to abortion were also prevalent in these tweets. Users voiced their dissatisfaction with lawmakers and political leaders who advocated for more permissive abortion laws. They argued that such policies undermine societal values and contribute to moral decline. The discontent expressed in these tweets indicated a broader societal concern with the direction of government policies related to abortion, reflecting a desire for more restrictive measures that align with their ethical and moral views. Overall, the negative tone in the non-advisory group conveyed strong opposition to abortion, both from a moral standpoint and in terms of concern for the well-being of women, while also criticizing governmental support for abortion access as indicative of a broader societal issue.

Comparing the sentiment of tweets between the advisory board and non-advisory board in the reflexive text analyses, the proportions of sentiment are very similar (52:51 positive; 36:36 neutral; 12:13 negative). In Figure 6.2, a quantitative data sampling was conducted from the week of the highest postings during an executive communication. To perform additional sentiment analysis, I chose the executive communications with the most social media interactions during the week of issuance. 3,812 tweets were pulled,

and the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies were extracted for 150 interactions (one per year, with three interactions). Out of 150 tweets, the most interactions occurred between followers and tweets with a positive tone. While there was some engagement with negative tweets, positive tweets received a far higher engagement. Figure 7.2 indicates that 89 tweets with a positive tone (59.33%) received the most interactions, followed by interactions with 47 negative tweets (31.33%) and 14 neutral tweets (9.33%).

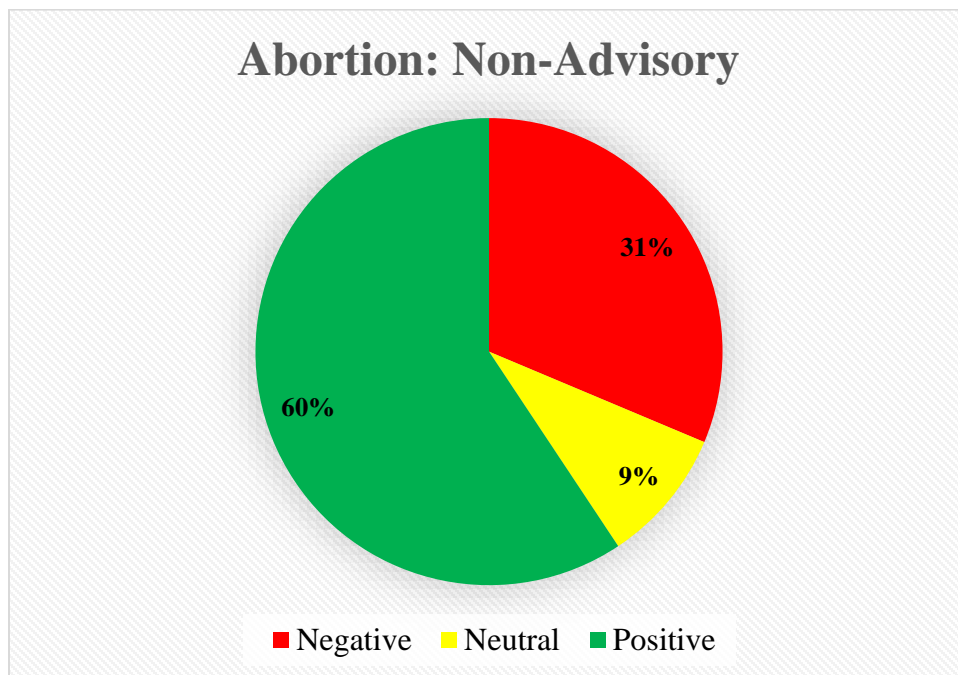


Figure 11: Sentiment Analysis of Abortion Tweets—Non-Advisory

Both the advisory and non-advisory groups express concerns about abortion policies, addressing the moral and ethical implications, as well as the emotional and psychological impact of abortion. Members of both groups articulated a shared unease regarding the current state of abortion laws and practices, emphasizing the immense personal, societal, and religious consequences they believe are associated with abortion.

However, the advisory group placed a slightly stronger emphasis overall on religious and moral concerns. Discourse often revolved around the belief that abortion is a sin and contradicts

their faith's teachings. Tweets frequently referenced religious texts, clergy statements, and spiritual doctrines to support their stance. They also engaged with news media platforms that align with their religious views, sharing content from religious leaders and faith-based organizations. Additionally, the advisory group often encouraged individuals facing pregnancy decisions to seek counsel from religious advisors and community leaders to ensure their choices align with their faith.

In contrast, the non-advisory group was more focused on the broader political implications of abortion. Their discussions were more centered on the perceived societal impact of abortion policies. This group more frequently critiqued government actions and policies that supported or expanded access to abortion and argued that such measures reflected and contributed to a broader moral and ethical decline in society. They also emphasized the political ramifications of abortion laws, discussing how these policies affect societal values and public health. The non-advisory group's discourse included concerns about the role of government in regulating abortion, advocating for policies that they believed would uphold moral standards and protect the sanctity of life. This distinction highlights the different approaches and priorities between the two groups in their discourse on abortion. While the advisory group's focus is deeply rooted in religious and moral perspectives, emphasizing spiritual guidance and media engagement aligned with their faith, the non-advisory group, while also deeply religious, adopted a broader ethical, societal, and political viewpoint, concentrating on the implications of abortion policies and the role of government in shaping these issues.

6.2 Immigration

Evangelical elites typically approach immigration issues through a lens of religious, moral, and ethical considerations. Their public discourse is characterized by appeals for prayer, calls for spiritual support, and a strong emphasis on moral principles. This group often critiques government policies from a religious perspective, arguing that current approaches may conflict with their belief system.

Their active participation in media and public forums is strategically aimed at voicing their concerns and advocating for policy changes that align with their spiritual values. By engaging in these platforms, evangelical elites seek to shape public discourse and policy to reflect their commitment to integrating faith with governance. Their rhetoric underscores dedication to maintaining moral integrity, especially in response to what they perceive as misaligned governmental practices under previous administrations. This approach highlights their belief in the necessity of faith-based perspectives in public policy and demonstrates their ongoing effort to influence and align immigration policies with their religious and ethical values.

6.2.1 *Advisory Board*

The dataset of tweets from Trump's advisory board released in response to his executive communications concerning immigration policy provides valuable insights into the board's reaction and the broader messaging strategies employed on their Twitter/X account.

Tweets with positive sentiment are distinguished by their enthusiastic endorsement of administrative actions (“Thank you, President Trump, for your executive action today ending family separation at the border. Now Congress must act to reform a broken system by allowing children to legally join parents, add more judges & immigration courts, & secure the border. @realDonaldTrump”—Dr. Ralph Reed, June 21, 2018) and their perceived effectiveness in

enhancing border security and national safety (“STRONGLY support WH plan protecting nuclear family & giving preference to spouses & children in immigration. Also trust fund for border security/Wall. This is a great plan.”—Dr. Ralph Reed, January 26, 2018).

Positive sentiment also focused on Trump’s executive orders (“Pres. Trump signs executive order he says will address problem of family separation at the border while maintaining aggressive border security. "I didn't like the sight or the feeling of families being separated."—Sealy Yates, June 20, 2018).

Other positive sentiments focus on the “right” way to become a citizen (“There’s nothing wrong or illegal with people approaching our border & applying for asylum. That doesn’t mean we have to receive everyone that comes but they certainly can apply. This is one of those ‘right ways’ that people can come...like Ted Cruz’s father when he sought asylum.”—Pastor Tony Suarez, October 22, 2018), particularly for children who immigrated with their parents (“Some may not like it but REALITY is that Grassley/Cornyn is only DACA fix that can pass Senate+House+Trump. DREAMERS can help by telling Dems to get on board, stop wasting time & ACTUALLY SUPPORT A BILL THAT CAN BE SIGNED INTO LAW. Let’s deliver certainty that DACA kids deserve”—Dr. Ralph Reed, February 24, 2018).

In this category, tweets frequently celebrate success stories of American excellence through inclusion (“Speech @POTUS gave @Davos today for the #WEF2020 was TREMENDOUS. Filled w/the pure data of American achievement, aspirational & inspirational, & complete w/faith. Demonstrating the unparalleled role we play in the world while showing that America FIRST never meant America ONLY”—Reverend Johnnie Moore, January 21, 2020). These narratives showcase the personal and

collective achievements that have been made possible through supportive and progressive immigration policies (I was pleased to speak this weekend with @NPRMichel on @npratc about the support of evangelicals for legislation that protects "dreamers." We must not let up on Congress..."—Reverend Johnnie Moore, February 12, 2018). These tweets underscore the broader social and economic benefits of welcoming immigrants ("It is common sense that our country would protect itself against illegal activity. Legal immigration is the goal. America is the most welcoming nation on earth. Christians especially embrace people from around the world. @realDonaldTrump is working to fix the problem. #unify"—Dr. Jack Graham, January 15, 2019), spotlighting success stories ("The President's measured proposal should have broad bipartisan appeal. We must put border security as our primary objective while realizing the countless ways legal immigrants and their families contribute to our country. I applaud the emphasis on immigration for nuclear families."—Dr. Jay Strack, May 17, 2019).

Additionally, elites commend specific governmental actions or policies viewed as fair and beneficial ("I'm thankful for @POTUS work to secure our borders. Both conservatives and liberals have always agreed that #immigrationreform must begin with border security. #SOTU"—Pastor Tony Suarez, February 5, 2020), or are, in general, complementary to the president ("Thank you Mr [sic] President @POTUS for responding to the immigration crisis with compassion and conviction. Your commitment to American values and security displays the character of your presidency"—Dr. Jack Graham, June 20, 2018). They reinforce the idea that immigration policies can be designed in an equitable and advantageous manner for the nation ("Our God is a God of order. He cares about people from every nation, but we have to ensure safety and order. We have to guard against illegal activity and provide a safe haven for those in need. #midterms"—Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, October 31, 2018). This perspective

supports the notion that well-structured immigration policies contribute positively to national interests (“the issuing of the same number of green cards which has proven to be valuable; the empathetic approach of trying to meet the immediate needs of those in our country while at the same time putting the emphasis on merit. We need a y’all, strong wall with a wide door on big hinges.”—Dr. Jay Strack, May 17, 2019), as well as the integration of immigrants into the fabric of society in ways that advance economic and social goals (Churches are rallying behind the families & children of undocumented immigrants following the recent U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids to help them out in their time of need. This is #community.”—Sealy Yates, August 18, 2019).

Negative sentiment predominantly centers on criticisms of current immigration policies and enforcement practices (“What’s really happening at southern border? This isn’t a manufactured crisis, this is a REAL crisis at there’s no one else to blame but our Congress which hasn’t acted on immigration legislation and border security in THIRTY YEARS! @newevangelicals”—Pastor Tony Suarez, August 19, 2019) as well as the Obama administration’s handling of immigration issues (“@mountain_goats For example, fed courts ruled Obama abused his power by declining to enforce immigration law.”—Dr. Ralph Reed, January 26, 2017). Other tweets reflected a broader sense of societal discontent and unease (“This is THE REAL REASON Democrats support open borders! I think most people don’t realize that, even if illegals can’t vote, they still are counted in the census and give left-leaning states more electoral votes. #buildthewall”—Jerry Falwell, Jr., January 2, 2019).

These tweets often articulated concerns about national security and public safety (“We've defended other countries [sic] borders while leaving our borders open for drugs into to enter our nation -@realDonaldTrump #JointAddress”—Pastor Mark Burns, March 1, 2017), raising questions about the effectiveness and consequences of existing immigration strategies (“For many Christians, the general idea we should seek to love, welcome and share the gospel with immigrants is not controversial, BUT the issue becomes much more difficult when considering how to respond to immigrants who are in the country illegally.”—Sealy Yates, September 18, 2019). They may challenge the government's approach to managing immigration, suggesting that it fails to address or mitigate risks adequately (“Will be with my good friend @LouDobbs tonight to discuss Democrat reckless endangerment of border security and Mitt Romney’s hypocritical attack against President @realDonaldTrump. Tune in at 6 and 9pm CT on @FoxBusiness.—Dr. Robert Jeffress, January 4, 2019).

The negative sentiment expressed in these tweets is frequently driven by personal experiences (“Congress this is your fault. You are the only ones that can fix our broken immigration system. People's lives and families are at stake. Too old for DACA, man who spent 30 years of his life in U.S. is deported <https://t.co/11rnzvZqBW> via @usatoday”—Pastor Tony Suarez, January 16, 2018) and societal anxieties regarding the perceived negative impacts of immigration (“Dems can’t Stand Merit Based Immigration because their plan is to just GIVE EVERYTHING AWAY for Free through Welfare. My Bible says you EARN by the SWEAT on your brow. Gen 3:19”—Pastor Mark Burns, January 31, 2018). Common grievances include concerns about the strain on public resources, such as healthcare and social services (“Democrats are not for AMERICAN CITIZENS. Dems just introduced a Bill to improve Healthcare for

illegal immigrants but not American citizens. If you love America and the American citizen, Vote @realDonaldTrump & @GOP in 2020.”—Pastor Mark Burns, September 29, 2019).

Overarching themes included fears about increased crime rates (“We need to pass the No Sanctuary for Criminals Act and #KatesLaw. Kate Steinle was murdered by 5 times deported illegal Juan Sanchez. #MAGA”—Pastor Mark Burns, June 29, 2017) or other issues that are thought to be linked to immigration (“The 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled Wednesday that the Trump administration can withhold millions in federal funding for law enforcement grants from sanctuary cities and states that don't cooperate with immigration enforcement.”—Sealy Yates, February 27, 2020).

Others expressed concern at unbiblical strategies for managing immigration policies (“Solving DACA without strengthening the borders ignores the teachings of the Bible.”—Dr. Robert Jeffress, February 13, 2018). Such tweets might highlight incidents or data used to argue against the current immigration policies, particularly when prioritizing American citizens (“Immigration is not the same as infiltration. Welcome everyone who truly wants a new way of life but not at the expense of safety/security”—Dr. Jack Graham, January 29, 2017).

The discourse within this category reveals a critical stance towards governmental actions and immigration strategies (“Our immigration laws are wrong. Our enforcement of those broken laws is wrong. Ignoring our broken laws is wrong. Jeff Sessions is wrong. Reelecting representatives who haven't addressed this issue for 30 years is wrong. “We the people” must demand better from our government.”—Pastor Tony Suarez, June 19, 2018), often fueled by more profound apprehensions about how

immigration affects societal stability and safety (“Important information on the proposed “New Way Forward Act.” The legislation “continues an awful trend of misplaced priorities -- of tolerating destructive behavior and letting it hurt honest citizens and destroy our society.”—Sealy Yates, February 16, 2020). This critical perspective reflects a broader dialogue about the perceived complexities associated with the intersection of politics and immigration (“I am considering a VETO of the Omnibus Spending Bill based on the fact that the 800,000 plus DACA recipients have been totally abandoned by the Democrats (not even mentioned in Bill) and the BORDER WALL, which is desperately needed for our National Defense, is not fully funded.”—Reverend Johnnie Moore, March 23, 2018), emphasizing a need for policy reassessment and reform to address these concerns (“The call on Congress to pass immigration reform is but a whisper compared to the loud & united voice we’ve had in recent weeks. Until advocates get as passionate demanding change from Congress as they do criticizing this administration the temporary patchwork will continue.”—Pastor Tony Suarez, June 22, 2018).

Recurring positive themes included praise for the perceived positive impacts of immigration reforms, such as enhanced national security and economic benefits. These tweets often highlighted success stories and positive outcomes related to immigration, showcasing immigrants' contributions to their communities and the nation. The overall tone of these tweets underscored a strong endorsement of the government's efforts to manage immigration effectively while emphasizing the benefits of these policies.

In contrast, tweets from high-profile evangelical elites frequently exhibited critical themes. They criticized the administration's immigration policies and enforcement measures and highlighted negative experiences or adverse effects resulting from these policies. Concerns about national security and public safety were prominent, with many expressing doubts about the

effectiveness of current immigration strategies. This critical discourse underscored a deep apprehension about the potential risks and societal impacts associated with the administration's approach to immigration.

As with abortion, while there was engagement with negative sentiment, positively worded tweets received a far higher engagement. A sample of 2,539 tweets was harvested from the week of the highest postings on X during a Trump executive communication on immigration. I scraped the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies from this dataset for 150 interactions (one per year, with three interactions). Figure 7.3 demonstrates that out of 150 tweets, there was the greatest number of interactions, with 97 positive tweets (64.67%), 23 neutral tweets (15.33%), and 30 negative tweets (20.0%). As stated earlier, previous research indicates that messaging with negative sentiment receives more interactions. However, this disparity could be related to evangelical elites wishing to build a positive brand and avoid controversy. Similarly to other public figures, elites know that their personal and organizational branding is vital to their relevance. A positive tone helps build a favorable public image, attracts followers, and increases engagement on social media (Ellison et al., 2007). Additionally, positive language could be a way to avoid losing followers or provoking a backlash, as a negative tone can sometimes lead to divisive reactions from followers—both with the post of the tweets and between followers (Shirky, 2011).

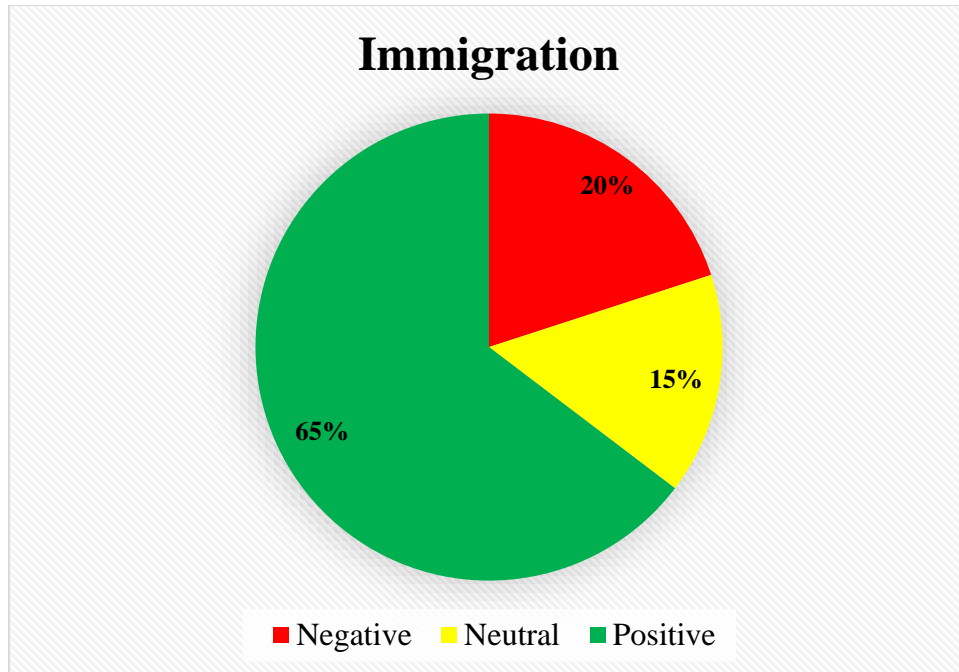


Figure 12: Sentiment Analysis of Immigration Tweets—Advisory

6.2.2 Non-Advisory Panel

Similar to their advisory board counterparts, high-profile evangelical elites who were not on Trump’s advisory board expressed similar positive and negative opinions as members on the advisory board to Trump’s executive communications on immigration. They also addressed immigration through religious, moral, and ethical considerations. Their messaging often included appeals for prayer and spiritual support, a strong emphasis on moral principles, and critiques of previous and current government policies. They voiced concerns for policy changes, attempted to integrate faith in governance, and emphasized moral integrity while promoting American interests. This approach highlights their belief in the necessity of faith-based perspectives in public policy and their effort to influence immigration policies according to their religious and ethical values.

Many high-profile evangelical elites endorse administrative actions, as well as call for citizens’ support of the new orders (“President Trump’s new Executive Order is designed to

protect our national security. We must defend it. <https://t.co/1yvsvrHRJIH> #JayLive—Dr. Jay Sekulow, March 6, 2017) and their perceived effectiveness in enhancing border security and national safety, as well as fulfilling moral obligations (“Glad to see that the Administration is listening to Americans on the moral atrocity of separating children from parents at the border. This is a good first step. Now let’s fix this system. We can have security while still showing compassion to those fleeing violence.”—Dr. Russell Moore, June 20, 2018). Positive sentiment also focused on Trump’s executive orders (“Great to see @POTUS taking action against sanctuary cities shielding criminal illegal aliens.”—Senator Marsha Blackburn, January 26, 2017).

Other positive sentiment focus on the “right” way to become a citizen (“@civislibertus @Reuters @topixkim Might that be because we had a reasonable path to citizenship?”—Shane Claiborne, November 26, 2018), particularly for children who immigrated with their parents (“The Dreamer issue is important, and it's well past time for Congress to find a reasonable solution to protect those who were brought to our country as children. @GalenCarey @bryantwright @dandaring will you join me in the #PowerToAct challenge? #Dreamers #DACA”—Dr. Russell Moore, December 13, 2017). Others encourage social media followers to consider the impacts of immigration policies through a biblical lens (“How should Christians think biblically about President Trump’s latest Executive Order on refugees? #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, January 30, 2017).

Tweets frequently celebrate support for keeping immigrant families together (“The 800,000 covered by #DACA are exactly the kind of immigrants we want in this country #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, September 6, 2017). These narratives

showcase the personal and collective achievements made possible through supportive and progressive immigration policies (“Encouraged to see the White House framework for Dreamers. I’m especially glad it outlines a path to citizenship. This is a good starting point for Congress to get to work and pass a permanent solution.”—Dr. Russell Moore, January 25, 2018). These tweets underscore the broader social benefits of welcoming immigrants (“One man welcomes #refugees with open arms by opening a coffee shop in his church.”—Dr. Charles Stanley, March 3, 2017) by spotlighting success stories (“Refugees & Robots: Church Helps Young Immigrants Find American Dream: <https://t.co/TLSSGP7UhM> #CBNNews”—Dr. Pat Robertson, March 19, 2017).

Additionally, high-profile elite commends specific governmental actions or policies viewed as fair and beneficial (President Trump issued an executive order today that will compassionately keep families together while upholding the rule of law. However, this should not lessen the pressure for Congress to come together to overhaul our immigration system and secure our borders.—Pastor Tony Perkins, June 20, 2018). Messaging reinforces the idea that immigration policies can be designed in a manner that is equitable and advantageous for the nation as a whole (The Lord of Armies says this: ‘Make fair decisions. Show faithful love & compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the resident alien or the poor & do not plot evil in your hearts against one another. But they refused to pay attention and turned a...’—Beth Moore, July 16, 2020). This perspective supports the notion that well-structured immigration policies contribute positively to national interests (“‘In light of the attack from the Invisible Enemy, as well as the need to protect the jobs of our GREAT American Citizens, I will be signing an Executive Order to temporarily suspend immigration into the United States!’”—Shane Claiborne, April 21, 2020), as well as the integration of immigrants into

the fabric of society per biblical admonitions (“‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me.’ -Jesus #FamiliesBelongTogether #FamiliesBelongTogetherMarch”—Shane Claiborne, June 30, 2018).

Negative sentiment predominantly centers on criticisms of current immigration policies from within the administration (“Trump attacks protections for immigrants from ‘shithole’ countries in Oval Office meeting - The Washington Post”—Shane Claiborne, January 11, 2018) and from other agencies’ policies that conflict with administration’s demands (“California is flat-out violating the #Constitution. It's circumventing federal immigration law and the @ACLJ won't stand for this. It's why we're taking action in federal court.”—Dr. Jay Sekulow, March 28, 2018). Many high-profile evangelical elites continue to hold negative sentiment toward the Obama administration’s handling of immigration issues (“Typical "compassion" by radical left Obama admin. Pushed policies that hurt our country and people, to help so called "immigrants." USA 1st!”—Bishop E.W. Jackson,). Other tweets reflected a broader sense of societal discontent and unease (“Whatever we do to show compassion toward illegals brought here as children, should be within Constitution & law. DACA is neither.”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, September 4, 2017) and with treatment of those entering the united states, particularly unaccompanied minors, (“The Trump administration is forcing children as young as toddlers to represent themselves in immigration courts”—Shane Claiborne, July 4, 2018).

One member, Bishop E.W. Jackson, was particularly critical regarding his concerns about immigration, national security, and public safety (What about this do leftists not understand? No American should face danger at the hands of a person who has no right to be in our country in the first place. If we enforced immigration laws,

Mollie Tibbets would be alive—Bishop E.W. Jackson, August 22, 2018), raising questions about the effectiveness and consequences of existing immigration strategies (Democrat elites will treat murder of Mollie Tibbets with cold disregard because their position is that illegal aliens are more law abiding than Americans. BUT THEY DON'T BELONG HERE! PERIOD!—Bishop E.W. Jackson, August 22, 2018). High profile-elites often challenge the government's approach to managing immigration, suggesting that it fails to address or mitigate risks adequately, especially when there is a sentiment that there isn't priority given to Americans (“@crabbymoderate @army1man1 @FoxNews American citizens do wrong. Why? Weak, ignorant, evil? Still, they belong here. Illegal aliens don't.—Bishop E.W. Jackson, February 27, 2017).

