

Evangelicals in the Power Elite: Elite Cohesion Advancing a Movement

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Social scientists typically examine social movements as grassroots phenomena, yet public leaders and elite actors also play important roles. This article examines their role in one contemporary social movement, American evangelicalism. Through semistructured interviews with 360 elite informants, as well as archival and ethnographic research, I explore the mechanisms through which leaders have sought to advance evangelicalism between 1976 and 2006. These public leaders founded organizations, formed networks, exercised convening power, and drew on formal and informal positions of authority to achieve movement goals. Results suggest that salient religious identity and cohesive networks have played important roles in shaping the goals and ambitions of leaders within the evangelical movement. Structural coincidence provided by governance structures at evangelical organizations, as well as evangelical programs directed toward elite constituents, have facilitated the formation of overlapping networks across social sectors. Institutional inertia and internal factions, however, have been countervailing forces. This empirical study demonstrates the persistence of institutional differentiation among America's leadership cohort, but it also points to a religious identity that can provide vital, cross-domain cohesion within the structure of elite power.

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Much of the literature on elite power suggests that those who occupy "commanding positions" in society have deep connections with one another. Typically, these connections

develop from shared decision-making (Hunter 1953; Mills 1956), shared backgrounds and experiences (Baltzell 1958, 1964), shared institutional positions (Useem 1984), or a shared social milieu (Bourdieu 1984; Domhoff 1975). Recently, Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006) chronicled the emerging diversity within the nation's power elite as African Americans, Jews, women, Latinos, Asians, and gay men and lesbians have entered the higher circles. Missing from their analysis—and every other analysis of elite power conducted to date—is the important role played by evangelicals who have joined the nation's elite. This article addresses that lacuna and explores whether these are isolated individuals who happen to be evangelical or if there are mechanisms within the evangelical movement that facilitate their ascent and, in the process, further the movement.

The rise of evangelicals to influential positions illustrates a wider point often overlooked in the social movements literature—namely, the role of leaders in a movement's advance. Their role is almost entirely subsumed under the cat-

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egory of resource provision, beyond which the focus then turns to grassroots mobilization. Tilly (2004) suggests that all social movements entail a sustained campaign for a particular set of objectives. These objectives are pursued through a repertoire of special-purpose associations and coalitions, public events, and outreach efforts. Movement participants must demonstrate worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitments to secure cohesion and legitimacy. Parkin (1968) suggests that social movements entail expressive action guided by a particular moral outlook, an outlook that concerns the way things ought to be. Work within the “new” social movements literature focuses on the role of identity and ideology, expanding the field’s earlier foci on resources and organizations (Dalton, Kuechler, and Burklin 1990; Kauffman 1990; Offe 1985; Pichardo 1997; Tilly 1979).

Collective and individual identity is now seen as inextricably tied to how social movements mobilize actors and advance their objectives (Klandermans 1994). Not nearly enough attention, however, has been paid to the place of salient religious identity for movement leaders and its implication for existing power structures. I am particularly interested in the ways that evangelicalism has created novel forms of cohesion among public leaders—leaders who head significant institutions within American public life. As others have suggested (Andrews 2001; Minkoff 1997), sympathetic, resource-rich elites can fund organizations and create politically-advantageous environments for particular movements and, indeed, a range of movement organizations. As Gieryn (1983) argues, leaders can create niches for institutions seeking to differentiate themselves from other entities, and elites can play particularly important roles in setting and maintaining boundaries for movements seeking to advance into new social territory. I use the term “advance” to discuss the evangelical movement’s forward momentum. This entails both an extension into different sectors of society—politics and the world of business, for example—as well as the introduction of evangelicalism into society’s upper strata.¹

¹ American evangelicalism has evolved as a movement, and this transformation has facilitated its advance. By the term “advance,” though, I do not

Modern American evangelicalism begins with the founding of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1942. At a gathering called the “National Conference for United Action Among Evangelicals,” a group led by the Reverend Harold J. Ockenga of Boston’s Park Street Congregational Church met to begin a movement of theological conservatives that would serve as an alternative to American fundamentalism’s separatist impulse (Carpenter 1980; Marsden 2006). Historians argue that this was merely a renaissance of evangelical influence that was far more pervasive in the nineteenth century. Noll (2002) estimates that in 1860 evangelical Protestants accounted for 85 percent of all churches in this country. They were extremely active in abolitionism and the temperance movements (Young 2006), and by the turn of the twentieth century, evangelicalism was so influential that, in the words of one scholar, “it was virtually a religious establishment” (Marsden 2006:6). Evangelical influence waned after securing only a pyrrhic victory in the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925. The next half century marked an era of evangelical retreat in nearly every domain of public life. As a result, evangelicals were largely ignored in empirical studies of elites conducted in the 1950s through the early 1980s (Baltzell 1964; Domhoff 1975; Keller 1963; Mills 1956). However, evangelicals persisted. Leaders such as Ockenga, Carl F. H. Henry, and Billy Graham—with financial support from business tycoons like J. Howard Pew of Sun Oil Company—established journals such as *Christianity Today* and founded Fuller Theological Seminary, an institution they likened to a “Cal Tech of the evangelical world.”²

Graham remained popular in the 1960s, but it was an era of widespread social change. Evangelicals were relatively minor players among the cast of powerful social actors of the

mean to imply that there is a normative ideal for evangelicalism, one that it has somehow reached in its most recent transformation. In this regard, I view the various stages of American evangelicalism discussed in this article as categorically, not ordinally, different. In this article, I treat American evangelicalism as a social movement, following the lead of Young (2006), Smith (1996), and others.

² Both California Institute of Technology and Fuller Theological Seminary are located in Pasadena, California.

1960s and early 1970s. Institutions like Berkeley, the Black Panthers, Woodstock, and the hippie movement grabbed headlines much more frequently than Graham or his contemporaries did. During the 1970s, a rising measure of angst about cultural drift from traditional values began to stir the movement to greater political action. In 1976, dubbed “the year of the evangelical,” both *Time* and *Newsweek* ran cover stories about the resurgence of conservative Christianity in American public life as Jimmy Carter became the first self-described “born-again” evangelical in modern history to be elected to the White House. Since then, others have noted the place of evangelical rhetoric and priorities in political discourse (Smith 2006), intellectual debates (Schmalzbauer 2003), and corporate life (Miller 2006).

Scholars have paid more attention to evangelicals in recent years (Balmer 2004; Marsden 2006; Smith 2000; Smith et al. 1998), yet we know practically nothing about adherents who serve in elite positions of public life. In this article, I address this gap and attend to the role of religious identity, social networks, and strategies for influence that have engaged evangelical elites over the last 30 years. Empirical studies often explore the extent to which leaders are united by social backgrounds and worldviews (Baltzell 1958; Domhoff 2006; Dye 2002; Mills 1956) or fragmented and specialized (Keller 1963; Mannheim 1940). My analyses highlight whether or not a segment of the nation’s elite are united by a brotherhood of shared evangelical conviction³ in any meaningful way and, if so, the mechanisms that sustain such unity. This article cannot assess the extent to which these mechanisms have resulted in certain outcomes—that must be evaluated on a case-by-

case basis. Rather, the analyses offered in this article elucidate the mechanisms that evangelicals have sought to use in realigning the informal power structures among the nation’s elite. In this regard, I highlight specifically the efforts, strategies, and overarching goals of evangelical elites, while also considering barriers and limitations that have emerged in their attempt to exercise greater cultural influence. I propose “convening power” as the decisive structural advantage that elites enjoy. And, it is the salience of religious identity to evangelical elites that makes their convening power especially noteworthy. My concluding discussion—centering on how the individual agency of motivated leaders can result in wider social change for a variety of social movements—is informative relative to the broader understanding of social movements, the sociology of elites, and the sociology of religion.

THEORIES OF ELITE POWER

In *The German Ideology*, Marx argued that the capitalist class controls not just the economic sphere, but also the political and ideological spheres to such an extent that “the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas” ([1845] 1978:172). He argued that economic power unites a ruling group of capitalists, permitting their domination over the masses. In *The Ruling Class*, Mosca ([1896] 1939) agreed with Marx that there are two classes: those who rule and those who are ruled, but he argued that social power is not unified in the hands of capitalists; rather it belongs to society’s political leadership. Since then, Hunter (1953), Mills (1956), Baltzell (1958, 1964), Useem (1984), and Domhoff (2006) have argued that elite power is best understood as something held by a small group of people united by class.

