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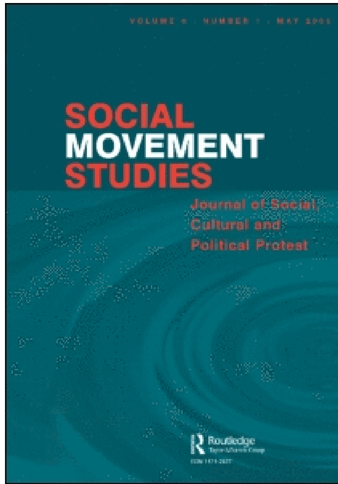

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Framing Faith: Explaining Cooperation and Conflict in the US Conservative Christian Political Movement

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ABSTRACT *Despite the burgeoning literature on coalition work, very little is known about the cooperative potential within social movements. Drawing on archival, interview, and secondary data, we examine cooperation and conflict in the US conservative Christian political movement from 1970 to 1994. We highlight how framing, political elites and intramovement dynamics within the conservative Christian political movement altered the cooperative potential over time. Specifically, we find that the conservative Christian political movement initially had a strong coordinative potential and even engaged in organization building as a way to formalize cross-denominational cooperation. However, as the evangelical wing of the movement sought to build and consolidate its political power, it began to frame issues in ways that reflected a particularized world view regarding the role of the state in fostering a moral society. Other conservative Christian organizations responded by couching their understanding of political issues in their own faith traditions, creating divisions within the movement and ultimately making cooperation impossible. Conceptually, this research broadens how we think about cooperation and points to the importance of specialization and political elites to cooperation within movements.*

KEY WORDS: Coalitions, framing, movement dynamics, Conservative Christian Movement

Introduction

Students of social movements long have been interested in the factors that explain the course, content and outcomes of activism. To this end, many studies have examined intramovement dynamics, focusing on how the interactions among groups affect the strategies, tactics and effectiveness of a movement (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Staggenborg, 1991; Benford, 1993; Minkoff, 1993; McCammon, 2003). Recently, scholars have been concerned with 'coalition work' within social movements (Rochon & Meyer, 1997; McCammon & Campbell, 2002; Meyer & Corrigal-Brown, 2005). While informative, this literature largely focuses on political campaigns over relatively short periods of time and/or formal coalitions in which groups have rules regarding how they will work together to achieve a specific goal. As a result of this narrow empirical focus, students of social

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movements know very little regarding the various forms that cooperation can take or how the cooperative potential within a movement changes over time.

Drawing on archival, interview, and secondary data, we examine cooperation and conflict in the conservative Christian political movement from 1970 to 1994. We highlight how framing, political elites and movement specialization alter cooperation within the movement over time. Specifically, we find that the movement initially engaged in organization building as a way to formalize cross-denominational cooperation. However, as the evangelical wing of the movement sought to consolidate its political power, it began to frame issues in ways that reflected a particularized world view regarding the role of the state in fostering a moral society. Other conservative Christian organizations responded by couching their understanding of political issues in their own faith traditions, which created divisions within the movement and ultimately made cooperation impossible. Conceptually, this research broadens how we think about cooperation and the role of political elites in facilitating cooperation, and highlights how specialization alters the cooperative potential within movements.

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Explanations for Cooperation

Much of the research on cooperation is couched in resource mobilization theory, which emphasizes the competitive tensions that exist among generally like-minded social movement organizations. Resource mobilization theory assumes that groups compete with one another for resources such as money and support to ensure the survival of their organization (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Zald & McCarthy, 1987). From this perspective, there are clear disincentives for groups to work together and they do so only in exceptional circumstances (Staggenborg, 1986; Hathaway & Meyer, 1997). Scholars, then, often view coalition work as the product of particular historical moments when cooperation, rather than competition, is a rational and necessary activity to stave off political losses (Staggenborg, 1986; McCammon & Campbell, 2002).

There are at least three problems with this approach. First, resource mobilization uses a ‘cost-benefit’ framework for understanding social movement dynamics, neglecting the cultural components of social movements (Jasper, 1997; Staggenborg, 1998). Making the cultural aspects of movements central to analysis is important for understanding cooperation because factors such as emotion, collective identity and faith influence movement dynamics (McAdam, 1988; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Platt & Williams, 2002). Second, because resource mobilization theory emphasizes the instrumental aspects of cooperation, research in this tradition tends to focus on particular instances of coalition work rather than on the factors that facilitate (or hinder) cooperation over time (Hathaway & Meyer, 1997; Croteau & Hicks, 2003; Meyer & Corrigal-Brown, 2005).

Finally, the current literature conceptualizes cooperation narrowly, prioritizing formal alliances and political campaigns. As such, there is not a common understanding regarding the various forms that cooperation may take. Here, we conceptualize cooperation along a continuum. On one end of the continuum are the formal coalitions generally studied by social movement scholars in which groups formally coordinate their resources and efforts to achieve a specific political goal. On the other end of the continuum is conflict where social movement organizations not only fail to work together but also oppose one another’s positions. In between these two poles is informal cooperation. Groups that informally coordinate their efforts work together toward a common goal. While these

groups may share information or resources, such coordination may involve little more than an agreement on and mobilization around a particular policy position (Downey & Rohlinger, 2008).

