

## The Relationship of Political Evangelicalism to Critical Thinking and Selected Sociopolitical Values in 2007

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### Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between political evangelicalism and both critical thinking and selected sociopolitical perspectives in a sample of Southeastern university students in late 2007. The findings showed that political evangelicalism was negatively correlated with critical thinking, critical patriotism, and respect for civil liberties but positively correlated with uncritical patriotism, emphasis on national security, militarism, threat of Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War. Compared with media reports highlighting evangelicals' sociopolitical perspectives near the beginning of the Iraq War, the current findings show that these perspectives have remained strong despite the subsequent course of the war.

### Introduction

[1] Considerable research has confirmed consistent and relatively strong relationships between evangelical moral values and self-serving political priorities. These priorities include infusing conservative Christian values into governmental actions, putting America's agenda first in the world community, and using military force to impose America's will on other nations (Williams, Bliss, and McCallum; Williams, Oh, and Bliss). However, these values are not synonymous with the theological premises of evangelicalism. To the extent that evangelicals espouse a fundamentalist view of Christian theology, they are likely to contend that the Bible is literally true and inerrant; Jesus is the Son of God; Jesus is the only person in history born of a virgin; redemption from sin is obtainable only through the crucifixion of Jesus; and Jesus will one day return to gather believers unto himself (Fundamentalist Christianity; Kellstedt and Smidt; Marsden).

[2] Although one can embrace fundamentalist beliefs without becoming heavily involved in political activity or can be deeply immersed in evangelical political issues without embracing

fundamentalist Christian theology, our past research has shown a strong empirical relationship ( $r = .84$ ) between political and theological evangelicalism, suggesting that those who embrace the theology are very likely to advocate the political agenda of evangelicalism. Plus, political evangelicalism and theological evangelicalism have shown the same pattern of relationships with other sociopolitical variables (e.g., nationalism, patriotism, tolerance of dissent), but the relationships tend to be stronger for political evangelicalism than theological evangelicalism (Williams, Oh, and Bliss).

[3] Notwithstanding the strong empirical linkage between theological and political evangelicalism, voices have emerged within the theological circles of Christian evangelicalism that advocate a different set of societal values from those advanced during the Bush administration of 2000 to 2008. For example, Wallis's book *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* advocates that Christians should mainly address peace, poverty, and social justice instead of being politically "known as pro-rich, pro-war, and only pro-American" (3). In a similar vein, the Red-Letter Christian movement emphasizes the teachings of Jesus regarding such actions as helping the poor and loving one's enemies (Wade). These evangelical issues would seem to have both theological and political traction in the future world community.

#### *Views regarding 9/11 and the Iraq War*

[4] In the more conventional political agenda of evangelicals, promotion of U.S. military dominance in the world has been among its strongest priorities. Political evangelicals were among the staunchest early supporters for the U.S. invasion of Iraq on the grounds that Saddam Hussein was involved in 9/11, had weapons of mass destruction that he intended to use against the U.S., and was part of an axis of evil (Durham). In a *CNN/Gallup/USA Today* poll in December of 2002, 84% of the highly religious respondents believed that the only way to neutralize Iraq's weapons threat was to remove Saddam Hussein from power, and 61% favored invading Iraq as a means of accomplishing that end (Smidt).

[5] Christian evangelicals were not the only societal group that advocated and supported the U.S. war with Iraq in 2003. In fact, in the aftermath of 9/11, a majority of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein was involved in 9/11 and had weapons of mass destruction that imminently threatened the security of America. Based on the *CNN/Gallup/USA Today* poll in December of 2002, Smidt found that 66% of Americans believed that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction and 81% believed that the only way to disarm Iraq was to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Consequently, approximately 75% of Americans supported the invasion of Iraq when it occurred in 2003 (Netzel).

[6] In the period from late 2003 to late 2007, many Americans changed their views about Saddam's role in 9/11 and his possession of weapons of mass destruction. After multiple investigations of the events surrounding the inception of the Iraq War, a majority of Americans eventually came to believe that Saddam was not involved in 9/11 and did not possess weapons of mass destruction in 2003. Furthermore, a majority of U.S. citizens eventually came to believe that the decision to go to war in Iraq was a bad decision. Whether Christian evangelicals would openly acknowledge in late 2007 that Saddam was not involved in 9/11 and did not have weapons of mass destruction was one issue addressed in the current study.