The negative sentiment expressed in these tweets is frequently driven by personal experiences (“Deport "pushers" not pastors. #Pastor NoeCarias served his community for 35 years. Let's reunite him now with US citizen wife and children.”—Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, July 25, 2017) and societal anxieties regarding the perceived negative impacts of immigration (“Illegal "Unaccompanied minors" allowed into country? Many were MS-13 gang members who terrorized people. Trump admin. taking action.”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, June 20, 2017). Common grievances include concerns about the strain on public resources, such as healthcare and social services (“Immigration is a federal issue, yet sanctuary cities are threatening lawsuits in defiance of Pres. Trump. <https://t.co/ancjhn1WHT> #JayLive--Jay Sekulow, January 26, 2017).

Overarching themes included fears about increased crime rates (“362 lbs. of narcotics captured yesterday in one border patrol operation. CA Gov. Moonbeam & others should be prosecuted for aiding drug dealers and endangering our citizens. Build that wall! #Jackson4Senate”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, April 10, 2018). Other tweets expressed the horrors of the immigration crisis and the necessity for legislative action (“No one needs to manipulate

the truth to horrify Americans about the immigration situation. There are more than enough nightmarish stories to compel anyone to act -- and we should..."—Pastor Tony Perkins, June 23, 2018).

Others expressed immense frustration ("I implore both Republicans and Democrats to reason together and solve our immigration crisis. Please, for the love of all that is decent, FIX THIS! #EnoughIsEnough—Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, June 26, 2019) and concern at the immorality of some of Trump's executive orders on immigration ("Killing #DACA and threatening to deport 800,000 #Dreamers is not just an insult to immigrants. It is a sin against God."—Shane Claiborne, September 7, 2017), while also expressing deep philosophical concern about immigration policies ("Do #refugees have the same rights at US citizens? I'll be on @foxandfriends at 6:15am ET to discuss:..."—Dr. Jay Sekulow, January 30, 2017). Such tweets might highlight scripture or utilize ethical debates to question immigration policies (@foxandfriends, @TheRevAl 'Jesus was a refugee' is a typical liberal red herring, nothing to do with #immigration"—Bishop EW Jackson, February 1, 2017), particularly those related to asylum seekers ("BREAKING: U.S. fires tear gas at asylum seekers, including children, closes part of border at Tijuana."—Shane Claiborne, November 18, 2018).

The discourse within this category reveals that many evangelicals, in general, hold some apprehension related to immigration policies, often fueled by more profound apprehensions from ignoring biblical principles ("‘I was a stranger and you did not welcome me.’ (Mt 25)"—Shane Claiborne, November 25, 2018). This critical perspective reflects a broader dialogue about the perceived complexities associated with the intersection of politics and immigration (Pray for people of all nations and races.

Pray that God would break down the wall of hostility that may separate us. And bring real and lasting peace by means of Jesus Christ death on the cross. #714Harvest—Pastor Greg Laurie, June 13, 2020), emphasizing a need for policy reassessment and reform to address these concerns (“Immigrants, & those fleeing from persecution, are not political ideas. They bear the image of a God who sees and knows those the world would deem invisible & ignorable. Many are our brothers and sisters in Christ; the rest are our mission field, loved by God (Jn. 3:16”—Dr. Russell Moore, October 30, 2018).

Many tweets contained supportive sentiments toward more rigid immigration policies (“As the next US Senator from Virginia, I will oppose any “pathway to citizenship” for illegal immigrants. PERIOD! It’s the only way we are going to discourage illegal crossing of our borders. #Jackson4Senate—Bishop E.W. Jackson, April 3, 2018) or other actions related to immigration (“The president knows we must fix our asylum system. The U.S. cannot serve as a safe haven for those truly in need of asylum if resources are diverted toward frivolous claims and other, less pressing immigration needs.”—Pastor Tony Perkins, May 17, 2019). Others highlighted successful policies (“.@realDonaldTrump's immigration proposal recognizes that families are the building block of society. By prioritizing keeping nuclear families together, this plan is pro-family.”—Pastor Tony Perkins, May 17, 2019), positive impacts of immigration policies (“Why any sane nation must have an immigration policy that protects its borders and defines its own citizenship. #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, October 24, 2018), and commendations for efforts made by authorities in toughening immigration standards. There are several tweets of support for President Trump’s stricter immigration policies (“POTUS vows to ‘protect the security & interests of the U.S. and its people.’ His Executive Order on #immigration does just that. #JayLive”—Jay Sekulow, September 25, 2017).

Some users tweeted support for policies that maintained the family unit (“We need an immigration policy that is truly just, fair, family friendly, and enforceable. If there is a silver lining, all this has brought much needed attention to the immigration issue. I am hopeful that all sides may finally come to the table and negotiate a solution.—Pastor Tony Perkins, June 20, 2018). Some expressed their concern for immigrants as related to Christian principles (““Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.’ –Hebrews 13:2 #Bible”—Dr. Charles Stanley, August 28, 2020). Others discussed outreach events designed to draw attention to those attempting to enter the United States (““Red Letter Christians are headed to the border today... Because Jesus said, ‘When you welcome the stranger, you welcome me.’ And when we put kids in cages, we do it unto Him. #MoralMonday”—Shane Claiborne, July 29, 2019).

Despite the many neutral and negative tweets, positively worded tweets received a higher engagement. A sample of 4,052 tweets was harvested from the week of the highest postings on X during a Trump executive communication on immigration. I scraped the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies from this dataset for 150 interactions (one per year, with three interactions).

Common themes included policy support, economic benefits, human interest stories, and praise for government actions. Conversely, other tweets focused on criticisms of immigration policies, negative experiences, and national security and public safety concerns. Common themes in negative tweets included policy criticism, humanitarian concerns, security risks, and economic burdens. Out of 150 tweets, Figure 7.4 shows that positive tweets had the most sizable interactions, with 90 positive tweets (60.00%), 22 neutral tweets (14.67%), and 38 negative tweets (25.33%).

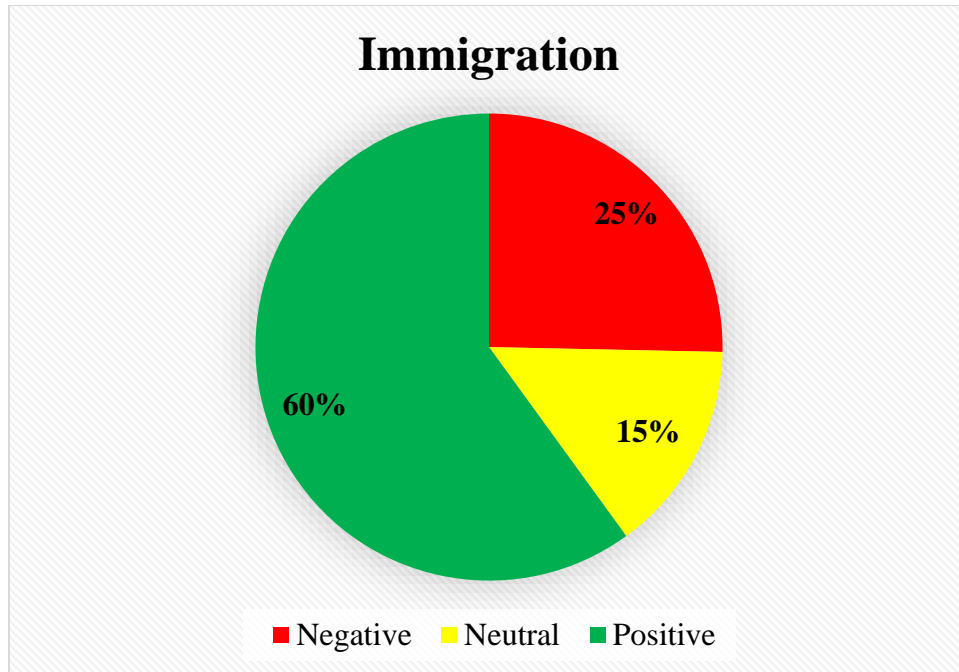


Figure 13: Sentiment Analysis of Immigration Tweets—Non-Advisory

High-profile evangelical elites interpreted immigration through deeply rooted religious and moral convictions and ethical concerns tied to personal safety and national security. Their public discourse often included calls for prayer for leaders, seeking divine guidance and support for policymakers. Some also encouraged followers to provide spiritual support to immigrants, viewing them as individuals deserving of dignity and compassion as prescribed by their religious beliefs. However, this perspective was primarily seen among elites, not on Trump’s advisory panel.

Both groups frequently critiqued government policies from religious, moral, and ethical standpoints, arguing that many current approaches contradicted their convictions. They highlighted biblical teachings in the Old and New Testaments on hospitality and care for the stranger, using these principles to challenge policies they perceived as harsh or unjust. Their criticisms were intertwined with their understanding of Christian duty and morality despite a

vocal minority advocating for the strictest forms of immigration control and deportation measures.

Evangelical elites articulated their objections to specific immigration policies and advocated for alternatives that aligned more closely with their spiritual values. They employed rhetoric that reflected a commitment to integrating faith with public policy discussions, emphasizing spiritual resilience and moral rectitude. Their messaging often included calls to action, such as urging congregations to support immigrant communities through charitable work and lobbying efforts. They also emphasized the need for policies that upheld the family unit and protected human rights. They provided pathways to legal status, arguing that such measures were consistent with their faith's teachings on justice and mercy.

Both groups engaged in comprehensive discourse on various aspects of immigration, encompassing critical evaluations of government policies, national security, public safety concerns, and the impact on economic resources and public services. These tweets conveyed dissatisfaction with current immigration policies and apprehension about their broader societal implications. The discourse predominantly centered on the perceived adverse consequences of immigration, highlighting challenges such as increased strain on public resources, potential threats to national security, and the overall impact on public services. This critical perspective reflected unease about the efficacy of existing immigration strategies and their ability to safeguard national interests and maintain societal stability—particularly where unaccompanied minors were involved.

Overall, evangelical elites' rhetoric on immigration reflected their religious faith and desire for ethical immigration policies. It underscored their belief in the importance of moral

leadership in political matters and their dedication to ensuring that the nation's laws and policies were consistent with their spiritual values and ethical principles.

6.3 LGBTQIA+

High-profile evangelical elites have utilized social media platforms like X (formerly Twitter) to voice their perspectives on LGBTQIA+ issues, often generating substantial public discourse and controversy. They frequently post about their opposition to LGBTQIA+ rights, framing their arguments within a religious and moral context. These posts often condemn same-sex marriage, transgender rights, and the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ topics in educational curricula, citing biblical principles as their foundation. Conversely, these figures sometimes face backlash from LGBTQIA+ advocates and allies who criticize their messages as discriminatory and harmful. The visibility and influence of evangelical leaders on X amplified their reach, impacting public opinion and political discourse surrounding LGBTQIA+ rights. This dynamic interplay on social media highlights the ongoing cultural and ideological battles between conservative religious values and the push for greater LGBTQIA+ acceptance and equality.

6.3.1 Advisory Board

The dataset of tweets from Trump's advisory board, released in response to his executive communications concerning the LGBTQIA+ community, offers valuable insights into the board's reactions and broader messaging strategies on Twitter/X.

Overarching themes from high-profile evangelical elites on Trump's advisory panel included a strong emphasis on protecting religious freedoms as Christians, defending the sanctity of marriage, and preserving the traditional family unit. They consistently advocated for policies and actions to safeguard their ability to practice and express their faith without government

interference. The protection of the sanctity of marriage often centered around opposition to same-sex marriage, with elites arguing that marriage should be defined exclusively as a union between one man and one woman. Additionally, they stressed the importance of preserving the family unit, often framing it as the cornerstone of society and advocating against policies they perceived as undermining traditional family values. These themes consistently highlighted their commitment to promoting a conservative Christian worldview within the political landscape. Certain users seem to focus on particular issues like other datasets and monopolize the conversation related to a specific problem.

While this dataset was much smaller than others in this research, communications focused primarily on the observance of religious freedoms. Many statements applauded Donald Trump (“Aren't you glad that President @realDonaldTrump fights for religious freedom in America?”—Pastor Mark Burns, September 23, 2019) and his support of religious freedoms for evangelicals (“Two reasons many of us who are evangelical Christians support President Trump is his support of religious freedom & his commitment to a conservative Supreme Court. This week we've seen 2 exceptional examples in the release of Pastor Brunson and the investiture of Judge Kavanaugh”—Dr. Jack Graham, October 12, 2018).

While some were angered at the cessation of business travel to states that passed anti-discrimination laws (“On Monday, California Attorney General announced that state employees would soon be banned from taking publicly-funded trips to Idaho because of two recently passed laws that it deems as ‘anti-transgender’.”—Sealy Yates, June 25, 2020); others hailed judicial outcomes that protected businesses who refused to offer services to members of the LGBTQIA+ community were celebrated (“Today #SCOTUS guaranteed reelection of Pres. @realDonaldTrump by protecting religious right of baker to not participate in a gay wedding.

@POTUS promised to protect religious liberty. This is the most consequential ex. of "promise made, promise kept." Thank you, President Trump!"—Dr. Robert Jeffress, June 4, 2018). Others informed followers of changes in federal law to include employment rights for individuals ("What you need to know about the Bostock Case. #ReligiousFreedom #LGBTQ"—Sealy Yates, June 23, 2020) as well as changes to include sexual orientation and gender identity into the 1964 Civil Rights Act ("Monday's decision is not likely to be the court's last word on a host of issues revolving around LGBTQ rights."—Sealy Yates, June 15, 2020). Many evangelicals felt as if anyone supporting their religious freedoms and traditional family values were under attack (Mayor @PeteButtigieg, Democratic candidate for president, is attacking @VP for his stand w/the Word of God. I have such a great respect for the Vice President, for his leadership in our nation, for his personal integrity, & for his Christian faith. 1/3 <https://t.co/jl7g1VvlCn> ..."—Dr. Ralph Reed, April 11, 2019).

Some expressed financial concerns for religious organizations ("In 1983 Supreme Court revoked religious school's tax exempt [sic] status for racial discrimination. Today, SC equated race with sexual choices and opened door to tax churches/schools that do not hire gay leaders (in spite of 2012 ruling)."—Dr. Robert Jeffress, June 15, 2020). Others focused on leftist agendas as the culprit for the attack ("@renee_torie A liberal feminist and a gay conservative spoke out and found some common ground on the #EqualityAct—they agree it's bad news."—Sealy Yates, May 21, 2019), particularly when referencing President Trump ("It is not an accident than during the week our President gave an historic message on religious freedom that he would be viciously attacked by the leftist socialist movement in America and those who support its anti-God agenda The fight for freedom is on full force."—Dr. Jack Graham, September 26, 2019). Others expressed concern about changes in Title IX that permitted trans women to participate in

women's sports ("In May, the DOE ruled that a Connecticut policy allowing biologically male, transgender athletes to compete in women's sports violated Title IX, which protects women's access to education and athletics."—Sealy Yates, June 20, 2020).

Others were certain their religious freedoms to access information were censored ("Amazon has banned a publishing company from purchasing ads to promote a new book critical of transgender ideology. The book points out its many harms on young girls. #Censorship"—Sealy Yates, June 23, 2020). Concerns were especially strident during the presidential campaign between Biden and Trump (Biden told the nation's largest LGBT advocacy group Wednesday he will appoint "pro-equality judges" to the federal judiciary and will make it a "top priority" to pass the Equality Act if elected president. #PrayThinkVote"—Sealy Yates, April 8, 2020), as well as legal changes and elites appealed to users to protect religious freedoms by voting in elections ("Today I urge all nations to join us in this moral duty" to protect religious freedom. - @realDonaldTrump #UNGA #ReligiousFreedom—Dr. Ralph Reed, September 23, 2019).

Biblical marriage between a man and a woman was a common theme. Many users tweeted their support of traditional marriage ("Lord, thank You for the intimacy that my spouse and I share. May we be quick to recognize and reject popular values that offend You and our marriage commitment. Amen."—Dr. James C. Dobson, June 2, 2018), and the need to protect children from outside influences ("As children's media begins to experience a growing LGBTQ presence, Christian filmmakers and producers will have to discuss these issues from a biblical perspective."—Sealy Yates, August 18, 2019). Evangelical elite applauded political leaders who were supportive of traditional marriage (".@CoryBooker: 'You do not believe it's appropriate for two gay people to marry?' Mike Pompeo: 'Senator, I continue to hold that view.'"—Dr. Jack Graham, April 12, 2018), and others were concerned by outside influences on church teachings

(“Pastors are feeling the pressure, but that doesn't mean they are ready to change their sermons. The issues pastors feel most pressured to speak out on are the same ones they feel limited to speak on,” with LGBT issues and same-sex marriage at the top.”—Sealy Yate, April 8, 2019).

Conversely, other users delighted in the downfall of those who supported marriage equality (“The Republican congressman who could get booted for officiating a gay wedding – POLITICO” —Jerry Falwell, Jr., June 13, 2020) while others were concerned that tax dollars and federal funds and subsidized healthcare might go to care for those in the LGBTQIA+ community (“Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden said Saturday he supports a nationwide ban on conversion therapy for those who have unwanted same-sex desires, and he also believes Obamacare should cover sex-reassignment surgery.”—Sealy Yates, September 24, 2019).

There was vehement opposition to political leaders who attacked conservative politicians with traditional marriage ideals (“I am on "Fox News @ Night" with Shannon Bream soon to discuss Mayor Pete Buttigieg's attack on @VP Pence and Evangelical Christians for their belief in traditional marriage. Tune into Fox News tonight at 11pm ET/10pm CT.—Dr. Robert Jeffress, April 9, 2019), as well as those politicians whom they felt jeopardized their religious freedoms (“In a recent interview, New York’s first openly gay congressman, Sean Maloney, referred to religious liberty as a ‘bogus term’ to discriminate those in the LGBTQ community.”—Sealy Yates, June 18, 2020). There was concern of an attack on the family unit as a whole (“From the beginning to the end, this debate was never driven by any serious consideration of what’s good for women and children, but by “heartstrings rhetoric, celebrity endorsement,” and especially, gay-rights advocates.”—Sealy Yates, April 17, 2020). And elites often used biblical inspiration for their viewpoint (“If Pete Buttigieg has problem w/@VP belief in traditional marriage, his quarrel is w/Jesus who said “From the beginning God made them

male and female...For this cause a man shall leave his father & mother & shall cleave to his wife, & the two shall become one flesh (Matt. 19:4-5)”—Dr. Robert Jeffress, April 8, 2019). While others were concerned that ideals within the church were under attack (It’s been pretty quiet since the United Methodist Church made its decision to strengthen its ban on gay clergy and same sex marriage in Late February. Now, those in opposition are plotting their way out.”—Sealy Yates, April 5, 2019).

From 2017-2021, comparatively speaking to other issues in this study, high-profile evangelical elites on Trump’s advisory board issued relatively few tweets surrounding the week of the issuance of executive communications related to LGBTQIA+ issues. I scraped the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies from this dataset for 120 interactions (one per year, with three interactions).

Figure 7.5 below indicates that the majority were positive, with 86 positive tweets (71.67%), five neutral tweets (4.16%), and 29 negative tweets (24.17%).

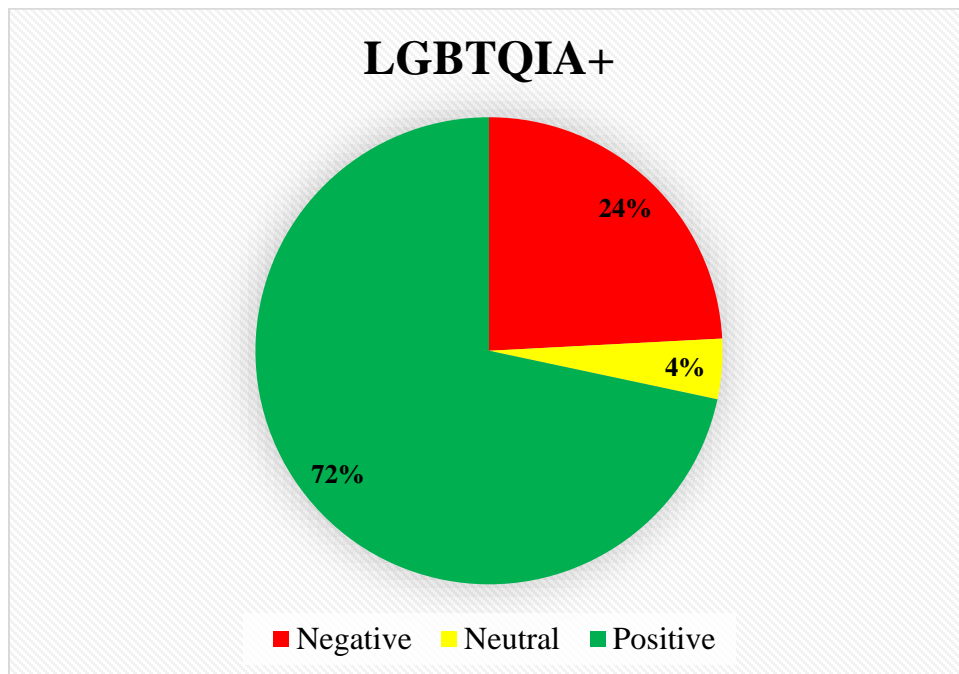


Figure 7.5: Sentiment Analysis of LGBTQIA+ Tweets—Advisory

Common themes in positive tweets included support for religious freedom, opposition to anti-discrimination laws and the "gay agenda," and endorsement of traditional family values. These positive tweets praised policies aligning with evangelical beliefs and commended the administration and other politicians who upheld and supported these values.

In contrast, negative tweets commonly criticized policies, expressed concerns about religious freedoms, opposed education policy changes, and reinforced the importance of upholding the gender binary. They often targeted politicians perceived as unsupportive, condemned anti-discrimination laws, highlighted instances of religious persecution, and voiced fears about LGBTQIA exposure in education and popular culture.

6.3.2 Non-Advisory Panel

High-profile evangelical elites reinforced their commitment to a conservative Christian worldview by emphasizing similar themes in their social media communications as elites on Trump's advisory board. A primary focus was protecting religious freedoms, often highlighting perceived threats to their ability to practice and express their faith. Concerns with gender expression frequently surface, with elites advocating for traditional gender roles and opposing policies that they believe undermine these roles. While maintaining a biblical lens, the main difference is that there seems to be a philosophical and ethical approach to understanding gender. Opposition to same-sex marriage is also prominent, rooted in the belief that marriage should be defined strictly as a union between one man and one woman. Traditional family values are a recurrent theme, emphasizing preserving the conventional family structure as a cornerstone of society. Additionally, there is significant concern about anti-discrimination laws perceived as restrictive to their religious freedoms, arguing that such laws infringe upon their rights to live out their faith in public and private spheres.

The dataset of tweets from the comparative high-profile evangelical elite, issued during the week of Trump's executive communications concerning the LGBTQIA+ community, offers valuable insights into the philosophical, ethical, and religious complexities faced in debating gender and sexuality. These communications underscore the panel's active engagement with this issue, reflecting the broader debates and tensions within the evangelical community.

There is vocal opposition to marriage equality (“Judicial activists (liberals) decide the outcome and then shred the Constitution to arrive at that outcome. That's how we got gay marriage.”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, February 1, 2017). While religious elites simultaneously defend traditional family values (“French Parliament Debates IVF Technology for Those Outside Heterosexual Marriage: Why the Presence of a Father Is So Important in the Life of a Child #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, September 26, 2019) with emphatic support for those in traditional marriages (“One marriage, one family, under God. Indivisible is coming to theaters October 26. Get tickets now at <https://t.co/I4abZYJKjM> <https://t.co/n8dGJeUdqE...>” —Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, October 11, 2018); others are concerned that the gender revolution has significant impacts on the family unit (“A Sign of Strange Times: Federal Government Assigns Gender to Baby Whose Parents Wanted to Raise Him in a “Gender Creative” Way #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, September 27, 2019).

There is a passionate belief and mistrust of the existence of an LGBTQIA+ agenda (“Only one long term trajectory? Why the long-term view of the LGBT revolutionaries is not long enough. #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, August 28, 2018), as well as intense expressions of disdain toward those are gay (“Who is Don Lemon to say that Kanye West acts like a “minstrel show”? Don Lemon is confused on several levels. He is beloved by liberals because he touts their line and plays the gay black card. And Kanye needs help? Please!

