Traditional or Reactionary Conservatism: Exploring the Far-Right of the 1960s

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Abstract: The emergence of the Tea Party movement is a reminder that the Far Right can be a powerful political force in America. Yet, scholarship on the Far Right pales in comparison to work on left-wing social movements. This paper examines the Far Right by revisiting the 1960s, a critical time because of the ideological realignment that shapes America today. Scholars explain that far-right movements are motivated by a commitment to retain social prestige, and unlike traditional conservatives, sympathizers with the Far Right are reactionary conservatives who resists social change at all costs. However, work on the Far Right and reactionary conservatism, especially work focused on the 1960s, fails to place the movement in its appropriate historical context, theorize and subsequently test the theory. Through a comparison of Far Right literature to mainstream conservative thought in the 1960s, the Far Right's anxiety toward social change stands out. I find that anxiety toward social change – manifested as far right conspiracy - is an important explanation for reactionary conservatism.

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In March of 2009, America was starting to realize the growing strength of the Tea Party movement. The Tea Party had just identified the song titled, "American Tea Party" as its movement anthem.[1] The song, directed at newly elected President Obama, begins:

Mr. President!

Your stimulus is sure to bust

It's just a socialist scheme

The only thing it will do

Is kill the American Dream

The song goes on to criticize President Obama for "taking from achievers" and redistributing to folks who "won't get out of their easy chair." In true Tea Party fashion, the real American patriots should "boot" anyone who tramples the constitution out of the country. Days after its release, the song was performed live at a Tea Party event in Orlando, Florida. Over the next two years, the song played at over 300 different Tea Party events.[2]

The sentiments expressed in the Tea Party's unofficial anthem are important for three reasons. First, the anthem exemplifies the Tea Party movement's rhetoric. Second, the anthem appeared in media outlets such as the *Huffington Post* and Fox News, demonstrating the national presence of the Tea Party. Finally, the song also offers a

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[1] The song, by Tea Party spokesperson Lloyd Marcus, was noted for recognizing the movement in such media outlets as *World News Daily*, *Huffington Post* and Fox News. The lyrics come from a 2009 article on Bob McCarty's website found at http://bobmccarty.com/tag/tea-party-song-lyrics.

[2] March 20, 2009, *World News Daily*, http://www.wnd.com/2009/03/92321; "Tuning in, Turning out: Tea Party Finds its Music," October 10, 2011, http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/10/10/tuning-in-turning-out-tea-party-finds-its-music.

glimpse into the past. The Tea Party's anthem parallels a previous time when a significant segment of America embraced a far-right movement. Over fifty years ago a song by the folk band Chad Mitchell Trio recognized the John Birch Society in an eerily similar fashion.[3] The song, simply titled, "The John Birch Society," identified many of the same dangers to America as its contemporary counterpart:

Oh, we're the John Birch Society, the John Birch Society

Here to save the country from a Communist plot

And again, like the Tea Party anthem, anyone who was against the movement was a traitor as "there's no one that [they're] certain the Kremlin doesn't touch." The song continues:

Do you want Justice Warren for your Commisar?

Do you want Mrs. Krushchev in there with the DAR?

You cannot trust your neighbor or even next of kin

If mommie is a commie then you gotta turn her in

Similarities between the two musical characterizations beg for a historical examination of the Far Right. Was the far-right movement in the 1960s a predecessor of the Tea Party movement, and does it exist in a historical timeline of far-right movements? Moreover, I contend that individuals anxious about social change turn to the Far Right for comfort. Their commitment to resist any and all change is an enduring worldview learned early in life; or a predisposition. I draw upon the theoretical framework of political

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[3] The song, originally released on Kapp Records in 1962, quickly became a national anthem for the far-right movement. J. Allen Broyles (1964) recognizes the song's importance as an accurate characterization of the movement in his work on the JBS, *The John Birch Society: Anatomy of a Protest*. The song lyrics are from metrolyrics.com, http://www.metrolyrics.com/the-john-birch-society-lyrics-chad-mitchell-trio.html; album info is from discogs.com, http://www.discogs.com/Chad-Mitchell-Trio-Golden-Vanity-The-John-Birch-Society/release/4033867.

scientists Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto (2013), as well as historian Richard Hofstadter (1964) and sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset (1970), who argue that individuals who attempt to prevent any and all social change are reactionary conservatives - anything but traditional conservatives.

This paper uses reactionary conservatism as a framework to understand the far-right movement of the 1960s. I use a reactionary framework to challenge scholarship suggesting traditional conservative principles, such as economic individualism and a belief in limited government, motivate far-right sympathy in the 1960s. In other words, I challenge the assumption that negative views toward significant social change, such as the Civil Rights movement and integration, are attributed to traditional conservative rhetoric.

In this paper, I have three objectives. First, I detail a theory that explains why individuals sympathized with the Far Right in the 1960s. I argue that social change and progress created feelings of anxiety, which in turn drove sympathy for the movement. That is, social change in the 1960s made significant numbers of individuals in positions of cultural status (predominantly white, Protestant males) anxious about losing their social prestige. The Civil Rights movement, the perceived conciliatory nature of American foreign policy during the Cold War and the Vietnam War, and international freedom and independence movements across the world are examples of the primary catalysts for reactionary conservatism. I claim that individuals reacting to social change and progress while trying to preserve the past generate the anxiety of the Far Right in the 1960s.

To be clear, I am not arguing that anxiety toward social change is the only factor determining far-right sympathy. I believe that far-right sympathy is a complex attachment to movement ideals grounded in partisanship and ideology. However, anxiety toward social change is a key mechanism explaining sympathy for the Far Right that deserves our attention. Moreover, the anxiety of the Far Right manifests as grand conspiracy theories, spanning multiple historical periods, in which the beloved Nation is under attack.[4] The conspiratorial discourse of the Far Right becomes the central focus of a content analysis that concludes the paper.

Second, I briefly set the Far Right of the 1960s in historical context. Few examinations illustrate how the far-right movement of the 1960s fits into a larger historical narrative of far-right movements over time.[5] I argue that the Far Right of the 1960s, led by the John Birch Society, follows from the Know-Nothings of the 1850s who were anxious about new immigrants, and the Klan of the 1920s who believed that Catholics, Jews and blacks were enemy infiltrators. Further, these far-right movements are precursors to the Tea Party movement, which believes that President Obama is destroying America. Each movement, within its own historical and political context, shares a common thread: anxiety toward a new and changing America.

The paper closes with an analysis of the elite messages of the Far Right in the 1960s by comparing content of the John Birch Society's national bulletin to that of the

[4] Specifically, Parker and Barreto (2013) as well as Richard Hofstadter (1955) rely upon the work of Theodore Adorno (1950), which argues that far-right movements are "pseudo-conservative" and rely upon an anti-democratic conspiratorial discourse charging that society is being destroyed.

[5] Although noteworthy examinations of the Far Right, such as work by Hofstadter (1964) and Bell (1963), link the Far Right of the 1960s with other historical periods, only Lipset and Raab (1970) and Parker and Barreto (2013) take the time to trace far-right movements throughout history.

National Review, one of the most influential conservative publications of the era.[6] I examine the elite messages and frames for conspiratorial content because the use of conspiratorial messaging and rhetoric as a direct response to perceived social change is indicative of reactionary conservatism. By comparing the literature of the Far Right to that from mainstream conservatism, I can assess whether the Far Right's elite informational cues fit within traditional conservatism, or represent something more.

After examining the elite discourse of the John Birch Society, rhetoric that exemplifies the Far Right movement of the 1960s, I find that the evidence supports my argument. The Far Right is preoccupied with conspiracy, while traditionally conservative literature is concerned with issues of foreign policy and limiting the federal government. My content analysis serves as a preliminary test of the theory, while subsequent work on the Far Right should aim to present a broader examination of far-right sympathizers in the 1960s that extends beyond movement elites to the masses. Thus, the following analysis begins by exploring why Americans find far-right movements enticing.

What Explains the Far Right?

Political science has welcomed recent work on the Far Right with emergence of the Tea Party movement. For example, scholarship by Christopher Parker and Matt Barreto (2013) describe the Tea Party as full of anxiety, reacting to the election of America's first non-white president. Yet, the work on the Tea Party is limited to understanding a contemporary phenomenon, and Parker and Barreto's examination draws heavily on the theoretical work of historian Richard Hofstadter (1963) and sociologist

[6] Kersch (2011) explains that the *National Review* was and still is a major influence in conservative politics.

Seymour Martin Lipset (1970), who focus on the Far Right in the second half of the twentieth century. [7] According to Lipset, the political and historical context of the 1960s was one of "growing uneasiness…in the face of gathering changes" on both the domestic and international fronts (Lipset & Raab, 1970, pp. 248). The uneasiness of the Far Right manifests itself as anxiety toward social change and progress.[8] For Hofstadter, simply put, modernity threatened the Far Right. Hofstadter's work relies upon pseudo-conservatism, and draws from Theodore Adorno's (1950) seminal book, *The Authoritarian Personality.* As Adorno explains, pseudo-conservatives "profess a belief in the tenants of traditional conservatism," but are willing to destabilize traditional American democracy and "abolish the very institutions" with which we identify in order to resist social change (Adorno, 1950, pg. 50).

