



## Changing the Subject: Abortion and Symbolic Masculinities Among Young Evangelicals

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*Challenges to hegemonic masculinity have been shown to lead men to adopt symbolic stances within the home to compensate. It is proposed that societal threats to masculine ideals – such as the gender crisis of the 1960s and 1970s – could lead to shifts in the way cohorts of young men perceive issues such as abortion, especially among evangelical Christians. A simultaneous equation model is used to test for the relative importance of religious and political factors in predicting views of abortion, taking into account the reciprocal effects of views of abortion and partisanship. Results show a remarkable increase in the impact of partisanship, and its interaction with religion, on abortion views.*

In the United States, great strides towards parity of men and women were made in a short period in the 1960s and 1970s, culminating, arguably, in the Supreme Court's 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision affirming the conditional right to an abortion. In so embracing women's rights, though, the state risked what R. W. Connell (1990) refers to as a "gender crisis" caused by a "too vigorous" pursuit of equality. While the implications of this crisis for hegemonic masculinities have been much debated, little empirical work has been done on the concrete political effects of the crisis, especially among the men coming of age during and after such an upheaval. This paper proposes that among at least one group of these young men – evangelical Christians – the gender crisis led to a fundamental shift in the understanding of political issues that, for them, linked religion and politics in a way never experienced by their fathers.

This gender crisis comes as a result of challenges to the dominant normative model of what men are supposed to be – Connell's "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1982 and 1987; Carrigan, Connell and Lee, 1985; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, among many others). While this model of masculinity is powerful, constantly shaping the views and actions of men and women alike, it is not static, but is subject to a struggle over what the ideal male is. Mike Donaldson (1993) uses the example of stay-at-home dads, who seem to emphasize fatherhood, rather than breadwinning, as the source of their masculine identities. Of course, there has been a heated debate over the nature of change in masculinities, whether they are brought on by outside forces (Hochschild and Machung, 1989), or through some internal evolution (Connell, 1990). For our purposes, however, the cause of the

change in the nature of masculinities is largely immaterial: it is enough that the gender order shifted, and young men adopted a version of masculinity rather different from their fathers.

Whether the source of the gender crisis is some evolution of masculine identity (Connell, 1990 and 1995), economic shifts towards wage and earnings parity (Hochschild and Machung, 1989), or even political developments like *Roe v. Wade*, the timing of the crisis – the late 1960s and early 1970s – is not in contention. It is also not in contention that the reactions of men to this crisis varied widely. As Margaret Wetherell and Nigel Edley (1999) argue, men adopt different elements of the masculine ideal depending on their circumstances. So, men who defined their masculinity through economic leadership, if faced with wage parity, may instead define themselves through spiritual leadership in the household, as a protector, or other symbolic acts. This reorganization can be clearly seen in Melanie Heath's (2003) interviews with evangelical men: even when the wives made as much, or more, than their husbands, they described the husbands as being the decision-makers in the household. As one said, "I only have to answer to him; he has to answer to God." In these cases, spiritual leadership seamlessly takes the place of economic leadership. The husband, if he is not the breadwinner, is responsible for the spiritual well-being of the household, or for protecting the household from thieves or other intruders. Even in cases where women earn substantially more than their husbands, Veronica Tichenor's (2005) in-depth interviews show that couples continue to maintain – at least symbolically – traditional gender roles, in which the man is the primary earner, and the wife is the homemaker. For instance, women's earnings do not seem to have much impact on the amount of housework they are expected to do (Greenstein, 2000; Gupta, 1999; Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Zelizer, 1989). In fact, it seems that when gender roles are upset by a woman's earnings, men and women both engage in "gender display," with men avoiding housework to compensate for the disruption (Bittmann et al., 2003). Men, especially evangelical men, then, attempt to perform gender through symbolic acts and statements (Gallagher and Smith, 1999): describing themselves for instance, as having the final say in any decision, even if they choose never to use it.