<https://t.co/58yScZ5pjQ...>” –Bishop E.W. Jackson, October 12, 2018). Others express concern that a redefining of gender is putting our society at risk (“Is everything biological or is nothing biological? LGBT advocates argue both ways. Examining the ‘science’ of transgenderism and sexual identity. Today on #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, June 29, 2018), and conveys delight when sheep come back to the fold (“In the Bible, the rainbow stands as a covenant between God and mankind. But for more than 40-years, the LGBT community has used the rainbow as a symbol of its movement. Now, one former transgender is on a mission to take it back.” [https://t.co/S5YLU4HYbb ...](https://t.co/S5YLU4HYbb...)”—Dr. Pat Robertson, September 26, 2019).

Many express anxiety that anti-discrimination laws will infringe upon personal religious freedoms for evangelicals (Today #SCOTUS ruled that Title VII protections for sex include sexual orientation and gender identity, which has seismic implications for religious liberty. Here is my response: russellmoore.com/2020/06/15/...”—Dr. Russell Moore, June 15, 2020), others suggest a loss of religious freedom would be disastrous in a workplace setting (Not satisfied with Pompeo’s pledge to treat everyone with respect and dignity, Sen. Booker demanded an endorsement of gay sex. Is this the Left’s new litmus test for public service? washingtonexaminer.com/opini...”—Pastor Tony Perkins, April 12, 2018). Others are concerned that courts cannot maintain religious neutrality (“Whatever the confluence of speech and free exercise principles might be in some cases, the Colorado Civil Rights Commission’s consideration of this case was inconsistent with the State’s obligation of religious neutrality.” #SCOTUS Masterpiece Cakes decision today.”—Dr. Albert Mohler, June 4, 2018). Currently, exists a small but vocal minority that draws attention to personal rights and freedoms (“When people hear the word "evangelical", they think -- anti-gay, anti-feminist, anti-environment, pro-guns, pro-war, and pro-capital punishment. We often look very unlike our Christ. We need a

Christianity that looks like Jesus again. #StillEvangelical? <https://t.co/hHSXCrintP> ...”--Shane Claiborne, January 25, 2018).

Others applaud the administration (“President Trump calls for repeal of Johnson Amendment to ensure religious freedom. #nationalprayerbreakfast—Tony Perkins, February 2, 2017) for protecting religious freedoms. Legal decisions protecting religious freedoms are celebrated on an individual (Supreme Court sides with Colorado baker who refused to make a wedding cake for same-sex couple | Fox News <https://t.co/ZatDrGUnA5> ...”--Steve Gaines, June 14, 2018), as well as state (“Judge Walker's recent opinion in a KY church case is essential reading for anyone who wants a blueprint for defending religious freedom under today’s challenges.”—Pastor Tony Perkins, May 6, 2020), and federal levels (“Very significant: The Supreme Court vacates the lower court ruling against Southern Baptist florist Barronelle Stutzman, to be reconsidered in light of the Masterpiece Cakes decision.—Dr. Russell Moore, June 25, 2018).

Many express concern that anti-discrimination policies will adversely affect society (“The @SCOTUS decision today on LGBTQ and discrimination is an absolute disaster. Will discuss thoroughly tomorrow on #TheBriefing — huge issues that will extend throughout American society.”—Dr. Albert Mohler, June 15, 2020). Others feel that gender identity and sexual orientation are used as excuses for entitlements by LGBTQIA+ individuals (“Allowing judges to rewrite the Civil Rights Act to add gender identity & sexual orientation as protected classes poses a grave threat to religious liberty. We've already witnessed courts use the redefinition of words as a battering ram to crush faith-based businesses and orgs.”—Pastor Tony Perkins, June 15, 2020). While the place of transgender people in the military is debated (“Internal contradictions of transgender ideology exposed as military policy is debated.

#TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, August 25, 2017), and congratulated when equal rights are obstructed (“The military's transgender revolution is put on hold ... for now. #TheBriefing”—Dr. Albert Mohler, March 26, 2018), debates are occurring regarding the youngest in our society (“Here's my interview in the New York Times on the Boy Scouts' new gender policy: [nytimes.com/2017/01/31/us/bo...](https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/31/us/bo...)”—Dr. Russell Moore, February 2, 2017).

From 2017-2021, comparatively speaking to other issues in this study, high-profile evangelical elites on Trump's advisory board issued relatively few tweets surrounding the week of the issuance of executive communications related to LGBTQIA+ issues. After scraping the data to eliminate unessential tweets, 10,913 tweets remained in the sample for analysis. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 5,576 tweets expressed positive sentiment (51.10%), 3,899 tweets neutral sentiment (35.72%), and 1,438 tweets held negative sentiment (13.18%).

As with abortion, while there was more engagement with negative sentiment, positively worded tweets received a far higher engagement. A sample of 3,196 tweets was harvested from the week of the highest postings on X during a Trump executive communications mentioning LGBTQIA+ issues from 2017-2020 (as there were no executive communications issues on LGBTQIA+ in 2021). I scraped the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies from this dataset for 120 interactions (one per year, with three interactions). Out of 120 tweets, Figure 7.6 demonstrates that the tweets receiving the most interactions were positive, with 94 positive tweets (78.33%), 12 neutral tweets (10.00%), and 14 negative tweets (11.67%).

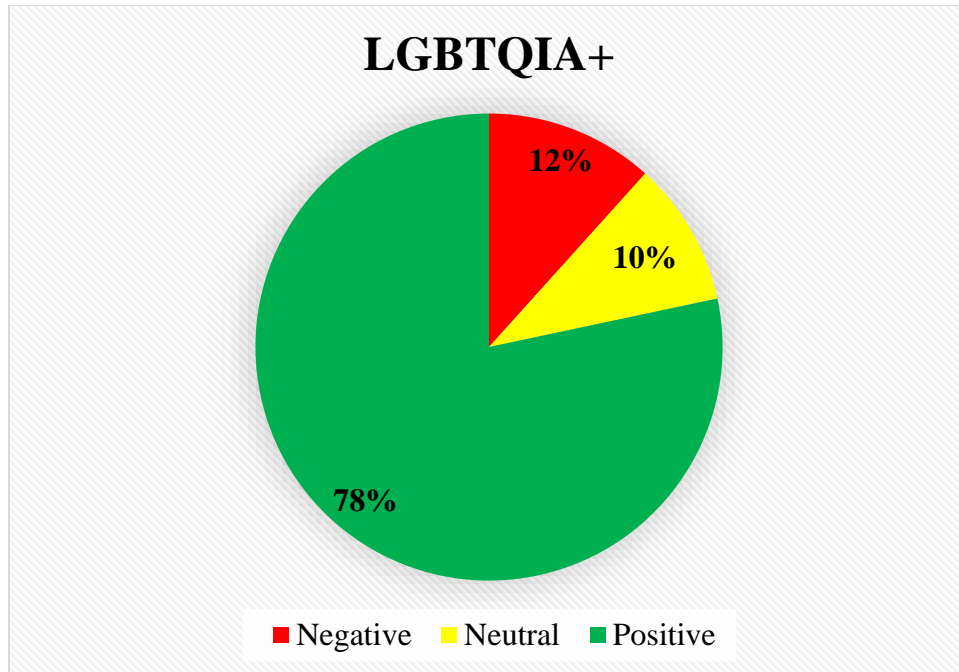


Figure 14: Sentiment Analysis of LGBTQIA+ Tweets—Non-Advisory

Common themes included support for religious freedom, traditional marriage, and conservative family values. Many tweets praised policies aligned with evangelical beliefs and commended the administration and judicial rulings that upheld and supported these values. A great deal of importance was placed on sustaining the gender binary, especially within the military.

There was opposition to anti-discrimination laws and a strong belief in the existence of an LGBTQIA+ agenda. Tweets commonly criticized unsupportive individuals and policies, expressed concerns about religious freedoms, and opposed policy changes decreasing personal and religious liberties.

Twitter posts from high-profile evangelical elites reflect strong opposition to marriage equality and a steadfast defense of traditional family values. Many criticize judicial decisions supporting same-sex marriage and emphasize the importance of traditional family structures. There is an inherent fear that societal changes regarding gender and sexuality are putting the

traditional family structure at risk. They express concerns about the impact of the gender revolution on the family unit and highlight what they see as the dangers posed by redefining gender roles. Additionally, there is a pervasive mistrust of the LGBTQIA+ agenda, coupled with disdain for prominent gay figures and skepticism about the biological arguments put forth by LGBTQIA+ advocates.

Furthermore, there is a great concern among these evangelical leaders that anti-discrimination laws will infringe upon their religious freedoms. They warn that such laws could severely affect religious liberty in the workplace and broader society. Celebrations of legal decisions protecting religious freedoms at the state and federal levels are common, as is praise for the Trump administration's efforts to ensure these freedoms. There is also anxiety about the potential adverse effects of anti-discrimination policies on society, with some arguing that gender identity and sexual orientation are being used as excuses for entitlements. The place of transgender individuals in the military is hotly debated, with discussions about the implications for both military policy and the rights of the youngest members of society.

6.4 Race

Members of Trump's evangelical advisory board used Twitter to communicate various themes regarding race in the United States. The dataset of tweets from the advisory board provides valuable insights into the philosophical, ethical, and religious complexities encountered in discussions on race.

6.4.1 Advisory Board

Many members of Trump's advisory board championed Trump as a guardian against racism ("My beautiful Black Americans are really waking up. We are done with Big

Government and more HAND OUTS [sic]. We now have a leader in @realDonaldTrump who's giving us a HAND UP. #RedWhiteBlue Educational Tour #MAGA <https://t.co/bRBbP1NW8d>” —Pastor Mark Burns, October 26, 2018), as well as someone able to cross racial and religious lines (“Don’t believe the media. Watch @realDonaldTrump in a dialogue with African-American pastors & community leaders.” —Dr. Ralph Reed, June 15, 2020). Elites placed great emphasis on his economic growth for Black and Brown communities, emphasizing that his progress in economic development (“The unemployment rate for African Americans, Hispanic Americans and Asian American is the lowest in history! Wonder why Democrats can’t celebrate that? #SOTU—Pastor Tony Suarez, February 5, 2020), job creation (“We got to STOP saying BLACK AMERICA because we ARE AMERICA..! Immigrants often come and take skilled labor jobs from Black & Brown workers. Instead of Giving People Fish, Teach them HOW to Fish.!”—Pastor Mark Burns, January 13, 2018), and criminal justice reform (“ White House Wednesday, where they urged the administration to support policing reforms and shared ideas about other initiatives to benefit black communities. <https://t.co/8GDNw5VLJU> ...”—Sealy Yates, June 12, 2020) benefited all Americans, including minority communities.

They highlighted initiatives like the First Step Act (“So pleased with the hard work @realDonaldTrump, Jared Kushner, @IvankaTrump, @Paula_White and other faith leaders and a bipartisan group of lawmakers have done to craft the First Step Act. Click to read full article <https://t.co/uSn7N4FoMA> “--Paula White, November 15, 2018) and Opportunity Zones (“@EdytheFord Not so sir. There are Black, Hispanic and White pastors in the room, some are in pic some are not. First Act prison [sic] reform passed

and an economy that is prospering minorities at historic levels. Jobs and opportunity Zones. That being said there's a lot to do yet.”—Jentezen Franklin, November 1, 2019) as evidence of the administration's commitment to improving conditions for Black Americans and other marginalized groups (“BREAKING NEWS: President @realDonaldTrump committing to \$500B to Black Americans. Creating 500M new Black-Owned Businesses in America!!!!

#WhatTheHellDoYouHaveToLose? #BlackVoicesforTrump #Trump2020

<https://t.co/u3UWo8OgfY> ...—Pastor Mark Burns, September 25, 2020). Users also expressed grave concern at the high rates of abortion in Black communities (“Statistics show that legalized abortion impacts black population much more than white pop. Clearly, those who support abortion don't believe that “black lives matter.” I'll discuss on “@LouDobbs Tonight” at 5 & 7pm ET on Fox Business. Tune in!—Dr. Robert Jeffress, July 31, 2020), likening it to genocide (“Dems don't care about Black People, they really only care about Black Votes. Which is why Dems & @KamalaHarris support the abortion of Black Babies. The legal genocide of the African American community.”—Pastor Mark Burns, October 26, 2019).

Additionally, evangelicals emphasized the importance of maintaining law and order (“Why do White Liberals think Racism started with President @realDonaldTrump? Trump is NOT fueling racism, he's fueling Law & Order. @i24NEWS_EN #GeorgeFloyd <https://t.co/wNEDgYR12D>” —Pastor Mark Burns, June 2, 2020), particularly in response to the protests and civil unrest following incidents of racial violence (“In a press conference yesterday, @POTUS called for unity in the wake of the violence in #Charlottesville.

<https://t.co/cquyoItDKd>” —Dr. Jay Strack, August 13, 2017). They supported Trump's calls for maintaining public order and criticized what they viewed as the mainstream media's negative portrayal of law enforcement (“Police Brutality is not the reason why Black Americans are the

lowest financially ethnic group. We shouldn't be marching because of #GeorgeFloyd, we should identify where systematic racism really exists, like jobs & promotions, minority business loans, and real opportunity.”—Pastor Mark Burns, June 10, 2020).

This stance was intertwined with their broader support for Trump's presidency (“Finally a leader in WH. Jobs returning, N Korea backing down, bold truthful stmt about #charlottesville tragedy. So proud of @realdonaldtrump”—Jerry Falwell, Jr., August 16, 2017), portraying him as a leader committed to protecting American values (“Last Thursday @realDonaldTrump met with faith leaders from the black community in Dallas which was was [sic] all but ignored by the media It was a powerful conversation with real solutions offered. Watch this powerful clip from Jack Brewer and see for yourself <https://t.co/fWUZhC6FyI>” –Dr. Jack Graham, June 15, 2020) and ensuring the safety and prosperity of all citizens (“2/2. After an explosion of wokeness and a ceaseless campaign to paint President Trump as a “white supremacist,” non-white voter support for Trump and Republicans went up nation-wide from 8% to 12% among blacks and 28% to 32% for Hispanics. #America #bringeverythoughtcaptive”—Dr. Richard Land, November 5, 2020).

Many elites saved their vitriol for politicians they felt were sympathetic to terrorists (“#IlhanOmar is not being attacked because she's a Black Muslim Female...She's being attacked because she's anti-Semitic who's sympathetic to the terrorist who killed Americans on #911.”—Pastor Mark Burns, April 12, 2019), weren't appreciative of the Black community (“The Establishment Republicans have tried to woo the evangelicals by saying the right things and never following through on their promises, while the Democrats have done the same thing to black Americans.

<https://t.co/Cx15kREEHh>” ...—Jerry Falwell, Jr., March 2, 2020), and slammed those who claimed others weren’t Black enough (“Did obama [sic] really say this? He insulted an African-American radio host by saying, "you ain't black." Simply because he asked Sleep Joe questions. This is racism. It is ugly. Democrats should repudiate this racist comment immediately. #YouAintBlack—Dr. Ralph Reed, May 22, 2020). Politicians were heavily criticized for withholding support for bills that would help Americans, specifically minority communities (“The meeting was held just after conservative black leaders met with President Donald Trump at the White House. Shame. Shame. Shame. A republican @SenatorTimScott put a police reform bill on the floor and we had black democrat senators who refused to even debate about it. This shows this has nothing to do with police, it’s all politics. Don’t take it from me, read it yourself!”—Dr. Ralph Reed, June 25, 2020).

During the presidential race in 2020, users criticized the Democratic nominee, Joe Biden (“@niceDonaldTrump @FoxNews @realDonaldTrump @IngrahamAngle Because under Democrat Bill Clinton, he fathered MASS INCARCERATION for many Black Americans. That's why...Over 1 Million Black Men are incarcerated right now. And @realDonaldTrump is undoing what Bill & Hillary Clinton did with their SUPER PREDATORS comment.”—Pastor Mark Burns, June 14, 2019) and his running mate, Kamala Harris (“.@JoeBiden ‘s pick of @KamalaHarris is a surprise given his faith. She might be the most anti-Catholic VP nominee in modern history. In 2018, she showed that bigotry when she suggested that membership in the “Knights of Columbus” was disqualifying for a federal judicial nominee.”—Pastor Tony Suarez, August 12, 2020). Elites reminded followers of racist behavior (Joe Biden does not get to determine who is black and who isn’t. He is not entitled to the votes of black people and after this racist comment, he should not get any votes from the black community.

<https://t.co/f5gZ8WwMYq> ...—Dr. Ralph Reed, May 22, 2020), and urged their followers to vote for their interests (--@TDeVeres You right their Parents Know Better...and THANK God they not stuck in the past like you and willing to Vote their Interest and not their Feelings. Stay divisive all YOU want too. Many Blacks are getting Knowledge and become FREE from Democratic strong holds.—Pastor Mark Burns, May 23, 2018).

Many members grappled to confront racism at a societal level (“We oppose anti-religious bigotry and racism in all its ugly forms. Thank you @VP for letting our African-American brothers & sisters who were attacked by the forces of hatred know that we stand with them.—Dr. Ralph Reed, May 3, 2019). Others struggled with addressing racism within their churches (“We had the honor of hosting a roundtable conversation with @POTUS & African American clergy & business leaders. We discussed racism in our country & how we can unite together & work toward a solution to see our nation healed. Watch this message from me: <https://t.co/2HLgWky3pt>”—Pastor Robert Morris, June 12, 2020). A few had to tackle the racism within themselves (“After listening to African American LU leaders and alumni over the past week and hearing their concerns, I understand that by tweeting an image to remind all of the governor’s racist past (Part 1/3). I actually refreshed the trauma that image had caused and offended some by using the image to make a political point. Based on our long relationships, they uniformly understood this was not my intent, but because it was the result (Part 2/3). I have deleted the tweet and apologize for any hurt my effort caused, especially within the African American community. (Part 3/3)”—Jerry Falwell, Jr., June 8, 2020).

Many elites critiqued secular approaches to addressing racial issues, expressing skepticism toward movements like Black Lives Matter (“All lives matter, but this radical

organization, Black Lives Matter, is the ultimate Trojan Horse.” Take a moment to read something from Lt. Col. @AllenWest that you probably won’t hear about in the media. #PrayThinkVote <https://t.co/HCwvVsm2ET>” —Sealy Yates, June 24, 2020) and critical race theory (“1/2 OMB Director Vought’s memo ordering all federal agencies to do “everything possible within the law” to cancel contracts or programs promoting “white privilege” and “critical race theory” confirms the isolated reports I have been receiving recently from federal workers in 2/2 various agencies across the country who have been coerced into participating in such emotional self-flagellation sessions -- how profoundly un-American. I applaud the Trump administration for this bold step to restore freedom to the federal workplace.”—Dr. Richard Land, November 7, 2020). Numerous users struggled with the removal of historic statues (“Over the past two weeks, efforts have been introduced to remove Confederate flags, statues, and memorabilia. What do you think about the removal of these things? <https://t.co/naYx5crjIN>” – Sealy Yates, June 26, 2020), monuments (“Protesters tearing down monuments to abolitionists and U.S. soldiers are desecrating our long journey to freedom. <https://t.co/QKnEmbzAUZ>” – Reverend Johnnie Moore, July 2, 2020), and memorials (“@charliekirk11 Then they’ll come for the Jefferson memorial and the White House.”—Pastor Tony Suarez, June 22, 2020).

At the same, there was recognition of the intrinsic value in moving beyond the racism of the past (“1/3 Let’s grant that perhaps the original naming of these bases after Confederate generals was motivated by a spirit of national reconciliation. Now, we thankfully live in a different, better, more inclusive country, where a different kind of reconciliation is needed. 2/3 Our U.S. military has led the way in many ways in bringing about racial reconciliation in our nation. That is one reason why African-Americans make up 22% of the Army’s ranks while representing just 13% of the American population. Imagine how those black soldiers and their

3/3 families and loved ones must feel residing on, and training at, military bases honoring men who fought to maintain the enslavement of their ancestors. Such a circumstance is immoral and repugnant.”—Dr. Richard Land, June 16, 2020). Users had moral and ethical battles with civil disobedience (“#NFL players who disrespect the American Flag while KNEELING are OK with disrespecting Soldiers who Died Defending the Flag while STANDING.”—Pastor Mark Burns, September 23, 2018) appealed to the media for rational coverage (“Dear Media: Please don’t miss (or bypass) what unites 99% of US 1. HORROR over the murder of George Floyd 2. DEMAND for justice 3. SUPPORT for peaceful protests 4. RECOGNITION of our need to perfect this union 4. EXPECTATION Mayors/Governors stop anarchists exploiting injustice”—Dr. Jay Strack, June 1, 2020), while conflicted with citizens' deadly interactions with police (“A picture is worth a 1,000 words.” A moving picture, especially one with audio, is worth at least a 100,000 words. Surely, there has never been a more vivid example of that than the sickening video of a policeman’s knee on a handcuffed George Floyd’s neck while he suffocates”—Dr. Richard Land, May 28, 2020) and with each other (“As a citizen of Virginia, this is NOT what we stand for. Praying 4 Charlottesville, peace & end to racism. <https://t.co/z9m4oqSuhW>”—Pastor Tony Suarez, August 12, 2017).

They argued that true reconciliation and healing could only come through a return to Christian values and principles (“Black churches are great forces for justice, equality and human dignity in our nation. Read my latest article, “The Black Church must take the lead,” posted on The Christian Post: <https://t.co/XH7rucMqPS> “—Bishop Harry Jackson, August 28, 2020). This perspective framed racial issues as part of a broader

spiritual battle (“African American leaders call for Southern Baptists to stand together in unity <https://t.co/IUZ1HXV6Z8>” –Dr. Ronnie Floyd, June 18, 2020), suggesting that solutions lay not in political or social activism alone (“Juneteenth marks the official end of slavery in America. Praying today for a renewed spirit of love and unity that recognizes every black life does matter. Jesus forgive our nation for our sins and make us into one nation under God indivisible with liberty and justice for all. <https://t.co/y9t1xNvoXm>”—Jentezen Franklin, June 19, 2020), but in a nationwide revival and adherence to biblical teachings (“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1) This church and its new pastor are breaking barriers. People call it the white church, the black church, the Hispanic church - but in the bible, there's only one church! <https://t.co/8uanvaNR38>” –Sealy Yates, December 4, 2019). Many members seemed genuinely devoted to listening to others (“I was grateful to listen and learn from faith & community leaders how together we can bring about healing and holistic revitalization to underserved communities across the nation.”—Jentezen Franklin, June 16, 2020) and uniting the nation (“God, help us to hear one another, not talk past one another & to see all made in your image w/equal dignity & worth. Heal our land. Amen”—Reverend Johnnie Moore, June 4, 2020).

While several thousand tweets had negative sentiment, positively worded tweets received higher engagement. A sample of 2,500 tweets was harvested from the week of the highest postings on X during a Trump executive communication on immigration. I scraped the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies from this dataset for 150 interactions (one per year, with three interactions). Out of 150 tweets, Figure 7.7 shows there was the most sizable number of interactions, with 97 positive tweets (64.67%), 31 neutral tweets (20.67%), and 22 negative tweets (14.67%).

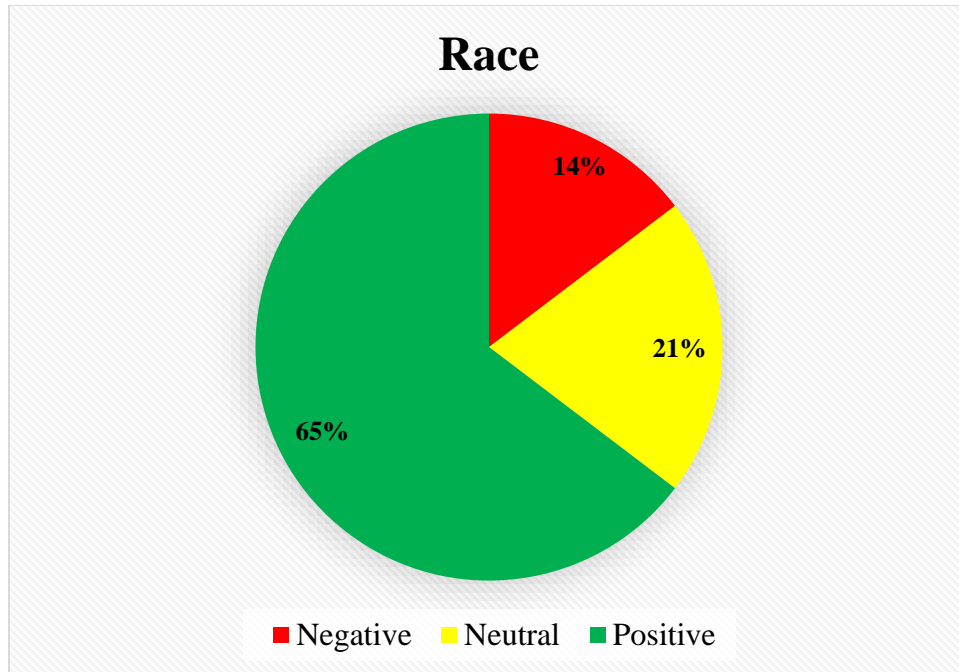


Figure 15: Sentiment Analysis of Race Tweets—Advisory

Common themes included mentions of administrative policies, law and order, economic and justice reform, and racial issues. Positive tweets focused on support for the administration’s policies, improving the economy and job numbers for minority communities, and reconciliation and unity amongst social unrest. Frequent themes included tweets speaking out against police brutality and tragic events and violence, calls for political and economic reform, critiques of critical race theory, and criticism of the removal of historical statues and monuments.