*Moral Agenda for America*

[7] As conditions in Iraq increasingly deteriorated from pre-war expectations in the 2004 to 2007 period, Christian conservatives began to refocus their moral compass for American society, emphasizing such issues as opposition to abortion, prohibition of same sex marriage, appointment of Christian judges, prayer in the public schools, intelligent design in science education, and government vouchers for attending Christian schools (Deckman; Marshall; Masci 2004; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison). This is not to claim that greater emphasis on the latter issues emerged strictly as a replacement for war-related values. Research clearly shows that several of these evangelical values pre-date 9/11 and the war in Iraq. For example, research (Deckman; Marshall) has revealed that Christian evangelicals and fundamentalists had previously been strongly supportive of teaching creationism in science courses, allowing prayer in the schools, and providing government vouchers for Christian education.

[8] The pervasive involvement of Christian evangelicals in American politics rests on the singular assumption that the U.S. was founded as a Christian nation and that political practices should reflect the Judeo-Christian heritage of our country (Guth et al. 2003). Questioning the foundational role of Judeo-Christian values in building and governing this nation typically is not tolerated within the evangelical sector of U.S. society (Williams, Oh, and Bliss). On the other hand, evangelicals are insistent on high visibility of their views within formal government structures and actions (e.g., prayer in the public schools, inclusion of “under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance, and display of the Ten Commandments in government buildings).

[9] The political impact of Christian evangelicalism on American society should not be minimized. There is probably no other large bloc of American voters so entrenched in conservative political values as Christian evangelicals (Guth et al. 2001; Kellstedt et al.; Layman,). The near monolithic nature of evangelical views, in combination with the size of their voting bloc (one-fourth to one-third of the U.S. population), makes this movement a formidable force in determining the outcome of elections, particularly when it joins forces with the military-industrial complex in society (Masci 2001). Yet Christian evangelicals view themselves on the defensive from media and academic attacks, particularly from higher education. Believing that their values are relentlessly attacked, evangelicals feel compelled to assert their values by forging alliances with whatever political coalition might politically advocate evangelical values to get elected and dominate American politics.

*American Pre-eminence*

[10] Christian evangelicals are not only committed to promoting their values within the framework of the U.S. government, they are also committed to promoting the interests of the U.S. government within the international community. Evangelicals report high patriotism, nationalism, and militarism (Mockabee; Williams, Bliss, and McCallum; Williams, Oh, and Bliss). These relationships seem to suggest that Christian evangelicals have an elevated image of the U.S. and its influence in the world, with much of their international political agenda centered on the dominance of the U.S. These nationalistic perspectives are so embedded in Christian evangelicalism that church leaders sometimes advocate them even within religious contexts (e.g., in the church, from the pulpit).

[11] Although political evangelicals have reported strong patriotism, no research has distinguished their responses to constructive and blind patriotism. These latter terms were popularized in the literature by Schatz, Staub, and Lavine and are equivalent to what we refer to in this article as critical and uncritical patriotism. Constructive patriotism represents a commitment to the provisions of the U.S. Constitution, including due process for both citizens and non-citizens. This commitment may involve assertive questioning of government actions that run counter to the guarantees of the Constitution. On the other hand, blind patriotism involves support for current policies of the government, especially in the time of war. Criticism of government action in wartime is viewed as demoralizing our troops and as helping the enemy.

[12] The U.S. response to the threat of terrorism has become enmeshed in the controversy over respect for civil liberties and emphasis on national security. Previous research (Williams, Oh, and Bliss) has shown a strong negative relationship between evangelicalism and respect for civil liberties and tolerance of dissent. Especially relevant to discussion of civil liberties within the evangelical community would be treatment of wartime detainees, given the teachings in the New Testament regarding the treatment of those in prison. Based on these teachings, one might expect evangelicals to take an extremely humanitarian position on due-process rights for detainees and to oppose the use of any kind of torture on prisoners. With respect to emphasis on national security, the evangelical emphasis on aggressively fighting terrorism by any means possible might suggest a strong emphasis on national security even to the extent of compromising some civil liberties. Again, this aggressive stance of evangelicals toward enemies of the U.S. would seem counter to the theological notions of turning the other cheek and loving one's enemies.