Factors that Affect Cooperation

Scholars point to three interrelated factors that affect cooperation: framing, intramovement dynamics and political elites. Frames are central organizing ideas that tell an audience what is at issue. Framing is the process through which activists produce and mobilize meaning. In this process, movement actors become 'signifying agents' who actively construct meaning for constituents, allies, opponents and bystander audiences relative to the broader political environment (Snow & Benford, 1988; Benford & Snow, 2000). Framing is critical to cooperation, and often a central source of organizational conflict. Frames that have broad cultural resonance 'bridge' ideological differences and facilitate cooperation within and across social movements (Gerhards & Rucht, 1992; Carroll & Ratner, 1996; Croteau & Hicks, 2003). In contrast, frames that are specific to a world view or ideology often cause frame disputes among generally like-minded activist groups, making cooperation impossible (Benford, 1993).

Even frames that successfully bridge movement groups are context specific (Carroll & Ratner, 1996). Activist organizations are embedded in a multi-organizational field, which refers to the 'total possible number of organizations with which the focal organization might establish specific linkages' (Curtis & Zurcher, 1973, p. 53). Multi-organizational fields consist of groups that both support and oppose an issue (Klandermans, 1992), but are not monolithic (Gerhards & Rucht, 1992). This means that activist organizations which cooperate on one issue may be opponents on another. Likewise, this suggests that the composition of the field and the possibilities for cooperation are contingent on the broader political climate (McCammon & Campbell, 2002). As the multi-organizational field changes so does the potential resonance and effectiveness of a given frame.

Second intramovement dynamics affect cooperation. Since scholars conceptualize intramovement dynamics as predominantly competitive (Zald & McCarthy, 1987), how the composition of social movements potentially affects cooperation is often overlooked. For instance, specialization within a social movement can make cooperation more difficult.[1] If a segment of a movement decides to target their political efforts and/or only support policies that reflect a particular ideology, these groups become more isolated from the broader movement, less inclined to accommodate alternative perspectives and unlikely to cooperate with groups that do not share their world view (Downey & Rohlinger, 2008). Specialization in a movement creates symbolic boundaries and clearly identifies a relatively narrow set of allies within the multi-organizational field. Since these organizations share an ideology or world view, they frame issues more narrowly, which makes conflict with other activist organizations more likely.

Finally, political elites affect cooperation. Social movement groups do not frame issues in a political vacuum. Instead, they respond to a broader political environment, which consists of other actors putting forward their own conceptual frameworks for understanding issues (Benford & Snow, 2000). Elites who have the ability to enact or change policy often are in the best position to frame political issues (Stone, 1997). More importantly, since politicians generally worry about re-election, elites offer frames that

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have broad appeal with constituents. These frames, in turn, can facilitate cooperation as diverse groups work together toward a common policy outcome. This does not mean that movement groups completely agree with the policy proposals offered by political elites. The point here is that elites have incentives to facilitate cooperation, and movement groups that seek to forward their political goals will be hesitant to reject elite frames whole cloth. Instead, activist organizations will challenge one or more aspects of the elite frame in an effort to bring policy proposals in line with organizational ideology and/or goals.

Data and Methods

In order to examine how framing, intramovement dynamics and political elites affect cooperation, we analyze the American conservative Christian political movement from 1970 to 1994.[2] The conservative Christian political movement is a good case for at least two reasons. First, it has a long history in the United States, which allows us to examine how political elites and intramovement dynamics affect cooperation. Second, the conservative Christian political movement is comprised of diverse religious denominations, including Mormons, Protestants and Catholics, which means cooperation can be challenging. Because denominations differ in their moral world views, how they construct 'public good' (Williams, 1995, 1999) and their conceptualizations of the role of the state in fostering a moral society, conflict is just as likely as cooperation. Here, we focus on the official stance of US church leaders.

Catholicism emphasizes the importance of belief and ritual, which includes a series of social duties, such as protecting the poor and vulnerable, that are oriented toward creating a moral society. As such, the Catholic Church is inclined to support state intervention that will provide a safety net to those who are most disadvantaged in society (Burns, 1992; Williams, 1999; Unknown author, Catholics, Ancient and Future, 2007). Protestantism, in contrast, emphasizes the pietistic or the personal and emotional aspects of religion. From this world view a moral society is the result of individual change, or a function of individuals living in accordance with the Holy Scripture. Thus, Protestant denominations are less inclined to support state intervention on behalf of the 'public good', although there are differences among Protestants in how strictly these principles are held or how fully they are endorsed.[3] These differences mean that Protestants and Catholics are likely to support various issues for different reasons.[4] In short, while religious organizations share a multi-organizational field, when and how different denominations cooperate is likely to vary over time.

In order to examine cooperation and conflict in the conservative Christian political movement we conducted archival research, read the organizational newsletters and documents of several national religious groups, conducted interviews with religious activists, and utilized primary and secondary sources.[5] Archival sources include records from the National Archives, Records of the Children's Bureau (RG 102), transcripts of hearings held by various subcommittees of the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Judiciary Committee, the Congressional Record and reports issued by the US Department of Health and Human Services. We also analyzed the organizational materials of the American Life League, Christian Coalition, Concerned Women for America, Family Research Council, National Council of Churches, National Right to Life Committee, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.[6] Given that our examination includes data from a quarter of a century, the following analysis highlights

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three political moments that illustrate how framing, political elites and intramovement dynamics affect cooperation.