6.4.2 Non-Advisory Panel

From 2017 to 2021, evangelical elites on Twitter engaged in discussions about race that revealed several overarching themes. Their communications provide valuable insights into the philosophical, ethical, and religious complexities in discussions about race. Like the advisory board, these members tweeted most frequently during Trump’s executive communications on race. These communications underscore the panel’s active

and intense engagement with race, reflecting the broader debates and tensions within the evangelical community.

Evangelical elites often highlighted the need for systemic change to address deep-seated racial inequalities (“When it comes to addressing racism in America, not enough is said so not enough is done.” - @milesmperson We must talk about it, even the hard things. Join the discussion at <https://t.co/qIUkocNehD>. #thethirdoption <https://t.co/6M2dvAbky8>” –Bishop T.D. Jakes, September 25, 2018). Users often critiqued systemic racism through calls for police reform (“An invitation from @fhunscripted to @robertjeffress: "Move from declaration to demonstration" to fight racism & police brutality. <https://t.co/avAF1xoIwV> #MLKDay2018” – Shane Claiborne, January 15, 2018), criminal justice reform (“How evangelicals teamed up with the White House on prison reform <https://t.co/nkF3V2nNTN> via @emmillerwrites.”—Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, May 29, 2018), equitable education (“The consequence of black voters continuing their blind devotion to the Democrat Party is more inner city poverty & violence, more babies killed before birth and fewer black students getting a quality education. Wake up! <https://t.co/58yScZ5pjQ>”--Bishop E.W. Jackson, August 11, 2018), and economic opportunities (“President Trump's executive order cutting Small Business regulations will help grow the economy and create jobs. <https://t.co/sLs5CNTnFf>” –Senator Marsha Blackburn, January 30, 2017).

Users employed their Twitter platform to make public statements against racist incidents (“This is overdue. What happened to George Floyd was unconscionable. He should still be alive today. It’s heart-breaking [sic] to think his last words were, “I can’t breathe” and “Mama!.” God help and comfort his family. I am so sorry.”—Pastor Greg Laurie, May 29, 2020) and policies (In fact, what have Democrat elites done for the black community in 60 yrs but

perpetuate poverty, cry racism & enrich themselves. The poor are mere pawns in elite Dems obsession with power.”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, December 12, 2017). Additionally, many urged their followers to take action against racism in their faith communities (“Glad to join other SBC leaders in condemning white supremacy - "Charlottesville Violence: SBC Leaders Urge Prayer." <https://t.co/m0PJKpGuYo>” —Dr. Steve Gaines, August 14, 2017).

Elites frequently emphasized the need for the evangelical community to confront its history of racial injustice (“This is an important day in the life of Southern Seminary. Just now, we release the "Report on Slavery and Racism in the History of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary." It is a massive project and a moral reckoning. <https://t.co/UibKjp4Tou>” —Dr. Albert Mohler, December 12, 2018). There were public appeals to seek repentance and forgiveness (“Lord, I repent of being complicit in & contributing to racism & white supremacy in the church by profiting off a system that was unjust to people of color. Forgive me for thinking it was enough to simply [sic] say & believe it to be true, “I’m not racist.” Forgive me for my passivity.”—Beth Moore, March 27, 2018). This often involved acknowledging past wrongs and committing to a process of reconciliation (“Racial bigotry & injustice are not trifling secondary matters, but are objects of the wrath of God. The gospel is to crucify such satanism and bring about a people modeling love, justice, reconciliation (Eph 2-3). This isn’t a “distraction,” but right at the core of mission.”—Dr. Russell Moore, October 31, 2018).

Many users placed a strong emphasis on standing with marginalized groups (“Today let us stand with the #WaterProtectors at #StandingRock And stand against the triplets of evil: racism, materialism, & militarism.”—Shane Claiborne, February 22, 2017), particularly Black communities, in their struggle for justice (“In 1920: African-Ams were 22% of US population but 75% of executions. 2017: They are 12% of pop, but 42% of deathrow [sic] & 35% of

executions. <https://t.co/bEGMJNhF6P>” –Shane Claiborne, September 11, 2017). This also included advocating for fair treatment (“What is happening in inner cities is nothing short of genocide against black citizens. To allow it is be [sic] complicit.”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, March 3, 2017) and opposing systemic racism in societal institutions (“What Should the Christian Response Be to Systemic Racism? #TheBriefing <https://t.co/n3q7KQOn6l>” –Dr. Alber Mohler, June 24, 2020).

Many leaders framed their discussions of race within the context of biblical justice (“The ultimate answer is Jesus! I pray for swift justice in the case of George Floyd's inexcusable death. The church should continue to stand together as we call for justice and pray for peace.”—Pastor Ed Young, May 9, 2020), arguing that true Christian faith requires a commitment to justice (“Black People Are Tired was authored in the wake of #AhmaudAubrey's [sic] death. Yet souls like #BreonnaTaylor keep being stolen. Here is a video honoring lives ended in a world still infected by violent racism. May they rest in power. May we fight for justice. <https://t.co/HZoFI6NdGw>” —Shane Claiborne, May 14, 2020) and equality (“The ongoing and outrageous violence in America against young African Americans must be stopped. My heart is broken for the family and friends of Ahmaud Arbery. We must continue to stand against injustice and inequality in all its sinful forms.” –Pastor Greg Laurie, May 7, 2020). Conservative theological principles were balanced with calls for social reform within the church (“Why Black Congregants Are Leaving White Evangelical Churches [nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/bl...](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/09/us/bl...)”—Dr. Russell Moore, March 9, 2018). Evangelical elites often reflect on the moral responsibility of Christians to oppose racism (RT @CBNNews: Son of Slaves & Son of Slave Owners Say: 'We Can Rise Above Racism in America' <https://t.co/ecjgOy89xS>” –Dr. Pat Robertson, July 17, 2020) and promote justice (“I am tired of shaking my head and rubbing my head and trying to

think what it would be like to be Black in America. I want to be part of a CHANGE. NOW in this generation. This injustice is outrageous. What continues to go on in this nation in regard to Black Americans is madness.”—Beth Moore, October 13, 2019), viewing these actions as integral to living out their faith (“‘I wish the church would call out the sin of racial injustice with clear conviction.’ Read why here: <https://t.co/QtCiQfA8eC>” –Dr. Charles Stanley, September 2, 2018).

Some users questioned the validity of social justice movements (“I believe that black lives matter. Kneeling while wearing a Black Lives Matter T-shirt [doesn't] go hand-in-hand with supporting black lives. My life has been supported through the Gospel ‘Jesus Christ’ and everyone is made in the image of God. <https://t.co/1i4FtUjzmQ>” –Dr. Pat Robertson, August 9, 2020) and “black on black” crimes (““Two black suspects allegedly murder black GA Police Officer - Antwan Toney. Is Black Lives Matter up in arms? No! Because they’re Marxists using race to manipulate black people & perpetuate class warfare. They couldn’t care less about black lives!”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, October 22, 2018). While others confronted the consequences of critical race theory (“Ideas Have Consequences: Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality in the News from the Southern Baptist Convention #TheBriefing <https://t.co/OQacGxI6RP>” –Dr. Albert Mohler, June 14, 2019).

Some users applauded Trump’s leadership (“I pray that black Americans would stop buying into the MSM narrative about racism and just look at what Pres. Trump is doing to help the average American, which includes black citizens.”—Bishop E.W. Jackson, January 12, 2018) and his racial policies (“Pleased to see the positive movement from the White House today on criminal justice reform. Churches with those who’ve been caught in the system as well as law enforcement officials know how much change is needed. Congress, let’s fix this.” –Dr. Russell

Moore, November 14, 2018) during his presidency. Others were critical of Trump's rhetoric, which they saw as divisive (“The White House is a disgrace to God. Human beings, created in the image of God- no matter how sinful-should never be called animals.

<https://t.co/OzXWg60Ja9>” –Shane Claiborne, May 22, 2018) and inflammatory (“When hell exhales the outcome is hatred. Both unacceptable and diabolical, racism must be confronted by God fearing [sic] people. #charlottesville”—Pastor Samuel Rodriguez, August 12, 2018).

Religious elites expressed concern that Trump’s language and policies exacerbated racial tensions and undermined efforts toward reconciliation (“May we continue to stand together in prayer against the evil of racism in our nation. #Charlottesville <https://t.co/zLUJK2lmMI>” –Dr. Rod Parsley, August 12, 2017).

Others voiced opposition to specific policies they deemed harmful to racial justice (“Trump suggests he'd like to model American criminal law on drug dealing on authoritarian systems like China, where dealers are executed: ‘Countries with a powerful death penalty, with a fair but quick trial, they have very little if any drug problem. That includes China.’

<https://t.co/9WprysjJAX>” –Shane Claiborne, February 10, 2020). This included criticism of Trump's immigration policies (A border wall fight looms. Government spending on the table. Is a shutdown imminent? Discussing on #JayLive. <https://t.co/dYL30JJAvp>” –Dr. Jay Alan Sekulow, April 24, 2017), his handling of incidents of police violence (“‘When the looting starts, the shooting starts.’ Trump is actually advocating for the National Guard to use deadly force against Americans who are protesting against police killings. Tell @jack to kick @realdonaldtrump off Twitter now. <https://t.co/zLTZtF8c9D>” –Shane Claiborne, June 4, 2020), and his response to white supremacist events, such as the Charlottesville rally (“Y'all remember Charlottesville White Supremacists ‘very fine people.’ Black NFL players Sons of bitches that

need to be fired.”—Shane Claiborne, September 23, 2017). Evangelical elites called for higher standards of moral and ethical leadership from Trump (“A govt that can bully consciences into participating and celebrating what the conscience finds immoral is a govt that can do *anything.*”—Dr. Russell Moore, February 16, 2017), urging unity and justice (“You can do what you want but I’m not giving up without a fight. We’ve let evil overtake the entire reputation of Evangelicalism. The lust for power is nauseating. Racism, appalling. The arrogance, terrifying. The misogyny so far from Christlikeness, it can’t be Christianity.”—Beth Moore, December 11, 2017). They often contrasted his actions with the teachings of Christ (“Dear @Franklin_Graham @Paula_White @robertjeffress & @JerryFalwellJr Please rethink your support for this man. Even just on the basis of human decency, let alone how unChristlike it is. This is bad enough, but imagine how upset Jesus must be about the kids at the border. Enough.”—Shane Claiborne, February 11, 2020), advocating for a more compassionate and inclusive approach (“Please consider this post an action alert. Wake up. Take off the rose-colored glasses. Stop being Color Blind. See the truth. Racism must go. We are created in living color.” <https://t.co/6whFhdgbf9>” —Dr. Pat Robertson, June 2, 2018). Elites encouraged fellow evangelicals to hold Trump accountable (“No. It is theological malpractice to say that the president is exempt from the Sermon on the Mount or not accountable to Christ’s commands. <https://t.co/u6GoPq1Btl>” —Shane Claiborne, February 1, 2017) and to speak out against policies and rhetoric inconsistent with Christian values (“Today is International Day for the Elimination of Racism. Let’s get our hearts right. There is NO human being superior to any other human being on the face of this earth. #endracism #startwiththeheart #LoveGodLovePeople <https://t.co/5AaC9I9j3i>” —Dr. Rod Parsley, March 21, 2018).

6.4.3 Discussion

Overall, high-profile evangelical elites discussed race on Twitter, focusing on promoting justice and reconciliation, critiquing systemic racism, and balancing theological principles with social advocacy. Their discussions of Trump and his policies were marked by a call for moral leadership and a critique of divisive rhetoric and harmful policies.

From 2017-2021, the comparative group of high-profile evangelical elites issued an epic 90,215 tweets surrounding the week of the issuance of executive communications related to race. After scraping the data, 73,706 tweets remained in the sample for analysis. Using the reflexive text analysis, I determined that 37,802 tweets were positive (51.29%), 9,962 tweets were neutral (13.52%), and 25,942 tweets were negative (35.19%).

While there was a increase in tweets with negative sentiment, positively worded tweets continued to receive a higher engagement. A sample of 2,500 tweets was harvested from the week of the highest postings on X during a Trump executive communication on immigration. I scraped the top ten interactions of likes, retweets, and replies from this dataset for 150 interactions (one per year, with three interactions). Figure 7.8 below shows that out of 150 tweets, there was the greatest number of interactions, with 93 positive tweets (62.00%), 26 neutral tweets (17.33%), and 31 negative tweets (20.67%). As with the other sentiment analyses, there continue to be more interactions with positive tweets. Another reason for the disparity between previous research and the results of this research could be that high-profile elite are aware that a positive tone helps to build a sense of community and unity with their followers. This unity can reinforce shared values and beliefs, making the community more cohesive and resilient (Rheingold, 2000; Wellman & Gulia, 1999).

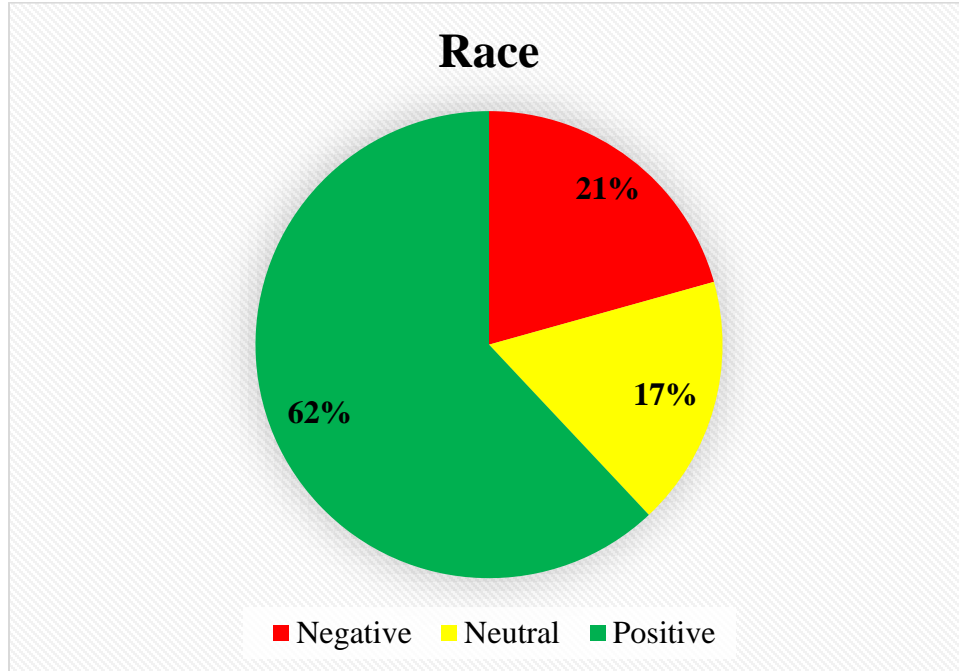


Figure 7.8: Sentiment Analysis of Race Tweets—Non-Advisory

Common themes included mentions of administrative policies, law and order, economic and justice reform, and racial issues. Positive tweets focused on support for the administration’s policies, improving the economy and job numbers for minority communities, and reconciliation and unity amongst social unrest. Frequent themes included tweets speaking out against police brutality, tragic events, and racially motivated violence; calls for political, economic, and critiques of critical race theory; and criticism of the removal of historical statues and monuments.

One prominent theme was the emphasis on unity and reconciliation. Many evangelical leaders called for racial harmony and emphasized the need for Christians to be agents of reconciliation in a divided society. They often referenced biblical principles to support calls for unity, advocating for the church to be a model of racial inclusivity and

harmony. This perspective highlighted the belief that faith communities have a unique role in bridging racial divides through love, understanding, and mutual respect.

Another repetitive theme was the critique of systemic racism and social justice initiatives. While some evangelical leaders supported efforts to address systemic inequalities and promote social justice, others were more skeptical. This skepticism often centered on concerns that specific social justice movements were aligned with political ideologies perceived as incompatible with traditional evangelical values. As a result, these leaders sometimes criticized concepts like critical race theory and questioned the effectiveness of secular approaches to combating racism. This divide underscored the broader tension within the evangelical community about how best to address racial issues, reflecting differing theological and political perspectives.

Overall, evangelical communications on Twitter during this period reflected a complex and multifaceted engagement with race. While there was a shared recognition of the importance of addressing racial issues, the approaches and emphases varied widely. Some leaders focused on promoting unity and biblical reconciliation. In contrast, others engaged critically with contemporary social justice movements, revealing the diversity of thought within the evangelical community on these critical issues.

The analysis rejected the third hypothesis (H3—Tweets with negative phrasing will receive more interactions from their followers through liking, sharing, and commenting.), not only with Trump's advisory panel but with those comparable high-profile evangelical elites who were not on Trump's advisory board, which posited that tweets with negative phrasing would receive more interactions (likes, shares, and comments) than those with positive sentiment. This finding is particularly intriguing given the prevailing literature, which suggests that negative

wording on social media posts tends to attract more interactions and attention. The trend towards more engagement with positive content among these high-profile religious elites challenges this conventional view. It suggests that, within this specific context, positive sentiment is more effective in driving follower interaction. This result offers a nuanced perspective on social media dynamics and highlights the potential for positive messaging to achieve higher engagement within specific communities.

Contrary to this hypothesis, the data revealed that tweets with positive sentiment garnered more engagement. To determine this, the executive communication with the most interactions was analyzed, and the comments with the most likes, retweets, and responses were examined. Figure 7.9 below indicates that for high-profile evangelical elites, nearly 70% of followers' interactions were in response to positively worded tweets.

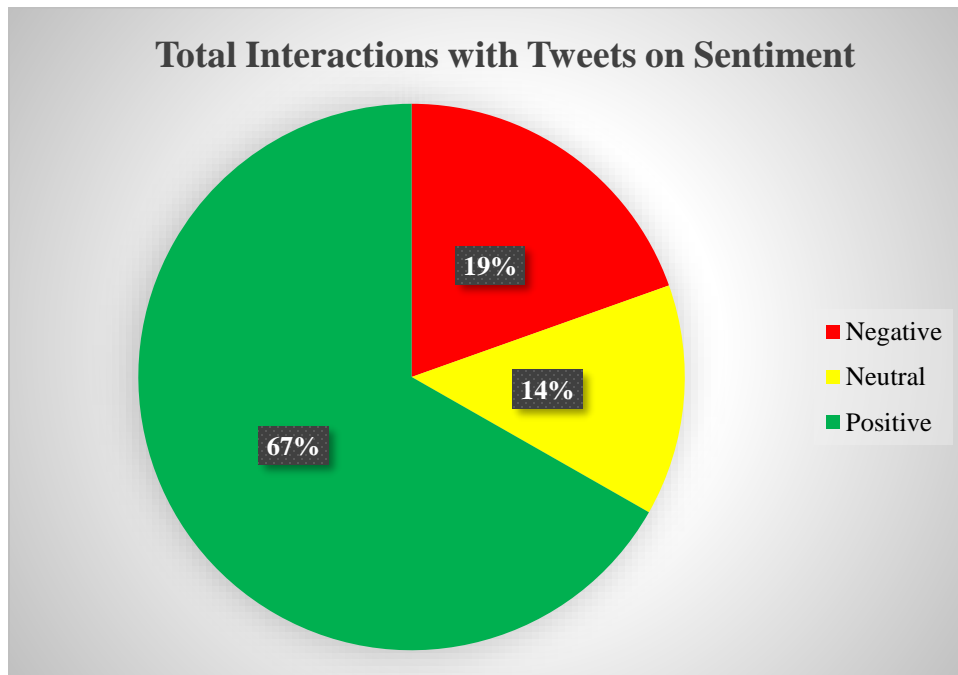


Figure 16: Total Interactions with Tweets on Sentiment

Additionally, the hypothesis that negative phrasing would generate more interactions was rejected, as positively worded tweets received greater engagement across the board. These

findings reveal critical patterns in evangelical leaders' public discourse and social media dynamics during the Trump presidency. The following section will delve into the implications of these results, exploring their importance and potential impact on understanding evangelical communication strategies and social media interactions.

7 CONCLUSION

In recent decades, American evangelical churches have increasingly engaged in political advocacy guided by influential religious elites. These leaders have focused on politicized issues such as immigration, abortion, and LGBTQIA+ rights. Early endorsements of Donald Trump by key evangelical figures, such as Jerry Falwell Jr., marked a dramatic shift, leading to greater evangelical support for Trump, particularly after he promised to repeal the Johnson Amendment. The dissertation will investigate the board's influence on policymaking and analyze their Twitter communications to understand how these elites shaped and responded to Trump's executive actions.

Trump's evangelical advisory board, a diverse group from televangelists to megachurch pastors, played an unprecedented role in influencing presidential policies, especially in areas like religious freedom and reproductive rights. Key figures such as Reverend Johnnie Moore and Paula White were instrumental in shaping initiatives like the White House Faith and Opportunity Initiative. This involvement underscores the deep politicization of American evangelicalism and its impact on public opinion and policy, reminiscent of the Moral Majority and Religious Right movements of the 1980s.

Framing theory has been pivotal in understanding how evangelical elites convey and shape political messages, simplifying complex topics to influence their followers' perceptions by emphasizing specific aspects of issues. Effective framing relies on source credibility, resonance with audience values, and alignment with pre-existing beliefs. Research shows that this framing can considerably affect attitudes toward various issues, with inclusive framing often promoting tolerance and support for policies like immigration reform. In contrast, exclusive framing fosters

resistance to change. Over time, these framing effects may evolve, impacting policy attitudes and trust in institutions.

Recent shifts in research methods highlight the growing use of experimental approaches to study religion and politics. Traditional measures of religious affiliation often yield ambiguous results, prompting researchers to explore experimental methods for more precise insights. Source credibility remains crucial, with factors such as perceived commonality of interests and expertise influencing the effectiveness of religious communication.

This study focuses on analyzing how high-profile evangelical elites, especially those on Trump's advisory panel, use Twitter/X to discuss political issues in response to Trump's executive communications. It examines the frequency and content of these tweets, exploring whether specific issues like abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ concerns are emphasized. Additionally, it investigates whether tweets with positive or negative sentiments receive more engagement from followers, filling a gap in the existing literature on the political discourse of evangelical elites on social media.

This study underscores the significant impact of Trump's evangelical advisory board on his administration. It details how board members actively engaged in policy discussions and decisions, such as advocating for the reversal of an Obama-era transgender military policy, which Trump enacted despite opposition from military leaders. Johnnie Moore, a board member, highlighted their frequent interactions with the White House, including policy briefings and direct meetings with Trump to address evangelical issues. The study used reflexive thematic analysis to compare tweets from Trump's advisory board with those from a control group of similar elites to identify key themes and assess their alignment with or critique of White House policies. Additionally, the dissertation provided historical context on evangelical Christianity's

role in U.S. politics to elucidate the evolving impact of evangelical elites on political discourse and policy.

The study's contributions are threefold. First, it identifies a growing divide among evangelical elites, highlighting a split between centrist or center-left evangelicals and a vocal minority of staunch conservatives. Second, the findings align with emerging research on the relationship between elite Christian attitudes and their interactions with minority groups. Third, the study enhances our understanding of how evangelical leaders engage with politics through social media, reflecting current trends in their digital communication strategies. Additionally, the research traces the historical connection between evangelical Christianity and conservatism, specifically how Republican strategies have shaped and mobilized the Religious Right over the years. It addresses specific questions about the political issues these elites focus on, how their discourse compares to Trump's executive communications and the intensity of their political messaging.

The study proposes three hypotheses to explore the discourse of high-profile evangelical elites on social media. First, it hypothesizes that abortion will be the most frequently mentioned issue compared to race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ concerns. Second, it predicts that religious elites will consistently focus on abortion, irrespective of the specific executive communication from Trump. Third, it posits that tweets with negative wording will garner more interactions from followers. This hypothesis is particularly intriguing as it builds on the notion that negative messaging is often more persuasive and memorable, which could account for its potential to generate higher engagement on social media platforms.