#### *Cognitive Skills of Christian Evangelicals*

[13] An aspect of Christian evangelicalism that has received minimal attention in the literature is the level of cognitive problem solving associated with this sociopolitical orientation. It may be that Christian conservatism represents not only different attitudinal perspectives about a Judeo-Christian agenda within American politics but also different cognitive skills than those of a more secular persuasion. The literature on the cognitive characteristics of politically active Christian evangelicals is quite limited. For example, the research literature does not address whether the right-wing Christian voting bloc has a different level of critical thinking skills than more secular groups within American society. Given that critical thinking requires the use of the most credible evidence to reach conclusions about complex problems and questions, one might suspect that Christian activists' interpretation of political information reflects a limitation in critical thinking (Facione). The problem may rest on the scope of information that Christian evangelicals acquire or their analysis of acquired information counter to their views.

#### *Scope of the Current Study*

[14] The current study examined in late 2007 the relationships between political evangelicalism and other sociopolitical variables, with these relationships potentially more data-based now than was the case in 2003 at the onset of the Iraq War. For example, Saddam Hussein's alleged involvement in 9/11 and the claim of weapons of mass

destruction in Iraq could look very different now from what was considered a near consensus conclusion by Christian evangelicals in 2003 (e.g., CNN 2004a, 2004b; Hastings; Land 2002, 2003). An additional purpose of the study was to examine a possible relationship between political evangelicalism and critical thinking. Although little research has addressed this relationship, it could be that Christian evangelicalism reflects a different level of thinking as well as differences in sociopolitical perspectives.

## Method

### *Participants*

[15] Students ( $N = 232$ ) in six sections of an undergraduate human development course required for entry into the teacher-education program of a large state university in the Southeastern U.S. participated in the study in the fall of 2007. Students could earn a small amount of credit (less than 2% of the total credit) for their participation. The gender breakdown of the sample was three-fourths females and one-fourth males. The academic classification of the sample was 3% freshmen, 37% sophomores, 34% juniors, 16% seniors, and 11% post-graduates. In a second stage of the analysis, students who were high (top quartile,  $n = 54$ ) or low (bottom quartile,  $n = 56$ ) on political evangelicalism were compared on critical thinking and the selected sociopolitical variables.

### *Course Structure*

[16] The course was divided into five units: physical development, cognitive development, social development, psychological development, and values development. The course was supervised by a senior professor who developed all course materials and assessment procedures. The supervisor trained doctoral students in School Psychology to teach the course content in a relatively standardized way. Additionally, all sections of the course had the same content, same assessments, and same schedule. Students took the course in the Fall semester of 2007.

### *Instruments*

[17] All students took the *Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal-Form S* (WGCTA) on the first or second day of class (Watson and Glaser). Form S is a shorter version of the WGCTA Form A and was designed especially for adults. Form S includes 40-items to be taken in one-half hour. Items are anchored in passages that students evaluate with respect to logical assumptions, strength of argument, and defensible conclusions. The seminal cognitive demand of the test is to evaluate what conclusions logically follow from stated evidence or assumptions. In that respect, the test assesses what other major authorities on critical thinking view as the essence of critical thinking – constructing defensible conclusions from available evidence and evaluating whether claims match evidence relevant to those claims (Facione). With regard to its psychometric standing, the manual for the WGCTA indicates that the internal consistency for Form S is .81; test-retest reliability is .81; and correlations with ACT and SAT tests vary from the mid .30s to the mid .80s.

[18] The political evangelicalism scale included 10 items assumed to be politically important to Christian evangelicals, including such issues as public prayer in the schools, prohibition of same-sex marriages, and appointment of judges who embrace Christian values. All of the

political evangelicalism items are included in Table 1. Students responded to these items on a Likert scale including the following options: *strongly agree*, *agree*, *uncertain*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Responses were scored in the direction of agreement with the items, with strongly agree receiving 5 points credit and strongly disagree 1 point credit. Thus, high scores meant that students strongly embraced political application of Christian evangelical values in American government, whereas low scores reflected strong opposition to the political application of Christian evangelical values.

Table 1. Items on the Political Evangelicalism Measure

1. Public prayer should be permitted in the schools.
2. Our nation should formally acknowledge God as the foundation of our heritage and government.
3. God authorizes our nation to fight evil through military intervention.
4. We should elect leaders who reflect the religious values of our country's heritage.
5. Elected leaders should be allowed to display religious symbols (such as the Ten Commandments, Crucifix) in public places.
6. The basic moral standards of our society should be based on the Bible.
7. Same-sex marriage is clearly condemned in the Bible and should be prohibited in our society.
8. Abortion is counter to the teachings of the Bible and should be prohibited in our society.
9. Only judges who embrace conservative Christian values should be appointed to the Supreme Court.
10. The phrase "under God" should be retained in our Pledge of Allegiance.