Cooperation and the Abortion Issue

Prior to the *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision, which legalized abortion in the United States, there was not a cohesive, national conservative Christian political movement.[7] This, in part, was a function of denominational differences. The Catholic Church hierarchy did not sanction direct political involvement (Smith, 1996; Derickson, 2005). For example, American cardinals supported New Deal programs and expressed 'social solidarity' with the poor (Fones-Wolf, 1994), but did not initiate widespread activism to back these programs. Likewise, during the heyday of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, the Catholic Church focused on social rather than political activism, applying for community action grants to train the hardcore unemployed and the functionally illiterate in Mississippi (Quadagno, 1994). The Church's stance on activism changed as the abortion issue came to the political fore. What made abortion different was that it involved a fundamental moral issue that affected the well-being of society. Thus, even before *Roe*, Catholics actively worked against abortion often exercising a 'moral veto' when legalization was up for debate (Burns, 2005). However, activism was restricted to states and lacked a coordinative base.[8]

The legalization of abortion in the United States provided an impetus for mass mobilization across denominations as well as a platform for political activism (Staggenborg, 1991). After *Roe,* the Catholic leadership officially sanctioned civil disobedience and adopted a sophisticated blueprint of political action that organized activists at the parish level (Tribe, 1990; Burns, 1992). What united (and mobilized) conservative Catholics with other conservative Christians was the view that the 'right to life' is a 'basic human right which must undergird any civilized society'.[9] This 'right to life' frame resonated across denominations. The Mormon Church argued that abortion was 'one of the most revolting and sinful practices in this day . . . ' and the Missouri Synod of the Lutheran Church testified that 'without the right to life, all other rights are meaningless'.[10] Other religious groups issued similar statements against abortion including the Greek Orthodox Church, the American Association of Evangelicals, Orthodox Presbyterians, the American Association of Christian Schools, and Baptists for Life, a grass-roots organization formed in 1973.[11] In short, the 'right to life' frame bridged diverse religious traditions by focusing on Christian values generically and providing a rationale for coordinated involvement in American politics.

Cooperation took the form of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) a cross-denominational organization founded in 1973 that combined the financial resources of the Catholic Church, existing state level pro-life groups that represented diverse Christian traditions, and grass-roots talent. The purpose of the NRLC was to mobilize a broad segment of the public, which might otherwise be divided on religious doctrine, in an effort to abolish legal abortion (Merton, 1982; Rohlinger & Meyer, 2005; Rohlinger, 2006).[12] This does not mean that religion was absent from the NRLC, only that it was referenced in generic ways. For example, when describing vigils and sidewalk-counseling outside of abortion clinics, NRLC emphasized religious activities, such as praying, that transcended particular faith traditions. A writer for the *NRL Newsletter* described the importance of prayer in counseling efforts:

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> During the long hours the sidewalk counselors spend their time not with idle chatter but with words uplifted in prayer for all concerned, the unborn babies, their mothers and fathers, for the abortionist and the workers at the center. It is prayer that sustains these courageous people and that forms the foundation for their work (Cranford, 1980).

The NRLC also focused on comparing abortion to other issues that had invoked moral outrage and provided a basis for religious activism such as the abolition movement. Excerpts of a brief prepared on behalf of individuals arrested during a clinic sit-in noted:

> It is not correct to say that because infants are not persons (in the constitutional sense) that they do not have rights. Slaves were not persons in the constitutional sense until the 13th Amendment was passed. Until then, slaves were regarded as property only. Nevertheless, a slave was entitled to be free from assault . . . To argue that the lives of unborn babies can be taken because it is 'legal' is an argument which would approve Hitler's gassing of Jews in World War II. That too was a legal taking of life. (Hitselberger, 1980)

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The creation of a non-denominational pro-life organization translated into political gains. The first victory came in 1976 with a ban on Medicaid funding for abortion. Medicaid, the joint federal/state program of health insurance for the poor, paid for nearly one third of all legal abortions performed in the US, mostly on AFDC recipients. Religious activists viewed this benefit as 'government-subsidized murder' (Rohlinger, 2002). The Medicaid funding ban was first introduced in 1974 in the House of Representatives by Rep. Dewey Bartlett (R-OK) as an amendment to that year's appropriations bill for the Department of Labor and Health, Education and Welfare (HEW).[13] Following *Roe*, several states had banned the use of state Medicaid funds for abortion, but fifteen states still paid for abortions. The Bartlett amendment specified that no *federal* funds could be use to pay for abortion except when necessary to save the life of the mother. As Bartlett, explained, tax dollars should not be used to pay for a procedure that many people vehemently opposed.[14] Although the Bartlett amendment was defeated, in 1976 pro-life forces gained a new champion, Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) who again tacked a strict Medicaid abortion funding ban – with no exceptions – onto that year's Department of Labor/HEW appropriations bill. The Hyde amendment passed in the House, 207-167 (Tribe, 1990).

The primary goal of NRLC, however, was to pass a Constitutional Amendment to reverse the *Roe* decision and strip from states the ability to make abortion legal at a later date. The Amendment wording declared that the word 'person', used in the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, 'applies to all human beings irrespective of age, health, function, or condition of dependency, including their unborn offspring at every stage of their biologic development'. While abortion would be illegal, the Amendment did not 'prohibit a law permitting only those medical procedures required to prevent the death of the mother' (Wilke, 2000, p. 36). Whether legislation and a constitutional amendment should include an exception to save the life of the mother quickly became a point of division among religious organizations. Those supporting an exception argued such a clause was politically necessary to abolish legal abortion, while religious fundamentalists posited that an exception allowed politics to trump morality (Rohlinger, 2006).