In these instances, we can see how men on an individual level respond to challenges to hegemonic masculinity. They make use of what we might call "symbolic masculinities": strong affirmations of alternative aspects of hegemonic masculinity, made in an effort to downplay the significance of areas where they do not meet the hegemonic standard. Men who are not the primary wage earners in their household may stress their spiritual leadership, or role as protectors. They may pointedly refuse to do housework – women's work – to the point that women who earn more than their husbands wind up doing more of the work than they would if they earned less.

The role of religion in these symbolic masculinities cannot be ignored. Previous work – such as that of Heath (2003), and Gallagher and Smith (1999) – looks specifically at evangelical men, such as those involved in the Promise Keepers movement of the 1990s. It may well be the case that the evangelical men feel greater pressure to conform to the hegemonic masculinity than men from more egalitarian denominations or religions, as evidenced by the emphasis placed by modern evangelical churches on women's "responsibility" to assent to male

dominance. In recent years, even as the Catholic Church has seen a resurgence in the movement among female congregants for equal status, evangelical sects such as the American Baptist Convention have very publicly issued statements reaffirming the importance of male dominance in the household, and female obedience to their husbands and fathers (Gallagher and Smith, 1999).

Just as threats to hegemonic masculinity on the household level lead individuals to embrace symbolic stances on issues like spirituality and housework, broader social threats to hegemonic masculinity may lead men to embrace symbolic stances on social issues. For instance, men threatened by changes in the hegemonic masculinity during the late 1960s and early 1970s could embrace symbolic issue positions against gay rights, or against abortion, or against restrictions on gun ownership. However, it is not enough to simply establish that individuals hold such issue positions. After all, they could easily hold such views independent of their potential implications for masculine identity, in the same way that individuals may oppose affirmative action programs either on principle, or out of covert racism (Sears, et al., 1997; Virtanen and Huddy, 1998). As such, evidence of issue positions taken as symbolic masculinities should come from the conditionality of these views on two factors.

First, these symbolic masculinities should be much more prevalent among young men – specifically those who came of age during or after the gender crisis of the 1960s and 1970s. By the time of the gender crisis, men born in the 1940s and 1950s had already established, or were well on their way to establishing, their masculine identities. Given the gender environment of the time, in which masculine dominance of the economic and social spheres was largely unchallenged, there was little need to reaffirm their masculinity with such symbolic stances. The men who came of age during or after the crisis, however, faced a much less secure gender environment, one in which economic and social dominance was not assured, and was not even necessarily considered to be preferable. As such, if individuals' stances on the sorts of symbolic issues discussed above are a symbolic reaction to the gender crisis, we should see a substantial difference between young men – born after the gender crisis – and older cohorts.

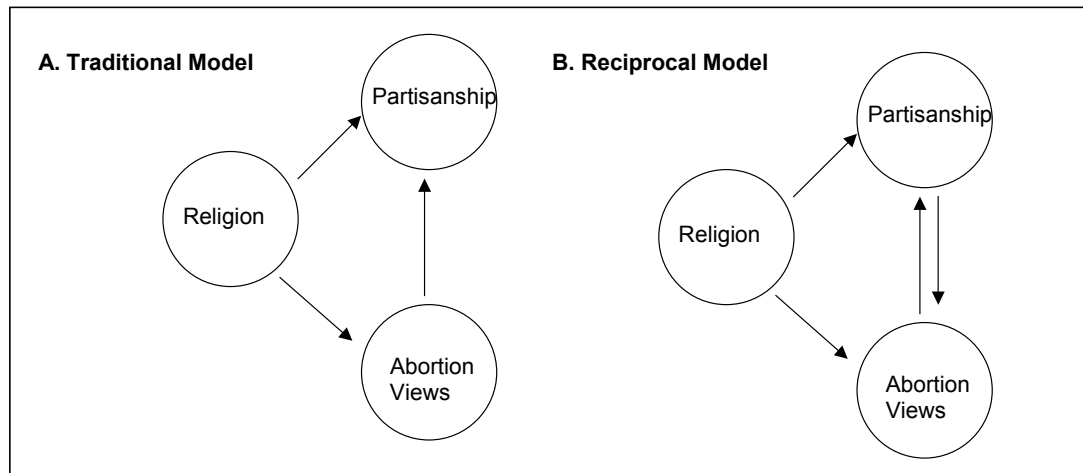
Second, it seems that men's predilections lead them to rely on different symbolic stances in the face of threats to their masculinity. The men in Tichenor's (2005) study who made less than their wives stressed their joint decision-making in the household, while the Promise Keepers in Heath's (2003) interviews were more likely to stress their role as the spiritual head of the household. Just so, social threats to the hegemonic masculinity should engender varied social responses. There is no attempt here to offer a comprehensive model of which groups or individuals will take up one symbolic stance or another, but some judgments may be less likely to be debated. For instance, among men for whom religion is an important part of identity, the symbolic stances should have some religious relevance. Men who already own guns may be more likely to stress the importance of protecting their family from intruders, just as men who earn significantly less than their wives may eschew housework. Among men for whom religion is more important, it should be possible to identify issue stances due to symbolic masculinities not from the stances themselves, but from the application of existing religious views to these issues.

