

**The Instrumental Use of Religion to Mobilize
Religious Conservatives in the 2004 Election**

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Religion was infused into electoral politics at many levels during the 2004 campaign in an attempt to increase the participation of religious conservatives.¹ The 2004 contest between former Senate minority leader Tom Daschle and John Thune was one of the most expensive and hotly contested races in the entire country. Within the context of South Dakota's conservative and very religious culture, a high stakes U.S. Senate race brought out some jarring examples of how religion is appropriated in politics. For instance, while South Dakota did not vote on a gay marriage ballot proposition in 2004 gay marriage was a topic in the campaign. Thune supported a federal constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage while Daschle's position was to leave the issue to states to decide. An anonymous mailer of bumper stickers were sent to churches statewide that said "Vote Daschle & Vote for SODOMY." The mailer used the Daschle campaign's headquarters as the return address (Sanderson 2004; Smith and Braunstein 2005, 236). Other issues, especially abortion and school vouchers, produced voting guides and other communications aimed at religious voters including rallies attended by James Dobson of Focus on the Family and statements by Bishop Carlson of the Catholic Diocese of South Dakota about life and abortion that pushed voters away from Democrats and toward Republicans (Smith and Braunstein 2005, 236-37; Sanderson 2004; Shouse 2004).

The mobilization of religious conservatives was not limited to South Dakota in 2004. It was clearly a part of a presidential campaign that pitted an evangelically-minded Protestant against a progressive Catholic. Karl Rove famously remarked after the 2000 election that four million evangelicals failed to show up, and the Republican Party set out to find a way to remedy that shortfall in 2004 (Cooperman and Edsall 2004).² On the surface there is much evidence of religious mobilization in 2004 including Republican attempts to obtain church lists for inclusion in their nationwide registered voter database (Cooperman 2004a; Kirkpatrick 2004a), considerable publicity regarding many Catholic Bishops and Arch-Bishops whose public statements equated the support of pro-choice candidates with sin (Kirkpatrick and Goodstein 2004; Goodstein 2004)³, the presence of gay marriage bans on the ballot in 11 states (Campbell and Monson 2005), and the well-documented activities of conservative religious interest groups such as the Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family. One Republican Party mailer sent to households in Arkansas and West Virginia, asserted that "liberals seek to ban the Bible" using the image of a Bible with "banned" stamped across it and the warning "This will be Arkansas...if you don't vote" ominously displayed next to an image of one man proposing to another (Kirkpatrick 2004b). Most communications were less direct, but clearly the Republican Party and the Bush campaign were actively pursuing religious conservatives through a variety of means.

¹ Except when citing other work, the term "religious conservative" is used throughout the paper to encompass "conservative Christian," "conservative Protestant," and "evangelical Protestant." While most religious conservative are conservative Christian and/or evangelical Protestants, the religious conservative label can extend beyond those labels to encompass others who might respond to similar campaign appeals.

² Rove made this observation at the American Enterprise Institute in December 2001. See http://www.aei.org/research/tgp/events/eventID.14,projectID.12/event_detail.asp.

³ For example, Archbishop John Donoghue of Atlanta was quoted on the front page of the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* as saying, "You have an erroneous conscience if you think there is some case in which you can vote for a pro-abortion candidate...You're wrong as far as church teaching is concerned...[Catholics may debate other issues, like war or capital punishment] but there's no debate about abortion. It is intrinsically evil. It is way above other issues as far as evil is concerned" (White 2004).

In this paper we will discuss the intersection of religion and political mobilization on the right within the context of what is already known from past elections and what has been presumed about the mobilization of religious conservatives in 2004. After a brief literature review and discussion of some of the possibilities for 2004, we present findings from the 2004 Campaign Communications Study, a national survey of registered voters who logged and collected all of the campaign communications they received during the three week period leading up to the 2004 election. We pay special attention to political mail. While the survey data do not permit a very thorough examination of who received the communications, at least in terms of religious affiliation, they do allow a very detailed examination of the communications in terms of content that is explicitly or implicitly religious or related to issues traditionally important to religious voters.

We discuss the methods used to mobilize religious conservatives in 2004 and find that the mobilization of religious conservatives in 2004 was dominated by the Republican National Committee (RNC) with the National Right to Life PAC trailing by a substantial margin and all others falling far behind. The messages were dominated by abortion, gay marriage, judicial appointments, and family values. Many of those issues were listed in the same pieces of mail. Explicitly religious references and images were sparse, perhaps following the findings on explicitly racial appeals of Mendelberg (2001). Messages related to religion were much more likely to be utilized to support Bush and oppose Kerry than support Kerry and oppose Bush, owing to the appeal of these messages to likely Republican voters. The mobilization of religious conservatives was aided by new developments in “microtargeting” employed by the RNC during 2004 that included large voter databases matched to consumer databases in an effort to target messages to individual voters based on the message most likely to persuade them. The microtargeting research of the RNC for religious conservatives is discussed in light of the content of the RNC mail. Using Green’s (2000) terminology, the mail related to religion sent by the RNC represents an instrumental use of religion by the Republicans to win elections and maintain their hold on the presidency. The overwhelming presence of the RNC in the religiously oriented campaign communications during the 2004 election appear to validate the prediction of Green and Guth (1988) and Green, Guth, and Hill (1993) that the consistent involvement of religious conservatives, particularly the Christian Right, on behalf of Republican candidates would eventually lead to their assimilation into the Republican Party.