Just as the Tea Party is currently reacting to the election of Barack Obama and a push for immigrant and gay and lesbian rights, the Far Right of the 1960s pushed back against many different types of social progress and change. For example, the mounting Civil Rights movement changed race relations in the country, and reactionary conservatives saw anti-discrimination and integration policies as harmful to the free market. Additionally, reactionary conservatives viewed the U.S. as weak and conciliatory because of Kennedy and Johnson's handling of the Vietnam War. Far-right sympathizers saw the country embracing egalitarian rationality over established customs to best deal

[7] See Lipset (1955); Lipset and Raab (1970); Hofstadter (1964); Parker and Barreto (2013).
[8] The concept of anxiety often focuses on an individual's personality. In this case, the concept relies upon social bases of anxiety. For example, social structures can threaten the basic motives for competence and control, making powerless individuals anxious. For a full explanation see, Fiske, Morling and Stevens (1996), "Controlling Self and Others: A Theory of Anxiety, Mental Control and Social Control."

with the increasing complexity of the nation and its issues (Bell, 1963).[9] With the Cold War in full swing, some anxious individuals turned to the Far Right for comfort.

Having grown anxious, scholars suggest that the Far Right then expresses its anxiety as fearful attitudes toward agents of social change. Importantly, the anxiety of the Far Right draws from fear of change, and differs from economic or class anxieties insofar as the former stem from a threat to social prestige.[10] Culture and morality determine social prestige, which then serves as justification for societal position. Even though social prestige is closely related to economic status, it rests in the value of certain characteristics that describe an individual or group, such as race, religion or cultural beliefs. Therefore, the issues that differentiate the Far Right from other groups in society are not synonymous with economic standing.[11]

Although scholarship that places anxiety toward social change at the center of far-right movements makes a strong case, other explanations for social movements also require examination. One such explanation is political malcontent, namely dissatisfaction with an election or policy changes. For example, losing or winning a competitive election can be a powerful mobilizing event (Campbell et al, 1960; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Lewis-Beck et al, 2008). Furthermore, mistrust in government, beyond partisan ties, can

[9] This interpretation of Bell's work echoes Hixon, Jr.'s (1992) comprehensive summary of the American right wing, which also draws upon one of Bell's (1962) earlier essays on the same topic.
[10] Scholars have discussed what are called the "politics of class" and "of status" in great detail. Unlike class politics, where the conflict is centered on material goals, status politics appeal to "resentments of individuals or groups" who "desire to maintain" social standing. Additionally, far-right movements have often occurred at times of great prosperity, when there is little the government can do to improve conditions. The focus of reform movements then turns to cultural differences to explain necessary subordination and is deemed "cultural politics." For an extended discussion, see Hofstadter (1963), "Pseudo-Conservatism Revisited: A Postscript – 1962" and Lipset (1955), "The Sources of the Radical Right".
[11] See Gusfield (1963), Bell (1962, 1963) and Hofstadter (1963) for an elaboration of the differences between status anxieties and economic anxieties. Hofstadter goes as far as claiming that "cultural politics" may be a necessary supplementation for "status politics," as issues of culture, faith, morality and freedom are all worth fighting over in American political life (pp. 82-83).

leave individuals feeling politically isolated and searching for a new political movement (Finifter, 1970; Easton, 1975; Citrin & Muste, 1999).

Others argue that the historical context of the 1950s and 1960s, namely partisan shifts towards progressive views (by both Democrats and Republicans), produced a right wing faction of suburban conservatives who organized around values of small government and economic freedom (McGirr, 2001; Kruse, 2005; Lassiter, 2006). The mid-twentieth century was a turning point in American politics. Barry Goldwater's strict adherence to limited government, which he used to justify his criticism of civil rights legislation, highlights the Republican Party's stance of "racial conservatism" (Carmines and Stimson, 1989). The Republican Party never looked back, embracing the support of the Deep South for the first time since reconstruction and changing the political landscape for generations to come. The Far Right had no small hand in shifting the Republican Party further from compromise in the early 1960s, and sympathizers used staunch conservative principles to justify their attitudes.[12]

Scholars also argue that the Far Right uses conservative principles as a mask, and that racial intolerance is the driving force behind movement sympathy. Research claims that intolerance was driving anti-communist attitudes in the 1960s, and the Far Right perceived minority groups as communist subversives (McEvoy, 1971; Johnson, 1983; Hixon, Jr., 1992; McGirr, 2001). However, the many arguments about the Far Right are not mutually exclusive. Scholarship characterizing the Far Right as traditionally conservative acknowledges extremism has its place in the movement, and vice versa.

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[12] Scholarship on political parties and party realignment clearly identifies the 1960s and Goldwater's nomination as a historical shift from moderation in the Republican Party. For a detailed account of party activists and party formation, see chapter 6 in Aldrich's (1995) book, *Why Parties*.

Even as much of the existing scholarship on the Far Right during the Goldwater era describes a complex, multi-faceted movement, it fails to identify anxiety as a common thread.

Accompanying anxiety toward change, conspiracy theories also characterize far-right movements. As individuals struggle to understand their changing world, their frustration with their ability to grapple with these changes leads to "social misperception" and the belief that they are under attack. In other words, as anxiety builds around new social environments, the Far Right perceives agents of social change as conspiring against their privileged group.[13] Far-right sympathizers "become anxious when they perceive their desire to belong to social groups is threatened" (Parker and Barreto, 2013, pg. 32). As individuals feel that their group position is slipping away, their perceived loss of control leads to conspiratorial thinking (Whitson and Galinsky, 2008). The Far Right is able to justify their often-unpopular positions by undermining social change with conspiracy theories.

Conspiracy theories are prevalent within but not distinct to the Far Right. Some scholars argue that conspiracy theories are central to American politics. For example, Professor of Law Mark Fenster (1999) argues that conspiracy theories represent a critical element to populist concerns about American government. Also, conspiracy theories exist across the political spectrum, not only on the right. Lionel Lokos (1967) work catalogs the fear campaign by the left against Barry Goldwater's presidential bid.[14] Despite

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[13] Parker and Barreto (2013) apply this logic to the Tea Party movement's preoccupation with conspiracy. For more on the psychology of paranoia and conspiracy see, Roderick Kramer's (1998) work, "Paranoid Social Cognition in Social Systems: Thinking and Acting in the Shadow of Doubt."

[14] Additional scholarship argues that conspiracy theories are not necessarily good or bad, and constitute a significant part of American politics. David Davis (1969) argues that conspiracy theory was an essential force leading to the civil war in his book, *The Slave Power Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style*, and

conspiracy theories' common residence in politics, scholars are unable to link far-right conspiracy theories to traditional conservatism. Furthermore, the Far Right is unique because grand conspiracy theories display its anxiety toward social change. Far-right conspiracy theories claim that cherished American values and even the country itself are under attack. The conspiracy theories derive from an inability to comprehend new and tradition-threatening social environments.

So far, I have presented a theoretical framework that suggests anxiety toward change and conspiracy are characteristic of far-right movements throughout history. The following section briefly traces far-right movements from the mid-nineteenth century to contemporary America, stressing the importance of anxiety toward social change and the ever-present far-right conspiracy theories. The presence of far-right conspiracies is central to my examination of far-right sympathy. For nearly two centuries, far-right movements have centered on a need to protect against threats to social prestige and a specific "way of seeing the world" (Hofstadter, 1964, pp. 4). I now turn back in history to examine the role of anxiety toward social change and conspiracy theories in both past and present Far Right movements.

Far-Right Movements: Past to Present

In order to situate the far-right movement in the 1960s in its appropriate historical context, it is important to understand how the Far Right fits into a larger intellectual framework. In the following section, I briefly trace the Far Right through American

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Michael Rogin (1988), in *Ronald Reagan: The Movie and Other Episodes in Political Demonology*, further states the importance of conspiracy in American political demonology and the creation of evil political foes.

history. I start in the 1850s with the Know-Nothing movement, continue to the second-era Ku Klux Klan and the John Birch Society of the 20th century, and finish with the Tea Party movement of today. Each of these Far Right movements captured the attention of the nation, and, in most cases, successfully lobbied for real political change. Throughout American history the Republican Party has incorporated the policy stances of the Far Right in order to unite conservatives at a national level (Kabaservice, 2012). Thus, the ideologies of these movements have significantly influenced national politics through the Republican Party's platforms.

Of additional importance is that influential Far Right movements are all well organized, national movements. Although many different right wing movements occur in American history, either alongside the Far Right movements I will highlight or at a different time altogether, the movements that reference all had (or have) sizeable memberships, organized chapters, political candidates and a policy platform. The following historical analysis provides the context necessary to conduct a preliminary examination of far-right sympathy in the 1960s. Examining the Far Right over time also allows for me to illuminates how anxiety and far-right conspiracy fit into the larger theory of movement sympathy; therefore, following discussion also stresses the anxiety and conspiracy central to each of the aforementioned far-right movements.

The Far Right of the Nineteenth Century: The Know-Nothing Movement

The nineteenth century observed considerable population shifts in America. While the country experienced relatively little immigration up to 1830, the number of new

immigrants nearly doubled from 1820 to 1830, and quadrupled from 1831 to 1840.[15] By the mid-eighteen hundreds, a new sense of American nativism swept across the country with the significant influx of new Catholic immigrants. The emergence of the American Party in the 1840s marked the rise of a powerful nativist movement determined to protect the social standing of native-born, Protestant whites (Higham, 2004).