All told then, among evangelical Christians in the United States, symbolic masculinities masquerading as issue stances should be evident from the application of religious views to new political issues among men coming of age during or after the gender crisis of the 1960s and 1970s. However, we need to identify an issue that these young evangelical men should be likely to focus on, and for the U.S., abortion seems a good candidate.

**The abortion shift**

With the court’s decision in *Roe*, the tenor of the debate over abortion in America abruptly shifted. Before the Supreme Court’s ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, abortion was largely a moral or religious issue; afterwards, it became one of the most fiercely contended issues in American politics. It inspired massive protests, intimidation campaigns, even murders. In some elections, it is the single most important issue, beating out concerns about war and peace, crime, and social services (Abramowitz, 1995).

In political science, views on abortion are generally seen as a predictor of attitudes and behavior – a stance that reflects the traditional understanding of their origins. The founders of modern American political science in *The American Voter* (Campbell, et al., 1960) considered religion, along with race and class, to be one of the primary predictors of political behavior. To the extent that abortion is seen as a religious issue, then, it does not make sense to treat it as an effect of political views, any more than race or gender.



*Figure One: Traditional and reciprocal models of the relationship between abortion and partisanship*

This view has been reinforced by studies such as that of Jacqueline Scott and Howard Schuman (1988), who find that all of the pro-life advocates identified in their study of GSS data in the early 1980s were regular church goers, and 40 percent named a religious figure – such as Billy Graham or Jerry Fallwell – as being one of the most influential people of recent years. Furthermore, the faces of public opposition to abortion rights are explicitly religious: Catholics, for instance, dominated the pro-

life movement in the 1980s, often led by collared priests or habited nuns (Granberg and Granberg, 1985).

However, in the years since *Roe*, the discussion of abortion has become less explicitly religious in nature (Dillon, 1996; Grindstaff, 1994): abortion opponents are now much more likely to frame their objections in scientific or medical terms than they were in years past. The National Right to Life Council, for instance, lists infection, infertility, breast cancer and death as potential side effects of abortion, in addition to unspecified long-term psychological side effects, while making only limited appeals to morality, and no explicit references to God.

This decline in the religious nature of the abortion debate has been accompanied by a marked increase in the correlation between abortion views and partisanship. For the first decade after *Roe*, there was little polarization in abortion views between the Democratic and Republican parties: not until the early to mid 1980s did party activists and elites begin to fully conform to their parties on the issue (Layman and Carsey, 1998; Carmines and Woods, 2002). Candidates began to take their cues from these activists, and voters quickly followed suit. Today, individuals use attitudes towards abortion to shape their vote choice (Howell and Simms, 1993) at all levels of government, from the state office (Cook, Jelen and Wilcox, 1994) to the presidency (Abramowitz 1995 and 1997).