Previous Research on Religious Based Mobilization

Long a moribund force in American politics – characterized by short periods of high activity followed by long declines – the past half-century has seen an unprecedented increase in religious evangelicals’ participation in mainstream politics (Leege et al. 2002, 89). Conservative religious activists have moved from the periphery into the core of the Republican Party, and their liberal counterparts have reacted to offset their growing influence (Guth et al. 2002, 162). Leege et al. (2002) explain the shift to be the result of Republican operatives’ mastery of manipulating the fears and apprehensions of religious traditionalists that society and its values are declining. They go on to explain that GOP strategists have succeeded in solidly swinging the religious vote to their favor by harnessing the symbols, language, and messages of cultural conflict so that the party’s message appeals to religious voters. Cultural conflict can be defined as “when [politics] involve disagreement about what the society should or does prescribe as the *appropriate way of*

life,” going beyond policy preferences and entering the normative and prescriptive world of what is right and wrong (Leege et al. 2002, 26). Disagreements about “appropriateness” and right and wrong in society lie at the heart of religious conflict and its political manifestations. Sense of right and wrong is a powerful motivation both in life and politics, and its influence explains how activists mobilize religious conservatives.

Wald (2003, 217-23) offers three explanations for how evangelical Protestants are mobilized: social influences, institutional influences, and values. The first two influences tend to ebb and flow as institutions and social connections shift between high and low involvement in political contests and on social issues. These forces provide motivation when they themselves are motivated; they do not offer internal impetus toward political participation and are consequently less likely to create long-term mobilization trends. The third explanation, however, is subject to start and to remain strong as individuals, especially those with higher religious commitments, become more willing to use their religious beliefs and values to inform their political ideology and behavior (Wald 2003, 222). Few groups are as susceptible to values-based mobilization as evangelical Protestants; they have a long history of pressuring governments, traditionally state and local units, when they perceive threats against their favored values and traditional morals (Wald 2003, 223). Green, Guth, and Hill (1993) describe the values-driven reactions of evangelicals as “demand” for traditional values in the political marketplace. Much like consumer demand, traditionalists, because of changes in society, demand that candidates and parties defend their values, and frequently political actors respond to this demand to obtain support from religious voters (Green, Guth, and Hill 1993, 81). This mobilizing influence, again much like consumer demand, is an internal impulse that is influenced by larger societal trends and not political actors; therefore, it has greater staying power.

Values issues that motivate activists to action will also inspire rank-and-file evangelicals to the ballot box. Important to this process is the concept of social categorization, which psychologically casts the paradigm of right and wrong upon an issue and is often accompanied by efforts to establish one side of an issue as being morally righteous and the other as being morally bankrupt (Guth et al. 2002, 14). The outlook of right and wrong that social categorization lends to politics extends political jurisdiction beyond its traditional bounds of economics and class; morality and values become legitimate political considerations that separate political parties. This development motivates increasing numbers of religious conservatives to vote on Election Day, and, as this process becomes more professional and organized, it also more consistently mobilizes increasing numbers of evangelicals to political causes, especially those on the right, by politicizing religious values and traditional morals.

One impediment to increased and lasting mobilization of religious conservatives is that they have a long history of political apathy that quickly follows times of high mobilization. Jerry Falwell has been quoted as saying, “One thing I have learned about Christians, having organized them for years. When they lose, they quit. And when they win they quit. We are just quitters” (Reed 1996, 17). Traditionally many evangelical Protestants believed that the best means of societal redemption was saving souls instead of filling empty stomachs and minds as the tenets of the social gospel advocated (Wilcox 2000, 26). They shunned the political process as too worldly. Another historical impediment to increased mobilization of religious conservatives has been that as they gain access to state-level Republican Party apparatuses and assert some

influence on the national level, they are faced with opposition from the Republican establishment, especially from moderates and secular conservatives (Fowler et al. 1999, 146). To overcome the establishment's opposition and the queasiness many moderates feel with religious political rhetoric, conservative Christian activists began to adopt a secular vocabulary through which they could advocate religious causes in secular terms (Wilcox 2000, 43). This shift away from religious imagery and language toward more secular arguments may account for much of the success of the Christian Coalition in the early 1990s under Ralph Reed.

During the last several decades, especially during the 1980s and 90s, religious conservatives have become increasingly identified with the Republican Party and conservative politics. Layman (2001) provides an excellent review of this development. Guth et al. (1998) report that in the 1996 election, the religious right's mobilization efforts focused mainly on evangelicals and that those efforts were quite successful, especially when they involved direct contact with voters by religiously oriented interest groups or informal discussions about politics with associates at church. Similar, although slightly smaller, effects were uncovered in their investigation of religious mobilization in the 2000 election (Guth et al. 2002). They summarize their findings for 2000 by saying, "Clearly, religious contacting is often effective among the religious right's primary constituency, Evangelicals, but the impact elsewhere is less clear" (Guth et al. 2002, 178). They also acknowledge that repeated efforts by the Christian Right on behalf of GOP candidates may result in a partisan transformation of religious conservatives so that in statistical analysis, the "indirect effect" of religious mobilization is measured by a respondent's partisan identification and there is not much left to be explained by religious affiliation (Guth et al. 2002, 179). What is notable in the analysis of Guth et al. about mobilization of the religious right from 1996 forward is that they do not discuss religiously oriented activities of the political parties. According to their analysis of 1996 and 2000, the mobilization of religious conservatives is mostly limited to informal discussions at church, clergy activity, and religiously oriented interest groups. However, it is notable that Green and Guth (1988) and Green, Guth, and Hill (1993) predict that the consistent involvement of the Christian Right on behalf of Republican candidates would eventually lead to their assimilation into the Republican Party. We will present some evidence below that this assimilation has now happened.

Layman (2001) and Legee et al. (2002) both give significant attention to the relationship between political parties and the mobilization of religious conservatives. Layman provides clear evidence regarding the extent of the realignment of evangelical Protestants as part of the Republican coalition, calling evangelicals "the religious core of the Republican Party" and noting that their switch from strongly Democratic to strongly Republican "the clearest change in the relationship between religious orientations and partisan loyalties over the last thirty years" (Layman 2001, 229). He suggests that the changes are elite driven, or a mass-level response to conflict and change at the elite level. Legee et al. provide the theoretical mechanism for this change in their explanation of the psychological mechanisms used by political elites to mobilize at the mass level. As Legee et al. (2002) explain, the increased proportion in the Republican coalition of evangelical Protestants can be attributed to the Republican Party's increased use of religious issues at an emotional or even visceral level to motivate evangelicals to political participation.