[19] The remaining seven sociopolitical scales all had ten items to which students responded on the same Likert scale used for the political evangelicalism measure. The seven scales included critical patriotism, uncritical patriotism, respect for civil liberties, emphasis on national security, militarism, perceived threat of Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War (see a listing of items for these scales in the Appendix). Critical patriotism reflected willingness to question whether the U.S. was living up to its highest ideals; uncritical patriotism represented unquestioning support for current U.S. policies and practices; respect for civil liberties signified respect for due process procedures for anyone suspected of wrong-doing by the government; emphasis on national security highlighted the necessity of using strong surveillance and detention measures to protect the nation from terrorist threats; militarism represented a belief in the moral and practical efficacy of accomplishing U.S. international goals through military force; threat of Saddam Hussein underscored the alleged role of Saddam in 9/11 and his alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction prior to the U.S. invasion of Iraq; and support for the Iraq war embodied the claim that going to war in Iraq is retrospectively defensible and will prove worthwhile both for the U.S. and Iraq.

## Results

### *Statistical Unity of the Sociopolitical Measures*

[20] The statistical unity of the sociopolitical scales was determined through an assessment of internal consistency and confirmatory factor analysis. The internal consistency of items included in each measure was consistently high across measures: political evangelicalism = .91, critical patriotism = .84, uncritical patriotism = .89, civil liberties = .73, national security = .81, Hussein threat = .87, and support for the Iraq War = .88. These high internal consistency coefficients indicate that responses to the items in each measure are highly related to one another and appear to be measuring the same construct.

[21] The confirmatory factor analysis used was the chi square/degrees of freedom ratio. A ratio of 3.00 or less represents a favorable fit between the quantitative grouping of responses to items and the predetermined conceptual grouping of items (Kline). However, some researchers claim that a ratio of up to 5.00 would also be acceptable (Garson). The ratios for the various sociopolitical subscales were as follows: political evangelicalism = 3.43, critical patriotism = 3.82, uncritical patriotism = 2.83, civil liberties = 2.38, national security = 1.25, Hussein = 4.97, and support for the Iraq war = 4.30.

### *Relationships between Political Evangelicalism and Comparison Variables*

[22] Correlations between political evangelicalism and all the sociopolitical variables were significant at the .01 level, meaning that correlations that high would not occur by chance more than 1 time out of 100. Specifically, the correlations between political evangelicalism and the sociopolitical comparison variables were the following: critical patriotism = -.30, uncritical patriotism = .50, respect for civil liberties = -.30, emphasis on national security = .47, militarism = .45, perceived threat of Saddam Hussein = .55, and support for the Iraq War = .52. Overall, this correlational pattern demonstrates an unquestioning and aggressive approach toward protecting America's security and dominance in the world.

[23] The correlation between political evangelicalism and critical thinking (-.18) was statistically significant at the .01 level. Nonetheless, this correlation was significantly ( $p < .001$ ) lower than the correlations obtained between political evangelicalism and uncritical patriotism, emphasis on national security, militarism, threat of Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War. The correlation between political evangelicalism and critical thinking was directionally consistent with the negative correlations between evangelicalism and both critical patriotism and respect for civil liberties, but directionally counter to the positive correlations between evangelicalism and uncritical patriotism, emphasis on national security, militarism, threat of Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War.

### *Comparisons between High and Low Political Evangelicalism Groups*

[24] Table 2 shows that students scoring in the top and bottom quartiles on political evangelicalism differed significantly on all comparison variables, including critical thinking. The top evangelical group obtained an evangelicalism mean of 43.93, whereas the bottom evangelical group obtained an evangelicalism mean of 19.12. This difference in means indicates that on the average the top group agreed with the evangelicalism items and the bottom group disagreed with those items. Overall, the high and low evangelical groups

differed significantly ( $p < .001$ ) on all group comparisons of means. Specifically, the high evangelical group was significantly higher than the low group on uncritical patriotism, national security, militarism, threat of Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War. Conversely, the high evangelical group was significantly lower than the low group on critical thinking, critical patriotism, and respect for civil liberties.