This shift implies that at least some individuals must have changed their views to comport with those of their political party, and this is surprising, not just because abortion is supposed to be grounded in religion. Abortion is also what public opinion researchers refer to as an “easy” issue: easily understood, with little confusion between outcomes and processes (Carmines and Stimson, 1980). As such, it should be more, not less stable over time. However, as political activists and elites became polarized, followed by major party candidates, voters were faced with a choice. The more involved an individual is with a political party – the more important that identification is to the individual’s identity – the greater the pressure they will feel to conform their views on an issue to that of their party, or their preferred candidate within that party. Given the real lack of political debate regarding abortion before *Roe v. Wade*, and the polarization of the parties afterwards (Abramowitz, 1995; Adams, 1997) many may have been left with abortion views at odds with those of their party. In such a situation, they have only three options. First, they could retain their views on abortion as well as their party identification: a stance that would become increasingly difficult as abortion becomes a more important issue (Zaller, 1992). Second, they could retain their views on abortion and drop their party identification, becoming an independent, or even a member of the opposite party. Finally, they could choose to simply alter their views on abortion to match that of their party. In doing so, they would be treating abortion as if it were simply another political issue; Geoffrey Layman and Thomas Carsey (1998) find this to be the most common solution among party activists.

While there are some individuals whose views on abortion remain at odds with that of the party they support (Abramowitz, 1995), the bulk of these come from lower socio-economic status voters who typically vote for the Democratic Party (Cook, Jelen and Wilcox, 1993), and may in fact be unaware of the incongruity. In 1992, Abramowitz (1995) finds that only 39 percent of pro-life Democrats knew that

the party and the candidate they supported was in opposition to them, while a much larger portion of pro-choice Republicans were aware of the disjoint.

In sum, *Roe* led to an abrupt change in the arenas in which the abortion debate was carried out. Before the decision, it was largely a religious issue; after, it quickly became a political one, and a source of great polarization for the two major parties. However, despite the noted decline in the explicitly religious elements of the abortion debate, religious figures and churches play a key role in the debate: as Connell (1990) notes, these movements are almost invariably church-based. This story, in which individuals suddenly find principled political reasons – such as women’s health – to support views previously espoused as religious, seems to indicate the adoption of issue stances as symbolic masculinities. The timing of the shift in the debate – the height of the gender crisis – also gives us a strong indication that, at least for evangelicals, abortion views may be best understood as symbolic masculinities.

### *Hypotheses*

This leads to several hypotheses regarding the abortion views of young evangelical men. First, we expect that among those men socialized after *Roe*, views of abortion should be both a religious and a political issue, while older cohorts should see it as an essentially religious issue.

Second, we expect that the views young men take on as symbolic masculinities should extend beyond the single issue of abortion, especially as the views of abortion held by the major political parties diverge. While this polarization should mean that political views should impact views of abortion (Republicans and Democrats alike should feel pressure to conform to their party’s stance on the issue) among men young and old, we should observe a reciprocal relationship only among young men. The model suggested here of issue stances as a reaction to gender crisis, implies that men’s broader political views should be, at least partially, a result of their views of abortion, as they identify with the party that best reaffirms their masculinity. As such, while partisanship should always impact views of abortion, among young men, views of abortion should, in turn, reflect partisanship.

Third, young men’s views on abortion should be the product of religion, partisanship, and the interaction of the two. Republicans should be less accepting of abortion than Democrats, and members of strongly anti-abortion – particularly evangelical<sup>1</sup> – sects should be less accepting of abortion than members of mainline protestant sects, but Republican evangelicals should be even less accepting than would be expected by an additive model.

### *Data*

To test for the relative impacts of religious and political views on the abortion views of young men, the analysis makes use of the American National Election Study. Even limiting the analysis to the post-1970 bi-annual studies, this includes data on the abortion views of 5,489 respondents, along with numerous indicators of political and religious views.

The estimation of the effect of partisanship on views of abortion is complicated by the well-established reciprocal effects of abortion views on partisanship. Such a relationship typically requires the use of a simultaneous

equation model such as three-stage least squares. In such models, models for the two variables that are thought to impact each other are estimated in turn, with the results of one regression model used to inform the results of the other. This resulting process is considerably more fragile than a typical regression model, as its success is dependent on the inclusion of control variables that are correlated with one of the dependent variables, but not the other.