Nativism flourished as immigration increased, and native-born Americans, predominantly Protestant, found themselves increasingly discontented as a result. Irish immigrants' strong attachment to Catholicism, coupled with their growing population within the U.S., made many Americans anxious about the way the country was changing. At their core, nativists believed that "some influence originating abroad threatened the very life of the nation from within" (Higham, 2004, pg. 4). The Know Nothing movement became a home for those profoundly discontented.

By the mid-nineteenth century, the Democratic and Whig parties slowly lost ground to the Know Nothing movement as the issue of slavery divided America. The Know Nothings prospered as the Whigs and Democrats failed to take a firm stance on abolishing slavery (Anbinder, 1992). Furthermore, the dissolution of the Whigs is also attributed to their failure to express the forceful anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic attitudes of their Protestant constituents (Anbinder, 1992; Levine, 2001). By the 1850s, the nativist third party group, the American Party, had grown into the Know-Nothings and firmly supplanted the Whig Party among northern Whigs and Southern Democrats. Born in New York City, the Know-Nothing Party accounted for one fourth of the popular

[15] Aside from the Chinese exclusion, legislated in 1882, immigration to the United States was unrestricted prior to 1920. Mae Ngai (2004) provides a comprehensive examination of immigration laws throughout American history in her book, *Impossible Subjects*. Also see tables 2.2 and 2.3 in chapter 2 of Judd and Swanstrom's (2012) *City Politics* for a closer look at immigration to America between 1820 and 1919.

vote for president in 1856 (Lipset, 1955). Local political victories in 1854 and 1855, in both the North and the South, marked the height of a movement that was able to garner the moral support of the working-class Protestant community around an anti-Catholic cause.

Despite their virtual disappearance by the late 1950s due to disagreement between Northern and Southern Know-Nothings over the future of slavery, the Know-Nothings' political agenda secured a place in national politics as the Republican Party relied on anti-Catholicism during the antebellum period and after the Civil War (Lipset and Raab, 1970). These were foundational tenets that the Republican Party adopted after the Know Nothings dissolution. Moreover, the Know-Nothings conspiratorial imagery of Catholic immigrants as dangerous criminals carried on long past the demise of the movement. Republican-led debates raged on about Catholics' role in the assassination of President Lincoln, going so far as to claim that Lincoln himself believed that "Catholics were plotting against the Republic" (Lipset and Raab, 1970, pg. 73). As northern Catholics continued to gain political power, the strain of conspiratorial anti-Catholicism planted in the Republican Party in the mid-nineteenth century and would reappear alongside racism and bigotry sixty years later when the Far Right once again found the national stage.

The Ku Klux Klan in the Early Twentieth Century

Relying upon the same organizational name and hooded clothes as its predecessor, the second-era Ku Klux Klan began as a fraternal organization destined for far more than the violent, racist reputation dawned by the Klan of the nineteenth century. The Klan preached "100% Americanism," and challenged the modernism that swept the

nation in the early 20th century (MacLean, 1994). More specifically, the growing social and political power of perceived subversive groups (blacks, Jews and Catholics) threatened the Americanism of the Klan. The Klan informed the country of the danger these subversive groups posed. Specifically targeting blacks, the Klan lectured that "The negro…is more dangerous than a maddened wild beast and he must and will be controlled" (Jackson, 1967, pg. 22). Blacks were to remain subservient in order to preserve white supremacy.

In addition to black Americans, the Klan also perceived Catholics as threatening because of the organizational structure in place with the Catholic Church (Jackson, 1967). To the Klan, Catholics' strong attachment to the Pope and the Vatican put them "at odds with political freedom" (Parker and Barreto; 2013, pg. 25). Furthermore, Catholics remained attached to their native dialects and supported political machines that depended on the immigrant vote (Chalmers, 1987; MacLean, 1994). As was the case with the Know-Nothing movement, the Klan's anxiety about a perceived loss in social prestige and cultural standing accompanied irrational economic angst.

The Klan, also concerned with perceived Jewish economic prosperity, made unfounded claims that Jewish economic success limited white-Protestant upward mobility (Cohn, 1967). Far-right conspiracy laced the Klan's bigotry. The Klan charged Jews with coopting multiple ideologies, including Communism and Bolshevism, in a plot to control the world. According to Klan literature, Jews controlled "the money markets of the world" in an international scheme later propagated by figures as prominent as

American industrialist Henry Ford (Lipset and Raab, 1970, pg. 139).[16] The Klan also exploited ready-made links by exaggerating the relationship between white ethnic immigrant groups and Communism and Socialism. Social progress was deemed radicalism, and the Klan used propaganda about ethnic immigrant culture, such as foreign language use, to power their conspiracy (Lipset and Raab, 1970).

Moreover, the bigotry of the Klan rested upon the perceived displacement of traditional Protestants. The return of black World War I veterans as assertive "New Negros" became cause for concern to the Klan, who had ensured black subservience in the South; also, blacks' exposure to French egalitarianism provided another clear connection to exploit an international conspiracy (Parker, 2009; Parker and Barreto, 2013). Most importantly, by combining anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic sentiment with bigotry and anti-Communism, the Klan opened the door for future far-right movements to build on traditional nativist sentiments of the past.[17]

The John Birch Society of the 1960s

Following the decline of the second-era Ku Klux Klan in the mid-twentieth century, the 1960s saw the rise of another far-right movement, again focused on preserving traditional values and the traditional American way of life. In protection of the southern way of life, the Dixiecrats emerged as a states' rights faction of the Democratic

[16] Although few studies examine the Ku Klux Klan as a durable right-wing movement because of its open appeal to racial and religious hostility, Lipset and Raab's (1970) historical work, *The Politics of Unreason*, discuss the Klan within a broader right-wing social movement framework. For more on the Klan and right-wing scholarship, see also, Hixon, Jr. (1992), *The Search for the American Right Wing: An Analysis of the Social Science Record, 1955-1987.*

[17] Building upon an early essay by Lipset (1962), "Three Decades of the Radical Right," Lipset and Raab (1970) make a clear connection between the Klan and subsequent far-right movements in *The Politics of Unreason*. However, they are not the only scholars of their time to reach this conclusion. More specifically, the work of Authur M. Schlesinger (1965), "Extremism in American Politics," identifies the appearance of Goldwater as a remanifestation of the extremism of the Know Nothings, the Klan and McCarthyism.

Party in 1948 (Lowndes, 2008). The Dixiecrats wanted to preserve Jim Crow and racial segregation under the guise of states' rights. Although short lived, the Dixiecrats firmly planted racial conservatism in national politics. What started as a regional revolt against integration developed into a campaign of massive resistance. By mid-century, the far-right wing of the Republican Party separated from moderate Republicans searching for votes from newly migrated northern blacks. Leaning on support from the White Citizen Council, far-right Republicans adopted racial conservatism as their own (Lowndes, 2008).

Additionally, by late 1950, Joseph McCarthy had propelled himself onto the national stage with his efforts to uncover Communist subversives. However, McCarthyism failed to mature into an outright political movement, given that McCarthy's followers never amounted to organized chapters with members, political candidates, or an established political platform.[18] Although McCarthy was merely a "soldier in the Republican campaign to regain power," he fought to remake American institutions (in order to abolish Communism); he wanted to eliminate any and all threats to traditional American values, and his followers became the catalyst for the massive far-right movement that followed (Hixon, Jr., 1992, pg. 10; Lipset, 1955).

As the 1960s approached, revolutionary change threatened traditional American identity both abroad and at home. Militant black veterans returning from World War II forced the "race question" upon a nation that had just finished fighting a war against a racist enemy (Parker, 2009). Emerging from war victorious, the country soon found itself facing another powerful force, Communism. If the 1950s represented a small shift to the

[18] Lipset and Raab (1970) offer a detailed examination of McCarthyism's failure to become a political movement.

right for conservatives, then the 1960s became a full-fledged sprint. The 1960 Republican Party convention marked decline of moderate Republican influence, reflecting increasing extremism. The years leading up to the Republican Primaries of 1964 drastically departed from the moderate political consensus characterizing the previous decade, and the Far Right gained control of the Grand Old Party (Kabaservice, 2012).

Building upon strict fiscal conservatism developed in opposition to New Deal policies and the symbolic anti-communism of McCarthyism, a far-right movement of tremendous proportions snatched the spotlight. The movement consisted of many groups, such as Americans for Constitutional Action in favor of the repeal of socialist laws, and the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade best known for its anti-Communist schools across California.[19]

Still, other far-right groups paled in comparison, both in size and influence, to the John Birch Society (JBS). Created by Robert Welch in 1958, the JBS was recognized on a national level by 1961, and the term "Bircher" became a clear political description with which members identified (Westin, 1962, p. 202). Welch, a wealthy candy manufacturer from Massachusetts, believed in limiting government intervention in individual affairs, and the doctrine of the JBS reflected major elements of traditional conservative ideology. Yet, the JBS also rested upon a second ideological center in order to justify an unwavering resistance to social change: sweeping far-right conspiracy (Lipset and Raab, 1970, pp. 249-50).