Table 2. Differences between High and Low Evangelicals on Comparison Variables

Dependent Measure	Group	<i>n</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i> value	Significance
Critical thinking	High evangelicals	54	26.04	(5.34)	-2.71	$p < .01$
	Low evangelicals	56	28.59	(4.52)		
Critical patriotism	High evangelicals	54	37.11	(5.84)	-4.31	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	58	41.53	(5.02)		
Uncritical patriotism	High evangelicals	56	30.57	(6.38)	8.15	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	57	20.58	(6.65)		
Civil liberties	High evangelicals	56	33.23	(5.08)	-4.00	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	57	37.46	(6.10)		
National security	High evangelicals	54	34.81	(5.27)	6.21	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	58	27.02	(7.85)		
Militarism	High evangelicals	55	31.55	(5.84)	6.72	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	58	23.84	(6.32)		
Saddam threat	High evangelicals	56	35.93	(4.63)	7.40	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	58	27.72	(6.94)		
Pro Iraq War	High evangelicals	56	33.14	(5.84)	7.41	$p < .001$
	Low evangelicals	58	23.88	(7.39)		

## Discussion

[25] The correlation coefficients and group differences both point to a sociopolitical pattern for political evangelicalism that appears highly consistent with the political values of the U.S. Presidential Administration between 2000 and 2007. Political evangelicalism and political conservatism appears to be two sides of the same coin in that Presidential Administration, representing an intractable integration of conservative religious and political values. The relationship between evangelicals and leaders of the Republican Party appears to have been reciprocal, with party leaders beholden to evangelicals for helping them get elected and



evangelicals dependent on Republican leaders to implement their sociopolitical agenda in the larger society (Guth et al. 2001; Masci 2004; Mockabee). Counter to the apparent pacifism and compassion of the Jesus whom they claim to serve, evangelicals appear to insist on hard-line control of the U.S. society and of other nations with which the U.S. deals.

[26] It is not surprising that political evangelicalism is related to a variety of conservative sociopolitical values, but the notion of evangelicalism also appears somewhat related to cognitive skills. Critical thinking as assessed in this study represents the ability to reach sound conclusions from available evidence. The evangelicals' limitation in critical thinking is most graphically represented in their evaluation of evidence regarding causation for the Iraq War. Although many U.S. citizens misunderstood the evidence near the beginning of the Iraq War as to the role of Saddam Hussein in the events of 9/11 and his possession of weapons of mass destruction, repeated evidence since the early years of the war should have abundantly clarified those misconceptions. Yet in late 2007, political evangelicalism continued to be substantially correlated with such issues as the threat of Saddam Hussein and support for the war.