Estimation of the model in this paper is further complicated by a change in the way the ANES asked respondents about the issue of abortion since 1972. In all cases, respondents were given four options regarding abortion policy, and asked which came closest to their own views. In 1972, the options given to respondents were:

1. Abortion should never be permitted.
2. Abortion should be permitted only if the life and health of the woman is in danger.
3. If a woman and her doctor agree, she should be able to have a legal abortion.
4. Any woman who wants to have an abortion should be able to have one.

In later years, the final two options were changed:

3. Abortion should be permitted if, due to personal reasons, the woman would have difficulty in caring for the child.
4. Abortion should never be prohibited.

While these categories are substantively similar, treating them as being exactly the same in an ordered logit or similar scheme risks confounding the results. This leads to a choice: we can either exclude early years from the survey – thus losing a large portion of the sample – or use the existing variables to construct a different measure of abortion views. Given the importance of including data from as early a time period as is relevant, and to aid in the interpretation of the statistical models, the first two categories are lumped together to represent conservative views on abortion, and the last two as liberal views on abortion. In all of the models here, a respondent will be assigned a value of “1” if they said that either of the last two categories came closest to their views, and “0” if they chose one of the first two categories.

As this renders one of the dependent variables dichotomous, Maddala’s (1983) simultaneous equation model for one continuous and one dichotomous endogenous variable is used (as implemented by Keshk, 2003). While the standard seven point partisanship scale used is not truly continuous, it contains enough categories to allow estimation with a minimum of inefficiency.

Finally, because the hypotheses hold that men socialized before *Roe* made abortion a political issue should differ from those socialized after the decision, a distinction must be made between the two groups. While there is no bright line separating them, the birth year of 1960 is used to separate those who have been mostly socialized before *Roe*, and those mostly socialized after. While this distinction is arbitrary, it is early enough to generally work against the hypotheses. After all,

men born in 1960 were 13 years old at the time *Roe* was decided, and presumably had much of their masculine identities already defined.

### Findings

Results for the simultaneously estimated models for partisanship and abortion views can be found in Table One.

	Born Before 1960				Born In 1960 or after			
	N: 4570				N: 919			
	Pseudo R2 (abortion model): .13				Pseudo R2 (abortion model): .09			
	PCP (abortion model): 53.4%				PCP (abortion model): 65.8%			
	R2 (Party ID model): .43				R2 (Party ID model): .53			
Dependent Variable: Abortion Views	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Party ID	<b>-0.044</b>	<b>0.021</b>	<b>-2.13</b>	<b>0.03</b>	<b>-0.184</b>	<b>0.043</b>	<b>-4.26</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Evangelical?	<b>-0.555</b>	<b>0.121</b>	<b>-4.58</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.938</b>	<b>0.274</b>	<b>-3.42</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Catholic?	<b>-0.317</b>	<b>0.052</b>	<b>-6.12</b>	<b>0.00</b>	-0.150	0.108	-1.38	0.17
Jewish?	<b>0.765</b>	<b>0.153</b>	<b>4.99</b>	<b>0.00</b>	0.336	0.447	0.75	0.45
Church Attendance?	<b>0.238</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>16.94</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.212</b>	<b>0.034</b>	<b>6.23</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Age	<b>-0.005</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>-3.96</b>	<b>0.00</b>	0.003	0.007	0.39	0.70
Women's Role	<b>-0.126</b>	<b>0.011</b>	<b>-11.89</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.129</b>	<b>0.031</b>	<b>-4.16</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Party ID x Evangelical	0.045	0.028	1.63	0.10	<b>0.114</b>	<b>0.059</b>	<b>1.93</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Constant	0.222	0.134	1.66	0.10	0.705	0.315	2.24	0.03
Dependent Variable: Party ID	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z	Coef.	Std. Err.	z	P>z
Abortion	-0.029	0.046	-0.63	0.53	<b>0.262</b>	<b>0.116</b>	<b>2.26</b>	<b>0.02</b>
Evangelical?	<b>-0.366</b>	<b>0.153</b>	<b>-2.40</b>	<b>0.02</b>	<b>0.810</b>	<b>0.409</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>0.05</b>
Catholic?	<b>-0.494</b>	<b>0.056</b>	<b>-8.81</b>	<b>0.00</b>	-0.139	0.102	-1.36	0.17
Jewish?	<b>-0.900</b>	<b>0.130</b>	<b>-6.92</b>	<b>0.00</b>	-0.439	0.329	-1.33	0.18
Democrat Feeling Thermometer	<b>-0.026</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>-29.30</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.035</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>-16.73</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Republican Feeling Thermometer	<b>0.026</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>27.46</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.033</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>16.60</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Education	<b>0.175</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>12.35</b>	<b>0.00</b>	-0.001	0.035	-0.04	0.97
Black?	<b>-0.636</b>	<b>0.080</b>	<b>-7.97</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>-0.694</b>	<b>0.144</b>	<b>-4.82</b>	<b>0.00</b>
Asian?	0.004	0.206	0.02	0.99	0.408	0.369	1.11	0.27
Hispanic?	<b>-0.241</b>	<b>0.116</b>	<b>-2.08</b>	<b>0.04</b>	-0.272	0.148	-1.84	0.07
Native American?	-0.100	0.139	-0.72	0.47	0.307	0.261	1.18	0.24
Age?	0.003	0.002	1.80	0.07	-0.007	0.008	-0.82	0.41
Age x Evangelical	0.000	0.003	0.08	0.93	<b>-0.033</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>-2.32</b>	<b>0.02</b>