[19] Lipset and Raab (1970) detail the rise of Americans for Constitutional Action, and Wolfinger et al. (1969) examine the Christian Anti-Communist Crusade in "America's Radical Right: Politics and Ideology." Each highlight the organizations concern with Anti-communism, and like the John Birch Society, a preoccupation with conspiracy.

The conspiracy of Welch and the JBS was grand, stretching back in time and across the globe, drawing upon the subversions that dominated American life in the 1960s.[20] The JBS professed angst and fear toward almost all substantial change that occurred domestically and abroad. Attempting to undermine change that could be perceived as progress, the JBS identified conspirators, starting with Karl Marx. Welch and other contributors wrote about Marx in the JBS's national newsletter, *American Opinion*. They claimed that Marx wrote the Communist Manifesto as an agent of the Illuminati. The grand conspiracy, dating back to 1776, declared that the Illuminati founded Communism in a tyrannical attempt to rule the human race (Lipset and Raab, 1970, pg. 252). With over eighty thousand members at its height, and a sympathetic group of four to six million Americans, the JBS's accusations were not falling on deaf ears (McGirr, 2001, pg. 76; Parker and Barreto, 2013, pg. 26).

As evidenced in speeches by Welch and note-worthy Birchers, as well as the pages of the *American Opinion*, the group found much of the 1960s social upheaval unsettling. Almost all of the JBS's conspiracy theories centered on Communism as the grand conspiracy. Following a divide-and-conquer strategy, the accused conspirators sought to separate America based on religious, racial, ethnic and national lines. This way, the conspirators could attack America from within, destroying the traditional values that made American great. The JBS argued that Communist subversives were behind the racial conflicts of the time and were responsible for both world wars, the Russian Revolution, the end of colonialism and the formation of the United Nations (Lipset and Raab, 1970, pg. 252-253).

[20] Lipset and Raab (1970) expand upon the grandiose conspiracy that Welch developed for his Society, going so far as to claim that his work has become "the very model of conspiracy theories" (pg. 250).

According to Birchers, Communist subversives had infiltrated the American government and accusations of treason went as far as sitting presidents and Supreme Court Justices. To the JBS, Eisenhower was a traitor because of his calls for wartime peace in Korea, Kennedy was a Communist dupe because of his deliberate effort to protect Fidel Castro during the Bay of Pigs, and the Courts, especially Chief Justice Earl Warren, were communist agents in the plot to incite race riots and divide America (Lipset and Raab, 1970). The JBS believed that American weakness abroad and racial tolerance at home threatened to destroy American economic, political and social life.

Unlike previous far-right movements, the JBS and the Far Right of the 1960s failed to embrace anti-Catholic nativist bigotry. In fact, the JBS had clear connections with prominent Catholics (Lipset and Raab, 1970). However, JBS conspiracy theories did employ religious targets, and incorporated anti-Semitism. Even as Welch and the JBS felt that anti-Semitism, along with bigoted nativism, would harm the movement, the JBS considered Jews Communist.[21] Although the JBS's official platform forbids racism, anti-Semitism and bigoted nativism, the society was intent on maintaining social prestige at any cost. Communism endangered the fabric of American life, as rising crime rates, feeble wartime policies, disrespect for authority and social welfare all threatened to deteriorate, and eventually destroy America.[22]

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[21] Lipset and Raab (1970) explain that although overt anti-Semites were dropped from the Birch Society, the society's impulsive attachment to American traditions and values attracted anti-Semites looking to use the Birchers' far-right conspiracy to propagate strict nativism.

[22] See Welch (1961), *The Blue Book of the John Birch Society* for a description of JBS platform. Also see Broyles (1964), *The John Birch Society: Anatomy of a Protest*, for a detailed interpretation of the JBS.

The Tea Party in the Twenty-First Century

America went through the first eight years of the twenty-first century under the watch of President George W. Bush. During Bush's Presidency, the Bush tax cuts limited revenues available to the federal government, and although benefiting certain segments of America, the cuts led to an expansion of the federal deficit of historic proportions. Bush doubled discretionary spending to twice that of the Clinton era and increased the federal budget ten times over, turning a $700 billion surplus to a $1.3 trillion deficit.[23]

One might think that Bush's record on fiscal conservatism would be enough to ignite a political movement united around "limited government and the rule of law, free-market capitalism, and fiscal and personal responsibility" (Parker and Barreto, 2013, pg. 1). However, it was not until the election of President Barack Obama in 2008, the first non-white president of the United States, that the Taxed Enough Already (TEA) Party materialized. Like far-right movements before, the Tea Party spearheaded a movement that was, and still is, reacting to unsettling social and cultural change in America.

Prior to the election of President Obama, the country was already in the midst of monumental demographic shifts. Not only is a younger generation of voters coming of age, but Latino voters over-represent the youngest age cohorts. For the first time ever, census projections estimate a majority-minority American population by the mid-twenty-first century with Latinos making up as much as 33 percent of the population by 2100

[23] Parker and Barreto (2013) expand a great deal on Bush's presidency, and make a convincing case that President Bush's policies were far from fiscally conservative. They note, Bush is considered by some, "The biggest spender since LBJ" (pg. 251). See also, Chris Edwards (2009), "George W. Bush: Biggest Spender Since LBJ," available at http://www.cato.org/blog/george-w-bush-biggest-spender-lbj.

(Fraga et al., 2010, pg. 4). Furthermore, gay and lesbian rights have gained momentum over the past two decades as twelve states now allow same-sex marriage.[24]

In their exhaustive examination of the Tea Party movement, Parker and Barreto (2013) argue that the election of President Obama was the tipping point for reactionary conservatives. Or, as the authors' put it, "the changed witnessed in America…is simply too much change for some people," and President Obama symbolizes the dissolution of the nation (pg. 5). Just as with past far-right movements, Parker and Barreto argue that the Tea Party and its sympathizers view social change as subversion. They claim that individuals sympathize with the movement because they feel anxious about their country slipping away, and fear they are losing the "real" America. Tea Partiers want to return to a time in which the cultural dominance of their group, white, Protestant, middle-aged men, went unchallenged, reversing any progress made. As Parker and Barreto (2013) point out, this remains consistent with the Tea Party's rhetorical charge to "Take their country back" (pg. 6).

Furthermore, similar to past far-right movements, the Tea Party is rife with conspiracy theories. Even balanced accounts of the Tea Party take pause at the ease with which movement members accept and perpetuate conspiratorial rumors and stories (Skocpol and Williamson, 2012). The Tea Party's discomfort with President Obama manifests as charges of socialism and tyranny that suggests Obama is an agent of social change whose intent is to destroy American traditions and values. Additional themes identify blacks, immigrants and gays and lesbians as Obama's co-conspirators in a plot to

[24] In some cases, the final legality of same-sex marriage laws is pending Supreme Court decisions. For a detailed list of all of the same-sex marriage decisions, see the National Conference of State Legislators website: http://www.ncsl.org/issues-research/human-services/same-sex-marriage-laws.aspx#1.

destroy the Constitution.[25] These themes ring true throughout the rhetoric of the Tea Party, marking the movement and its members as conspiracy theorists.

The Tea Party is merely a modern-day reflection of far-right conspiracy theories. For each major far-right movement in the last two-centuries, I have highlighted the centrality of anxiety toward social change, and consequently conspiracy. Each movement is acting on behalf of an advantaged social group (white, middle-class, middle-aged males), and each movement is attempting to return America to a time where the privilege and prestige of the Far Right went unchallenged.[26] Yet, all American far-right movements are not identical. For example, the Know-Nothings and the second-era Klan were tremendously anti-Catholic, while the JBS welcomed Catholic members. In addition, the Know-Nothings were consumed by religious nativism, and both religious and racial intolerance drove the Klan. On the other hand, the JBS was concerned with government expansion and Communism, and Welch knew that overt racial and religious intolerance would damage the 1960s movement (Broyles, 1964). Each movement, however, practiced intolerance in defense of liberty.

As I turn my attention back to the 1960s, the final section of the paper presents a preliminary test of the mechanisms driving sympathy for the Far Right. Thus far, I have emphasized the importance of traditional conservative principles - limited government and individual rights - in the Far Right's call for action. I have also questioned traditionally conservative intentions by suggesting that anxiety toward social change

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[25] Parker and Barreto (2013) identify the agents of social change perceived as co-conspirators in a detailed analysis of Tea Party elite rhetoric in a content analysis of mainstream Tea Party websites in chapter 1 of their book, *Change We Can't Believe In*.

[26] Sociologist Rory McVeigh (2009) defines a right-wing movement as a social movement that acts to preserve the advantaged position of its group members, often at the expense of other groups in society. Each of the movements described in chapter 1 fits McVeigh's characterization.

motivated the Far Right of the 1960s. Now, using a content analysis comparing the literature of the Far Right to the literature of mainstream conservatism, I test my initial claim. As I anticipate, I find that the literature of the Far Right is inconsistent with that of mainstream conservatism.

Not Your Average Conservative: The Literature of the Far Right

At the beginning of the paper, I argued that far-right movements are, at least in part, a reaction to rapid social change and progress. The following analysis takes the first step in testing why the Far Right and its sympathizers come to begrudge a changing society. To make my argument clear, I pay particular attention to the possibility that far-right sympathizers truly are ordinary conservatives. After a brief discussion of traditional and reactionary conservatism, I turn to my content analysis to assess the extent to which traditionally conservative values concerned the Far Right.

