Mort Blackwell

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THE CONNECTICUT MUTUAL LIFE REPORT on American Values in the '80s:

The Impact of Belief

CONDUCTED BY RESEARCH AND FORECASTS, INC.
COMMISSIONED BY CONNECTICUT MUTUAL
LIFE INSURANCE CO.

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

A total of 2,018 hour-long telephone interviews with members of the general public were conducted. Of these, 1,610 were selected randomly from the general population. In addition, Blacks, senior citizens (65 years or older), and youths (between the ages of 14 and 20) were oversampled. These oversample interviews were conducted in order to allow statistically reliable conclusions to be drawn concerning how these groups differ from, and are similar to, the rest of the population. The number of Blacks, senior citizens, and youth were weighted down to correspond with their actual distribution within the U.S. population. The number of respondents for most questions therefore totals approximately 1,600.

In addition to the survey of the general public, an eight-page questionnaire was mailed to 4,383 leaders in the following fields: business, law and justice, education, government, military, news media, religion, science, and voluntary associations. Responses from 1,762 leaders were received, representing an extraordinarily high mail response rate from a group of this sort. The responses from the leadership samples are reported separately from those of the general public and can be found in chapters six and seven of this report.

In all, approximately 1.5 million bits of information were collected in the survey of the general public, and approximately 900,000 in the survey of leaders. In our analysis of these data, thousands of relationships between different variables (between age, for example, and factors such as frequency of voting, belief that abortion is immoral, etc.) were explored before coming to the conclusions documented in this report.

PREFACE

We are a life insurance organization and individual life means a lot to us -- not only actuarially, but in terms of one's quality of life. Individual opinions also mean a lot to us. In order to uncover key values in a new decade, we decided to pursue a major undertaking -- a nationwide survey -- to probe for the basic beliefs and core values of a diverse cross sampling of Americans.

We believed that learning more about the desires, expectations and judgments of individuals in America today would provide us with useful insights about how people make decisions and how people ascribe values to their actions and aspirations. But, we realized that Connecticut Mutual was in no position to speak for America. So, we commissioned a study on American values in the '80s "to let America speak for itself." We plan to use the information developed from this survey to better prepare ourselves to deal with the critical issues of the future. Our hope is that others who read this survey will also benefit from it.

From the outset, the goal of this study was to go beyond a mere recitation of America's most important and most deeply felt values. Rather, we were interested in determining why Americans feel the way they do by examining what factors contribute to their feelings about their personal relationships, their work, their religious commitment, life in their communities, and participation or lack of participation in our political system.

In addition, we wanted to discover to what extent the public and their leaders hold similar views and attitudes. Consequently, the study in part explores the attitudes and behavior of nine different leadership groups.

Some of what America had to say for itself surprised us. Some of what America had to say concerned us. Some of what America had to say made us feel confident that we are still a nation of individuals who have retained the idealism and promise of our founding fathers.

Edward B. Bates, Chairman

Denis F. Mullane, President

INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut Mutual Life Report on American Values in the '80s: The Impact of Belief was initiated as a broad survey intent on investigating the extent to which traditional American values have remained prevalent in contemporary society. The study additionally sought to identify the beliefs and attitudes of leaders, and to compare them to those of the public.

This study, however, goes far beyond simply identifying the values likely to assume significance in the coming decades. Rather, it also explores the foundations which support belief in American values. What factors affect and predict the way Americans feel about themselves and about the society in which we live? And to what extent are our leaders in harmony with the public?

In order to identify the foundations of contemporary American values, the impact of traditional explanatory factors, such as age, gender, race, education and income were analyzed. Age, for example, was found to positively affect a number of American values and behavior, including community involvement (older Americans are more likely than younger Americans to vote, attend community meetings, etc.). Similarly, although to a lesser extent, one's education, occupational status, political orientation, income, and place of residence also affect certain attitudes.

Yet in investigating major aspects of American life -- community involvement, political and moral beliefs, personal relationships, and work -- time and again, systematic analysis led to the one factor that consistently and dramatically affects the values and behavior of Americans. This factor is level of religious commitment.* The initial intention of this study was not to prepare a report on the impact of religion on American life, but the pattern of responses was compelling.