There is, however, an alternative model of elite power. It argues that modern society is highly differentiated, and thus it cannot generate cohesive unity among those who occupy authoritative positions. This tradition, which finds some resonance in the writings of Weber, but was explicated by Dahl (1958) and Keller (1963), argues that power is distributed geographically, among various sectors, and across numerous entities. Differing backgrounds and priorities inhibit any significant cohesion that might occur through shared class sensibilities or

³ Nash’s study (1994) confirms the general impression that evangelical public leaders are almost entirely white males. Hence, “brotherhood” is an appropriate term. By evangelical “convictions,” I mean norms, reasoning, and ideology—matters of belief. I define “evangelical” as a branch of conservative Christianity that affirms (1) the Bible as the ultimate religious authority for faith and daily life; (2) the importance of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ (which typically entails a “born again” experience); and (3) an activist approach to faith whereby religious convictions shape how an adherent interacts with others.

overlapping institutional authority. In her work, Keller differentiated between strategic elites and a ruling class, concluding that the two differed in their manner of recruitment, internal organization, and degree of specialization. Accordingly, the notion of a single pyramid capped by a ruling class gave way in modern society to a number of parallel pyramids, each capped by an elite. Subsequent works have shown empirical differences between economic and political power in post-World War II France (Aron 1950) and contemporary America (Lerner, Nagai, and Rothman 1996; Vogel 1996), supporting this contention. A premise of this model is that the number of top sectors proliferates as society becomes more differentiated. In Dye's (2002) most recent analysis of the nation's current leadership cohort, he identifies nearly 6,000 individuals who wield significant influence in nearly a dozen different fields. His analysis shows that only a small percentage of public leaders (15 percent) occupy more than one influential position at the same time. While there is a concentration of the nation's resources in a relatively small number of institutions, the individuals who lead these institutions reach such heights by upward mobility and by demonstrating their capability within the institutions, not through class cohesion or overlapping institutional structures.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CHANGING POWER STRUCTURES

Both perspectives on elite power, discussed above, make room for the structure of elite power to change over time. Newcomers can join the elite, and in the process, power dynamics are altered. Proponents of the class unity model see power increasingly consolidated in the midst of and immediately following social disruptions. For Mills (1956), the military-industrial complex that emerged in the United States during World War II remained intact following the war, providing structural coincidence whereby military, business, and governmental leaders constituted a "power elite." Pluralists—as proponents of the second approach are called—also regard the structure of elite power as dynamic and open to change. Baltzell (1958, 1964), Pareto ([1901] 1968), and Tocqueville ([1856] 1998) regarded the structure of elite power as something that could not be maintained for long

without adjustment. If this is the case, then how have recent developments in American society contributed to possible realignments within the elite?

NETWORKS, MOVEMENTS, AND POSSIBLE ELITE REALIGNMENT. Elite power is often exercised through social networks. Tracing the development of three world philosophies—Western, Indian, and Asian—Collins (1998) demonstrates how social networks and the "emotional energy" that radiates out from networks generate intellectual advances. Interpersonal networks among elite intellectuals determine the standards and conventions for scholarly evaluation and accord prestige selectively. Collins also suggests that network hubs—most often through face-to-face encounters—spur scholarly creativity and productivity. He found that once overlapping networks of intellectuals and ideas were formed, newcomers sustained and deepened the relevance of these networks, making it more difficult for rival factions to overturn their ideas or the privileged place those ideas occupied. Since established networks continued to draw newcomers, they remained dynamic, changing entities even as they grew more established. These chains of influence—from master to pupil—are intergenerational, handed down one generation at a time. Disavowing the notion that academic reputation is secured by an individual's brilliance, Collins claims the key to scholarly recognition is secured through hierarchical, structured intellectual networks. These networks are not modern innovations. Padgett and Ansell (1993) argue that the multiple identities of Cosimo the Elder—one of the founders of the Medici family—enabled him to take advantage of network disjunctures among the elite in Renaissance Florence. He was particularly powerful because of his ability to span institutional and interpersonal boundaries; he could serve as nodes of introduction and information within multiple elite networks. In the face of increasing specialization and greater diversity within society's higher circles, it remains to be seen if the salience of these networks—and those who can span them—necessarily wanes.

Elite networks are fundamental to the advance of social movements. They provide critical resources, produce cultural goods, and facilitate the legitimation of a given movement to exter-

nal audiences (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Peterson and Berger 1975; Tilly 2004). These networks often provide the institutional scaffolding that supports the establishment and expansion of organizations that pursue movement objectives (Clemens 1996; Minkoff 1995; O'Connor 2001). Language and public symbols exert powerful influence over the reception of movement ideals (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et al. 1986; Steinberg 1999). Leaders of society's institutions not only enact public symbols, but they are also *embodiments* of public symbols. These symbols can mobilize people to act and maintain momentum once action has been undertaken (Bowers, Ochs, and Jenson 1993). This is particularly true within the realm of religion where moral rhetoric conditions cultural schemas and legitimates movement ideals (Patillo-McCoy 1998; Wood 1999; Young 2006). I am thus interested in how elite actors have tailored the production and reception of evangelical culture by leveraging their influence in both evangelical and public spheres of influence.

ANALYZING ELITES AND ELITE REALIGNMENT. Scholars tend to view elites as an external resource for a given movement, but rarely as a resource or driving force within that contributes to a movement's advance. Even the literature on the sociology of elites is relatively scant, with even fewer empirical studies relying on primary data from the leaders themselves. Looking at the evangelical movement, no study has examined the place of public leaders and their networks that span multiple domains.⁴ This is understandable; information on evangelicalism as practiced by the masses is more ample, and data are plentiful and accessible. But the situation is altogether different for elites. National surveys do not interview enough elites to draw general conclusions, and most empirical studies conducted on public leaders do not examine their religious repertoires. Relatively few works link the religious identities of individual leaders to a larger social movement (Hertzke 2004; Smith 1991). Moreover, institutional barriers

and secretarial gatekeepers often inhibit a researcher's ability to collect good data on elites. This study overcomes these challenges and provides the most comprehensive data to date—data that allow for the analysis of these important issues.

DATA AND METHODS

I conducted and analyzed semistructured interviews with 360 elite informants in six arenas of influence: (1) government/politics, (2) arts/entertainment/media, (3) religion, (4) the nonprofit/social sector, (5) higher education, and (6) business/corporate life. Because I was particularly interested in the role of the evangelical movement among America's leadership cohort, practically all of the religious leaders I interviewed were evangelical. Like other projects involving elite informants, I employed the snowball method for selecting informants (Kadushin 1995; Schmalzbauer 2003). In this method, informants are asked at the end of each interview to identify other, similarly-stationed leaders who share their religious commitments. I supplemented this methodology with something I call the "leapfrog method." Using this novel approach, I interviewed religious and nonprofit leaders from a diverse group of organizations within the evangelical movement drawn during early stages of data collection (N = 157). I then asked these early informants to identify higher-ranking potential informants in government, business, arts, entertainment, the media, and higher education. Because of the intentional diversity of these early informants, I was able to identify other potential informants while minimizing the bias of limited interpersonal networks and shared personal identities that typically encumber the snowball method. Also, given that the leapfrog method begins with organizations as the unit of analysis, instead of individuals, informants are more likely to represent diverse social locations (geographically, institutionally, and demographically) than is often the case in studies that employ only the snowball method. These early informants then helped me secure contact details, and often appointments, to interview high-ranking officials.

Informants include two former presidents of the United States; 48 Cabinet secretaries and senior White House staffers; 101 CEOs or sen-

⁴ Schmalzbauer (2003) and Nash (1994) have conducted interviews among evangelical public leaders in particular domains: journalism and the academy for the former, business for the latter.

ior executives at large firms (both public and private); three dozen accomplished Hollywood professionals; more than 10 leaders from the world of professional athletics; and approximately 200 leaders from the artistic, nonprofit, educational, and philanthropic arenas. The leapfrog method, coupled with the traditional snowball method, created an unusually large number of high-ranking, willing participants. In addition to these 360 informants, 71 leaders did not respond to my invitation or declined to participate in an interview, generating an 84 percent response rate for the study. I compared the profile of these leaders with those who did participate and found no meaningful differences between participants and nonparticipants in terms of gender, sector of influence, race, region of the country, age, or political affiliation (for those in the government sector). Table 1 details the professional background of study informants, including a list of representative titles held by informants, organizations they lead, and cultural goods they produce. These 360 interviews, conducted between 2003 and 2006, represent the first phase of a larger research project I am conducting called the PLATINUM Study (Public Leaders in America Today and the Inquiry into their Networks, Upbringing, and Motivations).