The Far Right as Traditional Conservatives

As previously mentioned, there are a number of explanations for why an individual might sympathize with the Far Right. Of the many explanations, traditional conservatism has gained the most scholarly traction (Parker and Barreto, 2013). An incessant need to limit, or altogether prevent government intervention into one's own life describes much of conservative politics, and in turn, is a description often applied to the Far Right. Traditional conservatism is used to justify the arguments of the Far Right on issues that define the 1960s. In his rich examination of Southern suburban politics in the mid-twentieth century, Matthew Lassiter (2006) argues that a "color-blind" ideology

based on strict market forces and individual meritocracy defined white resistance to school integration. Similarly, western libertarianism characterizes the Far Right in Lisa McGirr's (2001) work on Orange County, California in the 1960s. These interpretations both put traditional conservatism at the center of the Far Right movement in the 1960s.

If accounts of right wing politics in the 1960s use traditional conservatism to explain issue and policy stances, where does my interpretation of the Far Right as a reactionary movement fit? To begin, reactionary conservative movements are not void of traditionally conservative elements. Traditional conservatism reflects a commitment to "a discriminating defense of the social order against change and reform (Rossiter, 1955, pp. 12). Showing the utmost respect for the past, traditional conservatism tends to defend the institutions and values of the West. Following WWII, traditional conservative Christian ethic (rooted in community) and Protestant morality came into tension with a new conservatism concerned with individualism, materialism and the free market. The latter of the two, termed laissez-faire conservatism, outpaced its dated counterpart.

The post-war conservatism that followed rested in the belief that, "free, happy, effective government recognized the true nature of man and society and interfered as little as possible with the quest for success" (Rossiter, 1955, pp. 132). Having recognized that popular government is here to stay, laissez-faire conservatives accepted the advance of democracy, and instead worked to control government as it stands. In doing so, post-war conservatism embraced three pillars: a preoccupation with individual freedom and government deregulation, an acceptance of foreign policy as a necessary evil so long as national security is a priority, and an emphasis on traditionalism, community and family values (Rossiter, 1955).

Comparatively, reactionary conservatives also embrace and champion individualism, materialism and the free market, but remain on the fringe of traditional conservatism because of their attitudes toward social change. Like traditional conservatives, reactionary conservatives are wary about social change and progress. However, the uneasiness of the Far Right manifests as anxiety toward even slight social progress as they look to the past for comfort and security. Moreover, unique to reactionary conservatism is the feeling of dispossession and a will to do anything to take back America and preserve a specific way of life (Hofstadter, 1964, pp. 23). Constantly looking toward the past as a period of prosperity and comfort, reactionary conservatives will go to great lengths to regain that security.

Traditional conservatives, on the other hand, fear revolutionary change, but realize that incremental change is necessary to maintain stability recognizing that society is never static.[27] For traditional conservatives, properly guided change is a process of renewal.[28] Reactionary conservatives sacrifice social bonds for individual autonomy, and avoid change at all costs. They prioritize the individual, even at the peril of time-tested institutions necessary to conserve stability and order (Parker and Barreto, 2013). The Far Right's indictments against political authorities, sitting presidents and time-tested political institutions (such as the Supreme Court) go against traditional conservative

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[27] Clinton Rossiter (1955) explains how recognizing that society is an ever-changing entity is a key point of traditional conservatism. Hofstadter and Lipset further distinguish the Far Right's anxieties from those of traditional conservatives by emphasizing the Far Right's reliance on conspiracy theories and immense paranoia. Finally, the work of Parker and Barreto (2013) on the Tea Party builds upon Hofstadter's realization that the Far Right is less concerned with the maintenance of stability, and is willing to go to any length to fend of threats to their well-established way of life, even if it means inciting conspiracies that run counter to societal stability.

[28] The work of Russel Kirk expresses a similar sentiment, and Kirk relies upon Edmund Burke to express the relationship between conservatism and change. Kirk understands that Burkean change is a slow process that simply adjusts the order of things, and individuals must allow the "natural processes to take their course while cooling the heels of those infatuated with instant reform" (Kirk, 1985, pg. 45).

notions of maintaining stability. Moreover, grand conspiracy theories provide a reason to attack anyone who fails to share their vision of America.[29]

In summary, although reactionary conservatism shares some of the ideals that traditional conservatives value, reactionary conservatives will stop at nothing to resist social change. In their attempts to return America to a time when its past traditions went unchallenged, reactionary conservatives portray the agents working toward social change as subversive traitors destroying the country. In order to further examine the relationship between social change, conspiracy and the Far Right, I examine the periodicals of the far-right movement in the 1960s.

Interpretive Frames and Far Right Opinion Leaders

In light of the (brief) definition of traditional conservatism provided above, a case for or against the Far Right of the 1960s can be made. To start, civil rights legislation did represent an extension of federal power, and Communism was a looming threat to national security. However, the Far Right perceived the Civil Rights movement as subversion and race riots intent on dividing America. Additionally, Communist spies had infiltrated American institutions, such as the Office of the Presidency, Congress and the Supreme Court. Was the Far Right working to conserve what's "good" about American social and political life; or, was the Far Right trying to preserve their social prestige, fighting against social change and progress that threatened their lifestyle and worldview?

[29] Hofstadter (1964) argues that the Far Right's conspiracy theories are grand because they tend to perfectly explain historical events, and are made up of conspiracy theories that encompass the whole course or the main course of history.

To answer these questions, I turn to an analysis comparing the content of the *American Opinion* to content from the *National Review*.

The *American Opinion*, the JBS's primary national newsletter, was edited and published by Robert Welch, the founder of the JBS. Bircher ideas circulated for years as the society and Welch himself published materials since the formation of the JBS in 1958. The JBS had an estimated core of nine and a half million supporters in 1962, and this number failed to waiver in the face of continuous criticism nationwide (Westin, 1962). With such notoriety, due to both the strong internal organization of the JBS and Welch's national reputation, it is fair to assume that sympathizers with the movement were at least familiar with the general themes contained in the movement's literature.

Therefore, an examination of the *American Opinion* allows for the identification of multiple interpretive frames that help movement sympathizers make sense of their political environment (Snow and Benford, 1992). Elite ideas, identified as frames promoted in the *American Opinion*, provide shortcuts to interpret a complicated world (Zald, 1996). In other words, as John Zaller (1992) suggests, elite frames are informational cues that influence public opinion and shape political action. I will examine all of the content from the *American Opinion* from 1960 through 1964, marking the heyday of the movement that backed Goldwater's nomination.

I compare the content from the *American Opinion* to content from the *National Review*, a conservative news magazine founded by William F. Buckley, Jr. In the early 1950s, the erupting Cold War spurred a young group of conservative intellectuals energized by anti-collectivism – among them was Buckley.[30] A former debate champion,

[30] This conservative cohort also included Ayn Rand, Leo Strauss, Milton Friedman and Russel Kirk, among

Buckley had made a name for himself by criticizing his alma mater, Yale University, in multiple books for its “hostility towards capitalism” (Kersch, 2011, pg. 97). His frustration with his books’ lengthy publishing time led him to publish the *National Review,* which quickly became the lifeblood of conservative politics in America. The magazine became a crucial organism in American conservatism by “cultivating conservative intellectual talent” and “disseminating conservative political ideas” (Kersch, 2011, pg. 98).

By analyzing the *National Review* alongside the *American Opinion*, I am able to compare the prevalence of content frames in the JBS’s monthly newsletter to the content of what was, and still is, considered the mainstay for mainstream conservative thought.[31] If reactionary conservatism truly is the main driving force behind the Far Right, then the elite members of the movement should be preoccupied with conspiracy theories as their world changes in uncomfortable ways. In an attempt to reclaim an America of the past, movement elites will go to any length to undermine the new social changes taking place. If anxiety toward social change is, ultimately, absent from the movement, then alternative explanations (limited government, national security, racism, anti-communism) will overshadow theories of conspiracy.

Content Frames and Examples

In order to ascertain evidence to support the theory and test my hypothesis, I examined content from January 1960 through December 1964 in both the *American*

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others. For a full description of the rise of conservative intellectualism following WWII, see Kersch (2011), “Ecumenicalism Through Constitutionalism: The Discursive Development of Constitutional Conservatism in National Review, 1955–1980.” Rossiter (1955) also offers a detailed analysis of post-war conservatism.

[31] Recent work by Political Scientist Mark Smith (2007) on the emergence of the Republican Party squarely places the *National Review* at the center of mainstream conservative dialogue.

Opinion and the *National Review*. These five years are important for a few reasons. First, by the early 1960s, the far-right movement, headed by the JBS, was in full motion. The masterful organization behind the JBS was a well-known force by 1961, and Welch's salesmanship had made the group a rallying point for far-right organizations across the country (Westin, 1962). Second, the political influence of the JBS continued to expand, and the society saw its greatest political victory in the Republican nomination of Goldwater for president. Goldwater's defeat in 1964 marked the decline of the JBS's national presence. For these reasons, the period between 1960 and 1964 is crucial to my content analysis.