One such organization was the American Life League (ALL), which was created after two of the NRLC founding members, Judie and Paul Brown, left the group in protest of the abortion exception.[15] The goal of ALL, which identifies itself as a Catholic organization, was, in part, to explicitly imbue the abortion issue with a vision of morality that included only one acceptable solution – to end all abortions immediately, without exception. This is clear in its mission statement, which was issued in a press release in 1979: 'American Life League exists to serve God by helping to build a society that respects and protects individual innocent human beings from creation to natural death – without compromise, without exception, without apology.' Within this more particularized religious framework, legislative compromise was not an option. Judie Brown reminded constituents that the job of pro-lifers was to 'stand up for every innocent human being whose life is threatened by what Pope John Paul II called "the culture of death."' They were called to fight in 'God's battle' and to 'be faithful not victorious' (Brown, 1989). The NRLC viewed this approach as 'totally unrealistic', noting that pro-life groups needed to exploit every opportunity to chip away at legal abortion. As a former NRLC president from the 1980s noted, 'She [Brown] will certainly save her soul, but she is not saving many babies.'[16]

The introduction of this more particularized frame – 'right to life without exception or compromise' – had at least three consequences. First, it created conflict within the pro-life movement, which pitted 'true believers' against other pro-life organizations and led to highly visible public relations battles among groups (Rohlinger, 2006). Second, it created a rift among religious groups, which supported competing political solutions to the problem of legalized abortion. One faction convinced Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) to introduce a competing Constitutional Amendment, which stripped the exception from the language. Senator Orrin Hatch (R-UT) also introduced the Human Life Bill, which would make abortion legislation a state, rather than a federal, matter (Wilke, 2000, 2003). Finally, the frame made political compromise on the abortion problem impossible. The NRLC staged several national conferences, which were designed to present the pro-life movement as unified and to get dissenting groups to endorse more mainstream proposals that included an exception. While these conferences did convince some religious leaders and groups, including the anti-feminist, evangelical group Concerned Women for America, to accept the wording of NRLC's Human Life Amendment, other religious groups, like ALL, refused to participate and plotted their own strategic course based on the Biblical readings rather than the workings of political processes (Rohlinger, 2006). Ultimately, all three efforts to overturn *Roe* failed.

In sum, government action, and more specifically the legalization of abortion, provided an impetus for mass mobilization, which existing religious organizations and activists attempted to harness through the creation of a non-denominational political organization that focused on the 'right to life' of the unborn child. The 'right to life' frame was important to cooperation because it provided a 'bridging phrase' (Gerhards & Rucht, 1992) that resonated across denominations. However, new pro-life groups emerged and provided another, and more particularized, religious interpretation of the right to life frame. This frame created conflict among organizations and diminished support for the NRLC's original Constitutional Amendment. As a result of these 'frame disputes' (Benford, 1993), new policies emerged in the political arena.

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Political Elites and Informal Cooperation

Political elites in the Republican Party were critical to diffusing some of the tension among religious organizations in the 1980s. They did so by adopting and promoting a 'family values' platform in 1980 which stated: 'We reaffirm our belief in the traditional role and values of the family in our society' (Eisenstein, 1981, p. 194). The 'family values' frame was important because it provided short-hand for a bundle of issues, including abortion, school prayer, abstinence education and opposition to homosexuality and pornography, which resonated with a broad range of religious groups.[17] The appeal of this platform cut across diverse denominations, because it promised that 'traditional moral values' would be 'reflected in public policy' (Reichley, 1981–82, p. 543) without tying these values to a particular religious tradition (Freeman, 1993). The vagueness of 'family values' was politically important because it allowed Republicans to tailor its precise meaning to different audiences and build a broad-based coalition. Congressman Henry Hyde illustrated the power of this rhetoric, and strategy, when he asked a cheering Illinois delegation, 'Who could be against traditional family values?'[18] Paul Weyrich, a leading conservative strategist, agreed that the 'family values' frame was critical to cross-denomination mobilization. In a 1980 interview with *Conservative Digest*, Weyrich likened the importance of the 'family values' frame for the Right to the significance of the Vietnam War to the mobilization of the New Left, arguing that it united evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics, including Catholics that traditionally voted Democrat (Diamond, 1995, p. 232).

The platform resonated with the Catholic Church, which regarded the family as 'the basic social unit which must grapple with the problems of 20th century life.'[19] Church leaders, particularly in the US, felt that Catholics were a 'religious minority' and that the family, as a fundamental institution, was threatened by a culture hostile to marriage and children.[20] While the Holy See issued a *Charter on the Rights of the Family* in 1983, which stated that 'The institutional value of marriage should be upheld by the public authorities; the situation of non-married couples must not be placed on the same level as marriage duly contracted', Catholics leaders had to determine which policies to support and oppose.[21] Historically, the Catholic Church opposed legislation that undermined the traditional family.[22] Pragmatically, this has meant a preference for direct cash transfers over public services such as day care that might promote women's labor force participation and undermine the traditional family model (Esping-Andersen & van Kersbergen, 1992). Likewise, evangelical groups were very supportive of the platform and the Republican ticket, believing Reagan would bring 'America back to God' (Pierard, 1985, p. 100). Evangelicals backed their rhetoric with action. For instance, the Moral Majority, an evangelical organization created by the Reverend Jerry Falwell in 1979, embraced the Republican Party's platform and played a visible role in Ronald Reagan's presidential campaign, organizing voter registration drives, issuing moral 'report cards' and attacking liberal members of Congress (Lienesch, 1993; Oldfield, 1996).