Chapter Three offers an in-depth exploration of automated text analysis used to study high-profile evangelical elites' responses on Twitter/X to Donald Trump's executive

communications, comparing those from Trump's evangelical advisory board with a similar control group. This analysis employs reflexive thematic analysis due to its adaptability to large datasets and ability to uncover critical themes while accounting for the researcher's evangelical background. The study integrates automated text analysis methods, such as word counts and sentiment analysis, with manual review to capture nuanced meanings. Data collected from January 20, 2017, to January 21, 2021, encompasses tweets related to Trump's executive communications, categorized by content to assess their impact on the frequency and framing of political issues and follower interactions.

The methodology includes qualitative content analysis to interpret texts subjectively, involving systematic classification, coding, and theme identification for deeper insights beyond mere word counts. Over 350,000 tweets were analyzed, with themes developed by clustering and analyzing for relevance. Quantitative analysis complemented this approach through random sampling and evaluation of engagement metrics like likes, retweets, and responses, providing nuanced meanings and broader statistical trends.

The chapter concludes by detailing the methodological framework for analyzing how evangelical elites address critical social issues such as abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ rights. Content analysis measures issue prominence, while thematic analysis follows Braun and Clarke's pattern identification approach. The study also evaluates tweet frequency and engagement metrics to comprehensively view evangelical discourse and its interaction with Trump's policies.

Chapter Four traces the evolution of evangelical Christianity's intersection with American politics from the 1920s to the present. It begins by contrasting Protestantism, which emphasizes Biblical authority, with Catholicism's papal authority. Evangelicals, a subset of Protestants, have

gained significant political influence, especially since the 1980s, aligning firmly with the values of the Republican Party. This alignment has enabled them to drive various conservative policies, such as book bans, anti-abortion legislation, and restrictions on transgender healthcare.

Despite constituting only 14% of Americans, evangelicals are a major political force, making up 28% of the electorate and holding considerable sway in Congress and governorships. Their political involvement is driven by concerns over perceived threats to personal liberties and religious freedoms, often articulated through fear and nostalgia for a bygone Christian America.

Evangelicals have utilized their influence to shape political agendas, primarily through candidates who align with their values. Their support for various conservative policies and figures, such as Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump, has been evident. The chapter also discusses the shift in evangelical leadership styles, from the traditional ministerial roles of leaders like Jerry Falwell, Sr., and Billy Graham to the more controversial figures like Jerry Falwell, Jr., who embraced a more unconventional and abrasive style.

The chapter explores the dynamics within evangelical Christianity, including generational shifts, ideological media's role, and high-profile leaders' influence. Traditionally, religious discourse, especially among evangelical leaders, has been more exclusively focused on conservative issues like abortion. However, this research shows a broader engagement with issues like race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ rights, indicating a shift in these leaders' priorities and messaging strategies.

Additionally, the preference for a positive tone in tweets, which received higher engagement, might reflect a shift towards more inclusive or strategically positive communication styles that resonate better with modern audiences, including younger followers. This generational shift could indicate a move from purely negative or oppositional stances towards a

more balanced approach, reflecting the evolving expectations and values of a more diverse and possibly younger demographic within the evangelical community. It highlights ongoing debates within conservatism, such as disagreements over marriage equality, abortion, and foreign policy. I also note the persistence of racism and misogyny within evangelical circles despite some leaders' attempts to distance themselves from such ideologies.

The role of ideological media often shapes and amplifies the narratives that resonate with specific audiences, including high-profile evangelical elites. Ideological media can influence which issues are prioritized in public discourse and how they are framed. For instance, conservative media outlets may emphasize specific themes, like abortion or religious freedom, which could explain why these topics dominate the communications of religious leaders even when Trump's executive communications address other issues like immigration, race, or LGBTQIA+ rights. Moreover, ideological media can affect how these elites craft their messages, knowing that their audience is often exposed to and influenced by specific media narratives. This could also influence how elites might continue using a positive tone in their messaging by responding to a media environment that rewards optimism or alignment with the broader ideological narratives supported by their audience's preferred media outlets. Therefore, the role of ideological media in reinforcing specific themes and influencing the engagement strategies used in social media communications by high-profile evangelical elites is significant. These media platforms have the power to shape both the content and tone of the discourse among these elites, thereby playing a comprehensive role in their communication strategies.

The influence of fear, particularly regarding cultural and demographic changes, has shaped evangelical political behavior. This fear has been leveraged to support policies like Trump's Muslim ban and border wall while often ignoring or rationalizing controversial actions

by political leaders who align with their values. The chapter underscores the complex relationship between evangelical Christianity and American politics, illustrating how religious beliefs, high-profile religious elites, and political strategies have intertwined over the decades.

Chapter Five sets the stage for a comprehensive analysis of the evangelical advisory board's social media responses and their broader implications for political influence and policymaking. It examines four central issues addressed in Trump's executive communications: abortion, race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ rights, placing these within the historical context of the Republican Party's alignment with white evangelicals. Since the 1980s, abortion has been a pivotal political issue, with evangelical support being crucial for Republican candidates like Reagan and Bush. Despite their considerable influence, evangelical leaders criticized George W. Bush's second term for neglecting critical issues such as abortion and marriage equality. In recent years, tensions have emerged between religious freedom and LGBTQIA+ rights, with evangelicals expressing concerns that expanding LGBTQIA+ rights could undermine religious freedoms.

The analysis in Chapter Six confirmed that abortion was the most frequently mentioned issue among high-profile evangelical elites, surpassing race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ topics. This finding was consistent across both Trump's evangelical advisory board and a separate group of prominent evangelical elites not on the board. The prominence of abortion in their discourse underscores its substantial moral, theological, and political importance within the evangelical community. Abortion was mentioned 627 times overall, with higher frequency in the comparison group (2.92%) compared to the advisory board (1.92%), likely influenced by figures like Dr. Albert Mohler and Dr. Russell Moore. Race emerged as the second most mentioned issue, reflecting dynamic events such as Charlottesville and the George Floyd

incident, with 313 mentions, slightly more in the comparison group (1.32%) than in the advisory board (1.09%). Immigration, with 262 mentions (1.01%), was discussed more by the advisory board (1.16%) compared to the comparison group (0.86%). LGBTQIA+ issues were mentioned the least, with only 56 mentions (0.22%), indicating lower priority among evangelical leaders during this period. The study confirmed that evangelical elites maintained a consistent focus on abortion regardless of Trump's executive communications, emphasizing its meaningful role in their advocacy.

However, the analysis in Chapter Seven rejected the hypothesis that negative tweets received more interactions; instead, tweets with positive sentiment garnered more engagement, with nearly 70% of interactions for advisory board elites and 64% for comparison group elites responding to positively worded tweets. This suggests positive content may be more effective in driving social media interactions within this context. The subsequent section will delve into the implications of these findings for evangelical communication strategies and social media dynamics.

The research has profound implications for understanding the intersection of religion, politics, and social media, particularly in the context of high-profile evangelical elites. The dominant focus on abortion reveals its deep moral and theological magnitude within the evangelical community, underscoring its pivotal role in shaping public policy and mobilizing voters. This emphasis on abortion illustrates how evangelical leaders strategically prioritize issues that align with their core values and perceived political impact, often overshadowing other crucial topics like race, immigration, and LGBTQIA+ issues, even amidst major social and political events.

This strategic focus not only reflects the theological priorities of evangelical elites but also signals to their followers which issues should be of paramount concern, revealing a deeply entrenched hierarchy of moral and political concerns. This understanding provides insights into how these leaders might respond to future political leaders and policies, particularly those that challenge or diverge from these prioritized issues.

Furthermore, the finding that positively worded tweets received higher engagement challenges conventional views on social media dynamics, suggesting that within this context, positive messaging may be more effective in mobilizing and engaging followers. This trend could influence how both religious and political leaders craft their communications, particularly on social media platforms where engagement metrics are crucial for visibility and influence.

The prominence of figures like Dr. Albert Mohler and Dr. Russell Moore in shaping discourse around abortion highlights the significant role that key leaders play in directing the conversation and mobilizing their base. The lower emphasis on LGBTQIA+ issues suggests a selective focus on topics that align with broader media coverage or strategic goals.

These findings offer valuable insights into how evangelical elites use social media to reinforce core values, shape public discourse, and influence political narratives. Understanding their strategic communication choices and the impact of their messaging on societal debates is essential for grasping the broader cultural and political influence of evangelical leaders in American society. This understanding can also inform political strategies for candidates seeking to resonate with religious voters, revealing the importance of aligning campaign messages with the themes that resonate most with this influential demographic.

In sum, this analysis provides insight into the communication strategies of high-profile evangelical elites. It offers a lens to view the evolving relationship between religion, politics,

and media in the United States. As social media plays a central role in political communication, understanding these dynamics is not just important but crucial for scholars, political strategists, and religious leaders.

In conclusion, this study contributes to social media content analysis by demonstrating that mixed methods of reflexive text analysis, simple random sampling (SRS), and a constructed week sampling are advantageous complements in obtaining a representative Twitter dataset. Unlike previous research that focused only on objective variables such as news categories and story counts, this study incorporates subjective variables like elite tone and issue frames, enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The study also highlights the need for context in sentiment analysis, showing that the impact of positive and negative intensifiers in social media varies depending on context and meaning, affecting how the audiences receive the messaging. For instance, while the negativity effect was observed, its strength was moderated by the intensity of the language used.

Overall, the findings underscore the importance of considering stylistic and contextual factors in language analysis and offer valuable insights for developing algorithms and training datasets for social media research. The findings from this study underscore the critical importance of incorporating stylistic and contextual factors in language analysis. They offer valuable insights for developing algorithms and training datasets in social media research.

The observation that positive sentiment tweets received higher engagement rates than negative ones challenges traditional assumptions in sentiment analysis, which often emphasize the impact of negative content. This suggests that future algorithms should be refined to better detect and account for the nuances of positive sentiment, particularly in contexts where community-building and affirmational language are prevalent. Developing more sophisticated

models that can differentiate between various types of positive sentiment—such as hope, encouragement, and affirmation—will allow for a more accurate reflection of engagement patterns in social media discourse.

The prioritization of specific issues, like abortion, highlights the context's importance in interpreting social media communications. Algorithms that analyze social media content should be trained to code for contextual factors, such as the speaker's ideological leanings or specific topics' religious and cultural significance. By integrating context-aware processing, these models can deliver more accurate insights into the motivations behind social media posts and their likely impact on different audiences.

The emphasis on particular themes by high-profile evangelical elites also raises essential considerations for bias in algorithmic design. When developing algorithms for social media analysis, it is crucial to account for potential biases introduced by the prominence of certain topics or the stylistic choices of influential users. Ensuring that algorithms are trained on diverse datasets that include a wide range of perspectives can help mitigate these biases and lead to more balanced and comprehensive analyses of social media content.

Evangelical elites' consistent framing of social issues suggests that future algorithms should include more advanced thematic analysis capabilities. By identifying recurring themes and linking them to specific groups or ideologies, these tools can offer deeper insights into how different communities frame and respond to social and political issues. This could be particularly valuable for researchers studying the intersection of religion and politics, as it would allow for a more granular understanding of how discourse evolves over time and in response to specific events.

Given that different audiences may respond differently to various types of content, future algorithms should be designed with customization in mind. Tailoring algorithms to specific user groups, such as religious communities, could enhance the accuracy and relevance of social media analysis. This could involve the development of specialized models that incorporate the unique language, values, and priorities of these communities, leading to more meaningful and actionable insights.

The insights from this study also inform the creation of more robust training datasets for social media analysis. These datasets can help train algorithms to better recognize social media communication's subtleties by including a diverse range of stylistic and contextual factors. This could lead to more accurate sentiment analysis, thematic detection, and engagement prediction, ultimately improving the effectiveness of social media research tools.

In conclusion, this study's findings highlight the need for future algorithms to go beyond simple sentiment analysis and incorporate a deeper understanding of stylistic and contextual nuances. By doing so, these algorithms can provide more accurate and insightful analyses of social media content, particularly in complex and ideologically charged environments like the one examined in this research.

Possible methodological limitations may have impacted the analysis and interpretation of the data. The flexibility inherent in the analysis methods allowed for a wide range of analytical options, which, while helpful, also posed challenges in maintaining consistency and focus. Without a solid theoretical framework, the interpretive power of the findings could be limited, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions. Additionally, errors in querying key terms and selecting appropriate keywords introduced potential inaccuracies in data collection. The unique nature of social media content necessitates a re-evaluation of traditional sampling

methods, suggesting a need for alternative approaches to better capture the nuances of online interactions. Furthermore, analyzing social media data might not fully represent the entire population due to the selective nature of online content. Computational analysis also struggled with capturing subtle meanings such as sarcasm and humor. However, this was partially mitigated by incorporating a mixed-method approach, including reflexive text analysis and random sampling. Lastly, the data analyzed focused solely on the social media profiles of high-profile evangelical elites, potentially limiting the broader applicability of the findings.

Future research should build on the current findings by examining other social media platforms and conducting repeated analyses to verify the study's validity. It is recommended that sentiment analysis evolve to incorporate opinion mining and machine learning, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of consumer reviews by treating them as context-bound opinions that vary by individual and context. Researchers should also focus on evaluating sampling methods for large-scale data to ensure an adequate population size and representative results. While this study provided an overview of four issues critical for evangelical Christians, future research could explore broader themes, such as religious liberties, or conduct in-depth analyses of individual concerns to gain more detailed insights.

REFERENCES

- 2020 PRRI Census of American Religion. (2021, July 8). PRRI | At the Intersection of Religion, Values, and Public Life; PRRI. <https://www.ppri.org/research/2020-census-of-american-religion/>
- A Christian nation? Understanding the Threat of Christian nationalism to American democracy and culture. (2023, February 8). Retrieved June 13, 2023, from PRRI website: <https://www.ppri.org/research/a-christian-nation-understanding-the-threat-of-christian-nationalism-to-american-democracy-and-culture/>
- Aberbach, J. D. (2017). *Understanding contemporary American conservatism*. Routledge.
- Abramowitz, A., & Knotts, H. G. (2006). Ideological realignment in the American electorate: A comparison of northern and southern white voters in the pre-Reagan, Reagan, and post-Reagan eras. *Politics & Policy*, 34(1), 94- 108. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-1346.2006.00005.x> fea
- Adams, N. (2005, July 5). *Timeline: Remembering the scopes monkey trial*. NPR. Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://www.npr.org/2005/07/05/4723956/timeline-remembering-the-scopes-monkey-trial>
- Adkins, J. (2018). *Politics from the Pulpit: A Critical Test of Elite Cues in American Politics*. Kent State University, Kent, Ohio.
- Afshar, A. (2006). The Anti-gay Movement in the United States: The Framing of Religion. *Essex Human Rights Review*, 3(1), 64–79.
- Agarwal, A., Xie, B., Vovsha, I., Rambow, O., & Passonneau, R. (2011). *Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Data*. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/<https://aclanthology.org/W11-0705.pdf>
- Ahmari, S., Deneen, P., & Pappin, G. (2022, February 5). *Hawks are standing in the way of a new Republican Party*. The New York Times. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/05/opinion/republicans-national-conservatives-hawks.html>
- Ahmed, Z. (2020, April 22). *The unprecedented expansion of the global gag rule: Trampling rights, health and free speech*. Guttmacher Institute. <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2020/04/unprecedented-expansion-global-gag-rule-trampling-rights-health-and-free-speech>
- Alberta, T. (2017). Russell Moore. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from 50 Ideas blowing up American politics (and the people behind them): Russell Moore website: <https://www.politico.com/interactives/2017/politico50/russell-moore/>

- Albertson, B. L. (2015). Dog-whistle politics: Multivocal communication and religious appeals. *Political Behavior*, 37(1), 3–26. doi:10.1007/s11109-013-9265-x
- Allitt, P. (2017). *The Conservatives: Ideas and personalities throughout American history*. doi:10.12987/9780300155297
- Amnesty International UK. (2020, October 6). A licence to discriminate: Trump’s Muslim & refugee ban. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from Amnesty International UK website: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/licence-discriminate-trumps-muslim-refugee-ban>
- Antle, III, W. J. (2022, February 13). *It's time for libertarians and their skeptics on the right to team up against the Hawks*. The Week. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://theweek.com/foreign-policy/1010010/its-time-for-libertarians-and-their-skeptics-on-the-right-to-team-up-against>
- Armaly, M. T., Buckley, D. T., & Enders, A. M. (2022). Christian nationalism and political violence: Victimhood, racial identity, conspiracy, and support for the Capitol attacks. *Political Behavior*, 44(2), 937–960. doi:10.1007/s11109-021-09758-y
- Balmer, R. (2000). *Blessed assurance: A history of evangelicalism in America*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Balmer, R. (2007). *Thy kingdom come: How the religious right distorts faith and threatens America*. London, England: Basic Books.
- Balmer, R. (2014a). *Redeemer: The life of Jimmy Carter*. La Vergne, TN: Basic Books.
- Balmer, R. (2014b, May 27). The real origins of the religious right. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from POLITICO Magazine website: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/05/religious-right-real-origins-107133/>
- Balmer, R. (2021). *Bad faith: Race and the rise of the religious right*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing.
- Barton, B. C. (2014). *Pray the gay away: The extraordinary lives of bible belt gays*. New York University Press.
- Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. Ballantine Books.
- Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology: Journal of Division 1, of the American Psychological Association*, 5(4), 323–370. doi:10.1037/1089-2680.5.4.323
- BBC News. (2013, September 26). Charles Taylor war crimes convictions upheld. *BBC*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-24279323>

- Bellovary, A., Young, N. A., & Goldenberg, A. (2021, February 24). Left- and Right-Leaning News Organizations' Negative Tweets are More Likely to be Shared. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/2er67>
- Ben Barka, M. (2012). The New Christian Right's relations with Israel and with the American Jews: the mid-1970s onward. *E-rea*, (10.1). doi:10.4000/erea.2753
- Ben-Nun Bloom, P., & Arikan, G. (2013). Religion and support for democracy: A cross-national test of the mediating mechanisms. *British Journal of Political Science*, 43(2), 375–397. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0007123412000427>
- Benford, R. D., & Snow, D. A. (2000). Framing processes and social movements: An overview and assessment. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 26(1), 611–639. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.611
- Bennett, D. (2017). *Defending faith: the politics of the Christian conservative legal movement*. University Press of Kansas.
- Benson, B., G., G. J., & Merolla, J. (2012, January 26). For GOP, dislike for Obama trumps all. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from POLITICO website: <https://www.politico.com/story/2012/01/for-gop-dislike-for-obama-trumps-all-072028>
- Berelson, B., Lazarsfeld, P., & MacPhee, W. N. (1954). *Voting: A study of opinion formation in a presidential campaign*. University of Chicago Press.
- Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. (2012). What Makes Online Content Viral? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), 192-205.
- Bernard, A. R. (2017, April 30). AR Bernard pastor and spiritual counselor. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from <https://arbernardnews.com/>
- Beyerlein, K., & Chaves, M. (2003). The political activities of religious congregations in the United States. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(2), 229–246. doi:10.1111/1468-5906.00175
- Black, S. (2016, September 19). Evangelicals and politics: Where We've Been and Where We're Headed. Retrieved June 4, 2024, from National Association of Evangelicals website: <https://www.nae.org/evangelicals-and-politics/>
- Blumberg, A. (2017, January 10). 8 years did little to sway white evangelicals' views on Obama. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from HuffPost website: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/8-years-did-little-to-sway-white-evangelicals-views-on-obama_n_58752b13e4b02b5f858b8032

- Blumenthal, M. (2005, September 7). Pat Robertson's Katrina cash. *The Nation* (New York, N.Y.: 1865). Retrieved from <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/pat-robertsons-katrina-cash/>
- Boorstein, M. (2011, September 26). Liberty University's Johnnie Moore speaks the language of young evangelicals. *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.: 1974). Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/liberty-universitys-johnnie-moore-speaks-the-language-of-young-evangelicals/2011/09/26/gIQAvWC3mL_story.html
- Boorstein, M. (2016, June 8). Trump on God: 'Hopefully I won't have to be asking for much forgiveness.' *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.: 1974). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/06/08/trump-on-god-hopefully-i-wont-have-to-be-asking-for-much-forgiveness/>
- Boorstein, M. (2018, June 18). Why many white evangelicals are not protesting family separations on the U.S. border. *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.: 1974). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/06/18/why-many-white-evangelical-christians-are-not-protesting-family-separations-on-the-u-s-border/>
- Boston, R. (2018, September 7). All the presidents' men and women: Members of president trump's Evangelical Advisory Board are hard at work changing public policy - but they'd rather you not know about it. Retrieved February 4, 2024, from Americans United website: <https://www.au.org/the-latest/church-and-state/articles/all-the-presidents-men-and-women-members-of/>
- Boucher, J., & Osgood, C. E. (1969). The Pollyanna hypothesis. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 8(1), 1–8. doi:10.1016/s0022-5371(69)80002-2
- Boyd, J. (1970, May 17). *Nixon's southern strategy*. The New York Times. Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/1970/05/17/archives/nixons-southern-strategy-its-all-in-the-charts.html>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Brewer, M. D., Kersh, R., & Petersen, R. E. (2003). Assessing conventional wisdom about religion and politics: A preliminary view from the pews. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 42(1), 125–136. doi:10.1111/1468-5906.00166
- Brewer, P. R., & Gross, K. (2005). Values, framing, and citizens' thoughts about policy issues: Effects on content and quantity. *Political Psychology*, 26(6), 929–948. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2005.00451.x
- Brint, S., & Abrutyn, S. (2010). Who's right about the Right? Comparing competing explanations of the link between white evangelicals and conservative politics in the United States. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(2), 328–350.