It is widely accepted that political-religious groups such as the Moral Majority and the Christian Voice were a significant force in recent Congressional and Presidential elections. But no evidence has yet been collected that systematically documents the origins, popularity and consequences of their striking appeal to moral and religous participation in political affairs. The Connecticut Mutual Life Report discovers that the impact of religious belief reaches far beyond the realm of politics, and has penetrated virtually every dimension of American experience. This force is rapidly becoming a more powerful factor in American life than whether someone is liberal or conservative, male or female, young or old, or a blue-collar or white-collar worker.

*The measure of religious commitment used throughout this report goes beyond participation in organized religion. Rather, it is based on a sophisticated scale composed of eight items: feeling that God loves you, engaging in prayer, attending religious services, reading the Bible, having a religious experience, participating in a church social activity, encouraging others to turn to religion, and listening to religious broadcasts.

This report identifies a cohesive and powerful group of Americans, approximately 45 million strong,* as "intensely religious," and demonstrates that religious Americans are likely to vote often and to become highly involved in their local communities. As a consequence, the effect of this group is spreading across the nation. These Americans have been able to inject religious and moral issues directly into political discourse, extending their influence far beyond that which their numerical strength alone would suggest. The Connecticut Mutual Life Report investigates in detail the characteristics and impact of this religious and related moral current.

This study also identifies a large pool of Americans of all ages who can be considered "latently" religious, and therefore susceptible to a call to faith. Approximately three out of every four U.S. citizens describe themselves as religious and say that religion would become a more important factor in their lives if they knew they had only six months to live. Our findings suggest that the increasing impact of religion on our social and political institutions may be only the beginning of a trend that could change the face of America.

Evidence for growing involvement of morality in politics is abundant. Organized political-religious groups demand that candidates take clear positions on moral issues. They seek to defeat specific candidates who are not considered sufficiently moralistic on selected issues, and even promote single issue candidates for office.

*The 10% of the population identified as "highest" in their religious commitment, and the 16% identified as "high," combine to total 26% of the 174 million Americans 14 years and older (Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census), or approximately 45 million people.

This development is in striking contrast with one of the characteristics of early American religious practice. Writing in the 1830s, the French philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville noted that the fragmentation of American religion into innumerable sects prevented it from developing a preeminent authority. A religion could only be destroyed, he believed, by involvement in the shifting currents of political controversy. Tocqueville considered the American doctrine that exalted separation of church and state a healthy buffer, allowing religion to flourish relatively isolated from controversy.

To characterize the growing visibility of religion today as a completely new phenomenon, however, is to overlook several striking continuities in America's cultural-religious tradition. As Americans we hold ambivalent feelings, and engage in paradoxical behavior, concerning the role of religion in our private and political lives. On the one hand, the doctrine of separation of church and state is deeply imbedded in our national heritage. On the other hand, religion has always been a powerful force in the private and public lives of Americans. Religious commitment, for example, was one of the most dominant characteristics of American colonists and immigrants in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In Democracy in America, based on visits to the United States in the 1830s, de Tocqueville observed that:

> America is still the place where the Christian religion has kept the greatest real power over men's souls... The religious atmosphere of the country was the first thing that struck me on arrival in the United States. The longer I stayed in the country, the more conscious I became of the important political consequences resulting from this novel situation.*

*Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy In America. N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1966.

This dramatic role of religion in America apparent to de Tocqueville as an outsider in the 1830s is equally evident to the objective observer today. In a 1976 international Gallup poll conducted for the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, the United States was found to be more religious than any other industralized country in the world. According to the poll, 56% of adult Americans consider religion to be very important to them, compared with 27% of Western Europeans.

As a legacy of our religious traditions, ground swells of religious moralism have periodically emerged in American politics. In the mid to late nineteenth century, for example, religion had injected moral issues into our political dialogue. The abolition of slavery, prohibition, blue laws, and teaching the Bible in the classroom had become the leading political issues of the day. As a consequence of the Industrial Revolution, however, economic and social issues, affected by class and progressivism, suddenly overrode all other questions. But the possibility of moral issues finding political expression remains a recurrent theme in American politics. Indeed, The Connecticut Mutual Life Report finds that today it is once again moral issues that have, via religion, vaulted to the forefront of the political dialogue, and suggests that this reawakening of moral activism carries a special significance as the United States enters the eighties.