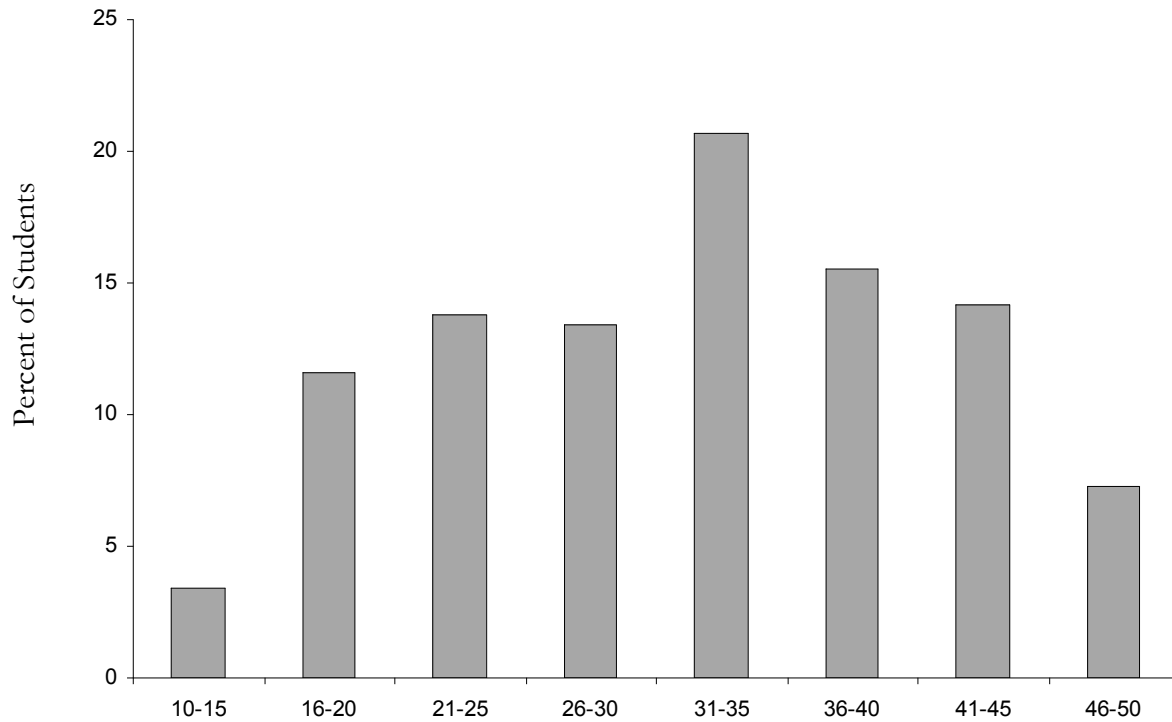
[27] Attitudinal bias could block openness to evidence counter to one's views, leading to incomplete and biased evidence about a political issue. On the other hand, the negative relationship between evangelicalism and critical thinking suggests the possibility of a cognitive limitation in the ability to think critically about mixed evidence. Living in the U.S. for five years since the beginning of the Iraq War without being aware of the evidence challenging the claims of 2003 regarding the conditions leading up to the war seems unlikely. Notwithstanding, a deficiency in critical thinking may blur one's potential to formulate clear and defensible conclusions from available evidence. For example, some still argue that the failure to find evidence that Saddam was involved in 9/11 and had weapons of mass destruction in 2003 probably just means he covered his tracks extremely well.

[28] The relationship between political evangelicalism and critical thinking must not be overstated. Level of critical thinking is significantly associated with political evangelicalism but accounts for a negligible amount of the variance in scores on political evangelicalism (approximately 3%). Upgrading the critical thinking skills of political evangelicals would not likely have a substantial effect on their political agenda. On the other hand, examining the difference between critical and uncritical patriotism with Christian evangelicals might have a considerable impact on their worldview.

[29] An important issue regarding this study is the extent to which our sample is representative of the broader population of U.S. citizens with regard to evangelicalism. Although that issue cannot be conclusively resolved from the current data, our sample of college students does approximate a normal distribution of scores on political evangelicalism. It is slightly skewed toward high evangelicalism, with few extremely low scores on this construct (see Figure 1). Specifically, the mean score on political evangelicalism was 31.65, with a standard deviation of 9.44. These data indicate that approximately 68% of our distribution scored between 22.21 and 41.09 on the evangelicalism measure, with the mean item response slightly above an uncertain level and 68% of the item responses ranging from disagree to agree. With regard to extreme scores,

more than twice as many students scored between 46 and 50 as between 10 and 15 (high and low score ranges on political evangelicalism).

Figure 1. Distribution of Political Evangelicalism Scores



[30] In addition to examining the evangelical scores within our high and low evangelical groups, we also contrasted the pattern of scores on other variables within each group. Starting with critical thinking, the means of the high and low evangelical groups (26.03 and 28.59, respectively) approximate the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> percentiles on a normative sample of the college-educated (Watson and Glaser). Consequently, although our evangelical groups may reflect high- or low-end evangelical scores, the critical thinking scores of the two groups are much nearer to the low than the high end of the critical thinking distribution within the normative sample of college educated. Consequently, the restricted range of critical thinking scores in our sample undoubtedly reduced the difference in critical thinking scores between the two evangelical groups, suggesting that the critical thinking differences between the two evangelical groups probably underestimate critical thinking differences between such groups in a broader range of evangelical scores that would likely be obtained across different regions of the U.S.

[31] Examination of the mean scores on critical and uncritical patriotism in the two evangelical groups indicates that both groups were inclined toward higher scores on critical patriotism than on uncritical patriotism. Specifically, high evangelicals obtained a mean score somewhat below the agree level on critical patriotism, whereas low evangelicals obtained a mean score slightly above the agree level on critical patriotism. Although these critical-

patriotism means were significantly different, both means were nearer the agreement than the disagreement level on the critical-patriotism items. In contrast, the mean scores on uncritical patriotism were positioned more toward the lower end of that distribution. The high evangelicals obtained a mean score on uncritical patriotism that reflects uncertainty toward this notion, whereas the low evangelicals obtained a mean score at the disagree level on uncritical patriotism.