Given its increasingly important role in defining the coalitions of the two parties, especially the place of religious conservatives in the Republican Party, religion was poised to be an important factor in voter mobilization in 2004. Accounts leading up to the 2004 election and in early post-election analysis focused heavily on the increased efforts of the Republican Party to reach out to religious conservatives and mobilize them through interaction with clergy (both Catholic and Protestant), religious interest groups, and through direct contact from the parties. This included a videotaped speech from the White House to the annual convention of the Southern Baptist Association (Kirkpatrick 2004c), the annual convention of the Knights of Columbus (Cooperman 2004b), and even outreach to selected African-American pastors (Kirkpatrick 2004d). The efforts of the RNC and the Bush campaign to mobilize religious conservatives went beyond speeches and symbolic meetings. Sensing a hesitation from clergy to becoming too involved in politics in a way that would distract from their religious mission, the Bush campaign and the RNC sought to recruit religious conservatives as “team leaders” using the label “faith and values.”⁴ Team leaders were giving specific tasks to accomplish including talking “to your Pastor about holding a Citizenship Sunday and Voter Registration Drive,” recruiting others at church to volunteer for the campaign, and placing reminders to vote in church bulletins the Sunday before the election (Cooperman 2004a).

With this background in mind, we next turn to some data that will help answer questions about the mobilization of religious conservatives in 2004. In particular, we can accurately assess the extent of religiously oriented messages in 2004 campaign communications and describe what organizations sent the highest mail with a religious or moral focus. We can also assess the issue and content and partisan bent of the mail pieces and examine the mail for explicitly religious language or symbols. We briefly discuss our data set below and then turn to a discussion of the results.

Data and Methods

To answer the questions of who sent religiously oriented mail and to examine the content of those communications, we use the 2004 Campaign Communications Survey (CCS). The CCS was conducted by the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at Brigham Young University and consists of a mixed-mode mail and telephone survey of registered voters nationwide with an oversample in Florida and Ohio. The sample was drawn from the registered voter database of the Democratic National Committee (DNC).⁵ The DNC had compiled a listing of all registered voters in the country. The survey design was pilot tested in a special election in 2002 and then used in four statewide samples in 2002 before being employed nationally in 2004. Fieldwork was handled by the Social and Economic Science Research Center at Washington State University.

Respondents were asked to complete a questionnaire booklet that included space to note political contacts they had during the three weeks before Election Day including direct mail, e-mail, phone calls, and personal contacts. They collected and sent in their political mail, permitting content analysis the mail pieces they received. Respondents were contacted at

⁴ Separate teams exist for Catholics as well as non-religious teams for young voters, women, Hispanics, African Americans, and so on.

⁵ We thank Lina Brunton of the DNC who was extremely helpful in drawing the sample.

multiple times by telephone and mail during the four weeks leading up to and immediately after Election Day to request their participation, answer questions, and remind them to diligently collect the necessary information.⁶ Additional details regarding sampling, response rates, questionnaires used and other aspects of the survey methodology are available from the authors upon request.

For this paper we focus on non-broadcast communications. Broadcast communications are much more open to public scrutiny and if cast in terms that are too narrow, risk being largely ineffective or even worse result in motivating the opposition as well as supporters. Non-broadcast communications increase the campaign's ability to focus on specific subgroups of voters with specific messages—maximizing the effectiveness and minimizing the risk of offending those that do not share the point of view expressed in the communication. While the survey collected information on telephone calls and in-person contacts, we focus entirely on the mail because it is more accurately and readily coded for religiously oriented content. In addition, the mail pieces all contain return addresses, making identification of the sponsor simple. In-person contacts and especially telephone calls rely on the respondents' descriptions which can be less accurate or in some cases never provided by the sponsor. We discuss our coding procedures as we present the findings below. Full details about coding decisions are presented in the Appendix.

Results

After analyzing the religion and values content of the mail pieces, our findings shed further light on the uses of religion and religiously-informed values in political campaigning and mobilization. Table 1 lists the top ten conservative and liberal organizations respectively that sent religious or values-based mail during survey's three week field period. We present two measures of activity. The first is the total number of mail pieces received by the survey respondents for each organization. The second is the total number of unique mail pieces identified for each organization among the total number that the survey respondents received. Among both measures, but especially in terms of the total mail pieces received, conservative organizations were more active than their liberal counterparts in sending mail pieces with religious or values based content. This is expected given the increasingly religious composition of the Republican coalition (Layman 2001) and the conventional wisdom that religious and values laden messages are more effective on the right than the left because they invoke stronger emotional reactions among conservatives than liberals. Survey respondents received a whopping 887 mail pieces from conservative organizations compared to a meager 163 from the left. Conservative organizations also sent forty-three unique mailers compared to thirty-six by liberal groups. Unique mail piece production was reached relative parity while the total number of mail pieces received was very imbalanced.

(Table 1 about here)

The other major finding in Table 1 is that the Republican National Committee sent considerably more values-based mail than any other group active in the election cycle. The RNC

⁶ The survey design benefited greatly from advice given by Don Dillman of Washington State University based upon his work in mail surveys (Dillman 2000). Ashley Grosse, then at Washington State University, was also instrumental in the survey design, fieldwork, and initial coding of the data.

accounted for most of the difference between liberals and conservatives. Removing the RNC from the conservative total leads to counts are much more balanced at 223 from conservative groups and 163 from liberal groups. Likewise with the RNC removed, the top ten organizations on the left sent slightly more unique pieces of mail (36) than the top nine conservative organizations (33). In sum, the RNC accounted for the vast majority of all values-based and religiously oriented mail pieces with the efforts of all other groups dwarfed in comparison. We do not have comparable data for 2000 or earlier to know if the RNC has always been this focused on religiously oriented messages, but it is fair to say that these results support the prediction of Green and Guth (1988) and Green, Guth, and Hill (1993) that with continued religious conservative involvement in GOP politics, the party would assimilate those attitudes and positions into its electioneering activities.