Introduction

Disillusion With Leaders

As we celebrated the Bicentennial in 1976, Americans registered a sobering disaffection with traditional political institutions and leadership. Whatever our degree of private cynicism, we learned publicly, after the Bay of Pigs, that presidents could lie to us on matters of supreme importance to our survival. President Johnson's subsequent justification for the deployment of U.S. Marines to the Dominican Republic in 1965 was challenged in our own press, an unusual event. The Tet Offensive in Vietnam in 1968, the publication of the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, and the impeachment proceedings against former President Nixon, produced a level of disillusionment rarely witnessed in American history.

Numerous articles and opinion polls have documented this widespread alienation from political institutions. Indeed, this survey demonstrates that there is a dramatic gap between leaders and the public in a number of respects. They disagree strongly, for example, on moral, political and family issues. They are also dramatically different in terms of their level of religious commitment, their community involvement, and their attitudes toward work.

Our diminished national self-confidence, however, takes on special foreboding in the context of a condition readily apparent as we enter the eighties: an economy in trouble. It is this special combination of political turmoil and economic decline that makes the swelling support for traditional values, as well as its spillover into direct political action, so compelling as a contemporary concern. Something unusual is happening.

A Search for Equilibrium

The growing impact of religious belief is the product of far more, however, than a reaction to the alienation and confusion of the 1960s and 1970s. Modern religious commitment is far more than a temporary fad or response to recent events. It represents something more profound.

Although rooted in the purposes many American ancestors espoused in deciding to immigrate here, the continued significance of religious man owes itself less to the immediacies of Watergate than to the uncertainties and dilemmas of modern existence in a society saturated with choices.

We live in a relentlessly egalitarian society that encourages self-interest and mobility of all types, including geographical and hierarchical. One reason so many people may cling to religion in the United States is that it provides some measure of order in their lives, some restraint on the cultural injunction to pursue happiness, or in some cases hedonism, to its farther limits. One recent in-depth case study, for example, suggests that Americans regard religion as a code of conduct, without which "there would be no reason not to sin and their lives would fall apart."*

*Theodore Caplow, Howard M. Bahr, and Bruce A. Chadwick, "Piety in Middletown," Society (January/February, 1981), pg. 37.

If religion in America today is used as a major resource employed to restore some kind of "equilibrium" in everyday activities and belief, then finding that religion is both significant in the lives of Americans and increasingly enmeshed in partisan politics takes on special significance in the current decade. As the most media and advertising rich nation in the world, the United States seems to present its citizens with every choice available to human imagination. So many opportunities and choices are accessible -- from different consumer products to mobility to changing one's marital status -- that it is not irrational for Americans to consider themselves overwhelmed by freedom. Beyond the vicissitudes of wars and presidential politics lie long-term shifts in the mental maps citizens use to orient their personal and public decisions. If almost every encounter with news media, authorities and even family members is viewed as an opportunity to choose, to exercise options, then every encounter brims with uncertainty and ambiguity.

The reemergence of America's religious strain therefore represents far more than a recent response to national concern about Vietnam and Watergate. It symbolizes nothing less than a determined effort to revitalize essential American self-confidence in the face of adversity, an enduring optimism and faith that have sustained so many newcomers to this land for so many centuries. As Daniel Bell said in 1976:

> In the past, human societies have been prepared for calamity by the anchorages that were rooted in experience yet provided some transtemporal conception of reality. Traditionally, this anchorage was religion...the new anchorages have proved illusory and the old ones have become submerged.... What holds one to reality if one's secular system of meanings proves to be an illusion? I will risk an unfashionable answer -- the return in Western society of some conception of religion.*

The Connecticut Mutual Life Report confirms that, bewildered by the confusion of the present, large numbers of citizens now find solace in the firm convictions of their ancestors.

*Daniel Bell, The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, New York: Basic Books, 1976, pp. 28-29.

OVERVIEW

The Connecticut Mutual Life Report on American Values in the '80s: The Impact of Belief reveals that it is the level of our religious commitment which, in the early part of the eighties, is a stronger determinant of our values than whether we are rich or poor, young or old, male or female, Black or White, liberal or conservative. The influence of religious belief pervades our activities in the home, the community and the workplace, as well as our attitudes on social and political issues. Concurrent with the pervasive influence of religious commitment, the report also documents a growing emphasis on the moral aspects of public issues and leadership.