Interviews ranged in length from 35 minutes to over 4 hours, with the average interview lasting 63 minutes.⁵ Interview questions included social and religious backgrounds, professional and personal networks, organizational affiliations, public responsibilities, career trajectories, and attitudes and motivations on a range of subjects. I also included questions that involved

retrospective life histories; this information, along with organizational archives, provided the historical data analyzed for this article. I conducted all of the interviews myself, and with the exception of 10 cases, all were conducted in person. Geographical diversity was a critical variable in the research design, and typically, interviews were conducted in the location of the participants' primary residence. Interviews were conducted at 72 research sites, ranging from Boston to Los Angeles and Miami to Seattle. Study participants come from all four regions of the country, including the Northeast (34 percent), the South (29 percent), the Midwest (10 percent), and the West (27 percent).

These interviews were digitally recorded and then professionally transcribed. A research associate checked the accuracy of the transcripts and sent copies to those participants who requested the opportunity to review their remarks for accuracy.⁶ The cleaned interview transcripts were then coded along 46 variables for various demographic and religious categories. This was supplemented with archival research at 110 organizations within the evangelical movement and participant-observation at two dozen gatherings of elite participants, including conferences, board meetings, retreats, and social gatherings. Because elite networks—especially informal ones—are, by definition, difficult to map without significant gaps, I chose not to employ formal network analysis. I did, however, analyze myriad matrices that considered the cross-domain structural arrangements and informal networks that included informants in this study. This analysis, along with the quantitative and qualitative analyses drawn from the interview data, archival research, and ethnographic observation involved more than 5,000 pages of material.

I detail the demographic profile of participants in phase 1 of this study elsewhere (Lindsay 2007), but a few items are noteworthy. As Karabel (2005) and Cookson and Persell (1985) note, elite education remains an important determinant to elite power. Among those who attended highly selective institutions,⁷ a plurality

⁵ Because the interviews were conducted mostly on-the-record for direct attribution, I was uncertain how to analyze the comments of currently elected politicians whose constituents could learn of their comments, thereby influencing what the official might say. Informants did have the option of speaking, at times, off-the-record, but the majority of each interview was on-the-record. Hence, I did not interview anyone in currently elected office, which is why there are no current members of Congress—certainly an institution of public influence—among this study's participants. With the possible exceptions of Congress and the Supreme Court, this study includes leaders from every domain of public influence examined in previous investigations.

⁶ Thirteen percent of informants requested the opportunity to review (and possibly edit) their comments.

⁷ The following institutions are coded "highly selective": the eight Ivy League campuses (Brown,

Table 1. Professional Descriptive Statistics of Informants, PLATINUM Study, Phase 1, 2003 to 2006

Industry and Sector Details	Frequency	
<i>Government</i>		<i>Select Positions among Informants^a</i>
Carter White House	2	President of the United States Deputy White House Chief of Staff
Reagan White House	7	Attorney General Secretary of the Treasury Secretary of the Interior Secretary of Energy Surgeon General Counselor to the President National Security Advisor
Bush (41) White House	10	President of the United States White House Chief of Staff Secretary of State Secretary of Health and Human Services Solicitor General Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
Clinton White House	7	Deputy Secretary of Defense Secretary of the Navy Administrator, USAID Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom
Bush (43) White House	22	Secretary of Commerce Chair, White House Council of Economic Advisors Assistant to the President Senior Advisor to the President Director, Office of Personnel Management
<i>Business^b</i>		<i>Select Companies among Informants^c</i>
Mining/Oil and Gas	8	Texaco, ConocoPhillips, Halliburton
Utilities	5	AES, The Southern Company
Manufacturing	12	Herman Miller, Boeing, Interstate Batteries, Raytheon
Wholesale Trade	2	Hughes Supply Company
Retail Trade	11	Wal-Mart, Target, Helzberg's Diamonds, Anne Klein II, Kay-Bee Toys, Laura Ashley, Lenox, Macy's, JC Penny
Transportation	4	Continental Airlines, Alaska Air Group, Burlington Northern Santa Fe
Information	11	Intel, Apple, Cisco Systems, Borders
Finance and Insurance	17	State Street Investment Corporation, Keiner Perkins Caufield & Byers, Colonial Penn Life Insurance, Prudential Financial Services
Real Estate	10	CB Richard Ellis, Fieldstone Communities, Trammell Crow
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	11	ServiceMaster, Oxford Analytica
Healthcare and Social Assistance	3	Sunrise Assisted Living
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	2	Electronic Arts, The Walt Disney Company
Accommodation and Food Services	9	Chick-fil-A, Ritz-Carlton, Tyson Foods, PepsiCo
<i>Religion</i>		<i>Select Institutions among Informants</i>
Denominational Bodies	7	North American Mission Board, National Association of Evangelicals, Willow Creek Association, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Parachurch Organizations	12	Alpha, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Purpose Driven
Church Leadership	12	Willow Creek Community Church, Menlo Park Presbyterian Church, Redeemer Presbyterian Church

(continued on next page)

Table 1. (continued)

Industry and Sector Details	Frequency	
<i>Higher Education</i>		<i>Select Institutions among Informants</i>
Professors	8	Notre Dame, Harvard
Administrators ^d	16	The Julliard School, Harvard Business School, Wheaton College, Wake Forest
Ancillary Organizations	14	Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
<i>Nonprofit Sector^e</i>		<i>Select Institutions among Informants</i>
Philanthropy and Fundraising	19	Fieldstead and Company, The John Templeton Foundation, The Gathering, Stewardship Foundation
Social Service	4	World Vision, International Justice Mission
Education	11	The Renaissance Institute, Institute for Global Engagement
The Arts	6	International Arts Movement
Advocacy	3	Families Northwest
Think Tanks	4	Ethics & Public Policy Center, Center for Public Justice
Leadership	18	CEO Forum, Young Presidents' Organization
<i>Culture</i>		<i>Selected Cultural Goods Produced or Directed by Informants</i>
Television/Film Executive	18	<i>Star Wars, The Passion of the Christ, Home Improvement, Raiders of the Lost Ark, That 70s Show, Happy Days, Mission Impossible, Charlie's Angels, Hawaii Five-O, Sesame Street, The Question of God, The Chronicles of Narnia, Because of Winn Dixie, JAG, Touched by an Angel, Planet of the Apes, X Men</i>
Actor/Entertainer	8	<i>Matlock, Live with Regis and Kathie Lee, Kids Say the Darndest Things, St. Elsewhere</i>
Writer/Publishing	9	<i>Batman Forever, Books & Culture, Elf, Image</i>
Media/Journalism	14	<i>ABC World News Tonight, Fortune, Newsweek, The Dallas Morning News, The Gallup Poll, Time</i>
Artist	5	National Council on the Arts
Professional Athletics ^f	19	Miami Dolphins, Professional Golfers Association, Arizona Diamondbacks, San Antonio Spurs, Cincinnati Reds, Phoenix Suns, Arizona Cardinals, Seattle Seahawks, World Professional Figure Skating, U.S. Professional Tennis Association

^a Because of space constraints, listed positions are not exhaustive; they are simply a representative selection of roles held by informants.

^b Sectors reflect North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) as a way of demonstrating diversity among business informants. Following convention, NAICS sector designation reported here applies to primary sector, and sector approximations are given for privately-held companies. Not all sectors are represented among informants.

^c Informants serve or have served in executive positions at these companies, most often as president, chairman, or chief executive officer.

^d Informants include presidents, provosts, vice presidents, and deans.

^e Informants serve as principals at these culture-shaping institutions.

^f Informants are principally professional athletes but also include coaches and owners.

earned a degree from Harvard (11 percent). With regard to the racial and ethnic profile of study participants, I agree with others who deem black Protestantism to be different in kind from American evangelicalism (Steenland et al.

2000). Hence, this study's informants are almost entirely white (95 percent). The few people of color in this study (African American, Asian American, and Hispanic) attend mostly white congregations and affiliate with evangelical groups and initiatives that serve a largely white constituency. This study also concurs with prior research that men continue to dominate the elite ranks (Domhoff 2006; Dye 2002). In this study, 10 percent of the public leaders are women,

Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Princeton, and Yale) as well as the University of Chicago, Duke University, Oxford University, and Stanford University.

although there may be a slight bias in that number; I intentionally oversampled women. On a few occasions when soliciting potential informants for the project, I asked early informants to specifically recommend potential female informants. I did not, however, change the study's standard of occupying an elite position in order to find female informants; the women interviewed have held positions equivalent to male informants including Cabinet secretaries, senior corporate executives, leading Hollywood producers, artists, and professional athletes.