I specify ten content frames to guide my analysis of both *American Opinion* and *National Review* (Please see the appendix for a detailed explanation of content theme selection, coding and sampling). I identified frames that reflect the many competing explanations for far-right sympathy in the 1960s.[32] In order to capture traditional conservatism, I rely upon my description of post-war conservatism in my first three frames: limited government, foreign affairs and national security, and religion and morals. For instance, literature that reflected limited government criticized "the expansion of federal government." The literature would even go as far as stating that the expansion of the federal government is a threat to "personal freedom."[33] In any case,

[32] I use thematic units to distinguish content on conceptual grounds. Although it can be difficult to reliably identify thematic units, they are useful for exhaustive coding schemes. Additionally, tests can increase the reliability of such units. The content analysis presented has an intercoder reliability of 0.82. For more on thematic units and reliability, see chapter 5 in Krippendorff (1980), *Content Analysis: An Introduction to its Methodology.*

[33] *National Review,* April 9, 1963.

literature reflecting traditional conservatism characterized government as “big, bad – and steadily getting bigger and worse.”[34]

Content frames for foreign policy and national security as well as religion and morals capture the remaining elements of post-war conservatism. Foreign policy and national security content describes literature about international conflict and protecting America from both internal and external threats. The content within the frame religion and morals is about attitudes toward right and wrong, and the overall importance of religion in America. Together, these three content frames account for post-war traditional conservatism in the literature.

To compete with traditionally conservative explanations, I also use a content frame to capture far-right conspiracy. Conspiracy is an indication of reactionary conservatism because the Far Right attempted to undermine social change through the identification of subversion. Even as traditional conservatives may be weary of social change, they still accept change as an organic process; incremental change is necessary to maintain order. Rapid change can quickly turn revolutionary, destroying the institutions that traditional conservatives covet. Unlike traditional conservatives, reactionary conservatives believe that social change of any kind is unacceptable. Reactionary conservatives are quick to identify agents of social change as subversives and traitors to protect the prestige of the dominant group. In sum, reactionary conservatives are alone in their belief that social change conceals subversion.

To illustrate, the literature captures far-right conspiracy theories about many different types of social change in the 1960s. Communism received the full attention of

[34]*National Review*, July 3, 1962.

the Far Right and was the centerpiece of the Far Right's grand conspiracy. According to far-right conspiracy, Communist subversives were everywhere and had already compromised America's most treasured institutions:

> "Communist infiltration into our government, and the recruiting and planting of Communist traitors in spots of vital control in every important branch of our economic, political, and cultural life, has already gone far beyond the wildest guess of the average American citizen."[35]

Dedicated "patriots" had already lost America to an intricately organized criminal conspiracy that could be divided into two parts: racketeers and traitors.[36]

Additional targets of the Far Right's conspiracy were progressive social movements, with particular focus paid to the Civil Rights movement. More specifically, the Civil Rights movement was nothing more than a race war and "an internal attack on the United States."[37] Furthermore, the Far Right connected progressive social movements to Communism and the grand conspiracy theory. For example, the Civil Rights movement was not acting alone; Communist subversives set out to divide, conquer and eventually destroy America.

Along with the content frames described, I use four additional frames to capture the remaining explanations for far-right sympathy: anti-Communism, racism and discrimination, personal criticism of political leaders and authorities, and mistrust in government. Aside from the internal Communist conspiracy, literature also expressed a general distaste for Communism, often informing the readers of the dangers associated

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[35] *American Opinion*, January 1960.
[36] *American Opinion*, October 1962.
[37] *American Opinion*, January 1963.

with Communist ideas. I identified content with bigoted or derogatory language as racist or discriminatory.

Content containing personal attacks of specific political leaders, authorities and elites were coded as such, and I accounted for content expressing mistrust in government. Finally, a content frames for history and education as well as patriotism capture the remaining literature. A good deal of literature retraced historical events or provided biographical information for political figures, and additional literature expressed pride in America and love for one's country.

When categorizing content, I coded both a primary theme and three sub-themes. Through the sub-themes, I can assess the prominence of certain content frames, and whether content frames are related to one another or appear together in the literature. For example, the sub-themes add depth to my examination because I can assess which sub-themes are most commonly associated with which main content themes. The following section presents my content analysis results, focusing on the main theme and secondary theme.[38]

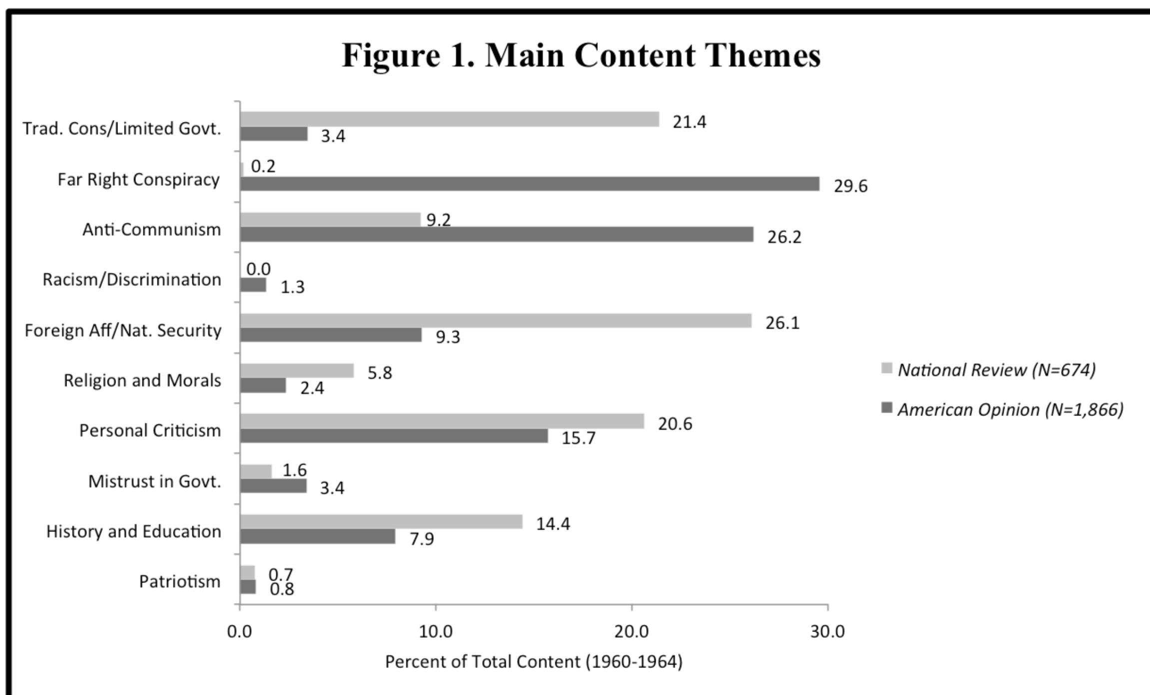
Conspiracy and Anti-Communism: The Literature Speaks for Itself

To begin my discussion of elite far-right messaging, I present my findings of content frames in Figure 1. Figure 1 compares the frequency of content frames in the *American Opinion* to the *National Review*. As my prior suspicions suggest, the majority of the content in the *American Opinion*, almost 30 percent, is conspiratorial, compared to

[38] Although interesting, the tertiary and quaternary content themes are not presented in detail for two reasons. First, not all of the content was extensive enough to allow for secondary and tertiary theme coding. Additionally, the reliability of such themes declines as the specific nature of the coding scheme increases. In other words, due to the limited content the secondary and tertiary themes rely upon, they are more subjective.

less than 10 percent of the content in the *National Review*. On the other hand, only 3 percent of the content in the *American Opinion* is about limited government, a standard conservative tenet, while limited government accounts for over 20 percent of the content in the *National Review.* Additionally, 26 percent of the content in the *National Review* is about foreign policy and national security, further confirming the periodical's traditional conservative aims. With almost 6 percent of the content dedicated to religion and morals, over 50 percent of the *National Review* reflects traditional post-war conservatism.

Figure 1. Main Content Themes



Although close to 10 percent of the content suggests intolerance to Communism, less than 1 percent is conspiratorial.

Contrary to the *National Review*, the content in the *American Opinion* is dominated by far-right conspiracy and anti-Communism. Overall, almost 30 percent of the *American Opinion* is conspiratorial, and 26 percent is intolerant to Communism. Comparatively, less than 4 percent of the *American Opinion* is concerned with limited

government, and traditional conservative themes account for less than 20 percent of the total content. Only a small amount of racist or discriminatory content appears in both the *American Opinion* and *National Review*. This is not surprising, as both Welch and Buckley understood the damage that bigotry could do to their movements. The bulk of the remaining content in both the *American Opinion* and *National Review* consists of personal criticisms as well as historical and educational material.

So far my analysis suggests that the dominant themes expressed in the literature of the Far Right differ from traditional conservatism. Coding for multiple sub-themes of content adds nuance to the initial trends observed. Figures 2 presents the frequency of the secondary content themes in *American Opinion* and *National Review*.