Although the survey's clear and compelling pattern of responses determined its focus, this report also highlights other shifting patterns of values beyond the emerging significance of religious commitment. It is, however, the theme of religious belief which weaves together the chapters of this report and provides the focus of this brief overview.

Religious Belief in America

This study measures for the first time in a national survey the degree of religious commitment manifested by Americans and its impact on American lifestyles. While previous studies primarily have presented figures on church attendance, our data show that these figures do not tell the entire story. We find, for example, that although less than half the public (44%) attend church frequently, three-quarters (74%) consider themselves to be religious.

what an opportunity for the church!

An equal number (73%) say they frequently feel that God loves them, and nearly all Americans (94%) say they experience this feeling at least occasionally. Over half (57%) the public report that they frequently engage in prayer.

By constructing a multi-item index based on how frequently respondents engage in religious activities and experience religious feelings, this study measures the depth of an individual's religious commitment. We find that while religion is an important part of the lives of most Americans, about one out of every four (26%) of those 14 years old and over can be termed "highly religious." As shall be demonstrated, the attitudes and activities of these 45 million Americans give them a social and political significance extending beyond their numerical strength.

In analyzing who the most intensely religious Americans are, we discover that age is the foremost explanatory factor. The report notes, for example, that only one-sixth of Americans 14 to 34 are highly religious, compared with close to half (46%) of those 65 and over. Further analysis suggests that older Americans are not more religious by virtue of being brought up in a more religious environment, but rather that it is a "life cycle" effect, and a growing sense of one's own mortality, that strengthens one's commitment to religion.

Furthermore:

- Southerners are twice as likely as Northeasterners to be highly religious (35% versus 17%), while people from the Midwest and West fall between these two extremes (28% and 22% respectively).

- Blacks are far more likely to be highly religious than Whites (42% versus 25%).
- Women are more inclined than men to be highly religious (34% versus 19%).
- Those with lower, rather than higher, incomes are more likely to be highly religious (33% versus 19%).
- Those with lower, rather than higher, levels of education are more likely to be highly religious (32% versus 18%).

National Politics and Community Involvement

In our search for the most significant cultural currents in American life, a prime area of investigation was the extent to which Americans believe in the political system and involve themselves in political, as well as social, activities at the community level. Some of the findings are disquieting:

- Half of Americans (51%) do not believe that important national problems such as energy shortages, inflation and crime can be solved through traditional American politics.
- Half the public (50%) do not believe that the vote is the main thing that determines how the country is run.
- Half the populace (48%) do not believe that important decisions on public issues are best left in the hands of our leaders.

In order to determine what factors relate to belief in, or disenchantment with, the political system and involvement at the "grass roots" community level, an extensive demographic analysis was conducted. While sociologists traditionally have believed that factors such as age, income, race and education determine the attitudes and behavior of Americans, this study finds a number of striking differences from the patterns of political disaffection which characterized the sixties and early seventies.

Overview

There is no greater disenchantment with "the system" among the young and the old, Blacks and Whites, men and women, liberals and conservatives, rich and poor. Similarly, many factors which traditionally have been offered as explanations for community involvement do not hold up under analysis: gender, place of residence (large city, small city, etc.), region of the country, race, and levels of income or education have little impact. Age does have an impact, which is a logical reflection of the fact that older individuals are more likely to have a sense of being "settled" and to have established more extensive social attachments within their community.

The one factor which emerges with startling clarity as the key to understanding who are the believers in the system is religious belief:

- The most religious Americans are far more likely than the least religious to believe that the vote is the main thing that determines how the country is run (64% versus 32%).
- The most religious are much more likely to feel that important decisions on public issues are best left in the hands of our leaders (56% versus 36%).
- The most religious are more inclined to believe that major national problems can be solved through traditional American politics (41% versus 30%).

Similarly, the intensity of one's religious commitment is (along with age) the strongest predictor of active community involvement:

- The most religious Americans are distinctly more likely than the least religious to vote in local elections (77% versus 49%).
- The most religious are far more likely to do volunteer work for a local organization (38% versus 6%).