RESULTS

This study confirms the general impression that evangelicals have become more prominent within the power elite over the last 30 years, even though the number of self-identified evangelicals in the United States has not changed dramatically since the late 1970s (Hackett and Lindsay 2004). Demographic change explains part of this development. A segment of the evangelical movement today is wealthier than ever before (Nash 1994), more prominent in national politics (Martin 1996), and has made remarkable gains in higher education (Riley 2005). All of this is associated with elite status, and indeed, many evangelicals in this study come from elite backgrounds. With a net worth exceeding \$8 billion, Philip Anschutz is one of the world's wealthiest evangelicals. Along the same lines, one knowledgeable informant told me he visited with 20 evangelical families over the course of a single year, each of whom had a net worth in excess of \$1 billion. Beyond wealth, evangelicals have attained levels of elite education that is on par with other elites. One-third of this study's informants attended a highly selective university, which is similar to Dye's (2002) findings across several elite sectors.

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

The religious profile of these public leaders looks different from the general evangelical population. Over half (56 percent) made a significant spiritual decision about their evangelical faith after age 17, and nearly one-third (29 percent) do not come from families that attended church—a figure double the general population (14 percent according to 1992 to 1998 aggregated Gallup Poll data). Across sectors, I found scores of public leaders who embraced the

evangelical faith while occupying the corridors of power. This happened across social sectors—in both business and Hollywood—and across political divides. In fact, Robert “Bud” McFarlane, who served as National Security Advisor during the Reagan administration, recounted his spiritual pilgrimage in ways that resonated with that of Alonzo McDonald, one of President Carter's chief advisors. When I noted this, McFarlane responded:

I think it is a process of maturing that everybody goes through. There's nothing unique about me. At the time it led to me asking, “Well, if you believe passionately as I do in the salvation that I have experienced through the love of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice, then you must ask, ‘What is the highest and best use of me?’” . . . [I determined that I] could be just as effective [as a Christian witness] if not more . . . in the military [as opposed to the ministry because there] are a lot more folks that you could reach in the foxhole than in the narthex.

This sense of embracing an evangelical faith and then using it in one's leadership motivated nearly all (91 percent) of the leaders I interviewed. For many, faith motivated them to action and provided a sense of meaningful vocation for their work (55 percent).

I also found many examples of middle-class, entrepreneurial evangelicals who moved into elite positions, bringing their evangelical convictions with them on their rise to the top. This happened not only in the corporate domain, but also in politics where large, loyal constituencies can facilitate social mobility for elected officials and their political appointees. Brady Anderson is a representative example. Anderson worked for Bill Clinton when Clinton was the attorney general of Arkansas, but he eventually left government to serve as a missionary for Wycliffe Bible Translators in Tanzania. After Clinton's election in 1992, Anderson and the president-elect reconnected at a luncheon in Washington. Knowing that Anderson had extensive experience in Tanzania and spoke Swahili, Clinton asked his missionary friend to serve as the ambassador to Tanzania, which he did for three years. His successful experience in Africa eventually resulted in his appointment as the administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As Anderson told me, he wound up on a “different track,” but his faith was important to him long before these senior governmental appointments.

However, across different sectors of leadership, a majority of informants (66 percent) said they deepened in their faith after assuming a powerful position. In his interview, Carter stated, “When I was President I was more deeply committed to prayer than ever before or since.” Table 2 enumerates the frequency of various religious variables among the 203 public leaders interviewed.

There are a number of common elements to the spiritual lives of these informants. Beyond the prevalence of faith in the exercise of their public leadership and the ways in which Christianity provides a meaningful framework for their sense of professional vocation, most of these leaders (67 percent) report regularly talking with their professional colleagues about their faith. In most contexts, this involved alluding to one’s faith when talking with a colleague about a personal concern (such as the illness or death of a loved one) or an invitation to attend a Bible study or church event. Rarely did this involve an explicitly evangelistic conversation, and practically none of the informants reported tension with colleagues over the invocation of personal faith at work.

Informants are far more loyal to faith-based small groups than to particular congregations or denominations. In fact, denominational loyalty is relatively low among these leaders; nearly three in five (59 percent) switched denominations at least once since turning 18. Fifty-seven percent of these leaders are currently involved in a small fellowship group. As will be dis-

cussed momentarily, the evangelical movement has spawned dozens of Bible studies, prayer groups, and fellowship circles for elite leaders since 1976. These small groups and involvement as a board member of an evangelical parachurch organization are two of the most important contexts where these leaders regularly engage their faith among peers.

Although the content of informants’ evangelical faith was relatively uniform—expressing traditional evangelical beliefs about the Bible, Jesus, and personal spiritual journeys—there were noticeable differences on what the term “evangelical” means. In fact, 23 percent of informants affirmed the characteristics most scholars use to define evangelicals (Bebbington 1989; Hackett and Lindsay 2004; Martin 1996; Smith et al. 1998) but did not like to describe themselves as evangelical. Some of the most common phrases informants used to describe what “evangelical” means include “orthodox Christian faith,” “a biblical faith” that is “personally appropriated,” “born again,” and “theologically conservative.” Not a single informant associated their evangelical faith with the Religious Right, echoing what Smith (2000) found among the general evangelical population. As an aside, only 43 percent of informants said they were Republicans—an intriguing finding that I discuss elsewhere (Lindsay 2007).

Despite these differences, personal religious identity is strikingly salient for the evangelical public leaders I interviewed. Evangelicalism is a faith a believer “owns” himself; most evan-

Table 2. Frequency of Religious Identity Variables among Evangelical Public Leaders (PLATINUM Study Phase 1, 2003 to 2006)

	Percent	N
Made a significant spiritual decision after age 17	56	113
Invokes personal faith in public leadership	91	185
Faith provides a sense of “calling” or meaningful vocation for public leadership	55	111
Faith became more important after occupying elite position	66	133
Hesitant to describe self as “evangelical”	23	47
Family did not attend church while growing up	29	58
Low denominational loyalty	59	120
Talk to colleagues about faith on a regular basis	67	136
Actively involved in a faith-based small group	57	116
Report “ambition” is a personal struggle with one’s faith and public leadership	34	69
Have served on an evangelical parachurch board	72	146
Has a family foundation for personal philanthropy	24	48
Is pessimistic about America’s declining moral state	22	44

Note: N = 203

gelical churches require adherents to make a personal profession of faith, as opposed to simply inheriting the faith from one's parents. It also seems to be a faith that compels leaders to action, and the wider evangelical movement has spurred the ascent and sustained spiritual cohesion among many of them. Between 1976 and 2006, more than 100 evangelical groups and initiatives were launched to support the spread of evangelicalism into higher circles. These included programs in every center of elite cultural production—such as Washington and Los Angeles—as well as efforts aimed at multiple domains. I found four arenas of particular activity: politics, arts/entertainment/media, higher education, and business. Groups such as Impact XXI, The Trinity Forum, and a Washington-based group called the Fellowship reach leaders from government, business, entertainment, and the nonprofit world. They sponsor Bible studies (often conducted via conference call), conferences, retreats, and regular support groups. In total, I identified 142 groups and initiatives directed to various elite constituencies within the broader evangelical movement.

As Figure 1 demonstrates, some of these initiatives involve groups or networks with mainstream, established social institutions (such as the White House public liaison office or major university research centers on religion). Most, however, are entities within the evangelical movement that reach out to mainstream elite constituents with an explicitly religious mission. I mapped these different programs, institutions, and events in terms of the elite constituencies they serve and the principal thrusts of their respective missions according to the four domains mentioned above. The social-spatial diagram shows their relative influence in multiple spheres.

The most powerful groups in building cross-domain cohesion are entities that reach constituents in multiple sectors. These are mapped at the center of Figure 1, which represents the meeting point of the four sectors. L'Abri, for example, is a retreat center in the Swiss Alps where younger evangelicals congregated in the 1960s and 1970s to discuss philosophy and religious beliefs. Among the leaders I interviewed, 13 percent mentioned L'Abri, its founder Francis Schaeffer, or his writings as having a profound influence on their lives. Through L'Abri, a number of leaders from different sectors built inter-

personal networks that have remained important to them throughout their lives. These connections helped informants get job interviews, meet future business partners, and develop supportive friendships as they moved to new cities.