Table One: Simultaneous equation model results

The strength of simultaneous models is dependent on the explanatory power of each: if one of the models is bad, so too is the other. In this case, the diagnostics appear strong, especially for the model of men born after 1959, in which the model correctly places about 2/3rds of respondents on abortion position, and has an R<sup>2</sup> of .53 for the partisanship model. The models of older men perform slightly worse, but as they are included mostly for comparative purposes, this is not a cause for great concern.

As demonstrated by the difference in the constant, men born after 1960 had a much greater likelihood of holding a liberal view of abortion, all else equal. However, the dynamics overlaying that constant are very different for those born before and after 1960.

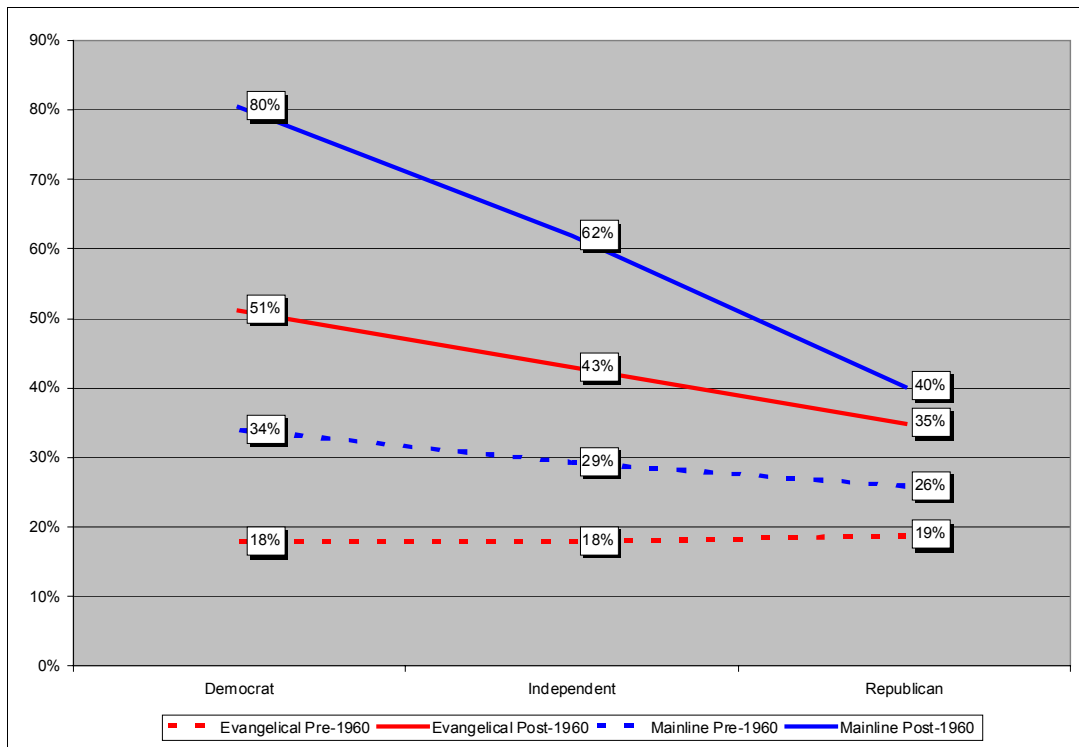
The results of Table One show a striking difference in the impact of partisanship on abortion views among men born after 1959. For both younger and older men, becoming more Republican leads to a lower likelihood of liberal views on abortion. While interpreting probit coefficients can be difficult, we can say that moving from strong Democrat to strong Republican in a man born after 1959 who otherwise had a 50 percent chance of supporting either side would decrease the likelihood of a liberal view on abortion by 40 points, to 10 percent. The same