- Brisbane, G. J. (2022). Religious identity, politics, and the media: What white evangelical Christian women's religious identity reveals about their endorsement of Donald J. Trump and distrust of news outlets. *The Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 019685992211200. doi:10.1177/01968599221120060
- Brody, D. (2008, June 9). Obama Campaign may be Sued for Joshua Generation Project. Retrieved August 1, 2023, from CBN News website: <https://www1.cbn.com/thebrodyfile/archive/2008/06/09/obama-campaign-may-be-sued-for-joshua-generation-project>
- Brooks, C. (2002). Religious influence and the politics of family decline concern: Trends, sources, and U.S. political behavior. *American Sociological Review*, 67(2), 191. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3088892>
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (2018). *Studies in interactional sociolinguistics: Politeness: Some universals in language usage series number 4: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9780511813085>
- Brownstein, R. (2022, April 19). Why the Republican offensive on abortion is escalating. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2022/04/19/politics/abortion-laws-red-states-republicans/index.html>
- Buchanan, P. (1987, August). *Culture Wars Speech: Address to the Republican National Convention*.
- Buckley, D. T. (2022). Religious elite cues, internal division, and the impact of Pope Francis' Laudato Si.' *Politics and Religion*, 15(1), 1–33. doi:10.1017/s175504832000067x
- Buckley, W. F., Jr. (1959). *Up from liberalism*. Stein and Day.
- Burge, R. P., & Williams, M. D. (2019). Is social media a digital pulpit? How evangelical leaders use Twitter to encourage the faithful and publicize their work. *Journal of Religion Media and Digital Culture*, 8(3), 309–339. doi:10.1163/21659214-00803004
- Burgess, K. (2022, June 8). Bellevue Baptist reaches partial settlement in lawsuit over sex abuse of teen. *The Commercial Appeal*. Retrieved from <https://www.commercialappeal.com/story/news/2022/06/08/bellevue-baptist-memphis-sexual-abuse-teen-lawsuit-james-hook-partial-settlement-reached/7553535001/>
- Bush, G. H. W. (1970, October 23). [Letter to Mrs. Jim Hunter Jr].
- Butler, A. (2021). *White evangelical racism: The politics of morality in America*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.
- Calfano, B. (2021). *Exploring the public effects of religious communication on politics*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Calfano, B., & Oldmixon, E. (2016). Remembering to ask the boss: Priming and the dynamics of priest reliance on bishop cues. *Religions*, 7(3), 21. doi:10.3390/rel7030021
- Calfano, B. R., Djupe, P. A., & Wilson, A. R. (2013a). God save this “broken” land: The efficacy of closed-circuit voter targeting in a U.K. election. *Politics and Religion*, 6(1), 50–73. doi:10.1017/s1755048312000636
- Calfano, B. R., Friesen, A., & Djupe, P. A. (2013b). Mitigating Mormonism: Overcoming religious identity challenges with targeted appeals. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 46(03), 562–568. doi:10.1017/s1049096513000541
- Calfano, B. R., & Paolino, P. (2010). An Alan Keyes effect? Examining anti-black sentiment among white evangelicals. *Political Behavior*, 32(1), 133–156. doi:10.1007/s11109-009-9095-z
- Campbell, D. E. (2004). Acts of faith: Churches and political engagement. *Political Behavior*, 26(2), 155–180. doi:10.1023/b:pobe.0000035961.78836.5f
- Campbell, D. E., Green, J. C., & Quin Monson, J. (2014). *Seeking the Promised Land*. Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, Earnest Q., and Pettigrew, Thomas F. (1959). *Christians in Racial Crisis A Study of Little Rock’s Ministry*.
- Campbell, R., & Cowley, P. (2014). What voters want: Reactions to candidate characteristics in a survey experiment. *Political Studies*, 62(4), 745–765. doi:10.1111/1467-9248.12048
- Capps, R., Chishti, M., Gelatt, J., Bolter, J., & Ruiz Soto, A. G. (2018, May). Revving Up the Deportation Machinery: Enforcement under Trump and the Pushback. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from Migrationpolicy.org website:
<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/revving-deportation-machinery-under-trump-and-pushback>
- Carter, J. (1976, July 11). Interview on NBC’s “meet the press.” Retrieved April 27, 2023, from Ucsb.edu website: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/interview-nbcs-meet-the-press>
- Chapp, C. B. (2012). *Religious rhetoric and American politics: The endurance of civil religion in electoral campaigns*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Ceaser, James W. (2010). Four Heads and One Heart: The Modern Conservative Movement. APSA 2010 Annual Meeting Paper, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1643418>
- Chamberlain, P. (2009). Younger evangelicals: Where will they take the Christian right? *Christian Higher Education*, 8(4), 327–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15363750902917334>

- Cheong, P. H. (2014). Tweet the message? Religious authority and social media innovation. *Journal of Religion Media and Digital Culture*, 3(3), 1–19. doi:10.1163/21659214-90000059
- Chishti, M., Pierce, S., & Jacks, A. H. (2018, November 29). Trump Administration’s Unprecedented Actions on Asylum at the Southern Border Hit Legal Roadblock. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from Migrationpolicy.org website: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/trump-administrations-unprecedented-actions-asylum-southern-border-hit-legal-roadblock>
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007a). Framing theory. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 10(1), 103–126. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>
- Chong, D., & Druckman, J. N. (2007b). A theory of framing and opinion formation in competitive elite environments. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 99–118. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00331.x>
- Cillizza, C., & Cohen, J. (2012, November 8). President Obama and the white vote? No problem. *Washington Post (Washington, D.C.: 1974)*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2012/11/08/president-obama-and-the-white-vote-no-problem/>
- Cimino, R. (2005). “No god in common:” American evangelical discourse on Islam after 9/11. *Review of Religious Research*, 47(2), 162. doi:10.2307/3512048
- Clarkson, F. (2012). Rev. Samuel Rodriguez: Not So Moderate. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Politicalresearch.org website: <https://politicalresearch.org/2012/10/02/rev-samuel-rodriguez-not-so-moderate>
- Clendinen, D. (1984, August 19). TV evangelists assume larger convention role. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/08/19/us/tv-evangelists-assume-larger-convention-role.html>
- Clinton, B. (1998, August 17). [Letter to American People].
- Clinton, T. (n.d.). Retrieved February 25, 2024, from Timclinton.com website: <https://timclinton.com/>
- Codone, S. (2014). Megachurch pastor Twitter activity: An analysis of Rick Warren and Andy Stanley, two of America’s social pastors. *Journal of Religion Media and Digital Culture*, 3(2), 1–32. doi:10.1163/21659214-90000050
- Cohen, C., Silverman, R., Sanghani, R., Clifton, S., Cohen, C., & Smith, J. L. (2020, November 7). Donald Trump sexism tracker: Every offensive comment in one place. *Sunday Telegraph*. Retrieved from <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/politics/donald-trump-sexism-tracker-worst-offensive-comments-quotes/>

- Colvin, J., & Long, C. (2020, May 28). Trump tries a new response after George Floyd's death. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from AP News website: <https://apnews.com/article/police-donald-trump-violence-elections-ahmaud-arbery-89d86d28110b5f9a6d5a6df1b9f3be30>
- Compton, M. (2011, October 21). President Obama has ended the war in Iraq. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from whitehouse.gov website: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/10/21/president-obama-has-ended-war-iraq>
- Dallas, K., & Graham, J. (2022, April 12). Russell Moore, David French, Beth Moore, others challenge religious conservatives. *Deseret News (Salt Lake City, Utah: 1964)*. Retrieved from <https://www.deseret.com/faith/2022/4/11/23001615/the-new-reformers-religion-politics-religious-liberty/>
- Dart, J. (1979, December 13). 50 Christians Agree to Raise Reagan Funds. *Los Angeles Times*, p. B3.
- Davis, J. H., & Shear, M. D. (2021). *Border wars: Inside Trump's assault on immigration*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
- de Vreese, C. H. (2005). News framing. *Identifying Information and Tenor in Texts*, 13(1), 51–62. <https://doi.org/10.1075/idjdd.13.1.06vre>
- Deal Barlow, C. M. (2021). *Biblical Literalism, Evangelical Christianity, and the Transgender Bathroom Debate*. Georgia State University.
- Deal Barlow, C. M. (2017). *I am Fearfully and Wonderfully Made: A History of Transgender Identity and What It Means For Progressive Christianity*. Georgia State University.
- Declaration concerning religion, ethics, and the crisis in the Clinton presidency. (1998, November 16). Retrieved July 13, 2023, from Layman.org website: <https://layman.org/news86fd/>
- Dias, E. (2016, November 9). How evangelicals helped Donald Trump win. *Time*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/4565010/donald-trump-evangelicals-win/>
- Dias, E., & Tsai, D. (2016). Meet Donald Trump's Top Pastor. *Time*. Retrieved from <https://time.com/trump-pastor/>
- Dijksterhuis, A., & Aarts, H. (2003). On wildebeests and humans: the preferential detection of negative stimuli: The preferential detection of negative stimuli. *Psychological Science*, 14(1), 14–18. doi:10.1111/1467-9280.t01-1-01412
- Djupe, P., & Calfano, B. (2013a). Divine intervention? The influence of religious values on support for U.S. interventionism. *Political Beha*, 35(4), 643–663.

- Djupe, P., & Calfano, B. (2013b). *God Talk: Experimenting With the Religious Causes of Public Opinion*. Temple University Press.
- Djupe, P., & Calfano, B. (2013c). Religious value priming, threat, and political tolerance. *Political Research Quarterly*, 66(4), 768–780. doi:10.1177/1065912912471203
- Djupe, P. A., & Gilbert, C. P. (2002). The political voice of clergy. *The Journal of Politics*, 64(2), 596–609. doi:10.1111/1468-2508.00142
- Djupe, P. A., & Gilbert, C. P. (2008). *The political influence of churches*. Cambridge University Press.
- Djupe, P. A., Lewis, A. R., & Jelen, T. G. (2016). Rights, reflection, and reciprocity: Implications of the same-sex marriage debate for tolerance and the political process. *Politics and Religion*, 9(3), 630–648. doi:10.1017/s1755048316000547
- Djupe, P., & Smith, A. (2019). Experimentation in the Study of Religion and Politics. In W. R. Thompson (Ed.), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Dobson, J. C. (1998, September). [Letter to Subscribers to His Newsletter]. Retrieved from <http://ontology.buffalo.edu/smith/clinton/character.html>
- Dodds, G. G. (2012). Crusade or charade?: The religious right and the culture wars. *Canadian Review of American Studies*, 42(3), 274–300. <https://doi.org/10.1353/crv.2012.0017>
- Domke, D., & Coe, K. (2010). *The god strategy: How religion became a political weapon in America*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Druckman, J. N., Jacobs, L. R., & Ostermeier, E. (2004). Candidate strategies to prime issues and image. *The Journal of Politics*, 66, 1180–1202. doi:10.1111/j.0022-3816.2004.00295.x.
- Druckman, J. N., Kuklinski, J. H., & Sigelman, L. (2009). The unmet potential of interdisciplinary research: Political psychological approaches to voting and public opinion. *Political Behavior*, 31(4), 485–510. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-009-9092-2>
- Druckman, J. N., & Lupia, A. (2016). Preference change in competitive political environments. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 19(1), 13–31. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-020614-095051>
- Druckman, J. N., & Lupia, A. (2017). Using frames to make scientific communication more effective. *Oxford Handbooks Online*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190497620.013.38>

Du Mez, Kristen Kobes. (2022, May 8). Interview by M. Martin. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2022/05/08/1097514184/how-abortion-became-a-mobilizing-issue-among-the-religious-right>

Du Mez, K. K. (2020). *Jesus and John Wayne: How white evangelicals corrupted a faith and fractured a nation*. New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation.

Dueling realities: Amid multiple crises, trump and Biden supporters see different priorities and futures for the nation. (2020, October 19). PRRI | At the Intersection of Religion, Values, and Public Life; PRRI. <https://www.ppri.org/research/amid-multiple-crises-trump-and-biden-supporters-see-different-realities-and-futures-for-the-nation/>

Edsall, T. B. (1992, March 12). Southern primaries reveal contradictions for democrats. *Washington Post (Washington, D.C.: 1974)*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1992/03/12/southern-primaries-reveal-contradictions-for-democrats/ba77e02c-e996-4cd8-a6be-1cacbd0ec354/>

Edwards, L. (1999). *The Conservative Revolution: The movement that Remade America*. Free Press.

Edwards, L. (2018, October 25). *What is conservatism?* The Heritage Foundation. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.heritage.org/conservatism/commentary/what-conservatism>

Egami, N., Fong, C. J., Grimmer, J., Roberts, M. E., & Stewart, B. M. (2022). How to make causal inferences using texts. *Science Advances*, 8(42), eabg2652. doi:10.1126/sciadv.abg2652

Ehrenfreund, M. (2014, November 19). Your complete guide to Obama's immigration executive action. *The Washington Post (Washington, D.C.: 1974)*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/11/19/your-complete-guide-to-obamas-immigration-order/>

Eichenberg, R. C., Stoll, R. J., & Lebo, M. (2006). War president: The approval ratings of George W. Bush. *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 50(6), 783–808. doi:10.1177/0022002706293671

Elmasry, M. H., & el-Nawawy, M. (2020). The value of Muslim and non-Muslim life: A comparative content analysis of elite American newspaper coverage of terrorism victims. *Journalism*, 23(2), 533–551. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884920922388>

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. (2007). The Benefits of Facebook “Friends”: Social Capital and College Students’ Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 12(4), 1143-1168.

- Elving, R. (2018, December 4). 6 little words helped make George H.W. Bush(A 1-term) president. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/04/673249018/6-little-words-helped-make-george-h-w-bush-a-one-term-president>
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Entman, R. M. (2007). Framing bias: Media in the distribution of power. *Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 163–173. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00336.x>
- Epstein, R. J. (2014, June 20). Faith & freedom speakers deride Obama’s Iraq policy. *The Wall Street Journal*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-WB-46758>
- Equal pay act of 1963 and the Lilly Ledbetter fair pay act of 2009. (n.d.). Retrieved August 4, 2023, from U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission website: <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/guidance/equal-pay-act-1963-and-lilly-ledbetter-fair-pay-act-2009>
- Ethics and Public Policy Center. (2003). Evangelical Views of Islam. Retrieved July 27, 2023, from Beliefnet.com website: http://www.beliefnet.com/story/I_24/story_12447.html
- Fadulu, L. (2020, August 26). Trump’s Rollback of Transgender Rights Extends Through Entire Government. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from Nytimes.com website: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/06/us/politics/trump-transgender-rights.html>
- Falwell, J., Sr. (2004, October). *God Is Pro-War*. Retrieved from <https://www.wnd.com/2004/01/23022/>
- Fea, J. (2018). *Believe me: The evangelical road to Donald trump*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B Eerdmans Publishing.
- Feddes, M. (2012, April 20). Richard Land’s Comments On Trayvon Martin Investigated By SBC. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Christianitytoday.com website: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2012/april/richard-lands-comments-on-trayvon-martin-investigated-by.html>
- Federal Election Commission. (2017). *FEDERAL ELECTIONS 2016: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives*. Retrieved from chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpajpcgclefindmkaj/<https://www.fec.gov/resources/cms-content/documents/federalelections2016.pdf>
- Feifer, G. (2010). *The great gamble: The soviet war in Afghanistan*. New York, NY: Harper Perennial.

- Fetner, T. (2011). *How the religious right shaped lesbian and gay activism*. W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services Library.
- Fisher, M. (2016, June 10). Donald Trump: 'I am the least racist person.' *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.: 1974). Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/donald-trump-i-am-the-least-racist-person/2016/06/10/eac7874c-2f3a-11e6-9de3-6e6e7a14000c_story.html
- Fitzgerald, B. (2006). *McCarthyism: The Red Scare (Snapshots in History)*. Compass Point Books.
- Fitzsimons, T. (2019, May 14). Trump opposes federal LGBTQ nondiscrimination bill, citing "poison pills." Retrieved July 21, 2024, from NBC News website: <https://www.nbcnews.com/feature/nbc-out/trump-opposes-federal-lgbtq-nondiscrimination-bill-citing-poison-pills-n1005551>
- Floyd, A. (2015, October 24). The racial right: The racist origins of the Christian right wing. Retrieved April 20, 2023, from Brown Political Review website: <https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2015/10/the-racial-right-the-racist-origins-of-the-christian-right-wing/>
- Focus on the Family. (2019, April 4). About Focus on the Family. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/about/>
- Froese, P., Bader, C., & Smith, B. (2008). Political tolerance and god's wrath in the United States*. *Sociology of Religion*, 69(1), 29–44. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/69.1.29>
- Frontline. (2004). *The Jesus factor*. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/jesus/interviews/wead.html>
- Gabriel, T. (2016, February 27). *Donald Trump, Despite Impieties, Wins Hearts of Evangelical Voters*. *Nytimes.com*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/28/us/politics/donald-trump-despite-impieties-wins-hearts-of-evangelical-voters.html>
- Gallup, Inc. (2007, June 8). Religion. Retrieved June 26, 2023, from Gallup.com website: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1690/religion.aspx>
- Gamson, W. & Modigliani, A. (1987). The Changing Culture of Affirmative Action. In R. Braungart (ed.), *Research in Political Sociology*, Vol. 3 (pp. 137-177). Jai Press, Inc .
- Garamone, J. (2011, June 23). Obama announces troop reductions, way forward in Afghanistan. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from National Guard website: <https://www.nationalguard.mil/News/Article/610547/obama-announces-troop-reductions-way-forward-in-afghanistan/>

- Garry, S. (2008, February 14). John McCain said publicly that “Hillary Clinton would make a good president.” Retrieved August 1, 2023, from @politifact website: <https://www.politifact.com/factchecks/2008/feb/14/james-dobson/mccain-knew-it-would-get-him-in-trouble/>
- Gass, N. (2016, June 21). Trump’s evangelical advisory board features Bachmann, Falwell. Retrieved February 4, 2024, from POLITICO website: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/06/trump-evangelical-advisory-board-224612>
- Gelb, L. H. (1983, March 23). Aides say Reagan is ready to offer arms compromise. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1983/03/23/world/aides-say-reagan-is-ready-to-offer-arms-compromise.html>
- Gibney, A. (2010, September 27). The deceptions of Ralph Reed. *Atlantic Monthly (Boston, Mass.: 1993)*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2010/09/the-deceptions-of-ralph-reed/63568/>
- Gifford, L. J. (2012). Girded with a Moral and Spiritual Revival. In L. J. Gifford & D. K. Williams (Eds.), *The Right Side of the Sixties: Reexamining Conservatism’s Decade of Transformation*.
- Gifford, L. J. (2009). *The Center Cannot Hold: The 1960 Presidential Election and the Rise of Modern Conservatism*. Northern Illinois University Press.
- Gillon, S. M. (2021, March 22). Reagan tied Republicans to White Christians and now the party is trapped. *Washington Post (Washington, D.C.: 1974)*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2021/03/22/reagan-tied-republicans-white-christians-now-party-is-trapped/>
- Githens, M., & Stetson, D. M. (Eds.). (2013). *Abortion politics: Public policy in cross-cultural perspective*. Routledge.
- Glass, A. (2018). Clinton signs NAFTA into law, Dec. 8, 1993. Retrieved July 14, 2023, from POLITICO website: <https://www.politico.com/story/2018/12/08/clinton-signs-nafta-into-law-dec-8-1993-1040789>
- Glueck, K. (2016, July 11). Donald Trump’s God whisperer. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Politico.com website: <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/donald-trump-pastor-paula-white-225315>
- God talk: Religious cues and electoral support. (2013). In *God Talk* (pp. 45–73). Temple University Press.
- Goffman, E. (1975). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Harvard University Press.

- Goldman, S. (2021, September 17). How “white evangelical” became a synonym for “conservative.” Retrieved July 21, 2024, from theweek website: <https://theweek.com/republicans/1005008/how-white-evangelical-became-a-synonym-for-conservative>
- Goldman, R. (2008, June 12). Strange bedfellows: Obama and evangelicals. Retrieved August 2, 2023, from ABC News website: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/Vote2008/story?id=5053866&page=1>
- Goldwater, B. M. (1960). *The Conscience of a Conservative*. Victor Publishing Company.
- Gonzales, N. L. (2008, June 9). New religious outreach could land Obama in legal trouble. Retrieved August 1, 2023, from Roll Call website: <https://rollcall.com/2008/06/09/new-religious-outreach-could-land-obama-in-legal-trouble/>
- Gonzalez, M. A. 2012. “Religion and the US Presidency: Politics, the Media, and Religious Identity.” *Political Theology* 13 (5): 568–585. doi:10.1558/poth.v13i5.568
- Gorman, S. (2015, November 27). Trump denies mocking New York Times reporter’s disability. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-trump-reporter-idUSKBN0TG01420151127>
- Graham, B. (1954). Satan’s Religion. *The American Mercury*, 41–46.
- Graham, E. L. (2017). Evangelicals and the Power of Positive Thinking. *Journal of Religious Studies*, 38(2), 190-203.
- Graham, F. (1998, August 27). Clinton’s sins aren’t private. *Wall Street Journal (Eastern Ed.)*. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/SB904162265981632000>
- Graham, R. (2021, March 12). With humor and biblical authority, Beth Moore captivates evangelical women. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/11/us/beth-moore-evangelical-women.html>
- Grant, T. (2011, March 25). Little evangelical consensus on Libya. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from Christianity Today website: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2011/march/little-evangelical-consensus-on-libya.html>
- Grant, T. (2016, June 22). Who flipped to join Trump’s evangelical advisory board? (COMMENTARY). Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Religion News Service website: <https://religionnews.com/2016/06/22/who-flipped-to-join-trumps-evangelical-advisory-board/>
- Graves-Fitzsimmons, G. (2020). *Just faith: Reclaiming progressive Christianity*. Fortress Press.

- Green, J. (2003, January 1). Reagan's liberal legacy. Retrieved June 25, 2023, from Washington Monthly website: <https://washingtonmonthly.com/2003/01/01/reagans-liberal-legacy/>
- Green, J. C. (1995). The Christian Right and the 1994 elections: A view from the states. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 28(1), 5–8. doi:10.2307/420570
- Greenfield, J. (September/October 2016). Donald Trump is Pat Buchanan with better timing. Retrieved July 10, 2023, from POLITICO Magazine website: <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2016/09/donald-trump-pat-buchanan-republican-america-first-nativist-214221/>
- Greenawalt, K. (1988). *Religious convictions and political choice*. Oxford University Press.
- Greenwood, D. N. (2013). Fame, Facebook, and Twitter: How Attitudes about Fame Predict Frequency and Nature of Social Media Use. *Fame, Facebook, and Twitter: How Attitudes about Fame Predict Frequency and Nature of Social Media Use.*, 2(4), 222–236.
- Gregg, G. L., II. (2016). George W. bush: Life before the presidency. *Miller Center*. Retrieved from <https://millercenter.org/president/gwbush/life-before-the-presidency>
- Griffith, R. M. (2017). *Moral combat: How sex divided American Christians and fractured American politics*. London, England: Basic Books.
- Grimmer, J., Roberts, M. E., & Stewart, B. M. (2022). *Text as data: A new framework for machine learning and the social sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Grimmer, J., & Stewart, B. M. (2013). Text as data: The promise and pitfalls of automatic content analysis methods for political texts. *Political Analysis: An Annual Publication of the Methodology Section of the American Political Science Association*, 21(3), 267–297. doi:10.1093/pan/mps028
- Guth, J. L. (2009). Religion in the 2008 Election. In Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier and Steven E. Schier (Ed.), *The American Elections of 2008* (pp. 243–265). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Guth, J. L. (2011). Obama, Religious Politics, and the Culture Wars. In S. E. Schier (Ed.), *Transforming America: Barack Obama in the White House* (pp. 77–100). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Guth, J. L., Green, J. C., Smidt, C. E., Kellstedt, L. A., & Poloma, M. M. (1997). *The bully pulpit: The politics of protestant clergy*. University Press of Kansas.
- Guth, J. L., Kellstedt, L. A., Smidt, C. E., & Green, J. C. (2006). Religious influences in the 2004 presidential election. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 36(2), 223–242. doi:10.1111/j.1741-5705.2006.00300.x

- Haberman, C. (2018, October 28). *Religion and right-wing politics: How evangelicals reshaped elections*. The New York Times. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/28/us/religion-politics-evangelicals.html>
- Hadden, J. K. (1969). *The Gathering Storm in the Churches*. New York: Doubleday.
- Haddock, V. (2005, November 20). The Bush dynasty and Roe vs. Wade / Rubbery politics runs in the family. Retrieved July 3, 2023, from SFGATE website: <https://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/The-Bush-dynasty-and-Roe-vs-Wade-Rubbery-2593871.php>
- Hagee, J. (1997). *Day of deception*. Cheltenham, England: Nelson Thornes.
- Hakim, D. (2018, October 3). In Tennessee senate race, financial missteps linger in the background. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/03/us/politics/tennessee-governor-blackburn-bredesen.html>
- Hamilton, D. L., & Huffman, L. J. (1971). Generality of impression-formation processes for evaluative and nonevaluative judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 20(2), 200–207. doi:10.1037/h0031698
- Harding, S. F. (2018). *The book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist language and politics*. doi:10.2307/j.ctv301gc8
- Hart, Roderick P. 1977. *The Political Pulpit*. West Lafayette: Purdue University Press.
- Hartford Institute for Religious Research. (n.d.). Megachurch. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from Hartsem.edu website: <http://hrr.hartsem.edu/megachurch/definition.html>
- Harwood, J. (2021, February 28). White evangelicals' dominance of the GOP has turned it into the party of resistance. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/28/politics/white-evangelicals-gop-trump/index.html>
- Hayek, F. A. (1944). *The road to serfdom*. Routledge.
- Heie, H. (2014). *Evangelicals on public policy issues: Sustaining a respectful political conversation*. Abilene Christian University Press.
- Hemmer, N. (2022a). *Partisans: The conservative revolutionaries who remade American politics in the 1990s*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Hemmer, N. (2022b, September 8). The Man Who Won the Republican Party Before Trump Did. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/08/opinion/pat-buchanan-donald-trump.html>

- Hendrickson, P. (1979, November 13). Ronald Reagan: Rugged Runner in The Biggest Race. *Washington Post*.
- Hertzke, A. D., & Peters, R. M. (1992). *The atomistic congress: Interpretation of congressional change: Interpretation of congressional change*. M.E. Sharpe.
- Heywood, A. (2004). *Political Theory: An Introduction* (3rd ed.). Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hixenbaugh, M., & Hylton, A. (2023, May 2). Christian activists are fighting to glorify God in a suburban Texas school district. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from NBC News website: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/grapevine-texas-school-board-election-christian-nationalism-rcna82246>
- Hoffmann, J. P., & Johnson, S. M. (2005). Attitudes toward abortion among religious traditions in the United States: Change or continuity? *Sociology of Religion*, 66(2), 161. doi:10.2307/4153084
- Hofmann, V., Kalluri, P. R., Jurafsky, D., & King, S. (2024). Dialect prejudice predicts AI decisions about people's character, employability, and criminality. Retrieved from <http://arxiv.org/abs/2403.00742>
- Hsieh, H.-F., Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277–1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687
- Hsiung, B. O., & Djupe, P. A. (2019). Religion and the extension of trust. *Political Behavior*, 41(3), 609–631. doi:10.1007/s11109-018-9466-4
- Hudson, D. (2014, July 21). President Obama signs a new Executive Order to protect LGBT workers. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from whitehouse.gov website: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/07/21/president-obama-signs-new-executive-order-protect-lgbt-workers>
- Humphrey, M. (2011, October 8). Jeffress says Satan is behind Roman Catholicism. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Right Wing Watch website: <https://www.rightwingwatch.org/post/jeffress-says-satan-is-behind-roman-catholicism/>
- Itkowitz, C. (2020, June 23). Trump Again Uses Racially Insensitive Term to Describe Coronavirus. Retrieved July 21, 2024, from Washingtonpost.com website: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-again-uses-kung-flu-to-describe-coronavirus/2020/06/23/0ab5a8d8-b5a9-11ea-aca5-ebb63d27e1ff_story.html
- Iyengar, S., & Kinder, D. R. (1987). *News that matters: Television and American opinion*. University of Chicago Press.