- The most religious are much more likely to attend neighborhood or community meetings (34% versus 5%).

And finally, those who are most committed to religion are more likely than the least religious to frequently feel that they "belong to a community" (83% versus 45%).

These discoveries have vital implications for the politics of the current decade. When one considers that only half the registered voters participated in the most recent national election, it is clear that any factor influencing political participation is significant. The results of this survey demonstrate that religious commitment has an extraordinarily powerful relationship to belief in the vote and to community involvement. Thus, The Connecticut Mutual Life Report in some measure illuminates the political successes of such groups as the Moral Majority, and suggests that it is the intensely religious who may well be the most vocal group in the eighties, just as it was the disenchanted who were the most vocal in the sixties and the seventies.

The Emergence of Moral Issues

Exploring American attitudes toward a wide range of major contemporary issues, our analysis shows surprisingly few sharp divisions on political issues which have traditionally evoked heated controversy. We find, for example, that there are no vast differences between liberals and conservatives on such issues as whether our involvement in Vietnam was justified, whether the government has too much power over the lives of average citizens, or whether the benefits of nuclear power outweigh the risks.

Such issues also fail to elicit strong differences of opinion between the young and old; men and women; the least and the most affluent; the least and the most educated; Blacks and Whites; the least and the most religious; those living in different regions of the country; and those living in urban, suburban or rural areas.

The controversial issues of today, our data reveal, are moral issues. It is these issues which most clearly divide liberals and conservatives; young and old; rich and poor; Black and White; those in cities and in rural areas; and those living in different regions of the United States.

On these most controversial issues, however, it is again level of religious commitment which is the most influential factor. The strength of the impact of religious intensity is quite dramatic:

- The most religious are much more likely than the least religious to believe sex between two single people is morally wrong (74% versus 11%).
- The most religious are much more inclined to believe smoking marijuana is morally wrong (87% versus 30%).
- The most religious are more likely to find pornographic movies immoral (87% versus 46%)
- The most religious are more adamant in considering homosexuality morally wrong (87% versus 54%)

The report observes that while a mere 3% of the public find none of the ten activities included in the survey to be "morally wrong," it is not at all clear that there is indeed a "moral majority" in the nation. In fact, the report reveals that Americans who are strictest in their moral judgments, i.e., who believe that all ten of the activities are morally wrong, are in the minority. This "moral minority" is about a quarter of the population (24%). Clearly, the vast majority of Americans prefer to evaluate each moral issue individually.

Relationships: A Search For Commitment

Americans today seem to value commitment above all else in their relationships. More people, for example, say it is "very important" to go out of their way to help a friend than it is to be with friends (83% versus 69%), while only slightly more than half (56%) the public feel it is very important to make new friends. A commitment to family life is apparent in the responses by a majority of Americans who feel that it is very

important to share personal feelings with their spouse (79%) and to do things as a family group (74%).

On the other hand, the apparent desire for commitment is contradicted by the finding that we as a nation seem willing to view divorce as a solution to an unhappy marriage: a majority of Americans (56%) say that if they were unhappily married they would be prepared to seek a divorce, as opposed to "reconciling problems at all cost." Analysis reveals that of all demographic factors, level of religious commitment is the only one that is a firm predictor of family attitudes; and we find that among the intensely religious there appears to be commitment without contradiction:

- The most religious are far more likely than the least religious to say it is very important to do things as a family group (93% versus 58%).
- The most religious are more likely to feel it is important to go out of their way to help friends (89% versus 71%).
- The most religious are much more likely to say they would reconcile marital problems at all costs rather than seek divorce (60% versus 33%).

CWC + NIAM

Americans at Work

Overall, Americans express satisfaction with their work. The survey reveals that Americans frequently feel they do their jobs well (91%), feel a sense of dedication to their work (76%), find their work interesting (73%), and believe their work contributes to society (68%).

Remarkably, demographic factors do not distinguish the most satisfied worker from the unsatisfied. Men and women, those with lower or higher levels of education and income, Blacks and Whites, old and young,* and blue-collar and white-collar workers all show striking similarities in their feelings toward their work. Given speculation about the alienation of certain segments of the work force, particularly women and minorities, this is a heartening discovery.