The new 'family values' frame spurred cooperation across the conservative Christian movement. This cooperation is exemplified by the Family Protection Act, introduced in 1979 by Senator Paul Laxalt (R-NV). The Laxalt bill contained 31 substantive proposals designed 'to strengthen the American family and promote the virtues of family life' (Eisenstein, 1981, p. 201). Specifically, it sought to make the traditional family the authority over all 'moral' questions, reintroduce Christian worship in the state schools,

censor sexual education and prohibit 'advocacy' of homosexuality (Somerville, 1992). What makes the bill interesting is that it was drafted by conservatives (JoAnn Gasper – editor of *Right Woman*), Catholics (Gary Potter – president of Catholics for Christian Political Action) and evangelicals (Rev. Robert Billings – executive director of the Moral Majority). While some religious organizations were skeptical of the scope of the bill, scholars suggest that religious leaders never expected the bill to pass. Instead, the purpose was to build an agenda within the conservative Christian movement and identify those issues around which there was the most consensus and strongest emotions (Boles, 1982).

In short, although the 'family values' framework was an electoral strategy designed to attract voters from a broad range of faith traditions, it provided a shorthand frame for a bundle of specific issues on which conservative Christian organizations agreed state intervention was necessary. Its achievement was to give the Conservative Christian movement a focus that enabled a variety of religious groups to work together toward a set of common goals. Political elites, then, are important to cooperation because they have incentives to construct frames that appeal to and mobilize relatively diverse publics. Like the 'right to life' frame, the 'family values' platform resonated broadly and provided an impetus for cooperation. It is worth noting, however, that there is an important difference between frames offered by elites and movements. Frames offered by political elites may be intentionally vague and identify issues rather than particular ideologies and world views because these frameworks facilitate movement efforts to map their own goals onto an elite agenda. As such, elite frames make informal cooperation among groups more likely as organizational leaders interpret elite frames to their constituents using more particularized understandings of issues.

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Specialization and Conflict

Throughout the 1980s, the evangelical wing of the movement grew increasingly unhappy with the Republican Party. Reagan had drawn on the strength and resources of conservative Christians, but failed to deliver on many of his promises. For instance, although numerous hearings and amendments were introduced on the issue of school prayer in the 1980s, the Reagan administration, and Republicans more generally, failed to make progress on any of them. Additionally, the Supreme Court ruled against an Alabama law that allowed teachers to set aside class time for 'silent meditation or voluntary prayer'.[23] Thus, most of the legislative advances on school prayer were made by activists within a handful of states (Alley, 1994). The abortion issue also became a sore spot among conservative Christians. Realizing that evangelicals would never defect to the Democratic Party, Reagan did not launch a fully-fledged attack on *Roe*. Instead, he found he could placate religious supporters with political appointments, minor policy changes, rhetoric and meetings with key leaders (Pierard, 1985).

As Reagan's second term came to a close and George Bush emerged as the Republican candidate for the 1988 election, evangelicals mounted an effort to place 'true believers' in political office and to consolidate their political influence (Shibley, 1998; Woodberry & Smith, 1998).[24] The creation of the Christian Coalition represented the primary effort of religious leaders to build an organization that would provide evangelicals a vehicle to get actively involved in politics 'from the county courthouse to the halls of Congress'.[25] Between 1990 and 1995 the Christian Coalition grew from 25,000 members to 1.6 million members with 1,600 local chapters, a national lobbying staff headquartered in Virginia

and 50 independently incorporated state organizations (Oldfield, 1996; Rozell & Wilcox, 1996). Under Ralph Reed's guidance, the Christian Coalition became a sophisticated political machine, dedicated to training Christians for political action and developing an information mechanism to interpret legislative issues that were important to a conservative policy agenda (Watson, 1997; Usher, 2000; Wilcox, 2000). More importantly, the Christian Coalition began to work closely with other evangelical groups, such as Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum and Focus on the Family, to promote policies that explicitly represented their vision of a moral society (Moen, 1992; Freeman, 1993; Marshall, 1997; Rozell & Wilcox, 1997; Berlet & Lyons, 2000). Coalition members strategically coordinated their position on various public policy issues, organized conferences, workshops and conventions, sponsored voter registration drives in churches, rated the positions of political candidates via moral frameworks, and provided activists for state caucuses and conventions (Hardisty, 1999; Oldfield, 1996; Wilcox, 2000).

Initially, the coalition was united by the 'defense of family' frame, which advocates policy solutions that protect traditional family values (Helvacioglu, 1991; Hardisty, 1999). A centerpiece of this frame, which provided a basis for coalition organizing, was opposition to gay rights. As an evangelical leader explained: 'What began the [evangelical] movement was a concern among many of us about the slippage of morality that had occurred in our country. It was a series of Supreme Court decisions … coupled with the gay rights movement and the attempt to legitimize homosexuality that got us started' (Moen, 1992, p. 119). Reverend Tim LaHaye agreed, noting that the 'government has intruded into areas of morals and if we don't speak out on moral issues the government will conclude by our silence that we won't care how immoral they get' (Moen, 1992, p. 120).