We coded the content of each piece of mail for up to eighteen identifiable issues that could reasonably be related to religion or religious and moral values, ranging from abortion and gay marriage to general statements about faith to mentions of the judicial selection process. Many of the most active organizations dealt with multiple issues in their mail pieces. Table 1 also contains a summary of the issue coding by group. Traditional single-issue interest groups, such as Planned Parenthood and National Right to Life, only addressed a small number of the issues we coded (abortion and judicial nominations for National Right to life; and abortion, reproductive health, liberal religious values, and judges for Planned Parenthood). Other groups, such as the RNC and People for the American Way (PFAW), dealt with eight of the eighteen coded issues; the RNC and PFAW had the most diverse issue content of the groups in the log survey. On average, conservative organizations advocated a slightly more diverse portfolio of issues than liberal organizations. Organizations on the right dealt with an average of 4.2 issues per group while those on the left only addressed 2.8. Again, the difference between the right and left is largely a result of the RNC's efforts.

Table 2 contains a breakdown of the eighteen issues we coded by their frequency of appearance in the mail pieces of conservative organizations. Abortion was the most prominent issue for both conservatives and liberals (not shown). Far more unique pieces of mail dealt with abortion than any other issue, but, while abortion mail pieces were the most numerous, same-sex marriage also made a strong showing.⁷ Conservative groups created fifty-two unique mail pieces addressing abortion in some way, nearly double the twenty-eight that addressed same-sex marriage or marriage generally. However, those twenty-eight unique pieces were circulated almost as widely as all of fifty-two abortion mail pieces. When counting the total number of mail pieces received that mention each issue (allowing multiple issue mentions for each mail piece), nearly 60 percent (533) of the mail pieces received by the survey respondents mentioned same-sex marriage or marriage generally compared to 75 percent (673) that addressed abortion.

⁷ Coding choices affect which issue is the most common in Table 2. References to same-sex marriage were often accompanied by references to support for tax breaks for families (increasing the child tax deduction and lowering/eliminating the marriage penalty), linking marriage and taxes to support for the institution of marriage; therefore, we combined references to marriage and family tax policy in our coding of same-sex marriage. Nearly all the mail pieces, especially the RNC's mail, mention both issues together. However, one RNC mailer mentioned President Bush's tax policies only and not same-sex marriage. The analysis presented here excludes this RNC mailer. If it is included there are slightly more mail pieces mentioning marriage and same-sex marriage (707) than abortion (673). However, we opted to exclude the RNC mail piece in the end because its main focus was not on values or religion.

Another way to consider it is that on average about 13 copies of each abortion mail piece were received while marriage mail pieces turned up an average of about 20 copies each. We expected abortion to play a prominent role in the issue content of the mail given the longstanding importance of abortion to religious conservatives. The totals for marriage related mail reflects the growing importance of this issue to religious conservatives in recent years and is also reflective of the appearance of 11 state ballot proposals to ban gay marriage in 2004 (Campbell and Monson 2005). Again, in support of the proposition that the Republican Party is assimilating religious conservative values and issues, the log survey's respondents received 458 pieces of mail from the RNC that addressed abortion and 489 RNC mail pieces that addressed same-sex marriage. Thus, for the RNC, same-sex marriage was the dominant issue reflecting, as Campbell and Monson (2005) assert, the use of gay marriage in 2004 to mobilize religious conservatives, especially in states with gay marriage bans. However, the RNC mail still prominently emphasized a pro-life position. In fact, most RNC mailers addressed same-sex marriage and abortion together, while a few focused exclusively on same-sex marriage.

(Table 2 about here)

The RNC accounts for the majority of mail pieces addressing same-sex marriage while other groups account for a diversity of groups campaigning on the abortion issue. Groups like National Right to Life or the Traditional Values Coalition made fewer or no mentions of same-sex marriage compared to the RNC instead relying heavily on abortion as the salient issue in their mail pieces. As Table 2 indicates, nearly eighty percent of all unique mailers on the conservative side mentioned abortion while only forty-two percent make mention of same-sex marriage. Again, this suggests that the Republican Party saw used values more broadly in their communications and capitalized on the marriage issue's salience to mobilize religious conservatives.

Some issues that we expected to see in conservative mail did not receive much attention. For example, religious liberty, often mentioned along with same-sex marriage in the media, was never mentioned by conservative organizations in the mailers. The top issues for the right were abortion, same-sex marriage, the nomination of conservative federal judges, family values, and the boy scouts (an issue in a number of RNC mailers trumpeting President Bush's conservative credentials). The judicial nomination issue is particularly interesting because initially we were not coding it, but it appeared so often that it was necessary to adjust our coding scheme to accommodate it. In hindsight, amid the context of pitched battles over Supreme Court and appellate court nominations that have occurred in the U.S. Senate since the 2004 election, the inclusion of a judicial nomination code seems more obvious. The issue of judges has become, and looks to remain, a prominent issue that accompanies the social debate and a prominent issue that the GOP uses to mobilize religious conservatives behind its candidates.

Most uses of values and religion were not directly religious. Table 3 contains a breakdown of the total number of mail pieces that contain religious symbols and language and shows that relatively few explicit uses of religious images and language are used. Only an image of a church breaks one-hundred total pieces, because an RNC mailer had the image of a church on the front. Even then it was relatively ambiguous visual reference to religion; the image is of a church, but it lacks clear markings as such. The RNC mail piece elicits the underlying visceral

emotions and thought of religion, as Leege et al. (2002) suggest, without explicitly drawing on religious imagery. These findings reinforce the concept that the uses of values in 2004 were primarily instrumental; few explicit appeals to religion were made, either visually or in language.