Once again, it is religious commitment which is the strongest predictor of satisfaction and involvement with one's work. Compared to the least religious, we find that:

- The most religious Americans are more likely to feel a sense of dedication to their work (97% versus 66%).
- The most religious are more likely to feel their work contributes to society (91% versus 53%).
- The most religious are more likely to say they would prefer to remain at their present job rather than take another (78% versus 52%).

*When teenagers and those over 64 are removed from the sample.

Leadership: The Moral Dimension

One of the core issues at the beginning of the eighties has been leadership -- or perhaps more precisely, the perceived lack of leadership. In order to gain insight into the qualities of leadership and the divergences between the public and its leaders, and to show how leadership may be strengthened in the eighties, approximately 1,800 leaders were surveyed within nine key American institutions: business, education, government, law and justice, the military, the news media, religion, science, and voluntary associations.

There does indeed appear to be a crisis of confidence in leadership. Half of the public do not believe that important decisions on public issues should be left to our leaders. Further, when asked to rate today's leaders on a scale of one to ten, 60% of the public give them a score of five or less. And leaders are even harsher in their judgment: 66% of them rate America's leadership today at five or less.

The report documents that this is a two way crisis of confidence. Not only does the public lack confidence in its leaders, fully half the surveyed leaders (50%) believe that the public cannot be relied upon to select the sort of leaders the nation needs. Indeed, 87% of leaders believe that there is an untapped leadership potential in the United States. A third of leaders (33%) name business executives as the occupation where the greatest untapped leadership potential lies, and 25% of leaders mention women.

A clue as to what the public and leaders find most lacking in America's leadership is found when they are asked to choose the leader they least admire in America's past or present. Both leaders and the public resoundingly vote Richard Nixon as their choice for least admired leader, and cite "dishonesty" as the quality they least admire about him. The public and leaders also concur on their second choice, Jimmy Carter, who is cited for his lack of competence and effectiveness. Observing that Jimmy Carter runs a rather distant second to Richard Nixon, the report suggests that while incompetence is seen as bad, it is dishonesty that is unforgivable in the politics of this era.

The importance of this "moral dimension" of leadership is further underscored when the public is asked to name the qualities they seek in a leader for the nation. Far and away, the most frequently mentioned quality is honesty, followed (and not closely) by intelligence. Leaders, the report notes, underestimate the importance of this moral dimension; when asked what they feel the public looks for in a leader, leaders do not cite honesty among their top three choices.

The emerging importance of the moral dimension of leadership offers a striking parallel with the emergence of moral issues as the most controversial issues on the public scene. In examining leaders' views on these issues, the report presents evidence that the gap between the public and its leaders is to some extent a moral gap. We find that across the entire range of moral issues leaders are consistently more liberal in their judgments:

- Leaders are far less likely than the general public to feel homosexuality is morally wrong (42% versus 71%).
- Leaders are much less inclined to believe abortion is immoral (36% versus 65%).
- Leaders are less likely to believe that smoking marijuana is immoral (33% versus 57%).

The study further discloses that leaders tend to be less religious than the public. Leaders are much less likely than the public to feel that God loves them, for example (54% versus 73%). Because leaders are among the less religious Americans, the study observes that they may be out of touch with the current of faith which appears to be gathering strength among the public in this decade. Such an observation is supported by the finding that it is religious leaders who are chosen by the public as the most admired of the nine leadership groups surveyed.

Indeed, there are some leadership groups that do exhibit a marked resonance with the general public. Religious leaders, and to a lesser extent business executives, consistently express higher degrees of commitment to religion, to their work, to their family, and to their community than do other leadership groups. And in many cases, this commitment, as well as their positions on moral issues, are remarkably similar to those of the general public:

- 100% of religious leaders consider themselves religious, but the responses of business executives come closest to those of the general public (80% vs. 74%).
- 96% of religious leaders frequently feel that God loves them, but again business executives are most resonant with the general public (70% vs. 73%).

- 77% of religious leaders believe that sex between two single people prior to marriage is morally wrong; 38% of business executives and 40% of the general public feel this way.

- Religious leaders (60%), the general public (57%), and business executives (48%) are the most likely to believe smoking marijuana is morally wrong.

- Religious leaders and the general public are the only groups in which a majority believe that divorce should be made more difficult to obtain (59% and 52%).