[32] Another pair of variables that provided an illuminating contrast between the high and low evangelical groups was respect for civil liberties and emphasis on national security. The contrast was greater for civil liberties than national security. The high evangelicals scored at approximately the same level on both of these variables (somewhat above the uncertain level), whereas the low evangelicals scored ten points higher (near an agree level) on respect for civil liberties than on emphasis on national security (somewhat below the uncertain level). Thus, the contrast between the group responses to the civil liberties and national security measures were more pronounced for the low evangelicals than the high evangelicals. The high evangelical group was about equally supportive of civil liberties and national security, whereas the low group was much more supportive of civil liberties than national security.

[33] The pattern of evangelical group differences for the three remaining sociopolitical variables (militarism, threat of Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War) was approximately equivalent across variables, with the high evangelical group scoring between uncertain and agree on all three variables and the low evangelical group scoring between uncertain and disagree on these variables. The differences in the high and low means ranged from 7.71 on militarism to 9.27 on support for the Iraq War. Both evangelical groups scored higher on the threat posed by Saddam Hussein than on militarism or support for the Iraq War, with the high-evangelical mean on the Saddam threat moderately below the agree level and the low-evangelical mean moderately below the uncertain level. Thus, even after Saddam's verified lack of participation in 9/11, his lack of collaboration with Osama bin Laden, the absence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, Saddam's removal from power, and his eventual execution, our students still entertained considerable ambivalence regarding the danger he posed to the U.S.

### **Concluding Observations**

[34] This study of political evangelicalism's relationship to critical thinking and prominent sociopolitical variables revealed significant relationships on all dimensions. Higher scores on evangelicalism were associated with higher scores on uncritical patriotism, emphasis on national security, militarism, threat posed by Saddam Hussein, and support for the Iraq War, but with lower scores on critical thinking, critical patriotism, and respect for civil liberties. The societal vision of political evangelicals is strongly anchored in attitudinal perspectives and to a lesser degree in critical thinking skills. Thus, the political agenda of evangelicals appears to be more a function of sociopolitical values than critical thinking skills.

[35] In evaluating the relationships between political evangelicalism and the sociopolitical variables included in this study, the reader should keep in mind that our measure of political evangelicalism does not reflect the theological fundamentals often associated with evangelicalism. Neither does it reflect some of the more recent societal emphases in

evangelical circles pertaining to peace, poverty, and social justice. The empirical relationships between this latter brand of political evangelicalism and the sociopolitical issues addressed in this study remain to be examined in future research.

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## Appendix

### Items in Comparison Sociopolitical Measures

*Critical Patriotism (items adapted from Schatz et al.: 159)*

1. We should have complete freedom to criticize our country even in the time of war.
2. Citizens should work hard to move their country in a positive direction.
3. If you love your country, you should notice its problems and work hard to correct them.
4. If I criticize my country, I do so out of love for the country.
5. I oppose some policies of my country because I care about my country and want to improve it.
6. I express love for my country by supporting efforts to change it for the better.
7. My love of country demands that I speak out against popular but potentially destructive policies.
8. Because I identify with my country, some of its actions make me feel sad.
9. Protesting against the actions of our country can sometimes reflect the highest level of patriotism.
10. If another country disagreed with an important policy of our country, I would not necessarily support my country's position.

*Uncritical Patriotism (items adapted from Schatz et al.: 159)*

11. People who do not wholeheartedly support our country should live somewhere else.
12. Our country is virtually always right.
13. I would support my country right or wrong.
14. Those who protest our country's military actions are unpatriotic.
15. I believe our country's policies are almost always the morally correct ones.
16. People should *not* constantly try to change the way things are in our country.
17. I support the policies of this nation for the very reason that they are the policies of my country.
18. There is too much criticism of our country in the world.
19. It is unpatriotic for citizens to criticize their country.
20. People should display their national flag as a way of showing unconditional support for their country's actions.