transformation among an individual born before 1960 would result in a 39 percent chance of holding a liberal view of abortion.

In addition, religion, too, has a greater effect on men born after 1959 than those born before 1960. In comparison to the excluded category of mainline protestants,<sup>2</sup> belonging to an evangelical sect had twice as great an influence on younger men than it did on older men. Among young men, being an evangelical led to a decrease of about 33 percent in the likelihood of supporting abortion rights; among men born before 1960, this effect was about 22 percent. Attending church had a similar effect for both groups: those who attended weekly or more attended church (coded as 1 on the church attendance variable; 5 represented never attending) were about 16 percent less likely to hold liberal views of abortion. Interestingly, and perhaps reflecting John Evans (2002) findings about increased intra-sect differences, membership in the other religious groups modeled (Judaism and Catholicism) had an effect on abortion views only among older men. Among men born after 1959, Catholics and Jews were statistically indistinguishable from mainline Protestants in their views regarding abortion, all else held equal.

So, while being a member of an evangelical sect had a greater effect on young men than on older men, religion overall seems to have had a greater effect on the abortion views of men born before 1960. For that cohort, membership in any of the major religious denominations in America impacted abortion views. Among younger men, the effect of being Catholic or Jewish was only half as strong, and insignificant. Younger men more than make up for this difference in the impact of partisanship on abortion views, with partisanship having four times the impact that it does on older men.

The second hypothesis dealt with the reciprocal nature of the relationship between partisanship and abortion views among young men. While partisanship has an effect on the abortion views of both younger and older men, when all else is taken into account, abortion views predict the partisanship only of younger men. For young men, at least, it seems that views of abortion both cause, and are caused by partisanship: a finding consistent with young men who come to a political party partially due to their views on abortion, then see those views reinforced by their membership in that party. This, in turn, strengthens their partisanship, and the cycle continues. Among older men, there is certainly a correlation between being a Republican and holding conservative views of abortion, but the simultaneous equations allow us to determine the direction of the causal arrow. Republicanism leads to slightly more conservative views of abortion, but those more conservative views fail to lead to stronger partisanship, reinforcing the notion that for this cohort, abortion views are far less political than they are for younger men.



*Figure Two: Likelihood of holding liberal abortion views by PID, religion and year of birth*

The final hypothesis deals with the interaction of partisanship and religion in predicting men's views of abortion. Among older men, the interaction between evangelicalism and partisanship is only marginally significant, with a z-value of 1.63, but tells an interesting story. It is of almost exactly the same magnitude, and in the opposite direction, of the coefficient attached to the main effect of partisanship. As such, among evangelicals, the two effects cancel each other out completely. For the older cohort, among evangelicals, partisanship has no net effect on abortion views.

Among younger men, the interaction effect is in the opposite direction of the main effect of partisanship, but of about a third less magnitude. As such, the effect of partisanship on views of abortion is expected to be about three times as large among mainline Protestants as it is among evangelicals. Put together, this means that for young men, evangelical and non-evangelical Republicans should have about the same issue positions on abortion, with the effect of politics trumping all else. Among young Democratic men though, religion is expected to have a huge impact, with evangelicals showing substantially lower likelihoods of holding liberal abortion views.