(Table 3 about here)

Not only did election mail make extensive use of values in 2004, the same mailers also were very explicit in endorsing candidates. And the mailers that endorsed candidates overwhelmingly endorsed President Bush or attacked Senator Kerry. Table 4 presents the breakdown of mail pieces that support or oppose presidential candidates. The pro-Bush/anti-Kerry mail pieces, while about the same in unique number, were far more widely distributed than the mail pieces that were pro-Kerry/anti-Bush. About 80 percent of all of the religiously oriented mail pieces were pro-Bush/anti-Kerry while only 12 percent were pro-Kerry/anti-Bush with the remainder having no discernable position. Nearly eight times more mail was received that attacked Kerry or supported Bush than attacked Bush or supported Kerry. The RNC and other Bush supporters were far more effective in widely disseminating their values-based messages.

(Table 4 about here)

Most of the pro-Bush/anti-Kerry mailers focused on values instead of explicitly on religion; their common message was essentially that President Bush shares the values of the conservative religious community. On the left the issues were more frequently framed in a context of social policy than on the right. The left avoided the language of right and wrong and instead focused on what the government should and should not do within a public policy context. Liberal organizations avoided much of the language of values in general and focused on the specific issues that they addressed as policy judgments and avoided the language of moral absolutism. Conservative organizations accompanied their references to specific issues with the language of values. For example, RNC mailers contained statements like “John Kerry claims to represent your values...”, “Give your values a voice,” “Fighting for our Values,” “George Bush: working to protect our values.” The right more frequently addressed issues as a matter of right and wrong by appealing to voters’ values about morality and life and evoke emotional reactions of the kind described by Leege et al. (2002).

Table 5 lists the top ten most widely distributed mail pieces. Of these, nine are from the right and five are from the RNC. The top RNC mailers all deal with same-sex marriage and abortion; it is obviously an issue that Republicans saw as working in their favor among religious conservatives. The four most common mail pieces were RNC mailers, the next were National Right to Life mail pieces, and then, as the seventh most common mail piece, comes the first offering from a liberal organization. Interestingly, the one liberal mailer in the top ten only vaguely addresses religious and moral values appealing to voters to not be distracted by Republican appeals and instead remember what is really important. It appears to simply be a response to the volume of values-based communications sent by the RNC.

(Table 5 about here)

Targeting Religious Conservatives

The dominance of the RNC in religious and values based communications in 2004 begs the question of how were religious conservatives identified and mobilized in 2004. The RNC went to great lengths to reach out to religious conservatives in 2004. Building on the mobilization techniques developed by labor unions in the late 90s, the RNC undertook a transformation of its own in the 2002 election creating the 72 Hour Task Force to increase their personal voter contact and increase Republican turnout (Monson 2004). These efforts increased dramatically in 2004 and religious conservatives were a significant part of the increased effort; as Bush campaign Deputy Strategist Sara Taylor said, “Our union is the Christian Evangelical vote” (Magleby, Monson, Patterson 2005, 34).

The mobilization of religious conservatives in 2004 included a new development that has been referred to as “microtargeting” (Gertner 2004; Magleby, Monson, and Patterson 2005, 34-35).⁸ The microtargeting process involves the use of large sample surveys mixed with consumer marketing data that enables individual level targeting rather than more tradition demographic or geo-demographic targeting based on precinct characteristics and past voting patterns. It means that a religious conservative living in an urban area and surround by Kerry-supporting neighbors could be identified using a set of consumer variables (for instance, a subscription to a religious magazine or the purchase of Christian pop music). The process of microtargeting voters in a particular state is as follows:

- Begin with the statewide registered voter file whatever data on individual voters the file includes such as birthdate, party registration, gender, and past turnout.
- Append to this file any proprietary data available from the state or national party files. This information might include the results of a phone canvass from a prior election. Party registration or identification information can be appended if available.
- Add “customer information” in the form of consumer data. This includes purchasing information for a variety of products, subscription lists, mortgage information, car registration information, etc.
- Conduct a large n survey using a random sample of 5000 to 10000 names from the file. The survey obtains or confirms party identification, likely vote choice, and then proceeds through a long list of issue questions.
- Model political behavior as a function of the consumer variables. The political variables (especially party id and vote choice) from the sample survey are dependent variables and consumer data (available for every voter in the database) are the independent variables.

At this point the analysis from the models is used to divide the database into “segments” using consumer variables that significantly predict the vote choice and party identification. This is not a deeply theoretical exercise. If a consumer variable predicts well in the modeling and is widely available for voters in the file it becomes a valuable means of identifying and contacting voters. There is some art to creating these segments. Figure 1 lists a sample of these segments for the microtargeting efforts in the fictitious state of “Republicana.” They were obtained from Alex Gage, a Republican consultant responsible for the RNC’s microtargeting efforts. The

⁸ This section is similar to material first presented in Magleby, Monson, and Patterson (2005) and draws heavily from an interview with Alex Gage and his associates at TargetPoint consulting in December 2004 by David Magleby and Quin Monson.

segments are given names that reflect the content of the characteristics of the group and ranked in descending order of strength of “GOP Base” or Republican partisan identification. The other figure listed is the percent of the segment that expressed a preference for Bush in terms of voting. It is notable that “Religious Conservative Republicans” top the list in terms of their Republican Party identification followed by “Conservative Republican Families.” It is also notable that the segments are grouped by color indicating that the top two groups (in shades of blue) are likely to receive appeals to turn out to vote, the middle group (in green) will likely receive persuasion-oriented communications, and the bottom groups (in orange and red) will likely be ignored.

(Figure 1 about here)

The final step in the process involves analysis of the detailed issue questions for each segment so that messages can be crafted designed to appeal to each group. Figure 2 presents a demographic profile as well as the issue positions of the “Religious Conservative Republicans” as shared by Alex Gage. The data show the percentages taking the issue position statewide and for the religious conservative segment and are color-coded to highlight large differences. In this case, the differences are not surprising at all. Large proportions of the religious conservative segment *strongly* oppose gay marriage, *strongly* support parental notification laws, and *strongly* oppose partial birth abortion. It is also notable that the issues that religious conservatives have strong opinions on go beyond social issues and include taxes and terrorism. The bottom line is that detailed profiles for each segment are given to the RNC staff and consultants that create campaign communications. In the case of direct mail, every registered voter in the state is assigned to a segment and the mail and other communications directed toward each segment is created while closely consulting the issue profile. That this was closely followed in some cases become readily apparent when comparing the descriptions of some RNC mail pieces in Table 5 with the issue profile in Figure 2. At times it is as if the creator of the mail piece simply cut and pasted the list of issues from the profile to the mailer.