Among the various evangelical initiatives—which include publications, parachurch organizations, small group ministries, regular events, and training programs—cohesion is formed across sectors through interpersonal friendships. In this way, shared religious faith provides a framework for ongoing interaction and the development of personal ties. The informality and occasional nature of some of these interactions create many different kinds of relations—deep friendships for some and casual acquaintances for others. While these friendships and the shared spiritual identity that facilitates their formation are mutually reinforcing, without the religious component these ties would be far less salient.

Some programs are more explicitly focused on elite constituents in particular domains. For example, the White House Christian Fellowship, while it invites speakers from other sectors (most often the arts and entertainment world), is a gathering of Christians in a single sector within a single institution. Analogous ventures can be found in business, higher education, and entertainment. All 142 of these programs and institutions have supplied cross-domain cohesion for evangelical elites in one way or another. This occurs either by bringing leaders from one sector into contact with leaders of another sector, or by pursuing projects or organizational missions that span domain boundaries.

Nonetheless, important differences emerge among the four sectors. Entities are differentiated according to the degree to which they build cohesion with contiguous sectors; this determines their social-spatial location within the total constellation of programs and institutions that provide cross-sector cohesion. Within higher education, for example, the Yale Center for Faith and Culture has closer ties—through its personnel, programs, and audiences—with the business sector than, say, the Emerging Scholars Network of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship. By the same token, the Los Angeles Film Studies Center, a program for college students interested in filmmaking, is closer to the entertainment sector than is its sponsoring organi-

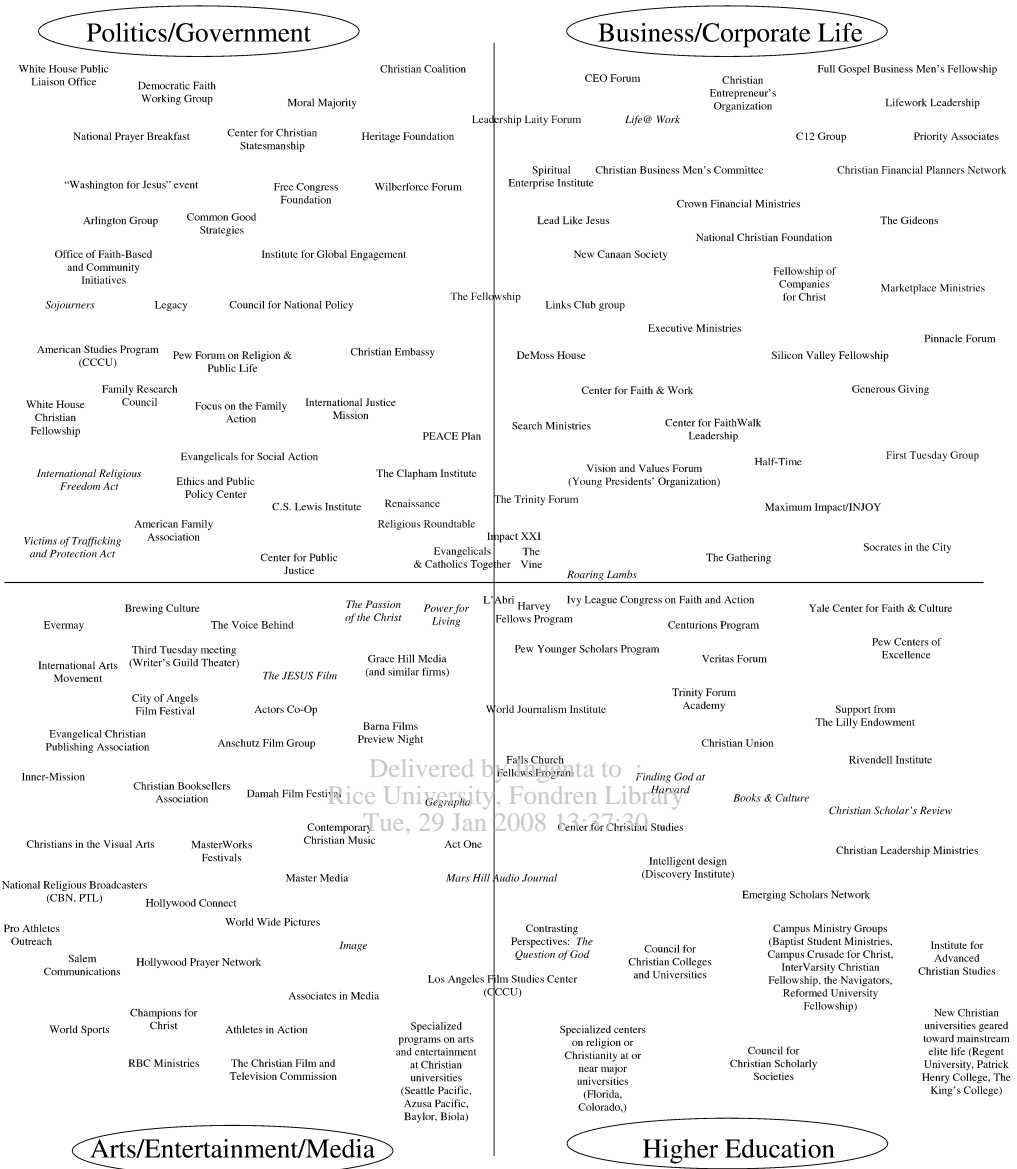


Figure 1. Social-Spatial Diagram of the Sources of Evangelical Structural Coincidence and Cohesion in Four Sectors, 1976 to 2006 (N = 142)

zation, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.

Against the backdrop of the numerous affiliations these leaders have (in their professional and personal lives), the salience of these ministries and fellowship groups is significant because these are *the* most important groups with which many are regularly involved. They are not simply affiliations; they involve bonds

of loyalty cemented through spiritual cohesion. Across this study, informants related stories of incredible commitment to others within these circles of spiritual friendship. For example, CEO Tom Morgan spoke about the support he felt from Douglas Holladay, a fellow evangelical business leader, when his company imploded and his personal fortune (including a beloved family farm) was at great risk. When I inter-

viewed Morgan in his Orlando office, he related the following incident:

Doug called me one day and said, "I just want you to know I'm praying for you through this thing, and I know how hard it is. . . . I know you're concerned about your farm and [that] you may lose it all. . . . I want you to know that's not going to happen. I'll buy it if I have to."

This example points to the empathetic support that many of these evangelical public leaders provide one another.

Thirty-two informants related similar experiences. Informants reported assistance with job-related and financial crises, family troubles, challenges within their organizations, and personal health issues. These relational ties were developed through various evangelical groups, and the groups provided powerful reinforcements for those involved. Two interesting trends appeared: First, the stories of loyal friendship occurred most often among leaders in politics, rather than leaders in business. Only one Hollywood informant related a story along these lines. Second, not a single woman talked about this kind of friendship. Indeed, as I state elsewhere (Lindsay 2007), "Around the country I found that women who rise to the top are still kept outside the inner circle of power among evangelicals. To borrow Gwen Moore's pithy phrase, 'women in formal positions of power remain outsiders on the inside.'"

NETWORKS: THE "FULCRUM" OF EVANGELICAL COHESION

Latour (1988) refers to Louis Pasteur's laboratory as the "fulcrum" by which Pasteur transformed medicine, and more generally, French society. Working through the preexisting hygienist movement of the early nineteenth century, Pasteur was able to frame his work in such a way that it continually addressed societal concerns. Pasteur was a skilled researcher, so the laboratory was a conducive environment that allowed him to maximize his strengths and garner the attention of leading officials in government and science. His genius, according to Latour, derived not so much from the *content* of his scientific discoveries but from his ability to capitalize on the *environment* where his strengths were best displayed. By analogy, I found that the evangelical parachurch sector provided a critical institutional environment for generating cross-

domain cohesion among evangelical public leaders. In particular, I found that service on the boards of these large nonprofit organizations provided social networks among elites from different sectors and facilitated the establishment of loose, informal alliances among evangelicals in powerful places.

Looking at the boards of 10 leading evangelical organizations, I found that most had representatives drawn from several elite sectors. Some, like Christianity Today International and Fuller Theological Seminary, draw representatives from government, business, entertainment, religion, the nonprofit sector, and higher education whereas others do not have quite as wide a spread. Informants suggested that board meetings for these organizations are some of the most sustained dialogue they regularly have with leaders from other sectors. Although they claim not to discuss "business matters" at board meetings, nearly all acknowledge that regular interactions afforded by their joint involvement in these established relationships of trust and mutual understanding "came in handy" when they need expert advice or a personal introduction to someone in a field different from their own. As Table 3 shows, the largest representation of directors' seats (84) comes from the business and corporate sector. Arts, entertainment, and media have the smallest representation with only six directors' seats. Within evangelical parachurch governance, the most common form of network overlap involved public leaders from business and the nonprofit sector.