Finally, we should make some note of the relative convergence in the effects of membership in a non-evangelical congregation. While Catholicism increased, and Judaism decreased, the likelihood of liberal abortion views among older men, their effects disappeared in younger men. Assumably, members of these religious groups found alternative symbolic masculinities, or otherwise adapted to the changes in the hegemonic masculinity.

## *Discussion*

When faced with their own failure to live up to a hegemonic masculine ideal, men seem to be more resourceful than we sometimes give them credit for. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) relate the story of a Soviet coal miner, Aleksandr Stakhanov, who became a Soviet folk hero for hewing over 100 tons of coal in a single day, a feat that led to a scramble to beat even his record. The findings here suggest that when faced with their inability to attain impossible masculine ideal, hewing tons of coal or maintaining complete male dominance in an increasingly egalitarian society, some men take the other path. While some men may have attempted to beat Stakhanov's record, others, the findings suggest, asserted their masculinity in unrelated ways, perhaps in the amount of vodka that could be drunk, or in military service.

These findings also suggest that this is largely a young man's game. Threats to masculinity seem to be rather more important to sons than to their established fathers. This finding is also the product of the broad range of literature concerned with the inculcation of masculinities into boys. Boys are not born knowing how to express their masculinity, but learn, at critical ages in their development, what is expected of them. Our results also suggest that once these preferences are set, they are generally stable over time: older men do not seem to have resorted to views of abortion as a symbolic masculinity. In addition to its roots in development, this also probably has to do with age and cohort effects: simply put, it is not men in their 30s and 40s who were threatened by the gender crisis, but the teenagers trying to newly assert their masculine identities.

While this analysis has focused on one issue – abortion – there is good reason to believe that several other political stances may have their roots, for certain individuals, in symbolic reactions to threats to hegemonic masculinity. Issues related to traditional conceptions of masculinity are most likely to be the result of these processes: homosexuality, women's rights, protection of the family. Future research in this area should explore the extent to which challenges to hegemonic masculinity are leading men from certain groups to embrace issue positions in these areas.

Future work in this area should also examine the extent to which women change their issue positions in response to the same symbolic masculinities that shape men's views. Certainly, the shift in the abortion debate from religion to politics did not happen just among men. Moreover, previous work (such as Tichenor, 2005 and Heath, 2003) has shown that women often reinforce men's views on these issues – encouraging their husbands to see themselves as leaders, protectors or decision makers as compensation for failures to conform to the hegemonic masculinity.

Finally, it is important to note that the source of young men's views of abortion in symbolic masculinities does not render these views any less sincere. Much of the work in political psychology over the past 15 years has been an attempt to slay what John Bargh (1999) refers to as the "cognitive monster": the extent to which our opinions and even actions are controlled by processes beyond our control or even awareness. Men who embrace restrictive views of abortion because of societal threats to hegemonic masculinity may very well believe in the principled reasons that they offer for their views, and it is only through reciprocal causation models or experiments that we can show the true source of their attitudes. This also means that the men embracing symbolic masculinities are hardly unique: the

motivations underlying most political behaviors may well be hidden from the individual. If we want to understand these behaviors, though, it means that we have to move beyond asking people about their motivations, and turn to experiments and quantitative analyses like these to fully appreciate the importance of these symbolic masculinities.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Individuals belonging to any of the following sects were considered to be evangelical: All Baptist sects, United Missionary, Protestant Missionary, Church of God, Holiness, Nazarene, Free Methodist, Church of God in Christ, Plymouth Brethren, Pentecostal, Assembly of God, Church of Christ, Salvation Army, Seventh Day Adventist, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Adventist, or any other fundamentalist sect.

<sup>2</sup> Listing their church as being: Protestant, Non-Denominational, Non-Denominational Community Church, Presbyterian, Lutheran, Congregational, Evangelical and Reformed, Reformed, Dutch Reformed or Christian Reformed, United Church of Christ (Not Church of Christ), Episcopalian, Anglican, Church of England, Methodist (excluding Free Methodist), African Methodist Episcopal (AME), United Brethren, Evangelical Brethren, Disciples of Christ, 'Christian', Mennonite, Amish, Church of the Brethren, or interdenominational protestant.

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