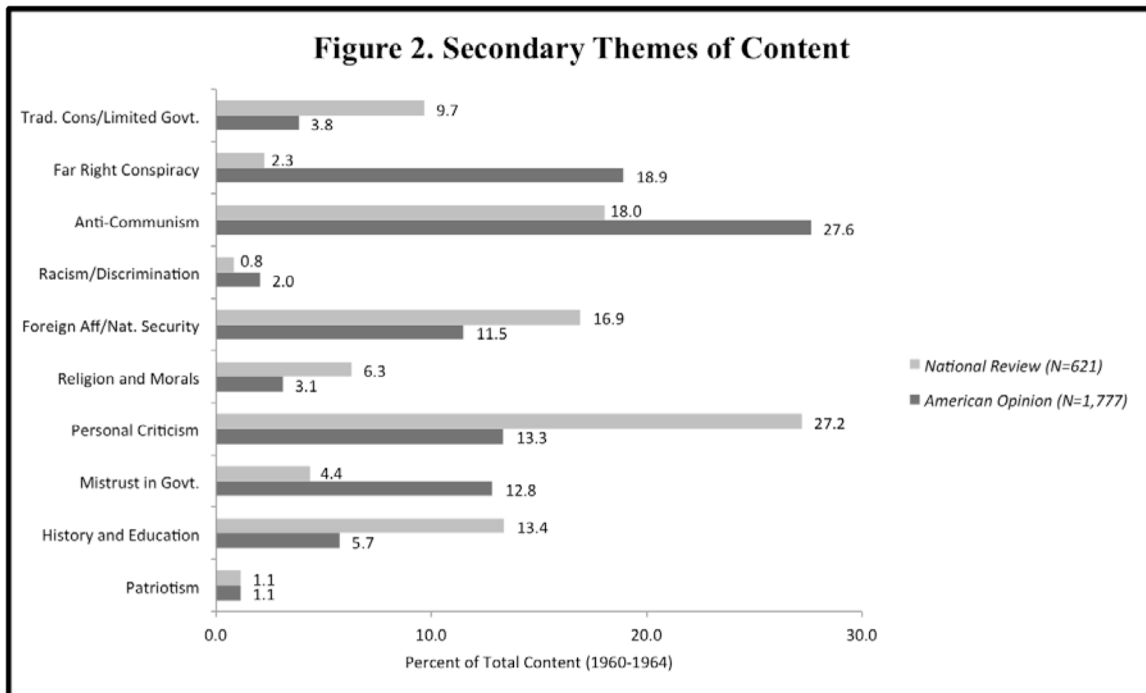


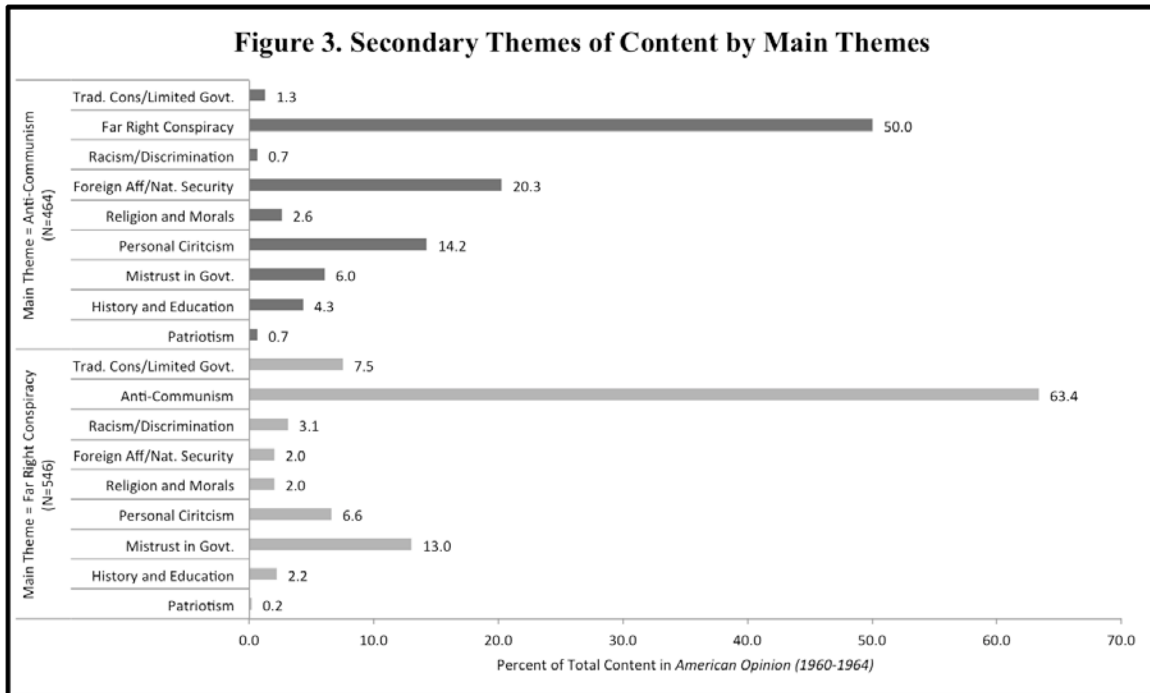
Figure 2. Secondary Themes of Content

As Figure 2 suggests, the trends observed in the main content themes continue to resonate throughout the literature. Although anti-Communism is a key sub-theme for both the *American Opinion* and *National Review*, the *National Review* falls short in the amount of

conspiratorial content when moving beyond the main content theme. Moreover, traditional conservative frames remain absent from the *American Opinion* as secondary themes. On the other hand, traditional conservative frames comprise one-third of the secondary content themes in the *National Review*.

To summarize, my results suggest that the content in the *American Opinion* is consumed by far-right conspiracies and anti-Communist themes. The *National Review*, on the other hand, contains anti-Communist sentiments, but fails to embrace far-right conspiracy theories. From here, additional analysis of the content of the *American Opinion* provides insight into the themes associated with subversion and far-right conspiracy. To be more precise, is there a relationship between the two types of content?

Figure 3 suggests that themes of far-right conspiracy and anti-Communism in the



American Opinion are related. As mentioned, conspiratorial content identifies subversives by linking individuals and groups to an international Communist plot to

control the world. Figure 3 exemplifies the association between the main content theme of far-right conspiracy and the secondary content theme of anti-Communism. To the point, a secondary content theme of anti-Communism accompanies a main theme of far-right conspiracy 63 percent of the time.

Concluding Thoughts

In this paper, I wanted to complete three objectives. First, I introduced a theory as to why individuals' sympathize with the Far Right in the 1960s. Contradictory to traditional conservative claims, I argued that individuals sympathized with the Far Right of the 1960s because they felt that their country was slipping away -- that dramatic social change was threatening to displace them atop the social ladder. The Far Right of the 1960s was reacting to uncomfortable social change that took the form of escalating Cold War pressure, the Civil Rights movement and international freedom movements across the globe. The changing world failed to match the perceived social reality that far-right sympathizers had grown to know and love. Anxious about confronting a new reality, individuals turn to the Far Right for solace and comfort.

Second, I place the Far Right of the 1960s in its appropriate historical context and I identify anxiety toward social change as a powerful mechanism driving far-right sympathy. While focusing on conspiracy, I suggest that the Far Right of the 1960s fits into a larger historical timeline of far-right movements reacting to uncomfortable social change. Each of the far-right movements I explore relies upon similar rhetoric and attracts sympathizers to a grand conspiracy declaring that America is under attack. By applying the same theoretical framework to the Know Nothing movement, the second-era

Ku Klux Klan movement, and the New Right and Tea Party movement, I am able to confidently move forward with my analysis of the Far Right in the 1960s.

Lastly, I examined the elite messaging of the 1960s by analyzing content in the *National Review* and *American Opinion.* My content analysis serves as a preliminary test of the theoretical framework. Considerable differences separate the *American Opinion* from the *National Review.* I found the literature of the Far Right filled with conspiracy theories and preoccupied with identifying communist subversives. The literature in the *American Opinion* fervently undermined social change and consistently reacted to events perceived as destroying America.

Even though my results support my initial claims, my analysis is not without limitations. Even though scholarship suggests that elite rhetoric influences how masses of people form their opinions and decide how to behave, I have yet to test if this is the case for the Far Right in the 1960s. In other words, are the messages of far-right elites actually influencing the attitudes and behaviors of movement sympathizers? In addition, there are a number of other factors that might explain far-right sympathy that I have yet to take into account. My content analysis suggests that traditional conservative issues are anything but a main concern of the Far Right; still, there are other factors, such as sociodemographic characteristics and partisanship that I have yet to test. As is often the case, my analysis raises as many interesting questions as it answers. As scholars continue to examine the Far Right, both historically and contemporaneously, I hope that my work both informs and provokes future research on right wing opposition to social progress and change.

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Appendix

The following appendix contains the detailed methodological procedures for the evidence presented in chapter 1. I drew on a content analysis of the *American Opinion* and the *National Review* from a five-year period from 1960 to 1964. My analysis provides insight into how the political environment of the 1960s was intepreted by elites by examining content from the *American Opinion* compared to content from the *National Review.* If the Far Right of the 1960s is truly about mainstrwam conservatism, the content frames from their primary national newsletter, the *American Opinion,* should reflect the content in the *National Review,* which was and still is considered the standard for mainstream conservative thought. I selected content themes to encompass both themes that accounted for large amounts of content and themes that accounted for competing explanations for far-right sympathy.

The content for the *American Opinion* consists of 2,312 articles from the periodical from 1960 to 1964. The *American Opinion* content universe was sampled, and each substantive section was coded for a main content theme and three sub-themes. The *American Opinion* was published 11 months out of the year, and one issue often contained the summer months of July, August and September.