WORLD VISION: A CASE OF STRUCTURAL COINCIDENCE. WHEN I observed the board meeting of World Vision—one of evangelicalism's largest organizations⁸—I was struck by the number of representatives from different institutional sectors: government, business, the media, and religion. Board documents show that the presence of these diverse representatives is intentional. At every board meeting, there is a spreadsheet

⁸ In 2005, World Vision had annual revenues of \$905 million, contributed from more than 5 million donors and volunteers. As a Christian relief and development organization, World Vision's programs reached more than 100 million people in nearly 100 countries in 2005.

Table 3. Sector Representation among Directors at 10 Leading Evangelical Organizations^a

Organization	Headquarters and Year Founded	Government & Politics	Business & Corporate Life	Arts, Entertainment, & Media	Religion ^b	Nonprofit Sector ^c	Higher Education
Billy Graham Evangelistic Association	Charlotte, NC (1950)	2	7	1	4	5	1
Christianity Today International	Carol Stream, IL (1956)	1	3	1	1	3	3
Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability	Washington, DC (1979)	—	3	1	—	9	1
Focus on the Family	Colorado Springs, CO (1977)	3	5	—	—	4	—
Fuller Theological Seminary	Pasadena, CA (1947)	1	18	1	5	4	3
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	Madison, WI (1941)	—	9	—	2	2	5
Prison Fellowship Ministries	Washington, DC (1976)	1	9	—	1	4	3
Wheaton College	Wheaton, IL (1860)	1	9	1	1	4	4
World Vision	Seattle, WA (1950)	2	3	1	4	7	3
Young Life	Colorado Springs, CO (1941)	—	18	—	1	3	2

^a Directors are classified according to the category that helped them secure a board seat if they are eligible for multiple categories or are retired. Classifications are based on data gathered through interviews with organizational executives and fellow board members, board archives, and observation at board meetings.

^b Category includes church leaders and denominational executives.

^c Category includes the CEO of the evangelical organization profiled (unless it is an institution of higher education) as well as directors whose primary role involves relations with the major donor community.

detailing the social, religious, and professional profiles of current members. Internal board documents state that World Vision's board *must* have representation from four sectors critical to the organization: individuals who have experience (1) with the poor, (2) with financial management, (3) with the major donor community in the United States, and (4) with the church and ministry world. Other sectors are also included: relief and development, law, education, medicine, human resources, the media, fundraising, governmental affairs, and senior corporate leadership. World Vision board meetings provide opportunities for evangelical public leaders to interact, develop friendship ties, and collaborate on projects. For several years, World Vision has been the site of leadership personnel overlap for the evangelical community, the corporate world, USAID, and the Department of State. The State Department's first ambassador-at-large for International Religious Freedom, Robert Seiple, assumed the post after stepping down as CEO of World Vision in 1998. His successor, Richard Stearns, came to World Vision after stints as CEO of Parker Brothers Games and Lenox, the fine china firm. Brady Anderson, the USAID administrator under Clinton, currently sits on the World Vision board, and the USAID administrator during President George W. Bush's first term, Andrew Natsios, once served as a vice president at World Vision. This overlap of individuals and institutional sectors can also be found among other parachurch boards of directors; examples include Prison Fellowship Ministries, Christianity Today International, and Fuller Theological Seminary.

THE EVANGELICAL ADVANCE AND COUNTERVAILING FORCES

Evangelicals have acquired and deployed resources to create a social environment that is amenable to network formation. This occurred multiple times over the last three decades. For example, as Raytheon CEO Tom Phillips embraced an evangelical faith in the 1970s, he began to search

for other corporate leaders in Boston who were also people of faith. This led to the formation of a regular meeting he refers to as the “First Tuesday Group;” it has met at the Weston Golf Club on the first Tuesday of every month for over 30 years. Attendees have included some of Boston’s most prominent business leaders, as well as professors, political leaders, and nonprofit leaders—all of whom share faith commitments. These networks provide much-needed social lubrication among elite participants. Indeed, what distinguishes these networks from others are the people who constitute them—the corporate chieftains and political power brokers, public icons and celebrated artists. Because the professional sphere in America today is so specialized and differentiated, most professionals have relatively little interaction in the workplace with leaders in other walks of life. Artists rarely attend business strategy sessions, and military leaders seldom advise film production teams. In more recent decades, while *individuals* may not have exerted power in multiple social arenas, their *social worlds* have (Baltzell 1958, 1964; Domhoff 1975, 2006; Kendall 2002). Social settings like boarding schools and debutante societies provided the contexts that facilitated close relationships among the nation’s leaders. While these elements of the social elite can still be found today, the thrust of new social movements has facilitated the formation of additional modes of social organization. As new networks and elite organizations have formed within the evangelical movement, they have fulfilled a similar function, enabling public leaders who share religious commitments to develop personal and professional networks.

Network formation is critical to the advance of a new idea or a social agenda (Wuthnow 1989); advancements come through well-connected leaders. I found multiple examples of overlapping networks of public leaders: evangelicals in the White House knew evangelicals in Hollywood, and vice versa. Moreover, these were not simply acquaintance networks; many times they were collaborators. For example, several years ago a group of Washington evangelicals established a group called “Faith and Law.” Most of the participants are senior Congressional or White House staffers. At one Faith and Law gathering, a woman talked about her interest in the world of fashion and enter-

tainment; even though she was serving in government, she was interested in “making a difference” through the entertainment world. After that meeting, she and some of her Faith and Law colleagues decided to see what difference they could make as a group. They arranged a breakfast meeting among several high-ranking government officials with Philip Anschutz, a fellow evangelical who is an incredibly successful business executive.⁹ After the breakfast meeting, Anschutz agreed to convene a group of business leaders and media “gatekeepers,” including then-chairman of AOL Steve Case, who is also part of the larger evangelical world. Out of that meeting, two initiatives were started, one of which commissioned a Harvard study to monitor the media’s effect on children. Aside from the results of that study or the formation of the nonprofit group that emerged from these conversations,¹⁰ this example demonstrates how overlapping elite networks can advance a movement or its priorities, producing particular cultural goods or launching new policy initiatives.

In the face of these opportunities and possibilities, however, I found a number of countervailing forces. Larger-than-life egos inhibited cooperation among elite evangelicals, and one-third of informants (34 percent) reported struggling with their personal ambitions and their faith. Business leaders, college presidents, and politicians also talked about the bureaucratic challenges they face when they attempt to infuse more religion into public institutions that serve a pluralistic constituency. For instance, George Bennett, an evangelical in Boston, served as Harvard’s treasurer for several years and was a member of the powerful Harvard Corporation—the seven-member board that runs the univer-

⁹ It is important to say that the “difference” advocated by these evangelical leaders was not a sectarian aim; as they related the story, it largely involved concern over the effect of mainstream media on children. Mores on what was deemed “appropriate” content for the media was, of course, born of evangelical conviction. This was not a religious aim per se, but the moral conviction that something ought to be done and the drawing of boundaries between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” content were certainly shaped by evangelical norms. Further, my sense is that these leaders had deeper levels of conviction on the matter because of their evangelical faith.

¹⁰ I do not know the details of these outcomes, so I cannot comment on their net effect.

sity. He very much wanted to resurrect the Christian ethos that characterized Harvard's past, but in the end, Bennett concludes he did not have much of a spiritual impact on the campus. He says he was unable to enact institutional change because at "Harvard, being what it is now . . . religion takes a back seat. . . . Being an evangelical, I couldn't feel that way."¹¹

Beyond institutional inertia, evangelical ambitions have been chastened by philosophical differences among the faithful. As others have noted (Smith 2000), evangelicals are divided on specific policy matters, which is not surprising since evangelicalism is a pandominational religious movement. These differences of opinion can be powerful barriers to achieving particular goals. In the 1980s, C. Everett Koop, the surgeon general, and Gary Bauer, the president's domestic policy advisor—both well-known evangelicals—disagreed on the federal government's response to AIDS. In the 1990s, evangelicals disagreed on the Clinton impeachment proceedings. Some led the charge against the president while others huddled with the first family in spiritual solidarity. Currently, disagreement abounds on whether the movement ought to champion environmental concerns or maintain its traditional focus on abortion and homosexuality. Despite these sources of resistance, though, most informants downplayed internal factions and setbacks the movement has faced. Relatively few (22 percent) expressed worries about declining morality in American society—a motif of evangelical jeremiads (Young 2006). Instead, they emphasized forward momentum and a bright future.