*Respect for civil liberties*

21. No one should be arrested and kept in jail without being formally charged.
22. Anyone put in jail for any reason should have access to legal counsel.
23. Interrogation of military prisoners should strictly follow the code of the Geneva Conventions.
24. Civil liberties of U.S. citizens and individuals under U.S. jurisdiction should not be compromised under any circumstances.
25. Suspected terrorists from other countries who are imprisoned by our government should have the same legal rights to due process as citizens of our own country.
26. Classified information should not be used to convict someone of terrorist acts without the accused being given access to that information.
27. No form of physical pain should be used to gain information from a suspected terrorist.
28. No form of psychological pressure (e.g., humiliation, threats) should be used to gain information from a suspected terrorist.
29. Libraries and phone companies should be allowed to inform their customers that the government is investigating their personal records.
30. The most important job of our leaders is to protect the civil rights of all individuals under the control of our country.

*Emphasis on national security*

31. Wiretapping a person's phone messages without a court order can be indispensable in protecting national security.
32. Newspaper reporters should not publish any information about their government that would compromise national security.
33. Indefinite detention of individuals who might have ties to terrorist groups is necessary to protect our country.
34. In matters of national security, we should trust the judgment of our President to do what is in the best interest of the country.
35. Any person failing to reveal information that might have prevented the death of civilians should be subject to the death penalty.
36. Our government needs to put some suspected terrorists in secret prisons outside the country to gain information from them that might affect national security.
37. Giving money to groups or causes known to oppose our government in wartime constitutes an act of treason punishable by imprisonment and possible death.
38. Causing physical and psychological distress is a valuable tool in getting suspected terrorists to talk.



39. Pre-emptive warfare is a necessary strategy for preventing terrorist acts against our country.
40. The most important job of our leaders is to protect the country from possible enemy attacks.

*Militarism*

41. Our nation's intentions in engaging in military combat are virtually always honorable.
42. Militarily withdrawing from a war that appears to be unsuccessful would be a sign of weakness on the part of our leaders.
43. Under no circumstances should our country ever admit defeat in a war.
44. Having a strong military is the most effective deterrent to terrorism.
45. Having one dominant military force in the world helps to promote international peace.
46. Our nation has a right to have nuclear weapons even if other nations are prohibited from having such weapons.
47. Virtually all of our soldiers behave honorably in military combat.
48. Soldiers accused of inhumane actions in the context of war should be tried only by their own military.
49. If our nation persists with a military mission long enough, that mission will eventually prove successful.
50. In wartime, our military deserves the complete support of the nation's citizens.

*Threat of Saddam Hussein*

51. Saddam Hussein was in some way involved in the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.
52. Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction when the U.S. made the decision to attack Iraq in 2003.
53. Saddam Hussein either concealed or shipped his weapons of mass destruction out of the country just before the U.S. invaded Iraq.
54. Under Saddam Hussein, Iraq was the stronghold of radical Islamic terrorist groups.
55. All attempts by the U.N. to determine if Iraq had weapons of mass destruction had been exhausted when the U.S. made the decision to invade Iraq in 2003.
56. Prior to 2003 Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden had collaborated on ways to attack the U.S.
57. Saddam Hussein presented an imminent and deadly threat to the U.S. at the time the U.S. President decided to invade Iraq in 2003.

58. At the time the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003, Saddam Hussein was killing thousands of his own people.
59. Historically, Saddam had rejected all diplomatic attempts by the U.S. to work with him
60. Overall, the world is a safer place because the U.S. removed Saddam Hussein from power.

*Support for the Iraq War*

61. When the U.S. decided to invade Iraq in 2003, our government had no intelligence indicating that insurgent resistance would likely follow the U.S. military invasion.
62. There was no way that the U.S. could predict in 2003 that sectarian violence was likely to become widespread following the U.S. military invasion.
63. Our government did everything it could to obtain complete and accurate intelligence regarding Iraq's possession of weapons of mass destruction prior to the U.S. invasion in 2003.
64. Our government's decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was clearly based on the best evidence available at that time.
65. Of all countries hostile to the U.S. in 2003, Iraq presented the greatest threat to U.S. national security.
66. The fact that no major terrorist attack has occurred on the U.S. mainland since 9/11 proves that the war in Iraq has contributed significantly to the security of the U.S.
67. Our country's military attack on Iraq was a reasonable and legitimate response to 9/11.
68. As a result of U.S. action, Iraq has developed a democratic system of government that will eventually become a model for all the Middle East.
69. The U.S. military surge in Iraq in 2007 will work if we only give it time.
70. Losing the War in Iraq would have long-term catastrophic consequences for the U.S.