(Figure 2 about here)

The targeting of appeals to religious conservatives in 2004 was more sophisticated than it has ever been before and this increased attention and sophistication has come from the Republican National Committee. One caveat is important to offer at this point: quantity may not trump credibility. In other words, a voter who receives 10 professionally designed mail pieces from the RNC may briefly examine each of them in the few seconds it takes to walk from the mailbox to the trash can. However, a lower-production quality mail piece arriving from Focus on the Family or National Right to Life may receive more attention because it is from trusted source. Perhaps the voter is a dues-paying member of the organization. In this case, the mail may be read in its entirety and the message will be allowed to exercise its full potential impact. However, it may also be true that for some voters the Republican Party has achieved a high level of credibility and it may also be true that a few seconds of reading before the piece is discarded may be enough exposure, especially if the message is repeatedly delivered.

It is important to note that that all religiously oriented campaign communications may not receive equal weight an attention from voters. A simple post-card from the National Right to Life PAC to a supportive member may be the equivalent of several mail pieces from the

Republican Party or especially from a lesser known interest group. The log survey data were designed to pick up an accurate sampling of political communications whether through the mail, telephone, or in person. The telephone and in-person contacts have not been coded and summarized for this paper, in part because the sponsoring organization for a telephone call or in-person contact is difficult to ascertain from the information we have available. Some telephone and personal communications especially informal contacts from friends associates do not include that kind of information at all where mail pieces all have a return address that allows precise coding.

Appendix

Log Survey Coding Criteria

The first step was to identify whether a mailer contained any references to religion or religious issues. A preliminary list of issues and references was compiled from issues we thought likely to appear in the mail; this list consisted of abortion, same-sex marriage, school prayer (and any other mentions of prayer), religious liberty, faith, separation of church and state, and family values. As the mail was coded, other issues were identified and added to the list. For example, after noticing that many religiously themed mailers mentioned the nomination of conservative judges, we added the nomination of judges as an issue and then reviewed what had previously been coded for other mentions of the issue. Issues added as coding proceeded were culture of life, support for marriage independent of same-sex marriage, reproductive health, boy scouts, liberal religious values (healthcare, welfare, etc., in light of religious values), gay rights, faith-based initiatives, gay adoption, the Ten Commandments, morality, public decency, and get-out-the-vote. These categories were not mutually exclusive; mailers could have been coded with one or all of these categories.

We also coded the mail for appearances of religious imagery and uses of religious language. The uses of religious language and religious imagery were considerably less prevalent than appearances of religious issues, so we had fewer categories. The codes for images included church, the Bible, cross, pastors/clergy, and an “other” category. Language was coded for mentions of God, the Bible, religious leaders, and an “other” category.

Category Definitions

Issues

Below are the categories that were coded. Accompanying each is a short description of the types of statements and phrases that were coded as falling under these categories.

Abortion – explicit statements on the issue of abortion; also any reference to the partial birth abortion ban was coded under this category.

Reproductive health – discussion of the social issues about the lines of a woman’s right to choose when, how, and why to have a family; this included discussions of access to birth control, reproductive health services, etc. Also included mentions of opposition to stem-cell research, support for the Unborn Victim of Violence Act (“Laci and Connor’s law), and overall statements about support for life of the unborn and statement about preventing the extension of legal rights to fetuses

Same-sex marriage – explicit statements dealing with marriage as only between a man and a woman; support or opposition to the Federal Marriage Amendment, Defense of Marriage Act, or other legal issues dealing with same-sex marriage; statements about “marriage equality;” statements about support for the institution of marriage without explicit mention of the same-sex marriage debate; many typically dealt with a candidate’s support for ending the marriage tax penalty – such statements often accompanied other statements about abortion, judicial nominations, etc.;

Family values – explicit uses of the phrase “family values.”

Boy Scouts – statements of support for the organization as a whole and for their right to use public buildings and facilities; also, criticisms of opponents for not supporting the organization.

Faith – statements about faith, particularly statements about the need for faith or statements about a candidate’s faithfulness or lack of it;

Liberal religious values – the values often espoused by liberal people of faith, i.e. healthcare, welfare, social policies to benefit the poor, and peace discussed through a religious paradigm

Gay rights – statements in support or opposition to gay rights, excluding marriage, which was classified as an independent category because of its salience during the 2004 elections; most statements dealt with discrimination in housing, employment, and such. Adoption by gay couples was also classified separately.

Faith-based initiatives – statements of support or opposition to the president’s proposals to allow religious organizations to use government funds in their provision of social services

Separation of church and state – discussion of the issue of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution and keeping religion and public policy separate; generally made by groups left of center

Gay adoption – statements in opposition to gay couples having the legal ability to adopt children

Ten Commandments – statements of support for the public display of the Ten Commandments and their application in public life

Traditional morality – making an issue of traditional morals and, particularly, sexual mores

Public decency – statements about the public display and/or dissemination of sexually explicit materials

Prayer – mostly dealt with school prayer but also dealt with the subject of prayer in general

Get-out-the-vote – religious mailers that dealt with religious individuals’ need to vote and the legal limits on what religious leaders could do to mobilize their congregations

Religious liberty – statements dealing with the free exercise of religion

Language

Bible-themed – use of the Bible as a source of authority for political positions; direct quotations of scriptures from the Bible; any mention of the Bible

God – use of the word God in any context; appeals to divine authority to support or oppose a position

Religious leader – quotations from religious leaders; statements of support or opposition from prominent religious leaders and figures; testimonials from pastors, bishops or other clergy members who were less prominent but their status as a religious leader is emphasized;