DISCUSSION

CONVENING POWER

What difference do these networks make in actual policy deliberations or elite cultural production? Since the work of Weber ([1946] 1991), some scholars have equated power with domination, the probability that a person can carry out his or her own will, despite resistance. Legitimated power, in Weber's formulation, is authority. Gramsci ([1947] 1994) subsequent-

ly argued that the dominant class uses ideology, or a world view, to support its authoritative position over the dominated classes. Through both political and ideological means, the ruling class relies on hegemony to secure the consent of the dominated classes for this arrangement, which obviously is not always in the best interest of the masses. Lukes, in his original text, *Power: A Radical View* (1974), argued that power involved both observable decision-making and informal influences like persuasion and manipulation—and non-observable phenomena such as the shaping of preferences. More recently, though, Lukes published a second edition (2005) wherein he rejects his earlier view that equated power with domination.

Convening power falls within a more efficacious perspective that regards power as a transaction between social actors. Convening power involves the ability to bring disparate groups together, for example, by introducing a congressional staffer to a senior media executive. It is the ability to set agendas and to coordinate activity, but it is more than simply establishing a legislative agenda. It entails interaction and coordinated effort where elites are able to bridge network disjunctures for mutual advantage. Elites in a variety of spheres are able to draw on their convening power to bring other elite actors together. Kerbo (1993) argues that elite power is the power over social networks; convening power specifies the content of that structural advantage. It enables elites to marshal resources, share information, and deflect criticism. Through these networks, elites are brought together; they then introduce and recruit other elites to join their causes.

The ability of political leaders to convene groups is one of their most powerful resources. More than the ability to establish a legislative agenda or to administer a policy through executive action, the power that governmental leaders have to bring groups together is critical to their success. And that convening power remains with individual leaders even after they leave office. This is how President Clinton has been able to assemble so many high-level participants in the Clinton Global Initiative. The same is true of the World Economic Forum, the Aspen Institute, and other elite gatherings. These meetings create social space for interaction among leading peers where they can discuss ideas that

¹¹ Interview with George Bennett, August 29, 2004 (Falmouth, MA).

can then be carried out by the organizations they run.

Moreover, this is not simply the purview of politicians. Cultural icons, professional athletes, celebrated intellectuals, and corporate titans wield similar influence. Because they serve as nodes of information and points of contact within high-status social networks, leaders wield a form of power that is stronger than one-on-one interaction: the power to mobilize groups and institutions. Convening power can be used to assemble mass rallies, but it begins with one leader reaching out to his small network of friends and associates. Convening power is how leaders in one sector join with other leaders in common cause. As one Hollywood executive told me, "When you get a call from the White House—whether it's the man you voted for or not, you take their call."

Convening power, however, is not enough to accomplish particular goals: that is a function of decision-making power. Obviously, bringing parties together is fundamental to decision-making, but overlapping networks, in and of themselves, can't produce specific outcomes. A leader can bring people together to discuss an issue, but she can't make them act. Convening power leads to cohesion, but not necessarily collusion. I found little support for the hypothesis that evangelicals are colluding to take over America, as some have suggested (Kaplan 2004; Phillips 2006). Cultural influence has certainly been evangelicalism's goal, but dozens of informants talked about the difficulties they face when trying to steer large bureaucracies or powerful institutions toward their evangelical aims. This is not unlike the literature on university presidencies that finds the persisting effect of institutional inertia (Bok 2004; Bowen and Shapiro 1998; Brodie and Banner 2005). This inertia, coupled with the range of opinions on particular politics and strategies of action, has diminished the consensus required for a collusive takeover. Cohesion has, of course, emerged from the shared religious identity of evangelical elites. But to determine if these overlapping networks actually result in the achievement of particular outcomes, one must analyze the mechanisms of decision-making that operate in a specific setting, in all its particularity. Decisions at the national level are rarely shaped solely by individual groups or constellations of

networks, no matter how powerful the individual nodes may be within those networks.

MODELING ELITE AGENCY: HOW EVANGELICALS COULD BRING SOCIAL CHANGE

How do the contributions of individual, motivated leaders result in cultural change? The rising prominence of American evangelicalism since 1976 provides a good example of how a movement once relegated to the "disadvantaged ranks of the stratification system" (Wuthnow 1995) might attempt to move into the corridors of power through restructuring elite networks. Based on the data I analyzed, Figure 2 provides a model of how external elites working with a movement can draw on their resources and the convening power at their disposal to enact wider social change.

Examining the figure from the bottom up,¹² we see that at the foundation of any cultural change, there must be a meaning system that undergirds the ultimate goals and objectives being pursued. This sense of meaning requires articulation for social actors to be motivated to act on the desired vision. The meaning system must also have implications for one's personal identity; the more salient the meaning system to one's identity, the more powerful its effect in mobilizing one to action. The articulation of that meaning system comes through expressive symbolism, symbols that are conveyed through explicit reference or more tacit implication such as *signaling behavior*. Signaling behavior entails communication to a selected audience encoded in a message for a broader audience. It depends on implicit, subtle, and often disguised messages to communicate particular data without full disclosure. Full disclosure is often not chosen because of tacit or explicit norms that make it unacceptable (Meyer 1979; Turner 1986). Examples of signaling behavior include allusions to evangelical faith made by political lead-

¹² While this model can entail a temporal sequence, the timing of individual elements or the entire enterprise can also be redirected, extended, or thwarted. Therefore, I present the model as an analytic sequence, which may or may not have a corresponding temporal flow.

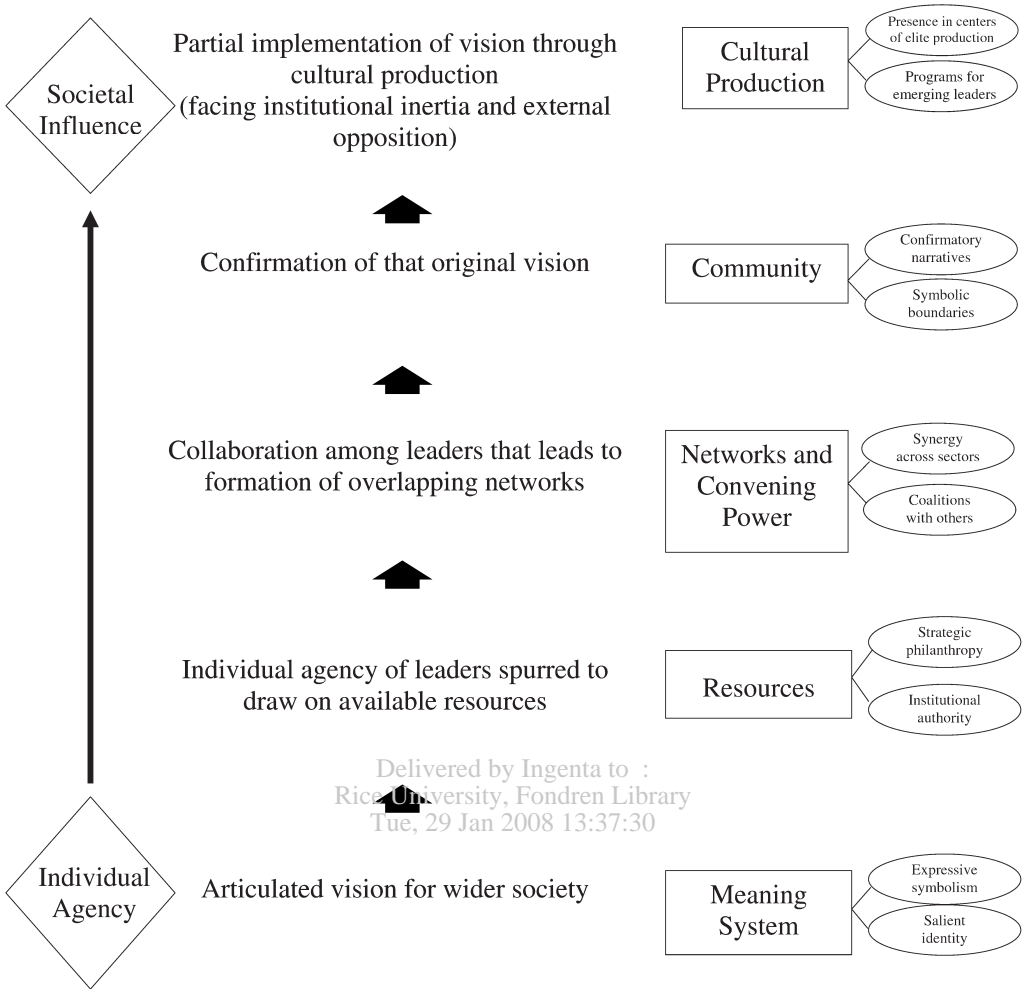


Figure 2. Model for Elite Agency: From Individual Action to Public Influence

ers, professional athletes, and corporate executives.