While evangelicals attacked gay rights in the period preceding Reagan's election, their political efforts were not coordinated until the late 1980s. Focus on the Family, Concerned Women for America, Eagle Forum and the Christian Coalition worked together to pass Colorado's Amendment 2, which repealed existing anti-discrimination ordinances and prohibited the passage of future ordinances at the local or state level. In addition to bringing extensive resources to the campaign, the coalition coordinated their efforts to spread a unified message across the state. The thrust of their argument was that, unlike people of color, homosexuals did not deserve 'special rights or protections' for a lifestyle they choose freely. People of color 'suffered' unduly from a characteristic that was not chosen and, therefore, deserved protection. Homosexuals, in contrast, chose to behave in socially unacceptable and sinful ways and must live with the consequences of their choice – discrimination against them (Witt & McCorkle, 1997; Hardisty, 1999). Amendment 2 passed, but was struck down by the Colorado Supreme Court, a decision that was upheld in 1996 by the United States Supreme Court. In short, a faction of the conservative Christian movement (evangelicals) began to specialize and pursue policies that were consistent with their religious world view. The introduction of particularized religious frames into political debates had implications for cooperation.

The effect of specialization was visible immediately after Bill Clinton took office and tried to honor his campaign promise for universal health insurance. A key controversy concerned the inclusion of abortion under 'pregnancy-related' services. Clinton's plan, Health Security, required all health insurance plans to cover abortion, effectively nullifying the Hyde Amendment and the laws of 37 states that restricted state funding of abortion. It also capped rate increases in health insurance premiums, a provision that

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pro-life forces feared could lead to health care rationing, the withholding of care, and even infanticide and euthanasia (Quadagno, 2004, 2005). As Wanda Franz (1993a, p. 3), the president of the National Right to Life Committee, warned:

> Children would grow up finding out that their siblings were killed and that they themselves could have been killed, too, because the government's health plan offered their mothers abortion as an 'option'. Mothers would find themselves under pressure to abort their children because the bureaucrats administrating (it) will be under pressure to save money by avoiding more costly services for birth.

The Clinton plan posed a conflict for the Catholic Church, which believed American health care policy was in desperate need of revision. In particular, Catholic leaders criticized health care policy for violating the principles of justice, stewardship and care of the poor and treating a 'social good' as a 'market commodity' (Cochran, 1999). In 1993 the Conference of Catholic Bishops adopted a framework for health care reform that argued health care was a fundamental human right:

> Our approach to health care is shaped by a simple but fundamental principle: Every person has a right to adequate health care . . . Our call for health care reform is rooted in the biblical call to heal the sick . . . and the priorities of social justice and the principle of the common good. (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1993, p. 1)

The dilemma was that Health Security included abortion services. In an effort to rescind this provision, the bishops initiated a letter writing campaign opposing that feature. In testifying on behalf of the Catholic Bishops of the United States, Helen Alvare explained:

> We believe that the fundamental right to health care is grounded in the right to life, a right of all human beings regardless of age, sex or condition of dependency. True healthcare reform, therefore, could never promote attacks on life itself. Tragically, the administration's plan, by including abortion as a mandated benefit, undermines(s) health reform at its root . . . abortion advocates . . . have not hesitated to burden the entire momentum for health care reform with their agenda.[26]

Evangelical organizations, such as the Christian Coalition and Concerned Women for America, rejected the plan whole cloth. They framed their opposition to Health Security through the lens of 'market theology', which used religious doctrine as a basis for laissez-faire economics and a rationale for the dismantling of the welfare state (Kintz, 2005). Market theology promised 'to set the "little man" free from the dulling paralysis of the bureaucratic regulation of the modern state, from the demoralizing dependence of welfare protectionism and from the moral relativism of Left liberalism and . . . release the creativity, initiative, enterprise and moral clarity of the individual', thus allowing the US to reassert its economic, political and military position as a world leader (Somerville, 1992, p. 103). Additionally, the market theology frame draws clear distinctions between Protestants and Catholics and purports the superior characteristics of the former. As Pastor Ted an influential religious leader from the New Life's megachurch in Colorado Springs explains:

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> Catholics ... constantly look back ... And the nations dominated by Catholicism look back. They don't tend to create our greatest entrepreneurs, inventors, research and development. Typically, Catholic nations aren't shooting people into space. Protestantism, though, always looks to the future. A typical kid raised in Protestantism dreams about the future. A typical kid raised in Catholicism values and relishes the past, the saints, the history. That is one of the changes that is happening in America. In America the descendants of the Protestants, the Puritan descendants, we want to create a better future, and our speakers say that sort of thing. But with the influx of people from Mexico, they don't tend to be the ones that go to universities and become our research-and-development people. And so in that way I see a little clash of civilizations. (Sharlet, 2005)

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Market theology, in other words, was the polar opposite of the Catholic position on health care. While the Catholic Church regarded health care as a basic human right and argued that the state was obligated to provide health services to all, evangelicals posited that Health Security was unnecessary, fiscally imprudent and represented an expansion of the welfare state. Ralph Reed (1994, p. 29) argued that 'The Clinton plan is really a Trojan horse for a not-so-hidden agenda to expand government bureaucracy, pay for abortions with tax dollars, and promote a radical social agenda.' Concerned Women for America made similar claims, warning that the plan would result in government subsidized abortion, further government intrusion into the economy and individual decision-making and erode the current care received by Americans. A staff writer for the *Family Voice* noted:

> We must ask ourselves if we are ready to hand over such a large portion of our economy to government for control. Before deciding, we must realize that sacrifices will be made. Doctors will be forced to change their methods of practice. Care and compassion may be the first to go as doctors rush patients through to compensate for lost income ... Doctors and hospitals will make medical decisions based on cost control – not good medicine ... We could end up with a system heavy on bureaucracy and taxes, light on choice – and devoid of freedom. (Wallace, 1994)

With the lines between the two positions clearly drawn, evangelical groups and political conservatives turned on the Catholic Church, equating its policy positions with radical liberalism. Stephen Moore of the CATO Institute opined:

> ... some people are simply predisposed to favor big government and are thus unpersuadable by evidence. Too often these days Catholic Charities falls in that category. Now Catholic Charities is increasingly preoccupied with advancing an anti-free-market, big-government agenda – they oppose almost any tax cuts, promote government run health care, oppose welfare reform, and now condemn poor people to a Social Security system that offers them a lousy deal ... The church's official support for a muscular government is puzzling, given that throughout history the state has been the primary oppressor of religion in general and Catholicism in particular. Just ask the Polish. Alas, conservative Catholics must begin to rethink their support for Catholic Charities. Contributions are partially

financing a propaganda campaign in Washington to prop up a dysfunctional and paternalistic welfare state that keeps poor people poor and dependent. (Moore, 1998)

In short, specialization within the conservative Christian political movement and the introduction of frames based on particularized religious beliefs into political debate divided organizations and undermined cooperation. Once agendas explicitly tied to faith traditions entered the political arena, differences among religious groups and their views regarding the role of the state in creating a moral society became visible and conflict unavoidable.

Discussion and Conclusion

Framing and movement specialization both influenced the potential for cooperation within the conservative Christian political movement over time. The content of frames affected the potential for and nature of cooperation within social movements. The frames that were the most effective at facilitating cooperation were those that bridged denominations and provided a generic Christian framework for understanding political issues. For example, framing legalized abortion as a violation of a fundamental Christian value – the sanctity of human life – provided the impetus for widespread mobilization and cross-denominational cooperation evidenced, most significantly, in the creation of the National Right to Life Committee. Similarly, the 'family values' frame provided a bundle of issues around which conservative Christian organizations could mobilize and work together to promote a generally shared vision of public good. Once political issues were framed using more particularistic moral world views, conflict arose within the movement.

Of course, organizational decisions regarding how to frame political issues for broader audiences are affected by intramovement dynamics. In the conservative Christian political movement, the growing political strength of evangelical organizations meant that leaders increasingly saw themselves as representing a specific religious population. This led them to frame political issues from a particularistic moral world view, which in turn had implications for cooperation among diverse groups. On the one hand, the use of more particularized frames strengthened cooperation within one segment of the movement. On the other hand, these frames made distinctions among religious traditions (Protestant and Catholic) which created divisions based on denominational differences and undermined cooperation. In short, specialization laid the foundation for conflict.

This research contributes to the study of social movements by highlighting the need to conceptualize cooperation more broadly. In this case, we show that cooperation can take various forms. Sometimes cooperation is intended to be both formal and long-lasting, as in the case of organization building. At other times, cooperation is informal and designed to build a broader agenda around which cooperation may flourish. In other words, cooperation is more nuanced than the political campaigns described in the coalition-work literature. Organizational leaders make efforts to establish an agenda that will foster cooperation over the long haul. Of course, the cooperative potential within movements at any historical moment is dependent, in part, on the context in which it is embedded.

This research also illuminates the role of political elites in facilitating cooperation. Because elected officials seek to advance particular policies, they must build support across diverse segments of society. In the case of the conservative Christian political movement, Republicans were well positioned to introduce an elaborated frame – the

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family values frame – that transcended particularistic moral world views and focused the political efforts of the movement. While they ultimately failed to translate the family values platform into policy, they did provide religious organizations with a common language and a set of political goals.

Finally, this research highlights how intramovement dynamics can affect cooperation over time. Here, we see that movement specialization can cause divisions within movements that are not easily bridged. As evangelical organizations increasingly viewed political issues through their specific faith traditions, it hindered their ability to appeal to the same Christian values that once made cooperation possible. Specialization, of course, is simply one dynamic that affects the cooperative potential within social movements and its divisive potential may eventually diminish. In short, if scholars are to understand the course and outcomes of social movements, we must have a more thorough understanding of cooperation and conflict within movements.