- Jalali, N. Y., & Papatla, P. (2019). Composing tweets to increase retweets. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. doi:10.1016/j.ijresmar.2019.05.001
- Jantz, G. (2021, October 8). Whole person care. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from The Center • A Place of HOPE website: <https://www.aplaceofhope.com/whole-person-care/>
- Jing-Schmidt, Z. (2007). Negativity bias in language: A cognitive-affective model of emotive intensifiers. *Cognitive Linguistics*, 18(3). doi:10.1515/cog.2007.023
- Johnnie Moore on President Trump's Evangelical Advisory Board*. (2017). Available from <https://www.c-span.org/video/?433432-4/johnnie-moore-president-trumps-evangelical-advisory-board>
- Johnston, L. (2018, August 30). Trump's evangelical advisory board violates the law, advocacy group argues in new filing. *Washington Post (Washington, D.C.: 1974)*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2018/08/30/trumps-evangelical-advisory-board-violates-the-law-advocacy-group-argues-in-new-filing/>
- Jones, P. E., & Brewer, P. R. (2020). Elite cues and public polarization on transgender rights. *Politics, Groups & Identities*, 8(1), 71–85. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1441722>
- Jones, R.P., Cox, D., Cooper, B., & Lienesc, R. (2016, October 25). The divide over America's future: 1950 or 2050? Findings from the 2016 American Values Survey. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from Public Religion Research Institute | At the Intersection of Religion, Values, and Public Life website: <https://www.prrri.org/research/poll-1950s-2050-divided-nations-direction-post-election/>
- Jurafsky, D., & Martin, J. H. (2009). Syntactic Parsing. *Speech and Language Processing: An Introduction to Natural Language Processing, Computational Linguistics, and Speech Recognition*. In *Computational Linguistics, and Speech Recognition*. 2nd edition (pp. 427–459). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson–Prentice Hall.
- Kanamori, Y., Pegors, T. K., Hulgus, J. F., & Cornelius-White, J. H. (2017). A comparison between self-identified Evangelical Christians' and nonreligious persons' attitudes toward transgender persons. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(1), 75–86. <https://doi.org/10.1037/sgd0000166>
- Kaylor, B. (2010, November 15). Conservative Christian leaders plot to replace Obama. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Good Faith Media website: <https://goodfaithmedia.org/conservative-christian-leaders-plot-to-replace-obama-cms-17004/>
- Kellstedt, L. A., & Green, J. C. (1993). Knowing God's many people: Denominational preference and political behavior. In David C. Leege & L. A. Kellstedt

- (Ed.), *Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics*. (pp. 53–71). Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Kelly, A. P. (2020). *Voices of outrage: Online partisan media, user-generated news commentary, and the contested boundaries of American conservatism during the 2016 US presidential election* (dissertation). Department of Media and Communications, London, England.
- Kharde, V. A., & Sonawane, P. S. (2016). Sentiment Analysis of twitter data: A survey of techniques. In *arXiv [cs.CL]*. <http://arxiv.org/abs/1601.06971>
- Kirk, R. (2016). *The conservative mind: From Burke to Eliot (abridged edition)*. Stellar Classics.
- Klein, P. A. (1993). *FEDERAL ELECTIONS 92: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives*.
- Knott, S. (2016). George H. W. Bush: Domestic Affairs. *Miller Center*. Retrieved from <https://millercenter.org/president/bush/domestic-affairs>
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Krosnick, J. A. (1990). Government policy and citizen passion: A study of issue publics in contemporary America. *Political Behavior*, 12(1), 59–92. doi:10.1007/bf00992332
- Krugman, P. (1991, April 1). Did the Federal Reserve Cause the Recession? *U.S. News & World Report*, p. 51.
- Kuruvilla, C. (2019, May 8). Paula white, trump’s spiritual adviser, leaves Florida church with new ambitions. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from HuffPost website: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/paula-white-trump-church_n_5cd2e310e4b0a7dffccfa91e
- Lagerwerf, L., Boeynaems, A., Burgers, C., & Van Egmond-Brussee, C. (2014). Immediate attention for public speech: Differential effects of rhetorical schemes and valence framing in political radio speeches. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 34(3), 273–299.
- Land, R. D., Colson, C., Bright, B., James Kennedy, D., & Herbster, C. D. (2002, October 3). [Letter to George W. Bush]. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20190705081813/https://waynenorthey.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/The-Land-Letter.pdf>
- Lasky, E. (2008). Barack Obama and Israel. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from Americanthinker.com website: https://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2008/01/barack_obama_and_israel.html

- Layman, G. C. (1997). Religion and political behavior in the United States: The impact of beliefs, affiliations, and commitment from 1980 to 1994. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 61(2), 288–316. <https://doi.org/10.1086/297796>
- Lazarus, J., & Thornton, J. R. (2021). Bully pulpit? Twitter users' engagement with President Trump's tweets. *Social Science Computer Review*, 39(5), 961–980. doi:10.1177/0894439320946578
- Lazarus, J. (2021). Negativity bias: An evolutionary hypothesis and an empirical programme. *Learning and Motivation*, 75(101731), 101731. doi:10.1016/j.lmot.2021.101731
- Lee, J. (2010, December 22). The President signs repeal of “don't ask don't tell”: “out of many, we are one.” Retrieved August 5, 2023, from whitehouse.gov website: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2010/12/22/president-signs-repeal-dont-ask-dont-tell-out-many-we-are-one>
- Lee, M. Y. H. (2015, October 28). Hillary Clinton's claim that DOMA had to be enacted to stop an anti-gay marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution. *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.: 1974). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/fact-checker/wp/2015/10/28/hillary-clintons-claim-that-doma-had-to-be-enacted-to-stop-an-anti-gay-marriage-amendment-to-the-u-s-constitution/>
- Levy, P. (2015, August 11). How the bush family aided planned parenthood's rise. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved from <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2015/08/planned-parenthood-jeb-bush-wants-roll-back-his-fathers-legacy/>
- Lewis, A. R. (2018). *Cambridge studies in social theory, religion and politics: The rights turn in conservative Christian politics: How abortion transformed the culture wars*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Liebrecht, C., Hustinx, L., Van Mulken, M., & Schellens, P. J. (2019). Two dimensions of language intensity in evaluative discourse: Contextuality and semantic richness. In M. de L. Á. Gómez González & J. L. Mackenzie (Eds.), *The construction of discourse as verbal interaction*.
- Linder, R. D. (1996). Universal Pastor: President Bill Clinton's Civil Religion. *A Journal of Church and State*, 38(4), 733–749. doi:10.1093/jcs/38.4.733
- Lindsay, D. M. (2008). Evangelicals in the Power Elite: Elite Cohesion advancing a movement. *American Sociological Review*, 73(1), 60–82. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240807300104>
- Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. MacMillan.

- Liu, J. (2008, November 5). How the faithful voted. Retrieved August 2, 2023, from Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2008/11/05/how-the-faithful-voted/>
- Lopez, A. (2023, February 14). More than half of Republicans support Christian nationalism, according to a new survey. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2023/02/14/1156642544/more-than-half-of-republicans-support-christian-nationalism-according-to-a-new-s>
- Lopez, M. H., & Krogstad, J. M. (2014, August 15). 5 facts about the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2014/08/15/5-facts-about-the-deferred-action-for-childhood-arrivals-program/>
- Lum, K. G., & Martin, A. L. (2017). If God be for you, who can be against you?" : Persecution and vindication of the Church of God in Christ during World War I. In S. A. Johnson & S. Weitzman (Eds.), *The FBI and religion: Faith and national security before and after 9/11*. University of California Press.
- Lupia, A. (2017). *Uninformed why people know so little about politics and what we can do about it*. Oxford University Press.
- Lupia, A., & McCubbins, M. D. (1998). *Political economy of institutions and decisions: The democratic dilemma: Can citizens learn what they need to know?* Cambridge University Press.
- Mahler, J., & Eder, S. (2016, August 27). 'no vacancies' for blacks: How Donald trump got his start, and was first accused of bias. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/28/us/politics/donald-trump-housing-race.html>
- Malloy, D. (2012, September 20). Ralph Reed takes GOP high-tech. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution website: <https://www.ajc.com/news/ralph-reed-takes-gop-high-tech/K7MZHVHbALsVOEKYdqtviO/>
- Manderson, N. (2021, July 16). *How evangelicals abandoned Christianity - and became "Conservatives" instead*. Salon. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.salon.com/2021/07/17/how-evangelicals-abandoned-christianity--and-became-conservatives-instead-3/>
- Mangan, D. (2016, October 20). *Trump: I'll appoint Supreme Court justices to overturn Roe v. Wade abortion case*. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2016/10/19/trump-ill-appoint-supreme-court-justices-to-overturn-roe-v-wade-abortion-case.html>
- Marley, D. J. (2006). Ronald Reagan and the splintering of the Christian right. *A Journal of Church and State*, 48(4), 851–868. doi:10.1093/jcs/48.4.851

- Martin, J., & Burns, A. (2016, June 13). Blaming Muslims after attack, Donald trump tosses pluralism aside. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/14/us/politics/donald-trump-hillary-clinton-speeches.html>
- Martin, L. A. (2023). *The Gospel of J. Edgar Hoover: How the FBI Aided and Abetted the Rise of White Christian Nationalism*. Princeton University Press.
- Martin, W. C. (2014). *With god on our side: The rise of the religious right in America*. New York, NY: Bantam.
- Martínez, J., & Smith, G. A. (2016, November 9). How the faithful voted: A preliminary 2016 analysis. Retrieved August 25, 2023, from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>
- Mauro, T. (2005, October 31). Jay Sekulow's golden ticket. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from National Law Journal website: <https://www.law.com/nationallawjournal/almID/1130332860379/>
- Maxwell, A., & Shields, T. G. (2021). *The Long Southern Strategy: How Chasing white voters in the South changed American politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Mayring, P. A. E. (2023). Qualitative content analysis. In *International Encyclopedia of Education(Fourth Edition)* (pp. 314–322). Elsevier.
- Mazzetti, M., & Glaberson, W. (2009, January 22). Obama issues directive to shut down Guantánamo. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/22/us/politics/22gitmo.html>
- McCammon, S. (2016, November 1). Trump presents dilemma for evangelical women, once reliable GOP voters. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2016/11/01/500183772/evangelicals-face-a-gender-split-over-trump>
- McDaniel, L., E., Nooruddin, I., & Faith Shortle, A. (2010). Divine boundaries: How religion shapes citizens' attitudes toward immigrants. *American Politics Research*, 39(1), 205–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1532673x10371300>
- McGreal, C. (2015, September 14). Trump's anti-immigrant rhetoric could lose Republicans the 2016 election. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/14/donald-trump-anti-immigrant-2016-election-republican-loss>
- McKinney, R. (2009, October 26). "Reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement" to speak at missions conference. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from The Daily Citizen website: https://www.dailycitizen.news/news/local_news/reigning-intellectual-of-the-evangelical-

movement-to-speak-at-missions-conference/article_4aa568a5-56dd-584a-9f92-879b306ff528.html

Media, C. S. U. (2018, May 9). SLU founder, CSU alum receives honorary doctorate. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from [Charlestonsouthern.edu](https://www.charlestonsouthern.edu) website:

<https://www.charlestonsouthern.edu/slu-founder-csu-alum-receives-honorary-doctorate/>

Melkonian-Hoover, R., & Kellstedt, L. A. (2019). Populism, evangelicalism, and the polarized politics of immigration. *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*, 17(3), 50–67.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2019.1644009>

Member Activity by Hillary Rodham Clinton. (n.d.). Retrieved August 16, 2023, from Congress.gov website: <https://www.congress.gov/member/hillary-clinton/C001041?q=%7B%22subject%22%3A%22International+Affairs%22%7D&pageSize=250>

Mencken, H. L. (2002). *H.L. Mencken On Religion* (S. T. Joshi, Ed.). Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books.

Merritt, J. (2017, April 23). The gay, conservative Christian who might be trump's NATO ambassador. *Atlantic Monthly (Boston, Mass.: 1993)*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/04/trump-nato-grenell-lgbt-rights/523830/>

Michaels, M. (1981, February 1). Billy Graham Challenges the Moral Majority. *Parade Magazine*, 1–2.

Miller, E. C. (2020, July 7). The price of white evangelical patriarchy. Retrieved May 29, 2024, from Religion & Politics website: <https://religionandpolitics.org/2020/07/07/the-price-of-white-evangelical-patriarchy/>

Miller, S. P. (2014, May 18). The evangelical presidency: Reagan's dangerous love affair with the Christian right. Retrieved June 26, 2023, from Salon.com website: https://www.salon.com/2014/05/18/the_evangelical_presidency_reagans_dangerous_love_affair_with_the_christian_right/

Ministries, P. W. (2020, May 3). About Pastor Paula White-Cain. Retrieved February 6, 2024, from <https://paulawhite.org/about/>

Modi, R., Graves-Fitzsimmons, G., Siddiqi, M., & Malik, R. (2020). (rep.). *How Religion and LGBTQ Rights Intersect in Media Coverage*. The Center for American Progress. Retrieved from <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/religion-lgbtq-rights-intersect-media-coverage/>.

- Monsma, S. V., & Carlson-Thies, S. (2009, February 9). A promising start for Obama's faith-based office. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from Christianity Today website: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2009/februaryweb-only/106-11.0.html>
- Montanaro, D. (2021, November 9). *Feel like you don't fit in either political party? here's why*. NPR. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://www.npr.org/2021/11/09/1053929419/feel-like-you-dont-fit-in-either-political-party-heres-why>
- Moore, A. S. (Ed.). (2021). *Evangelicals and presidential politics: From Jimmy Carter to Donald trump*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.
- Moore, D. W. (2001a, September 24). *Bush job approval highest in Gallup history*. Gallup.com; Gallup. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4924/bush-job-approval-highest-gallup-history.aspx>
- Moore, D. W. (2001b, November 1). Eight of 10 Americans support ground war in Afghanistan. Retrieved July 27, 2023, from Gallup.com website: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/5029/eight-americans-support-ground-war-afghanistan.aspx>
- Moore, J. (2017, August 24). Evangelical Trump adviser: Why I won't bail on the White House. Retrieved February 6, 2024, from Religion News Service website: <https://religionnews.com/2017/08/24/johnnie-moore-why-i-wont-bail-on-the-white-house/>
- Moore, R. J. (2017, September 1). Interview by K. Atkins. Retrieved from <https://www.c-span.org/video/?433432-4/johnnie-moore-president-trumps-evangelical-advisory-board>
- Murugan, V. (2009). Embryonic stem cell research: a decade of debate from Bush to Obama. *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine*, 82(3), 101–103.
- My faith votes. (2018, December 12). Retrieved May 9, 2024, from My Faith Votes website: <https://www.myfaithvotes.org/about>
- Nagorski, A. (2018, December 2). Reagan brought down the Berlin wall, but it was George H.W. bush who unified Germany. Retrieved July 3, 2023, from The Daily Beast website: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/regan-brought-down-the-berlin-wall-but-it-was-george-hw-bush-who-unified-germany>
- National Defense Research Institute. (2010). The History of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell.". *Sexual Orientation and U.S. Military Personnel Policy: An Update of RAND's 1993 Study*, 39–68.
- National Public Radio (NPR). (2006, November 15). A new look for the house and Senate. In *Talk of the Nation*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2006/11/15/6492344/a-new-look-for-the-house-and-senate>

- National Shooting Sports Foundation. (2020, May). Firearm Production in the United States with Firearm Import and Export Data. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from nssf.org website: <https://www.nssf.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/NSSF-IIR-Firearm-Related-Accident-Statistics.pdf>
- Neiheisel, J. R., & Djupe, P. A. (2008). Intra-organizational constraints on churches' public witness. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 47(3), 427–441. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2008.00419.x>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The content analysis guidebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Neuman, S. (2015, June 26). Obama: Supreme court same-sex marriage ruling “A victory for America.” *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/06/26/417731614/obama-supreme-court-ruling-on-gay-marriage-a-victory-for-america>
- Newport, F. (1999, June 4). Presidential job approval: Bill Clinton’s high ratings in the midst of crisis, 1998. Retrieved July 14, 2023, from Gallup.com website: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/4609/presidential-job-approval-bill-clintons-high-ratings-midst.aspx>
- NPR Staff and Wires. (2010, March 23). Obama signs historic health care legislation. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2010/03/23/125058400/obama-signs-historic-health-care-legislation>
- Obama, B. (2011, March 28). *Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Libya*. Retrieved from <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/03/28/remarks-President-address-nation-libya>
- Office of the Secretary of State. (1994). *1994 General Election*. Retrieved from https://elections.sos.state.tx.us/elchist11_race833.htm
- Oldmixon, E. (2019). Political Behavior of Religious Elites. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. <https://oxfordre.com/politics/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.001.0001/acrefore-9780190228637-e-784>.
- Ollstein, A. M. (2019, February 22). *Trump administration issues rule to strip millions from Planned Parenthood*. Politico.com. <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/02/22/planned-parenthood-funding-trump-1164038>
- Olson, L. R. (2001). Filled with Spirit and Power: Protestant Clergy in Politics. *The American Political Science Review*, 95(4), 1005–1006. doi:10.1017/s0003055400400468

- Olson, L. R., & Green, J. C. (2006). The Religion Gap. *PS, Political Science & Politics*, 39(03), 455–459. doi:10.1017/s1049096506060860
- Ortiz, E., Burstein, A., & Denne, L. (2020, August 24). Jerry Falwell Jr. resigns as Liberty University president after accusations that he participated in a partner's affair with his wife. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from NBC News website: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/jerry-falwell-jr-resigns-president-liberty-university-reports-say-n1237886>
- Pak, A., & Paroubek, P. (2010). Twitter as a Corpus for Sentiment Analysis and Opinion Mining. Proceedings of LREC. 10.
- Pan, Z., & Kosicki, G. (1993). Framing analysis: An approach to news discourse. *Political Communication*, 10(1), 55–75. doi:10.1080/10584609.1993.9962963
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Pear, R. (1984, April 14). Reagan suspends benefits cutoff. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/04/14/us/reagan-suspends-benefits-cutoff.html>
- Peeters, G., & Czapinski, J. (1990). Positive-negative asymmetry in evaluations: The distinction between affective and informational negativity effects. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 1(1), 33–60. doi:10.1080/14792779108401856
- Pennycook, G., Ross, R. M., Koehler, D. J., & Fugelsang, J. A. (2017). Correction: Atheists and agnostics are more reflective than religious believers: Four empirical studies and a meta-analysis. *PloS One*, 12(4), e0176586. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0176586
- Petri, A. E. (2023, April 22). Book bans are on the rise in U.S. schools, fueled by new laws in Republican-led states. *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2023-04-22/book-bans-soaring-schools-new-laws-republican-states>
- Phillip, A. (2010, September 14). Christian voters losing faith in Obama. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from POLITICO website: <https://www.politico.com/story/2010/09/christian-voters-losing-faith-in-obama-042028>
- Phillips, M. (2011, May 2). Osama bin Laden dead. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from whitehouse.gov website: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2011/05/02/osama-bin-laden-dead>
- Phillips-Fein, K. (2011). Conservatism: A state of the field. *Journal of American History* (Bloomington, Ind.), 98(3), 723–743. doi:10.1093/jahist/jar430

- Piotrow, P. T. (1973). *World Population Crisis: The United States Response*. Retrieved from chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/Pnaan187.pdf
- Pitney, N. (2008, June 17). Obama Launching “Joshua Generation Project.” Retrieved August 1, 2023, from HuffPost website: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/obama-launching-joshua-ge_n_106158
- Pleming, S. (2009, March 18). In turnaround, U.S. signs U.N. gay rights document. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-rights-gay-usa-idUSTRE52H5CK20090318>
- Posner, S. (2017, August 17). Why Trump’s Charlottesville response won’t hurt him with a key chunk of his base. Retrieved May 29, 2024, from Washingtonpost.com website: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2017/08/17/why-trumps-charlottesville-response-wont-hurt-him-with-a-key-chunk-of-his-base/>
- Potter, C. (2022, October 11). The moment the republican party lost control. Retrieved July 10, 2023, from The New Republic website: <https://newrepublic.com/article/168021/republican-party-lost-control-1990s-gingrich-buchanan>
- Pounds, J. (2016). Expanded Ministry Among Changes as Thomas Road Baptist Church Marks Decade in New Home. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Newsadvance.com website: https://newsadvance.com/news/local/expanded-ministry-among-changes-as-thomas-road-baptist-church-marks-decade-in-new-home/article_37beb1ce-d667-562e-90be-daf20a3de94c.html
- Pratto, F., & John, O. P. (2004). Automatic vigilance: The attention-grabbing power of negative social information. In *Social Cognition* (pp. 250–265). Psychology Press.
- Pulliam-Bailey, S. (2011, January 21). *Q & A: Billy Graham on aging, regrets, and evangelicals*. Christianity Today. <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2011/januaryweb-only/qabillygraham.html>
- Pulliam-Bailey, S. (2014, August 28). *Pastors’ letter on Mark Driscoll: Step down from all aspects of ministry and leadership*. Religion News Service. <https://religionnews.com/2014/08/28/mars-hill-pastors-letter-mark-driscoll-step-down-ministry-leadership/>
- Pulliam-Bailey, S. (2016a, October 9). The deep disgust for Hillary Clinton that drives so many evangelicals to support Trump. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/10/09/the-deep-disgust-for-hillary-clinton-that-drives-so-many-evangelicals-to-support-trump/>

- Pulliam-Bailey, S. (2016b, October 10). *“Lecherous and worthless”*: Megachurch pastor from Trump’s own evangelical council denounces him. Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/10/10/misogynistic-trash-megachurch-pastor-from-trumps-own-evangelical-council-denounces-him/>
- PRRI Census of American Religion. (2023, February 24). Retrieved February 7, 2024, from PRRI | At the intersection of religion, values, and public life website: <https://www.prii.org/spotlight/prri-2022-american-values-atlas-religious-affiliation-updates-and-trends>
- Quilantan, V. (2024, March 28). Dallas bishop T.D. Jakes’ name crops up in lawsuit against Sean “Diddy” Combs. *Dallas Observer*. Retrieved from <https://www.dallasobserver.com/music/dallas-bishop-td-jakes-sean-diddy-combs-lawsuit-18979472>
- Quinley, H. E. (1974). *Prophetic clergy: Social activism among protestant ministers*. Nashville, TN: John Wiley & Sons.
- Rascoe, A. (2018, August 11). A year after Charlottesville, not much has changed for trump. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/08/11/637665414/a-year-after-charlottesville-not-much-has-changed-for-trump>
- Rathje, S., Van Bavel, J. J., & van der Linden, S. (2021). Out-group animosity drives engagement on social media. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 118(26), e2024292118. doi:10.1073/pnas.2024292118
- Rayfield, J., Kovensky, J., Riga, K., & Walker, H. (2010, September 7). Dallas pastor defends claim that Islam ‘promotes pedophilia’ (VIDEO). Retrieved May 9, 2024, from TPM – Talking Points Memo website: <https://talkingpointsmemo.com/muckraker/dallas-pastor-defends-claim-that-islam-promotes-pedophilia-video>
- Reagan, R. *Proclamation 5147 -- National Sanctity of Human Life Day*. , (1984).
- Reagan, R. (1984b, January). *Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union*.
- Reagan, R. (1984c, August 23). Remarks at an ecumenical prayer breakfast in Dallas, Texas. Retrieved June 26, 2023, from Ucsb.edu website: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/remarks-ecumenical-prayer-breakfast-dallas-texas>
- Reagan, R. (1989, January 11). *Farewell Address to the Nation*. The White House.
- Regent University. (2021, January 7). Michele Bachmann, J.D., LL.M. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from <https://www.regent.edu/faculty/j-d-michele-bachmann/>