Other – uses of religious language such as *sacred* and *religious*

Images

Bible – pictures of books obviously identifiable as the Bible

Cross – uses of the cross in any way either in mailer graphics or in photographs

Church – images easily identifiable as churches or other religious buildings

Religious Leaders – images of individuals easily identifiable as religious leaders or members of the clergy; for example, showing a man with a pastor's collar was one such instance

Jewish – use of Jewish iconography such as yarmulkes, menorahs, or other obviously Jewish images; the one instance found was a yarmulke prominently displayed on a man's head

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Table 1, Organizations Sending Mail about Religious, Moral, or Social Issues, 2004

Conservative Organizations	Mail Pieces		# of Issues Addressed by Group	Liberal Organizations	Mail Pieces		# of Issues Addressed by Group
	Total ^a	Unique ^a			Total ^a	Unique ^a	
Republican National Committee	664	10	8	American Coming Together	49	4	3
National Right to Life	121	7	2	AFSCME	25	2	2
Republican Jewish Coalition	46	2	1	NARAL Pro-Choice America	20	4	2
Focus on the Family	17	5	3	Planned Parenthood	20	12	4
Bush-Cheney '04	15	7	4	Democratic National Committee	19	3	2
Christian Coalition	8	3	7	Human Rights Campaign	14	3	2
Susan B. Anthony List	8	3	2	National Organization of Women	5	4	2
Life Issues Institute	3	2	1	People for the American Way	5	1	8
Traditional Values Coalition	3	2	8	Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee	4	1	1
Citizen Leader Coalition	2	2	6	Equality Florida Action Network	2	2	2
Total	887	43	Average 4.2	Total	163	36	Average 2.8

^a “Total” refers to the total number of mail pieces received by the log survey’s respondents from the organizations while “Unique” refers to the number of unique mail pieces that the organizations sent to the respondents. For example, the RNC sent 664 copies of 10 unique mail pieces to the log survey’s respondents that addressed 8 issues (see table 2 for a list of issues).

Table 2, Distribution of Issues in the Mail of Conservative Organizations, 2004

Issue	Total Mail Pieces		Unique Mail Pieces		Number of Organizations Sending Mail Pieces that Mention Issue
	Number that Mention Issue ^a	% of Total (899)	Number that Mention Issue ^a	% of Total (66)	
Abortion	673	0.75	52	0.79	15
Same-sex Marriage	533	0.59	27	0.41	8
Nomination of Judges	458	0.51	14	0.21	5
Family Values	397	0.44	8	0.12	3
Boy Scouts	167	0.19	3	0.05	2
Faith	125	0.14	11	0.17	9
Faith-based Initiatives	21	0.02	5	0.08	3
Gay Rights	12	0.01	4	0.06	1
Separation of Church and State	8	0.01	5	0.08	4
Gay Adoption	7	0.01	2	0.03	2
Ten Commandments	6	0.01	3	0.05	2
Public Decency	5	0.01	2	0.03	2
Prayer	3	0.00	3	0.05	2
GOTV	2	0.00	1	0.02	1
Traditional Morality	1	0.00	1	0.02	1
Liberal Religious Values	1	0.00	1	0.02	1

^a Totals do not equal 887 or 43, for total mail pieces and unique mail pieces respectively, because mailers dealing with more than one issue were counted for every issue that they mention.

Table 3, Images and Language in the Mail of Conservative Organizations, 2004

	Total # of Mail Pieces with Image/Language	Total # of Conservative Mail Pieces with Image/Language	# of Unique Conservative Mail Pieces with Image/Language
Images			
Church	116	111	2
Cross	8	2	3
Pastor	5	0	2
Jewish Icon	1	0	1
Bible	0	0	0
Language			
Bible	39	38	7
God	21	14	12
Other	11	9	3
Leader	3	2	3

Table 4, Support of Presidential Candidates in Mail about Religious, Moral, or Social Issues, 2004

Position ^a	Number of Mail Pieces Received	Percent of Mail Pieces Received	Number of Unique Mail Pieces	Percent of Unique Mail Pieces
Pro-Bush/Anti-Kerry	860	0.80	46	0.39
No position	81	0.08	36	0.30
Pro-Kerry/Anti-Bush	131	0.12	37	0.31
Total	1072		113	

^a Position defined by explicit references to either candidate by name.

Note: Mail pieces are not double counted in either number of mailers receiver or unique mailers. The total for number of mailers represents the number of religious/values mailers in the log survey; the total of unique mailers is the total number of different and distinct mail pieces in the survey.

Table 5, Top Ten Mail Pieces about Religious, Moral, or Social Issues, 2004

Rank	Organization	Number Received	Description
1	Republican National Committee	147	Mentions abortion, same-sex marriage, and nominating conservative judges. Criticizes Kerry for claiming to represent conservative values when he is associated with or supported by prominent liberals such as Michael Moore, Jane Fonda, Michael Dukakis, and Ted Kennedy.
2	Republican National Committee	111	Mentions abortion, same-sex marriage, family values, President Bush as a man of faith, and nominating conservative judges. Main title, "This Election is for Families." Asks, "Who can you count on to support traditional values?"
3	Republican National Committee	93	Mentions abortion, same-sex marriage, nominating conservative judges, and the boy scouts controversy. "John Kerry claims to represent your values ... but in twenty years in Washington Kerry has voted 119 times <u>against</u> conservative values" [emphasis in original]. Lists ways in which Kerry's views differ from conservative values.
4	Republican National Committee	73	Mentions abortion, same-sex marriage, family values, the boy scouts, and nominating conservative judges. Asks, "Who shares your values?" then describes both candidates' positions on social and moral issues.
5	National Right to Life PAC	65	Mentions abortion and Supreme Court Nominations. Gives a detailed breakdown on where the candidates positions on partial-birth abortion, abortion on demand, government funding of abortion, voting record on life, and Supreme Court appointments. Also gives short paragraphs on Vice-Presidential candidates' positions.
6	National Right to Life PAC	32	Exclusively focused on abortion. Shows a picture of a baby with the words, "This little guy wants you to vote for President Bush." On the reverse it gives a summary of the presidential candidates' positions on life. Top of back has a Biblical quotation and in large print says, "Vote like life depends on it ... it does."
7	Republican National Committee	30	Mentions with same-sex marriage and family values. On the front cover asks, "Where Do the Presidential Candidates Stand on Protecting Marriage?" On the inside it asserts that Kerry's actions show that he is against marriage. The back cover declares, "President George W. Bush Strongly Supports Marriage."
8	America Coming Together	23	Deals with liberal religious values of jobs and health care as more important than other moral and social issues. Title: "Don't be Distracted." Claims that Republicans are distracting voters with unimportant issues. Ends with plea: "If we stay focused on jobs, health care and homeland security, we can get Ohio back on track."
9	Republican Jewish Coalition	23	Deals with abortion and stem-cell research. Prominently features former New York mayor Ed Koch and highlights his disagreement with President Bush on abortion and stem-cell research but says that he is supporting the president because of his strong position on security and Israel.
10	Republican Jewish Coalition	23	Deals with abortion by advocating that pro-choice Democrats vote for Bush because of his support for Israel and strong stance against terrorism.