When well-resourced actors (those with money, status, knowledge, or power) are engaged to act, they draw on resources readily available to them. Two critical resources are finances that come from strategic philanthropy (such as private foundations that support evangelical causes) and institutional bases of authority (like the White House). These provide much-needed legitimacy to the movement. As disclosure of that resource allocation becomes public, other well-resourced actors learn about their peers' activities. Those pursuing similar objectives begin to collaborate. Building on Michels's work (1962), this is the *organizing moment*—the point at which well-resourced

actors begin to work together, precipitating the formation of overlapping networks. As these overlapping networks include other well-resourced actors, their alignment creates additional resources from which the collaborating group may draw. Networks can include movement initiatives targeted toward both elite constituents and boards of directors at movement organizations.

Coalitions and cross-sector alliances create a relational substructure that supports collective activities and provides resources across domains. Convening power is exercised through these networks. As motivated actors within these overlapping networks interact with one another, they receive further confirmation of the original vision, which first spurred them to action.

Through fellowship experiences within these overlapping networks, a sense of shared community is established and cohesive bonds are deepened. These relational ties, in turn, provide feedback loops through which movement ideals become more meaningful, confirming the original vision that motivated these leaders in the first place. The scripts that support their efforts, what I refer to as *confirmatory narratives*, are discourses that emerge from the cohesive community being formed. By maintaining symbolic boundaries within the community (Lamont 1992, 2000), leaders build greater degrees of cohesion, providing additional support for their shared vision.

Finally, expended resources and cohesive community result in some form of cultural production, providing tangible results for the collaborative effort. This cultural production comes in many different forms—a piece of legislation, a movie, or a corporate mission statement. The focus on producing something, some measurable outcome, often requires a presence in centers of elite cultural production (such as New York or Los Angeles). There must also be a mechanism through which young and emerging leaders can be recruited into the venture. Evangelicals sponsor programs for emerging leaders in many areas, including politics, the academy, and screenwriting. Cultural production results in a partial implementation of the original vision, as motivated actors direct continuing resources toward cultural production even as they face external opposition and institutional inertia. Throughout this process, the incorporation of powerful leaders into social and professional networks that overlap with evangelicals has been fundamental to achieving greater visibility for the evangelical movement. For instance, President George H. W. Bush may not be an evangelical (unlike his son), but his participation in gatherings administered by evangelical groups (like the National Prayer Breakfast) provided portals through which evangelicals have gained entry into the higher circles of American society.

This model of elite agency is certainly applicable to different kinds of movements, but I conclude that religion provides unique resources that are particularly advantageous for certain elements—especially the development of meaning systems and community. I agree with others who note that religion can shape personal

identities and motivate civic engagement in particularly powerful ways through the formation of a sense of norms and community (Ecklund 2006; Morris 1984; Putnam 2000; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Young 2006). This description can also be applied to other movements, though, such as the gay and lesbian movement and the feminist movement, for they too depend on an overall meaning system, resources, social networks, a sense of community, and cultural production in their quest for social change. I similarly imagine that expressive symbolism, strategic philanthropy, cross-sector synergy, confirmatory narratives, and programs for emerging leaders have contributed to the advance of these movements. Perhaps in future research others will outline how these mechanisms have worked in other movements.

CONCLUSION

The structure of elite power today points to a diverse range of participants (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 2006), yet as the case of the American evangelicals shows, enterprising social movements can build cohesive networks among diverse, powerful people. Institutional differentiation among America's leadership persists; business leaders do not often come from the world of politics, and public intellectuals do not become entertainers.¹³ The data support the conclusions of others regarding institutional differentiation and separate recruitment channels for elites (Dye 2002; Keller 1963; Lerner et al. 1996; Putnam 1976). I also find that institutional inertia inhibits the implementation of a unified agenda, and in fact, the structure of

¹³ One class of counter-examples that did emerge in this study, however, relates to the focus of Mills's study (1956). It was not uncommon for Pentagon officials (usually civilian officers) to serve subsequently as business executives in the defense industry or as heads of nonprofit organizations specializing in military matters. For example, Deputy Secretary of Defense Rudy de Leon now serves as the head of Boeing's Washington office, out of which most of Boeing's defense contracts are handled. Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre now heads the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based nonprofit focused on global security issues.

elite power today is dominated by institutions, not individuals. Nevertheless, salient forms of identity can generate intriguing social networks that provide cross-domain cohesion among leaders.

Within American evangelicalism, I found two important mechanisms that have generated robust networks and alliances among elite actors: parachurch boards (which intentionally draw leaders together from different sectors) and specialized initiatives targeting public leaders, hundreds of which have been launched or expanded over the last 30 years. These reinforce a shared identity that provides a binding element among public leaders, much as I imagine happens among other forms of identity, such as those shaped by race or gender. While I cannot comment on other identities specifically, this examination of the evangelical movement and the powerful role of overlapping networks should spur similar investigations of other groups. Have similar developments happened among African Americans or within the ecology movement? Is there something unique about religiously-shaped cohesion, or is it simply representative of other identity-based sources of unity?

The convening power of evangelicals has been so potent because their religious identity is so salient, even as they have risen in education and socioeconomic status (Smith and Sikkink 2003). Shared spiritual identity builds cohesion among leaders who are separated geographically and institutionally. Evangelicalism provides a moral framework through which these public leaders make sense of their lives and endow their work with special meaning. Of course, evangelical identity is but one of many salient identities these leaders must manage in their lives. As Cadge and Davidman (2006) show, religious adherents blend different parts of their lives together creatively in their own spiritual narratives. The competing logics of action that exist within the different realms of religion and the professions require ongoing negotiation for individuals who exist in both worlds. This is especially important for leaders whose actions influence not only their own lives, but the lives of many others as well. I found that the demands of that negotiation process are what brought many of these leaders into spiritual fellowship with one another. Most of their small groups center around the chal-

lenges of being a faithful evangelical, a successful professional, an engaged family member, and a virtuous person—all at the same time. The spiritual friendships formed in these small groups cement deep ties of loyalty, and while practically no one I interviewed would acknowledge that these ties directly influence business decisions or political dealings, it is inconceivable that such factors have not been at work.

Despite the number of high-ranking evangelicals I found, one must not overstate the movement's influence. Even within the current Bush administration—the most evangelical in modern history—evangelicals still represent a minority among the senior staff. Jews and secularists are just as prevalent. Moreover, in Hollywood, only one evangelical, Philip Anschutz, has the power and resources to “green light” a movie project. Among film directors with active careers between 2000 and 2005, no more than 5 percent could be considered conservative Christians, and among those, many would not necessarily be considered “evangelical.” Among successful actors, the number of evangelicals is even lower (Lindsay 2007). The reason evangelicals have received so much attention in recent years is because they represent a prominent, new group entering elite ranks. Moreover, the very existence of elite evangelicals—who enjoy high degrees of existential security and material comfort—calls into question some of the recent assertions of secularization theory that posits people become more secular as their quality of life increases (Norris and Inglehart 2004).

The etymology of “religion” can be traced to a Latin phrase that means “to bind together.” Evangelical institutions have facilitated the rise of networks that bring leaders from different parts of society together. This cross-domain cohesion, which accompanied the evangelical movement's advance, is difficult to achieve, and in our highly differentiated, segmented society, its emergence is noteworthy. Evangelicalism's rise points to various forms of social organization that facilitate the rise of any movement—cohesive networks, strategic resource allocation, and cultural production, among others. Future research on social movements should more carefully examine the legitimacy that elites external to a movement can provide and evaluate the unique contributions and resources that elites involved with or sympathetic to a given

movement can provide for its advance. As I found, a movement may facilitate structural coincidence of elite actors—through boards of directors or movement organizations—and this can be a critical way a movement builds alliances and pursues goals. Evangelicalism, as a movement grounded in religious conviction, has been particularly effective in generating cohesion among elite actors. Moreover, its flexible institutional structure enabled it to spawn initiatives and organizational forms that have brought the movement into the corridors of elite power.

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