- Religious leaders and the general public are the only groups in which even a significant minority disapprove of a married woman earning money if she has a husband who is capable of supporting her (12% and 20%).

- Religious leaders and business executives are the groups most likely to attend community meetings, to feel they belong to a community, and to hold office in a local organization.

- Religious leaders are more likely than any other leadership group to feel that one of the most important rewards of their leadership position is doing something of value for society (80%). Business executives are the least likely to feel this way (52%).

The finding that religious leaders are, more than any other leadership group, in tune with the general public is clearly consistent with the major findings of this report. Religious involvement is by far the most powerful predictor of community and political involvement and concern about the leading political issues of the eighties; and it is religious leaders who parallel this concern and activity. While the majority of leaders are out of touch with the public, especially concerning the tremendously important moral issues, religious leaders are the one group most in a position to lead. Clearly, this has important ramifications concerning the kind of leaders Americans are likely to choose in the latter portion of this century.

Overview

According to most pollsters and analysts, the recent presidential election was "too close to call" right up to the day of the election. In the end, however, the nation saw an overwhelming victory for President Reagan -- a candidate who, our survey suggests, was not elected for his known and admired qualities, but rather, it would appear, because he was successful in sounding a "call to faith" in traditional American values. Perhaps the election was not decided on "issues" in the customary sense but rather by the overriding issue of belief in our established American traditions.

Chapter three demonstrates that moral issues have become the leading political issues. It appears that our society is at a transition point, and that the public may be willing, under almost imperceptible influences, to throw its entire weight behind a leader who strikes the correct "moral" or "reaffirming" tone. This new trend is both heartening and potentially frightening. Since the injection of faith into politics via religion is capable of creating a single powerful voting block, this suggests the opportunity for a truly visionary leader, or a dangerous demagogue, who, by striking the appropriate religious-moral notes, could be swept into a position of awesome power.

So TRUE!
But honesty is
very important -
when it works against
a demagogue

Conclusion:

Dangers and Opportunities

In his book titled The Pursuit of Loneliness, sociologist Philip Slater warns that we Americans, in our historic quest for autonomy, wealth, and control over the environment, have failed to nourish a shared sense of identity, or "community." Perhaps a clear perception of mutual identity satisfies significant social needs which have been long neglected. In this context, the cultural evolution charted in The Connecticut Mutual Life Report may reveal an effort at restoration: a spontaneous revival of traditional values occurring throughout the country. Through their belief and behavior, most religious citizens demonstrate that a return to traditional certainties is one way to forge a sense of community. In their devotion to family, work, and community, the religiously committed demonstrate the resilience and healing power of traditional bonding. Although those who are rigidly certain that their beliefs are inherently superior to all others can be quite dangerous if they find themselves in positions of authority, in some respects their quest for certainty may make a positive contribution to social renewal.

Revitalization: Organized Movement or Cultural Shift?

A great deal of attention has been paid recently to the activity of zealous groups eager to convert society to their own belief system. But the question is: Does the religious and related moral fervor exemplified by groups such as the Moral Majority and emphasized in this report simply represent the emergence of effective, organized special interest groups intent upon a revitalization movement, or does it represent a more profound cultural shift?

A revitalization movement, according to noted anthropologist Anthony F.C. Wallace, is a deliberate, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture. Deliberate intent is a critical part of such a movement.* A cultural shift, by contrast, occurs by evolution, drift, or acculturation. It happens gradually and incrementally, through a chain reaction, and is not forged deliberately by a specific movement.

The Connecticut Mutual Life Report uncovers evidence supporting far more than a movement by one particularly well organized segment of American society. Rather, it confirms the vitality of a cultural current of religious commitment and moralism, and through them, a willingness to participate in family, occupational and civic concerns. The broad sweep of this religious commitment is confirmed principally by two findings:

*Anthony F.C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movement," American Anthropologist 58 (1956), pp 264-281.

- first, quite apart from the 26% of the 14 and over population identified as highly religious, most Americans consider themselves religious and engage in such activities as prayer and feeling that God loves them.