Figure 1, Hypothetical Republican Microtargeting Segments, 2004

The Republicanana MicroTargeting Segments				
Segment	Segment Name	Segment Size	GOP Base	Committed GWB
1	Religious Conservative Republicans	37,145	87%	86%
2	Conservative Republican Families	53,082	86%	96%
3	Younger Republicans	122,335	85%	92%
4	Motivated Republicans	164,204	83%	89%
5	High Turnout Republicans	35,878	82%	92%
6	Older Reliable Republicans	133,191	80%	83%
7	Limited Government Conservatives	34,630	78%	85%
8	Culturally Conservative Independents	69,667	78%	80%
9	Socially Moderate Republicans	275,542	75%	68%
10	Education Oriented Republican Families	94,475	74%	76%
11	Unreliable Republican Voters	130,245	74%	80%
12	Pleased Weak Republicans	31,700	71%	82%
13	Secular Republicans	44,266	58%	51%
14	Pro-Bush Anti-Tax Swing Voters	42,133	50%	79%
15	Secular Independent Singles	56,580	48%	59%
16	Conflicted Male Voters	39,243	41%	56%
17	White Liberal Independents	44,382	33%	42%
18	Low Turnout Pro-Bush Democrat Men	120,595	33%	57%
19	Average Turnout Weak Male Democrats	41,597	27%	27%
20	Secular Younger Females	280,716	24%	38%
21	Young Unreliable Social Liberals	174,993	18%	37%
22	Liberal Democrats	335,889	14%	21%
23	High Turnout Female Democrats	235,019	9%	17%
24	Minority Democrats	425,646	4%	10%
Total		3,023,153		

Figure 2a, Demographic Characteristics of Hypothetical Microtargeting Segment of Religious Conservatives, 2004

Segment 1
Religious Conservative Republicans
Segment Group: Strong Republican



Segment Size:	37,145
Statewide Share:	3.8%

GOP Id:	87%
GWB 2004:	86%

Key Demographics			
Item		Statewide	Segment 1
Party	% GOP Base	43.0%	87.0%
	% Dem Base	27.0%	4.0%
	% Independent	30.0%	9.1%
Pres 2004	% Committed Bush	55.0%	86.0%
	% Committed Dem	45.0%	14.0%
Motivation	% Highly Motivated	34.0%	37.0%
Gender	% Male	49.0%	51.0%
	% Female	51.0%	49.0%
Religion	% Church Weekly	31.0%	61.0%
	% Protestant	37.0%	45.0%
	% Catholic	28.0%	25.9%
	% Jewish	4.0%	4.2%
Age	% Age 18-34	18.0%	4.0%
	% Age 35-44	19.0%	7.0%
	% Age 45-64	42.0%	49.0%
	% Age 65+	21.0%	40.0%

Key Demographics			
Item		Statewide	Segment 1
Union	% Union HH	28.0%	14.0%
	% Non-Union HH	72.0%	86.0%
Race	% White	84.0%	91.0%
	% Black	2.0%	0.0%
	% Hispanic	9.0%	3.9%
Work Status	Working Full Time	48.0%	23.0%
	Working Part Time	6.0%	6.0%
	Unemployed	1.9%	0.0%
	Retired	33.2%	68.0%
	Homemaker	6.1%	2.4%

Role of Government			
Item		Statewide	Segment 1
Role of Gov't	Limited Government	29.0%	47.0%
	Expanded Gov't	17.0%	5.0%
	Mixed Views	25.0%	21.2%
	More Services GOP	32.0%	29.8%
	Less Gov't Dems	41.0%	53.3%

Turnout Decile Categories		
Category	Statewide	Segment 1
Reliable (Deciles 7-10)	40.3%	82.0%
Unreliable (Deciles 4-6)	29.6%	17.0%
Suspect (Deciles 1-3)	30.2%	1.0%

Figure 2b, Key Attitudes of Hypothetical Microtargeting Segment of Religious Conservatives, 2004

Key Attitudes		
Item	Statewide	Segment 1
Strongly oppose gay marriage	44%	86.0%
Strong favor parental consent for abortion	47%	92.0%
Strongly oppose tax increases	36%	57.3%
Worried about the influence of the religious right	31%	12.0%
Strong opposes affirmative action	30%	37.3%
Strongly opposes gun control	31%	45.0%
Strongly opposes activist judges	60%	69.6%
Worried about the cost of health insurance	56%	44.0%
Angry about internet pornography	57%	82.0%
Strongly supports increased military funding	34%	49.0%
Strongly favors increased intelligence funding	38%	43.0%
Worried about job losses	40%	15.6%
Angry about no WMDs in Iraq	33%	32.0%
Strongly supports President's actions in War on Terror	45%	61.7%
Strongly supports Republican Tax Cuts	39%	76.0%
Strongly supports No Child Left Behind Act	38%	32.0%
Strongly oppose Partial Birth Abortion	36%	77.0%
Strongly favor curbs on frivolous lawsuits	41%	48.0%