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Notes

1. Specialization is a term used by resource mobilization scholars to explain organizational structure. As organizations are confronted with diverse problems they become more complex, which necessitates experienced personnel to make the organization function successfully (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Here, we expand this idea to understand movement composition and the potential affect on cooperation.
2. While we are focusing on the political movement, we recognize that cooperation and conflict may work differently in terms of the humanitarian efforts of religious organizations. Groups may oppose one another in the political arena and still cooperate on campaigns such as those to eliminate AIDS and hunger.
3. Protestantism has divisions between mainline groups consisting of such denominations as Episcopalians, Lutherans and Presbyterians and Evangelicals and other sects. Evangelicalism refers to a broad collection of beliefs and practices that transcend any particular denomination. In reference to the contemporary conservative Protestant political movement, the term often is applied to neo-Evangelicals, Pentecostals and Fundamentalists. These groups share a belief in Bible literalism, an emphasis on the importance of the personal conversion experience, and a desire to convert others to their faith. They differ, however, in their views on the relationship between adherents and non-believers. Fundamentalists, for instance, are characterized by rigid adherence to principles, intolerance of other views and opposition to secularism. They regard the broader society as contaminated and desire to separate themselves from its dangerous influences. Pentecostals emphasize individual experience with faith through practices such as faith healing and speaking in tongues, activities that are not oriented to the broader political world. Neo-evangelicalism emerged from a conflict with Fundamentalists regarding the extent to which adherents should maintain ties to the rest of the world. Evangelicals do not draw strict boundaries between religion and politics, and hope to influence society through a variety of avenues including politics (Oldfield, 1996; Woodberry & Smith, 1998; Wilcox, 2000).
4. As Woodberry & Smith (1998) note, categorizing denominations is tricky business because most have limitations. Here, we use such categories such as 'evangelical' as shorthand for understanding broad patterns of cooperation and conflict among national religious organizations. In short, it is not our intention to provide comprehensive analyses of different denominations, but to highlight that the conservative Christian political movement is diverse in its conceptualization of a moral society as well as the role of government in fostering it.
5. Interviews primarily were conducted with pro-life activists affiliated with a range of groups including Concerned Women for America, the National Right to Life Committee and Operation Rescue.
6. Organizational materials include archived organizational documents, newsletters, reports, correspondence and press releases.

7. While American history is peppered with religious movements, cross denominational involvement has varied significantly (Kleppner, 1970; Jensen, 1971; Lienesch, 1993; Swierenga, 1990). Here, we conceptualize the conservative Christian political movement following the *Roe* decision as distinct from previous historical periods because national religious organizations did not simply voice support or opposition but got involved in American politics.
8. Interviews with two former presidents of the National Right to Life Committee and a founding member of the National Right to Life Committee.
9. US Senate, Statement of John Cardinal Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, Judiciary Committee, 7 March 1974, p. 153.
10. US Senate, Statement of David McKay before the Subcommittee on Constitutional Amendments, Judiciary Committee, 7 March 1974, p. 318.
11. House of Representatives, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Civil and Constitutional Rights, H521-2, Proposed constitutional Amendments on Abortion, Part 1, 4 February 1976.
12. Interviews with three founders, two of whom served as the president of NRLC conducted in 2003 and 2004.
13. The appropriations bill contained the federal share of funds to the states for AFDC and Medicaid.
14. *Congressional Record*, 17 September 1974: 31454.
15. The Browns found a sympathetic audience with New Right leader Paul Weyrich, who provided monetary support for ALL (Blanchard, 1995; Diamond, 1995).
16. Interview conducted with a former National Right to Life Committee president on 9 April 2004.
17. *Republican Platform, 1980* (Washington, DC: Republican National Committee), pp. 10–15.
18. Unknown, 28 July 1980 ‘On Traditional Family Values’, *Time Magazine.* Retrieved via LexisNexis.
19. Priscilla M. Russo, Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities 1978. From ‘The Debate on Family Policy’. Accessed online at the United States Conference on Catholic Bishops on 1 November 2008 at http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/articles.shtml
20. Msgr. James T McHugh, S.T.D.D, Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities 1983. ‘The Person, The Family and Fundamental Choices’. Accessed online at the United States Conference on Catholic Bishops on 1 November 2008 at http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/articles.shtml
21. Richard Doerflinger, Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities 1987. ‘Family Policy in the United States’. Accessed online at the United States Conference on Catholic Bishops on 1 November 2008 at http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/articles.shtml
22. For example, the Church opposed the Sheppard–Towner Act of 1921, which provided funds to states for nutrition and hygiene information for pregnant women and new mothers, because it feared it represented a federal effort to promote birth control. It also opposed a 1959 plan to expand day care services for poor mothers out of concern that it would encourage women to work outside of the home (Letter from Monseigneur Raymond Gallagher to Mrs. Katherine B. Oettinger, Chief, Children’s Bureau, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 27 April 1962. National Archives, Record Group 102, Records of the Children’s Bureau, Central File 1958–62, Box 832, File: June 1960–1962, Day Care of Children of Working Mothers; See also Memorandum Re: Day Care from Katherine Oettinger, 1 February 1965, National Archives, Record Group 102, Records of the Children’s Bureau, Central File 1958–62, Box 1005, File: July 1963–1968).
23. See the ruling, *Wallace v. Jaffree* 472 US 38 (1985).
24. For instance, Pat Robertson, the Pentecostal televangelist preacher, sought the Republican Party presidential nomination in 1988. During his campaign, Robertson trained activists in every precinct in the country, creating a grass-roots Christian network to raise funds and recruit volunteers. Vice President George Bush responded to Robertson’s challenge by cultivating conservative Christians, meeting individually with evangelical leaders, appointing a religious liaison and discussing his own faith in public settings. Although Robertson lost badly in the primaries, his attempt to capture the party had long-lasting consequences as the Republican Party adopted many of the Moral Majority’s campaign issues (Bruce, 1990; Oldfield, 1996; Shibley, 1998).
25. Christian Coalition website: http://www.cc.org/about_us. Accessed 28 November 2008.
26. ‘Hearings on Women’s Health’. Testimony of Helen Alvare, Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, Committee on Energy and Commerce, House of Representatives, 103rd Congress, 2nd Session, 26 January 1994, p. 171.

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