- second, the relation of religious commitment to all the aspects of American life investigated in this report resembles a smooth progression, a ladder of several rungs, with sizeable groups of Americans located at each rung. There is a steady progression, for example, -- from 49% to 52% to 61% to 64% to 77% -- moving from the least religious to the most when Americans are asked whether they vote in local elections. This pattern is remarkably consistent throughout the report. Americans, in other words, are not found clustered at one end or another of the spectrum of religious commitment. They are almost evenly distributed on a continuum of belief and activity.

To be sure, there is a substantial amount of historical continuity in Americans' religious commitment, as discussed in the Introduction to this report. It may <u>also</u> be true, however, that today someone's level of commitment has a demonstrably more significant impact on a wide range of beliefs and activities than it has had in the recent past. There is substantial evidence supporting this conclusion.

Conclusion:
Dangers and Opportunities

In the 1960's conflicts arose between young and old, male and female, and Black and White. Divisions between blue collar and white collar, poor and wealthy, and liberal and conservative persisted. The Connecticut Mutual Life Report, however, reveals that these divisions, once so visible in American life, are far less important than they seem to have been in the recent past. Although some evidence of a generation gap remains, and although different education levels are somewhat associated with differences among Americans, we are not so much a nation of rich or poor, male or female, or even liberal or conservative. Rather, we are increasingly a nation with different levels of religious commitment, and those levels of commitment are strongly related to significant choices citizens make about their families, jobs, and communities.

This major finding is particulary important in light of recent widespread discussions concerning the disintegration of the family, the community, the American work ethic, and faith in our political institutions and leaders. This report clearly demonstrates that it is via religious commitment that some Americans have been able to retain their faith in family, community, work, and in the American political process.

Implications for Leadership

In the midst of this cultural shift, the search for leadership takes on special meaning. It is commonly assumed by political scholars that

Americans vote for a particular political candidate not because they are responsive to a special interest group, but rather because they are moral and sincere. It follows that leaders who are viewed as seriously lacking in moral character, inner strength, or competence might be among the most disliked leaders.

The Connecticut Mutual Life Report confirms this traditional expectation. Both the general public and leaders consider Richard Nixon the worst leader in our history (by pluralities of about 50%), and the predominant reason for that judgment is "immorality." The second most disliked leader is Jimmy Carter, and the prevailing reason given for that judgment is incompetence.

The public and leaders appear to differ in describing what they like most in a leader, however. Leaders are relatively consistent in choosing leaders known for their strength or competence in periods of national crisis: Presidents Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Truman.

The public, however, rates President Kennedy first (25% of the selections), and President Lincoln second (with 12% of the selection). The remainder of those who received significant mentions include Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Carter, and Eisenhower, who each received between six to eight percent of the mentions. The only non-president frequently mentioned by the public (receiving about eight percent of the mentions) was Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Conclusion:
Dangers and Opportunities

Whatever else may be said about the two highest rated leaders, Kennedy and Lincoln, it is clear that they were assassinated while in office and therefore qualify for martyrdom in American's pantheon of leaders who sacrificed their most precious possession: life itself. (The third ranked leader, Roosevelt, also died in office.) A further clue suggests the significance of a capacity for martydom as an admired qualification for American leaders. The only non-president often mentioned by the public as belonging to its most admired category is Martin Luther King, Jr., who was also assassinated.

It is important for leaders to recognize that America is a nation searching for leaders who are willing to dedicate themselves, even their lives, to the greater national good. Inspired by such a leader, Americans will respond to a call to faith. It has been demonstrated that there is a sizeable gap between public expectations and leadership performance; and that public is prepared to evaluate political leaders largely in terms of their capacity to evoke symbols of commitment. These twin observations present the American political system simultaneously with a great opportunity and a great danger. The opportunity lies in the opening for a visionary leader to mobilize large numbers of people for national programs of self-sacrifice and devotion to shared goals. The danger lies in the opening for a divisive leader to mobilize large numbers in the service of a partisan campaign to blame the nation's troubles on one group or another labeled "immoral."

In either case, Americans are currently quick to judge public issues and leadership in moral terms and to express general disappointment with national leaders. Whether public energy is directed toward socially useful or socially destructive ends may depend in no small measure on the quality of today's leaders. The leaders of the coming decades can become statesmen of demagogues. Whichever role they choose, their capacity for influence is vast. But clearly, by striking a particular moral posture, leaders can acquire tremendous civic support for a wide array of public goals.