- Regnerus, M. D., Smith, C., & Sikkink, D. (1998). Who gives to the poor? The influence of religious tradition and political location on the personal generosity of Americans toward the poor. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 37(3), 481. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1388055>
- Regnery, A. S. (2019). *Unlikely pilgrim: A journey into history and faith*. New York, NY: Beaufort Books.
- Regnery, A. S. (2009). *Upstream: The ascendance of American conservatism*. New York, NY: Threshold Editions.
- Religion and the presidential vote. (2004, December 6). Retrieved July 25, 2023, from Pew Research Center - U.S. Politics & Policy website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2004/12/06/religion-and-the-presidential-vote/>
- Remnick, D. (2010). *Bridge, the: The life and rise of Barack Obama*. Vintage.
- Renaud, M. (2017, January 19). Myths debunked: Why did white evangelical Christians vote for Trump? Retrieved August 25, 2023, from The University of Chicago Divinity School website: <https://divinity.uchicago.edu/sightings/articles/myths-debunked-why-did-white-evangelical-christians-vote-trump>
- Renn, A. (2021, November 8). *Evangelicalism's second-class status in Conservatism*. American Reformer. Retrieved March 5, 2022, from <https://americanreformer.org/evangelicalisms-second-class-status-in-conservatism/>
- Rheingold, H. (2000). *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. MIT Press.
- Ribuffo, L. P. (2006). George W. bush and the latest evangelical menace. *Dissent*, 53(4), 42–49. doi:10.1353/dss.2006.0089
- Richards, A. (1988, July). *Keynote address to the Democratic National Convention*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/07/19/us/transcript-of-the-keynote-address-by-ann-richards-the-texas-treasurer.html>
- Richardson, H. (2021). *To make men free: A history of the republican party*. London, England: Basic Books.
- Riedel, B. O. (2014). *What We Won: America's secret war in Afghanistan, 1979-89*. Brookings Institution Press.
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Drager, M. W. (1996). Sample size in content analysis of weekly news magazines. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73(3), 635–644. doi:10.1177/107769909607300310
- Riffe D., Lacy S., Fico F. G. (2005). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., Watson, B. R., & Fico, F. (2019). *Analyzing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research* (4th ed.). doi:10.4324/9780429464287
- Riker, W. H. (1996). *The strategy of rhetoric: Campaigning for the American constitution*. Yale University Press.
- Riley, R. (2019). The Clinton impeachment and its fallout. *Miller Center*. Retrieved from <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/impeachment/clinton-impeachment-and-its-fallout>
- Ritchie, S. (2009, March 19). Obama bests bush on international LGBT rights. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from American Civil Liberties Union website: <https://www.aclu.org/news/lgbtq-rights/obama-bests-bush-international-lgbt-rights>
- Ritter, R. S., Preston, J. L., & Ivan Hernandez, J. (2014). Happy Tweets: Christians Are Happier, More Socially Connected, and Less Analytical than Atheists on Twitter. *Social Psychology and Personality Science*, 5(2), 243–249.
- Rizzo, S. (2019, May 9). President Trump’s shifting claim that ‘we got rid’ of the Johnson Amendment. *Washington Post* (*Washington, D.C.: 1974*). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/05/09/president-trumps-shifting-claim-that-we-got-rid-johnson-amendment/>
- Rodgers, B. (2016, July 22). Apopka pastor called Trump’s ‘God whisperer.’ *Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.orlandosentinel.com/2016/07/22/apopka-pastor-called-trumps-god-whisperer/>
- Rodgers, D. T. (2020). *As a city on a hill: The story of America’s most famous lay sermon*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rogers, K., Jakes, L., & Swanson, A. (2021, March 18). *Trump Defends Using ‘Chinese Virus’ Label, Ignoring Growing Criticism*. *Nytimes.com*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/us/politics/china-virus.html>
- Rosentiel, T. (2008, November 5). Inside Obama’s sweeping victory. Retrieved August 2, 2023, from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/2008/11/05/inside-obamas-sweeping-victory/>
- Rosin, H. (1999, December 16). Bush’s “Christ moment” is put to political test by Christians. *Washington Post* (*Washington, D.C.: 1974*). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/1999-12/16/045r-121699-idx.html>
- Ross, B., & El-Buri, R. (2008, May 7). Obama’s pastor: God damn America, U.S. to blame for 9/11. Retrieved August 2, 2023, from ABC News website: <https://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4443788&page=1>

- Rovner, J. (2009, February 4). Obama sees SCHIP as first step in overhaul. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2009/02/04/100255357/obama-sees-schip-as-first-step-in-overhaul>
- Rowling, C.M., Sheets, P., & Jones, T.M. (2013). Frame contestation in the news: National identity, cultural resonance, and U.S. drone policy. *International Journal of Communication* 7: 2231–2253.
- Saglioglou, C., & Forstmann, M. (2013). Activating Christian religious concepts increases intolerance of ambiguity and judgment certainty. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 49(5), 933–939. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2013.05.003
- Sagona, C. (2017, August 21). Brooklyn megachurch pastor explains why he left the president's evangelical advisory board. Retrieved February 25, 2024, from Religion News Service website: <https://religionnews.com/2017/08/21/pastor-explains-why-he-left-the-presidents-evangelical-advisory-council/>
- Santorum, R., Kerry (MA), J. F., (NV), J. E., Lieberman (CT), J. I., (KS), S. B., (NY), H. R. C., ... Hatch (UT), O. G. *Workplace Religious Freedom Act of 2005*. , (2005).
- Sargent, G. (2019, August 14). The walls around Trump are crumbling. Evangelicals may be his last resort. Retrieved May 29, 2024, from Washingtonpost.com website: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/01/02/walls-around-trump-are-crumbling-evangelicals-may-be-his-last-resort/>
- Schaeffer, F. (1979, March 29). [Letter to Paul Weyrich].
- Schlafly, P. (1989, November 6). *The Washington Times*, p. F4.
- Scheufele, D. A., Nisbet, M. C., & Brossard, D. (2003). Pathways to political participation? Religion, communication contexts, and mass media. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 15(3), 300–324. doi:10.1093/ijpor/15.3.300
- Scheufele, D. A., & Tewksbury, D. (2007). Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models: Models of media effects. *The Journal of Communication*, 57(1), 9–20. doi:10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00326.x
- Schick, A. (2000, December 1). A surplus if we can keep it: How the federal budget surplus happened. Retrieved July 14, 2023, from Brookings website: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/a-surplus-if-we-can-keep-it-how-the-federal-budget-surplus-happened/>
- Schmidt, M. (2019). Jackson Is Confident He'll Beat the Odds. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Richmond.com website: https://richmond.com/news/state-regional/government-politics/jackson-is-confident-he-ll-beat-the-odds/article_88762dd0-ecb3-58d2-bfb6-96b11d6c6278.html

- Schöne, J. P., Garcia, D., Parkinson, B., & Goldenberg, A. (2023). Negative expressions are shared more on Twitter for public figures than for ordinary users. *PNAS Nexus*, 2(7), gad219. doi:10.1093/pnasnexus/pgad219
- Scott, E. (2018, May 14). A look at Robert Jeffress, the controversial figure giving the prayer at the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem today. *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.: 1974). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2018/05/14/a-look-at-robert-jeffress-the-controversial-figure-giving-the-prayer-at-the-u-s-embassy-in-jerusalem-today/>
- Scott, E., Killough, A., & Burke, D. (2016, October 8). Evangelicals ‘disgusted’ by Trump’s remarks, but still backing him. *CNN*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2016/10/07/politics/donald-trump-evangelical-leaders/index.html>
- Severns, M. (2020, December 14). In final years at Liberty, Falwell spent millions on pro-Trump causes. Retrieved August 24, 2023, from POLITICO website: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/12/14/jerry-falwell-trump-liberty-university-444661>
- Sharlet, J., & Joyce, K. (2007). Hillary’s prayer: Hillary Clinton’s religion and politics. *Mother Jones*. Retrieved from <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/09/hillarys-prayer-hillary-clintons-religion-and-politics/>
- Sharp, J. (2018, April 11). Evangelist Scott Dawson, GOP candidate for governor, calls for drug testing in all Alabama schools. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Advance Local website: <https://www.al.com/news/2018/04/evangelist-scott-dawson-gop-ca.html>
- Shields, J. A. (2009). *The Democratic Virtues of the Christian Right*. Princeton University Press.
- Shellnutt, K. (2019a, February 13). James MacDonald fired from harvest. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from Christianity Today website: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/february/james-macdonald-fired-harvest-bible-chapel.html>
- Shellnutt, K. (2019b, November 5). Harvest elders say James MacDonald is ‘biblically disqualified’ from ministry. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from Christianity Today website: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2019/november/harvest-elders-say-james-macdonald-biblically-disqualified.html>
- Shirky, C. (2011). The Political Power of Social Media: Technology, the Public Sphere, and Political Change. *Foreign Affairs*, 90(1), 28-41.
- Showalter, B. (2016, October 13). James MacDonald explains why he left trump’s evangelical advisory council. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from The Christian Post website: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/james-macdonald-explains-left-trump-evangelical-advisory-council.html>

- Simmons-Duffin, S. (2020, June 12). Transgender health protections reversed by trump administration. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/06/12/868073068/transgender-health-protections-reversed-by-trump-administration>
- Simon, R., & Washington Bureau. (1998, February 2). Clinton takes heart from blacks' support. *Chicago Tribune*. Retrieved from <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1998-02-02-9802020066-story.html>
- Sinclair, B. (2006). *Party wars: Polarization and the politics of national policy making*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Sinderbrand, R. (2008, June 11). Analysis: Democrats woo disaffected evangelicals. Retrieved August 1, 2023, from CNN Politics: Election Center 2008 website: <https://www.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/06/11/dems.evangelicals/index.html>
- Slack, M. (2012, September 20). From the archives: The end of don't Ask, don't Tell. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from whitehouse.gov website: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2012/09/20/archives-end-dont-ask-dont-tell>
- Smietana, B. (2021, March 9). Bible teacher Beth Moore, splitting with Lifeway, says, "I am no longer a Southern Baptist." Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Religion News Service website: <https://religionnews.com/2021/03/09/bible-teacher-beth-moore-ends-partnership-with-lifeway-i-am-no-longer-a-southern-baptist/>
- Smietana, B. (2023, April 13). James MacDonald, former Harvest Bible pastor, charged with felony assault and battery. Retrieved June 6, 2024, from Religion News Service website: <https://religionnews.com/2023/04/13/james-macdonald-former-harvest-bible-pastor-charged-with-felony-assault-and-battery/>
- Smith, A. E. (2022). *Religion and Brazilian democracy: Mobilizing the people of god*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, A., & Welker, K. (2019, February 27). "Completely false": Trump attorney Jay Sekulow disputes point in Cohen testimony. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Nbcnews.com website: <https://www.nbcnews.com/card/completely-false-trump-attorney-jay-sekulow-disputes-point-cohen-testimony-n977416>
- Smith, B. (2008). Obama on small-town Pa.: Clinging to religion, guns, xenophobia. Retrieved August 2, 2023, from POLITICO website: <https://www.politico.com/blogs/ben-smith/2008/04/obama-on-small-town-pa-clinging-to-religion-guns-xenophobia-007737>
- Smith, C. (1998). *American evangelicalism: Embattled and thriving*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

- Smith, G. A. (2017, February 27). Most white evangelicals approve of Trump travel prohibition and express concerns about extremism. Retrieved May 29, 2024, from Pew Research Center website: <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2017/02/27/most-white-evangelicals-approve-of-trump-travel-prohibition-and-express-concerns-about-extremism/>
- Smith, S. (2016, June 29). James Dobson says Paula white led Donald Trump to Jesus Christ. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from The Christian Post website: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/james-dobson-says-paula-white-led-donald-trump-to-jesus-christ-165844/>
- Smith, S. (2020, April 6). Greg Laurie's Palm Sunday webcast draws 1.3M viewers, Trump: People are open to the Gospel. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from The Christian Post website: <https://www.christianpost.com/news/greg-lauries-palm-sunday-webcast-draws-13m-viewers-trump-people-are-open-to-the-gospel.html>
- Sniderman, P., & Theriault, S. (2004). The Logic of Issue Framing. In W. E. Saris & P. M. Sniderman (Eds.), *Studies in Public Opinion Error, and Change* (pp. 133–165). essay, Princeton University Press.
- Statecraft: The Bush 41 Team*. (2020). United States: VPM.
- Steensland, B., & Jerry Z. Park, Mark D. Regnerus, Lynn D. Robinson, W. Bradford Wilcox, Robert D. Woodberry. (2000). The measure of American religion: Toward improving the state of the art. *Social Forces; a Scientific Medium of Social Study and Interpretation*, 79(1), 291–318. doi:10.1093/sf/79.1.291
- Steensland, B., & Wright, E. L. (2014). American evangelicals and conservative politics: Past, present, and future: American evangelicals and conservative politics. *Sociology Compass*, 8(6), 705–717. doi:10.1111/soc4.12175
- Stewart, K. (2022). *The power worshippers the power worshippers: Inside the dangerous rise of religious nationalism*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Stokes, E. C., Chicotsky, B. K., & Billings, A. C. (2018). The political pulpit: Issue framing and conservative partisanship in Evangelical Protestant pastors' sermons before and after the 2008 election of Barack Obama. *Church, Communication and Culture*, 3(1), 36–52. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23753234.2018.1429220>
- Strauss, V. (2017, August 1). Top Trump administration officials flock to weekly Bible study classes at White House. *Washington Post (Washington, D.C.: 1974)*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2017/08/01/top-trump-administration-officials-flock-to-weekly-bible-study-classes-at-white-house/>
- Sullivan, A. (2008). *The party faithful: How and why democrats are closing the god gap*. New York, NY: Scribner.

- Sullivan, B. (2021, July 8). The proportion of white Christians in the U.S. has stopped shrinking, new study finds. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2021/07/08/1014047885/americas-white-christian-plurality-has-stopped-shrinking-a-new-study-finds>
- Sumaktoyo, N. G., Ottati, V., & Untoro, V. (2016). The paradoxical religiosity effect: Religion and politics in Indonesia and the United States. *Politics and Religion*, 9(3), 481–507. doi:10.1017/s175504831500053x
- Suskind, R. (2004, October 17). Faith, Certainty and the Presidency of George W. Bush. *New York Times*.
- Taliesin, J. (2018). Profile on the right: The Heritage Foundation. *Political Research Associates*. Retrieved from <https://politicalresearch.org/2018/06/22/profile-right-heritage-foundation>
- Talton, J. (2020, June 12). *Economy's long expansion transformed Seattle — what's next is an open question*. *Seattletimes.com*. <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/economys-long-expansion-transformed-seattle-whats-next-is-an-open-question/>
- Talton, J. (2018, September 21). *Ten years ago, WaMu's failure crushed Seattle's last banking giant*. *Seattletimes.com*. <https://www.seattletimes.com/business/economy/ten-years-ago-wamus-failure-crushed-seattles-last-banking-giant/>
- Taylor, J. (2016, January 18). Citing “two Corinthians,” Trump struggles to make the sale to evangelicals. *NPR*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2016/01/18/463528847/citing-two-corinthians-trump-struggles-to-make-the-sale-to-evangelicals>
- Taylor, J. K., & Haider Markel, D. P. (Eds.). (2015). *Transgender rights and politics: Groups, issue framing, and policy adoption*. University of Michigan Press.
- Taylor, A., Saenz, A., & Levine, M. (2015, June 26). Same-sex marriage: Supreme court rules in favor, President Obama calls it “victory for America.” Retrieved August 5, 2023, from ABC News website: <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/supreme-court-ends-sex-marriage-ban-nationwide/story?id=31924524>
- The Oil Squeeze of '79. (1979, March 12). *Time*, 113(11), 44–51.
- The White House Office of the Press Secretary. (2016, June 9). FACT SHEET: Obama administration's record and the LGBT community. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from whitehouse.gov website: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/06/09/fact-sheet-obama-administrations-record-and-lgbt-community>
- Thomas, E. (2019, March 27). How the Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor helped preserve abortion rights. *New Yorker (New York, N.Y.: 1925)*. Retrieved from

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/how-the-supreme-court-justice-sandra-day-oconnor-helped-preserve-abortion-rights>

- Thumma, S., & Travis, D. (2007). *Beyond megachurch myths: What we can learn from America's largest churches*. London, England: Jossey-Bass.
- Todd, E. (2022). *The fullness of love: From mere churchianity to an awakened life*. Resource Publications.
- Trump, D. J. (2016, June 21). Trump Campaign Press Release - Trump Campaign Announces Evangelical Executive Advisory Board. Retrieved June 7, 2024, from The American Presidency Project (University of California, Santa Barbara) website: <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/trump-campaign-press-release-trump-campaign-announces-evangelical-executive-advisory-board>
- Tsugawa, S., & Ohsaki, H. (2015). Negative messages spread rapidly and widely on social media. *Proceedings of the 2015 ACM on Conference on Online Social Networks*. New York, NY, USA: ACM.
- Tumasjan, A., Sprenger, T., Sandner, P., & Welp, I. (2010). Predicting elections with Twitter: What 140 characters reveal about political sentiment. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 4(1), 178–185. doi:10.1609/icwsm.v4i1.14009
- Tumulty, K., & Cimon, M. (1993, January 23). Clinton Revokes Abortion Curbs : Executive orders: President ends ban on fetal tissue research, overturns gag rule at clinics and clears way for the FDA to allow importing of French RU486 pill. *The Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1993-01-23-mn-1587-story.html>
- Turek, F.L. (2014). Religious rhetoric and the evolution of George W. bush's political philosophy. *Journal of American Studies*, 48(4), 975–998. doi:10.1017/s0021875814000681
- Tversky, A., & Kahneman, D. (1981). The framing of decisions and the psychology of choice. *Science*, 211(4481), 453–458. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.7455683>
- United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. (2015, April 15). 2014 Executive Actions on Immigration. Retrieved August 5, 2023, from [Uscis.gov website: https://www.uscis.gov/archive/2014-executive-actions-on-immigration](https://www.uscis.gov/archive/2014-executive-actions-on-immigration)
- United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. (2019, June 17). Tony Perkins elected chair of bipartisan U.S. commission on international religious freedom. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from USCIRF website: <https://www.uscirf.gov/news-room/releases-statements/tony-perkins-elected-chair-bipartisan-us-commission-international>

- United States Department of Justice. (2007, February 23). FACT SHEET: Task Force for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. Retrieved July 25, 2023, from Justice.gov website: <https://www.justice.gov/archive/fbci/about.html>
- Verhovek, S. H. (1994, March 10). Texas Vote: It'll Be Richards vs. a Bush. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/03/10/us/texas-vote-it-ll-be-richards-vs-a-bush.html>
- Vinson, C. D., & Guth, J. L. (2003). Advance and Retreat in the Palmetto State: Assessing the Christian Right in South Carolina. In J. C. Green, M. J. Rozell, & C. Wilcox (Eds.), *The Christian Right in American Politics: Marching to the Millennium*.
- von Mises, L. (1952). *Planning for Freedom; and Twelve other Essays and Addresses*. Libertarian Press.
- Wald, K. D., & Calhoun-Brown, A. (2018). *Religion and politics in the United States* (8th ed.). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wald, K. D., Owen, D. E., & Hill, S. S., Jr. (1988). Churches as political communities. *The American Political Science Review*, 82(2), 531–548. doi:10.2307/1957399
- Wallsten, K., & Nteta, T. M. (2016). For you were strangers in the land of Egypt: Clergy, religiosity, and public opinion toward immigration reform in the United States. *Politics and Religion*, 9(3), 566–604. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755048316000444>
- Walsh, K. (2015, August 28). The Undoing of George W. Bush. Retrieved July 27, 2023, from Usnews.com website: <https://www.usnews.com/news/the-report/articles/2015/08/28/hurricane-katrina-was-the-beginning-of-the-end-for-george-w-bush>
- Walters, J., & Morris, S. (2017, August 19). Trump's evangelical panel remains intact as others disband. Here are his religious cheerleaders. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/aug/18/donald-trump-evangelicals-charlottesville>
- Wang, H., Can, D., Kazemzadeh, A., Bar, F., & Narayanan, S. (2012). A system for real-time twitter sentiment analysis of 2012 us presidential election cycle. In *Proceedings of the ACL 2012 system demonstrations* (pp. 115–120).
- Wang, Y., Feng, Y., Hong, Z., Berger, R., & Luo, J. (2017). How polarized have we become? A multimodal classification of trump followers and Clinton followers. In *Lecture Notes in Computer Science* (pp. 440–456). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Ward, M., Sr. (2021). The Woman They Love to Hate: Hillary Clinton and the Evangelicals. In C. A. Kray, T. W. Carroll, & A. H. Mandell (Eds.), *Nasty Women and Bad Hombres*:

- Gender and Race in the 2016 US Presidential Election* (pp. 175–188). University of Rochester Press: Boydell & Brewer.
- Wear, M. (2016a, June 29). The temptation of Hillary Clinton: Column. *USA Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2016/06/29/temptation-hillary-clinton-warren-evangelical-brownback-unifier-bible-study-senate-new-york-lgbt-column/86288776/>
- Wear, M. (2016b, November 22). Why did Obama win more white evangelical votes than Clinton? He asked for them. Retrieved August 2, 2023, from The Washington Post website: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2016/11/22/why-did-obama-win-more-white-evangelical-votes-than-clinton-he-asked-for-them/>
- Weaver, R. M. (2013). *Ideas Have Consequences: Expanded edition*. University of Chicago Press.
- Weisberg, J. (2008, March 13). Bush's evangelical politics. Retrieved July 18, 2023, from Slate website: <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2008/03/the-bush-tragedy-bushs-evangelical-politics.html>
- Welch, M. R., D. C. Leege, K. D. Wald, and L. A. Kellsted. (1993). Are the sheep hearing the shepherds? Cue perceptions, congregational responses, and political communication processes. In D. C. Leege & L. A. Kellstedt. Armonk (Eds.), *Rediscovering the religious factor in American politics*.
- Wellman, B., & Gulia, M. (1999). Virtual Communities as Communities. In M. A. Smith & P. Kollock (Eds.), *Communities in Cyberspace* (pp. 167-194). Routledge.
- Wetzstein, C. (2015). T.D. Jakes clarifies his comments on 'evolving' on gay rights. Retrieved May 9, 2024, from *Washington Times* website: <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2015/aug/10/td-jakes-clarifies-his-comments-on-evolving-on-gay/>
- Whitehead, A. L., Perry, S. L., & Baker, J. O. (2018). Make America Christian again: Christian nationalism and voting for Donald trump in the 2016 presidential election. *Sociology of Religion*, 79(2), 147–171. doi:10.1093/socrel/srx070
- Wilcox, C. (1996). *Onward Christian Soldiers?* Westview Press.
- Wilcox, C. (2009). Of Movements and Metaphors: The Coevolution of the Christian Right and the GOP. In S. G. Brint & J. R. Schroedel (Eds.), *Evangelicals and democracy in America. religion and politics* (pp. 331–356). essay, Russell Sage Foundation.
- Wilcox, C., & Robinson, C. (2011). *Onward Christian soldiers?: The religious right in American politics* (4th ed.). Westview Press.

- Wilcox, W. Bradford. (2006). *Soft patriarchs, new men: How Christianity shapes fathers and husbands*. University of Chicago Press.
- Williamson, E. (2020, January 17). In Jay Sekulow, trump taps longtime loyalist for impeachment defense. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/17/us/politics/jay-sekulow-trump-impeachment.html>
- Williamson, V., Skocpol, T., & Coggin, J. (2016). *The tea party and the remaking of republican conservatism*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Wyer, R. S. (2019). *Cognitive organization and change: An information processing approach*. Psychology Press.
- Wynn, C. (2013, December 11). Interactives: Are the park cities ready for pastor ed and Lisa? Retrieved May 9, 2024, from Dallasnews.com website: http://res.dallasnews.com/interactives/2013_December/pastored/
- Yancey, P. (1994, April 25). The riddle of bill Clinton's faith. Retrieved July 11, 2023, from Christianity Today website: <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/1994/april-25/riddle-of-bill-clintons-faith.html>
- Young, N. J. (2018, December 5). How George H.W. Bush enabled the rise of the religious right. *Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2018/12/05/how-george-hw-bush-enabled-rise-religious-right/>
- Zaller, J. R. (2011). *The nature and origins of mass opinion*. Cambridge University Press.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Search Terms Within Executive Communications

Abortion

Abort, Mexico City, Planned Parenthood/Planned Parenthood, Pro-life/Prolife,
Roe v. Wade, Sanctity, Unborn, Womb

Immigration

Border, DACA, Deferred, Illegal, Immigrant, Immigration, Muslim
Ban/MuslimBan, Refugee, Sanctuary, Terrorist

LGBTQIA+

Bisexual, Gay, Homosexual, Lesbian, LGBT/LGBTQ, Queer, Transgender

Race

African-American/African American, Black, Black Lives Matter/BLM,
Charlottesville, Confederate, George Floyd/GeorgeFloyd, Kneel, Memorial, Monument,
Racism, Statue

Appendix B

Topics of Executive Communications

Economy & Jobs, Budget & Spending; Land & Agriculture; Veterans; Education; Law & Justice; Energy & Environment; Healthcare; Infrastructure & Technology; Foreign Policy; Coronavirus Response