Content for the *National Review* was collected by coding every major article in every other month of the periodical from 1960 to 1964. The *National Review* was published every month of the year such that a main newletter was followed by a smaller,

less comprehensive buttelin the next month. My analysis coded every main newsletter for a main content theme and three sub-themes, and consists of 957 articles. Figure 7 presents the number of articles in each periodical for each year I collected material.

My content analysis finished with an intercoder reliability of 0.82. The analysis in chapter 1 is limited to content frames with substantive meaning, thus eliminated Adminitrative and informational content and domestic military content content from my final examination. My final analysis examined 1,851 from the *American Opinion* and 669 articles from the *National Review.* Please see figure 8 below for the full content analsys results.

Frame Descriptions

Far Right conspiracy: This content frame captures any material that is deliberately false or conspiratorial in nature. This frame describes material accusing certain groups of subversion or world domination, as well as content filled with rhetoric intended to create or distort reality. This frame also describes content that suggests that the government or the president is bad for America and destroying the country.

Racism: This frame describes content that is bigoted or blatantly racist. Content in this frame is generally directed towards black Americans and the civil rights movement. This content frame also includes any derogatory language toward racial groups as well as any racist imagery.

Anti-communism and socialism: This frame describes content that is anti-communist or anti-socialist. Generally, this content accuses certain groups or individuals of having communist or socialist associations and beliefs. Content also describes the United States as communist and socialist. This frame also captures content that attempts to inform readers of the danger of communism and socialism, often highlighting the communist and socialist elements of the United States or other countries around the world.

Domestic military issues: This frame describes content that discusses the military and the use of the military with the borders of the United States. Content generally argues for or against the usefulness of a standing army and military use inside of the United States.

Limited government and state's rights: This frame describes content that makes a case against or criticizes government expansion or a large national government in general. This frame also contains content arguing for the expansion of state's rights. Content generally focuses on limiting government expansion, especially in relation to the nationalization of controversial policies such as integration and equal rights.

Foreign affairs and national security: This describes content about international affairs and countries other than the United States. Content generally describes international conflict. This frame also describes content that focuses on protecting the country from outside and internal threats. Content generally describes new security measures to protect the United States. This content frame also captures material intended to inform readers on global affairs and events in countries other than the United States.

History and education: This content frame describes material that informs readers of historical events and figures. The content is educational, and often tells the biographical story or recognizes a historical event that relates to current events or issues.

Mistrust in government: This describes material specifically questioning the character of political authorities or national figures. The material also questions the amount of trust Americans can put into institutions such as congress and the Supreme Court. This frame captures content that specifically questions how trustworthy individuals or institutions are.

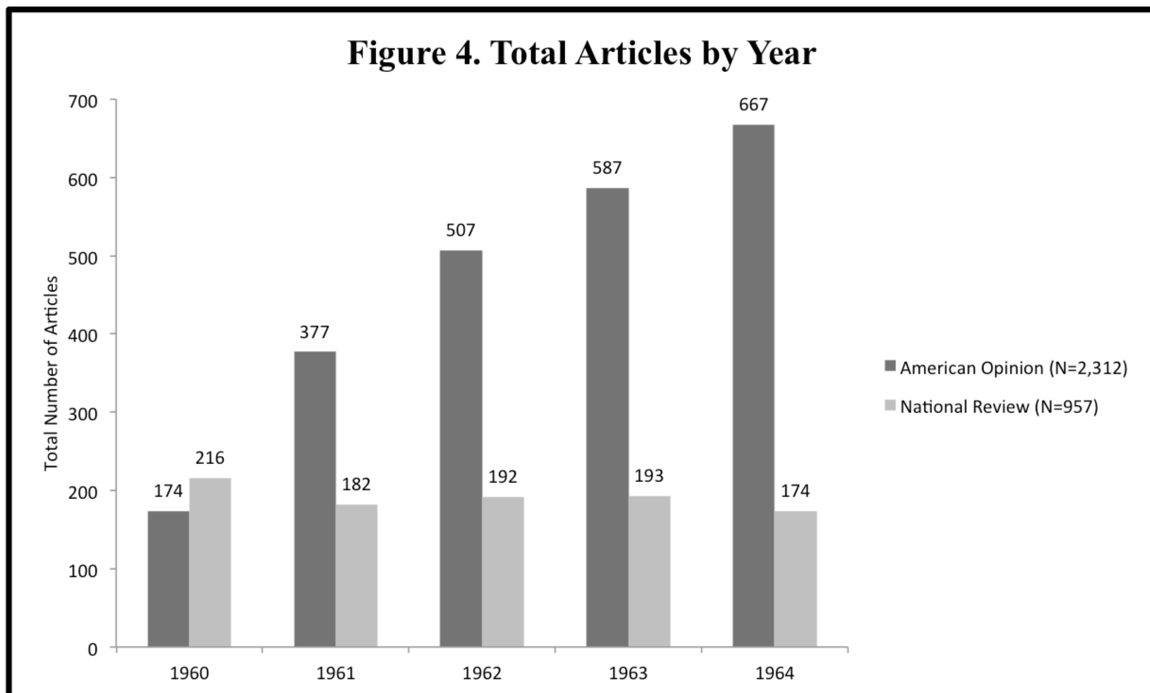
Criticism of political leaders and authorities: This frame describes content that criticizes political leaders and authorities for statements, decisions and actions that they have made. This content generally attacks liberal politicians, civil rights activists and foreign political leaders.

Religion and morals: This describes content about religion, moral predispositions and general attitudes on what is right and wrong. Content generally focuses on the importance of religion within American culture as well as the immorality of certain behaviors. Evangelical sentiments are also a focus of this content frame.

Patriotism: This describes content that focuses on the importance of loving America and remaining loyal to one’s country. This content is often in reference to an American

holiday such as the Fourth of July or Veterans Day. Content also references events, stories or biographies that emphasize the importance of national allegiance and expressing ones attachment to the United States.

Informational/Administrative and other content: This describes content that did not fit well into any of the identified content frames. Content generally focuses on local political issues or issues that are specific to a political agenda that does not fit into the national political scene. This frame also describes content that is informing readers of a political event. Content informing readers how to access information or of any changes coming to the periodical are also in this frame. Generally, content describes when political events are taking place or provides information about the authors of the literature.



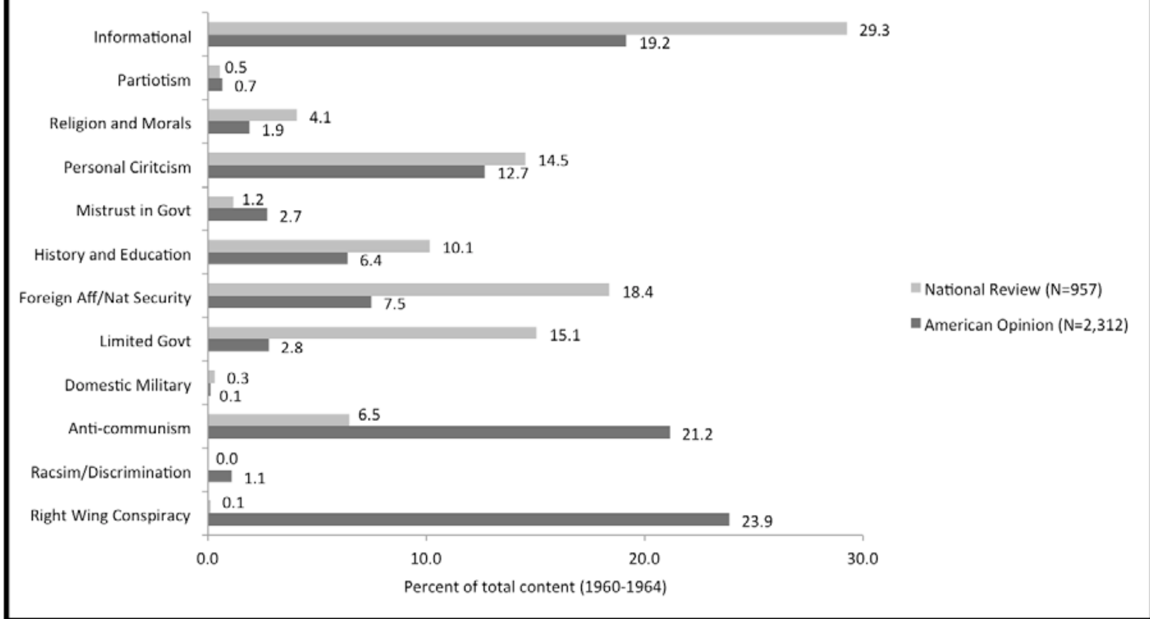


Figure 5. Main Content Themes (full results)
Informational
29.3
19.2
Partiotism
0.5
0.7
Religion and Morals
4.1
1.9
Personal Ciritcism
14.5
12.7
Mistrust in Govt
1.2
2.7
History and Education
10.1
6.4
Foreign Aff/Nat Security
18.4
7.5
Limited Govt
15.1
2.8
Domestic Military
0.3
0.1
Anti-communism
6.5
21.2
Racsim/Discrimination
0.0
1.1
Right Wing Conspiracy
0.1
23.9
0.0
10.0
20.0
30.0
Percent of total content (1960-1964)
National Review (N=957)
American Opinion (N=2,312)