
Two Views of American Politics & Society

Roger C. Lowery, Ph.D.
Professor and Assistant Department Chair
Political Science Department
University of North Carolina Wilmington

lowery@uncw.edu

www.uncw.edu/people/lowery



Two views of American politics & society:

- **The Culture-War thesis**
 - **The Moderate-Majority thesis**
-

The Culture-War thesis:

- “There is a religious war going on in this country, a cultural war as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.”

-- Pat Buchanan,
speech to the 1992 Republican National
Convention

Academic origin:

- James Davison Hunter, 1991, ***Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America***
 - Thesis: increasing conflict is inevitable between two groups in America – the culturally:
 - ❑ Orthodox
 - ❑ Progressive
-

Religious roots of cultural conflicts:

Theological Issues	Conflicting values	
	Orthodox	Progressive
Scriptural authority	Final & absolute	Open to interpretation
Nature of God	Masculine (stern & vengeful)	Feminine (nurturing & loving)
Human nature	Inherently sinful	Flawed by environmental causes
Redemption	Salvation through faith	Salvation through social justice
Natural pleasures	To be resisted as corrupting	To be embraced as God's beneficence

Evidence: voter polarization in

- **Red states** versus **blue states** (2004):

Sharp religious-group divisions in political attitudes

Which should be the more important influence on the laws of the United States? Should it be the Bible or should it be the will of the American people, even when it conflicts with the Bible?

	The will of the American people	The Bible	DK
■ Total	63	32	5
■ White evangelical Prot.	34	60	6
■ White mainline Protestant	78	16	6
■ Catholic	72	23	5
■ Secular	91	7	2

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults

Americans are sharply divided over the influence of the Christian Right

*Have **conservative Christians** gone too far in trying to impose their religious values on the country?*

	<u>2005</u> %	<u>2006</u> %
Yes	45	49
No	45	43
Don't know	10	8

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults

Clear religious divide over evolution:

Humans and other living things have...

	<u>Total</u>	<u>Protestant</u>		<u>Cath</u>	<u>Secular</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>Evan.</u>	<u>Mainline</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Existed in present form only	42	65	32	33	12
Evolved over time	51	28	62	59	83
Don't know	7	7	6	8	5

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults

An ideological divide over religion in public schools

*Have **liberals** gone too far in trying to keep religion out of schools & government?*

	<u>2005</u> %	<u>2006</u> %
Yes	67	69
No	28	26
Don't know	5	5

Pew Research Center for the People & the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, conducted July 6-19 among 2,003 adults

Private/religious school vouchers

"Which comes closer to your view? The government should spend money to assist low-income families who want to send their children to religious schools. OR, The government should spend no money for children to attend religious schools."

	%
Should spend money	43
Should spend no money	54
No opinion	3

CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll. June 21-23, 2002. N=1,020 adults nationwide

The Moderate-Majority thesis:

- “Americans are *closely* divided, but we are not *deeply* divided”
- “We divide evenly in elections or sit them out entirely because:
- we instinctively seek the center
- while parties and candidates hang out on the extremes.”

-- Morris P. Fiorina, 2004, *Culture War? The Myth of a Polarized America*.

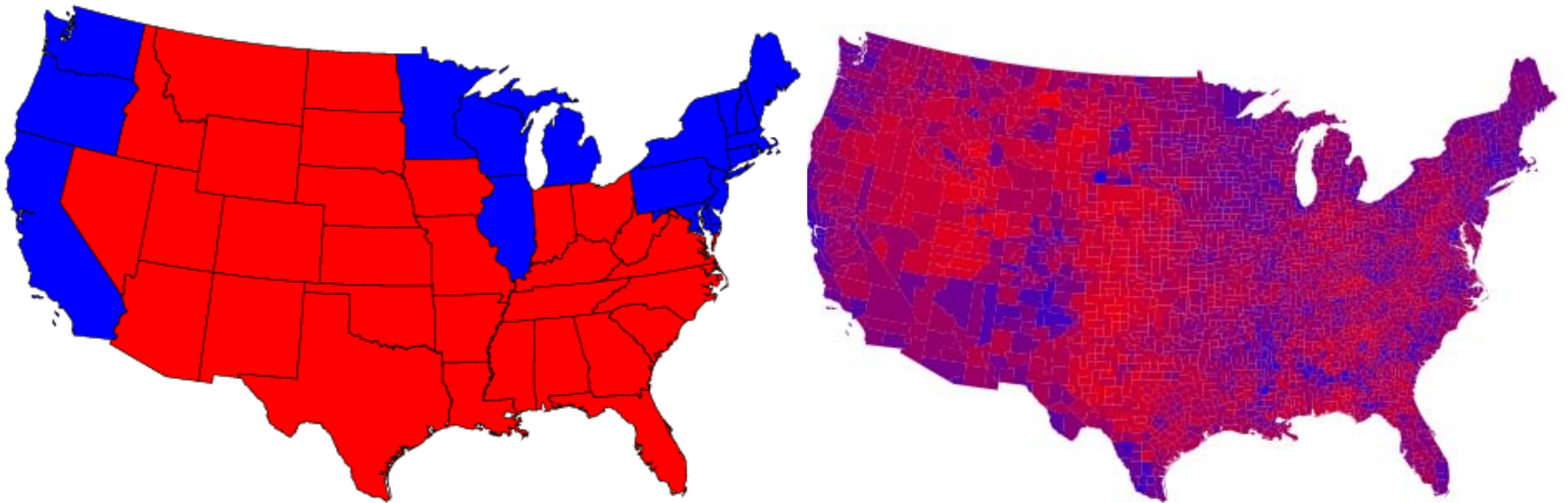
Academic origin:

- Richard M. Scammon and Ben J. Wattenberg, 1970, *The Real Majority*
- Key argument:

“Elections are won in the middle.”

Evidence: popular vote by county

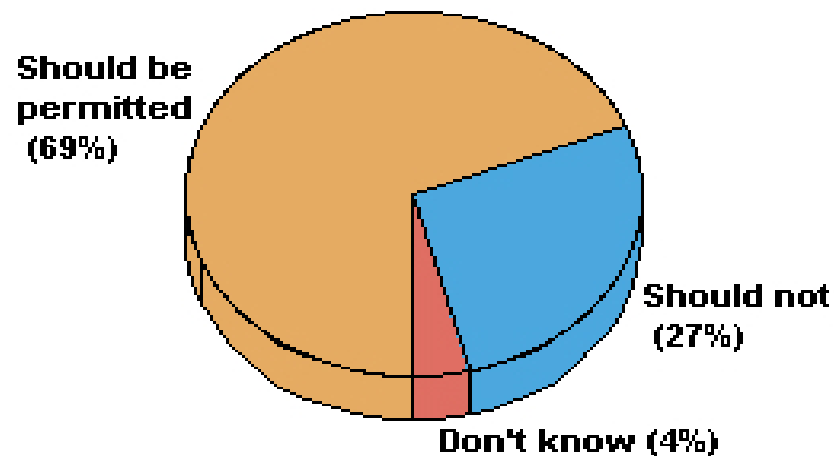
- It wasn't really **Red states** v. **Blue states** -- instead, most states were really shades of **Purple** in their voting in 2004:



Given a centrist option, most Americans favor compromise -- even on the *hot-button* issues

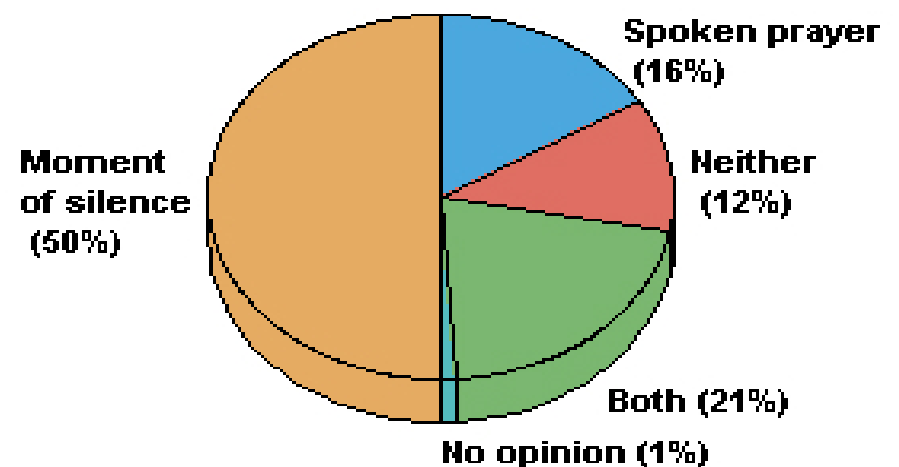
More than two-thirds of Americans say school prayer should be permitted in public schools, but when asked to choose half say they prefer a moment of silence to spoken prayer

Do you think organized prayer should or should not be permitted in the public schools?



Source: Quinnipiac 6/03

If you had a choice, which would you prefer in the local public schools -- spoken prayer, a moment of silence for contemplation/silent prayer, neither or both?



Source: Gallup 8/01

The preference for a moment of silence is consistent over time

"If you had a choice, which would you prefer in the local public schools: spoken prayer, or a moment of silence for contemplation or silent prayer?" (Options rotated)

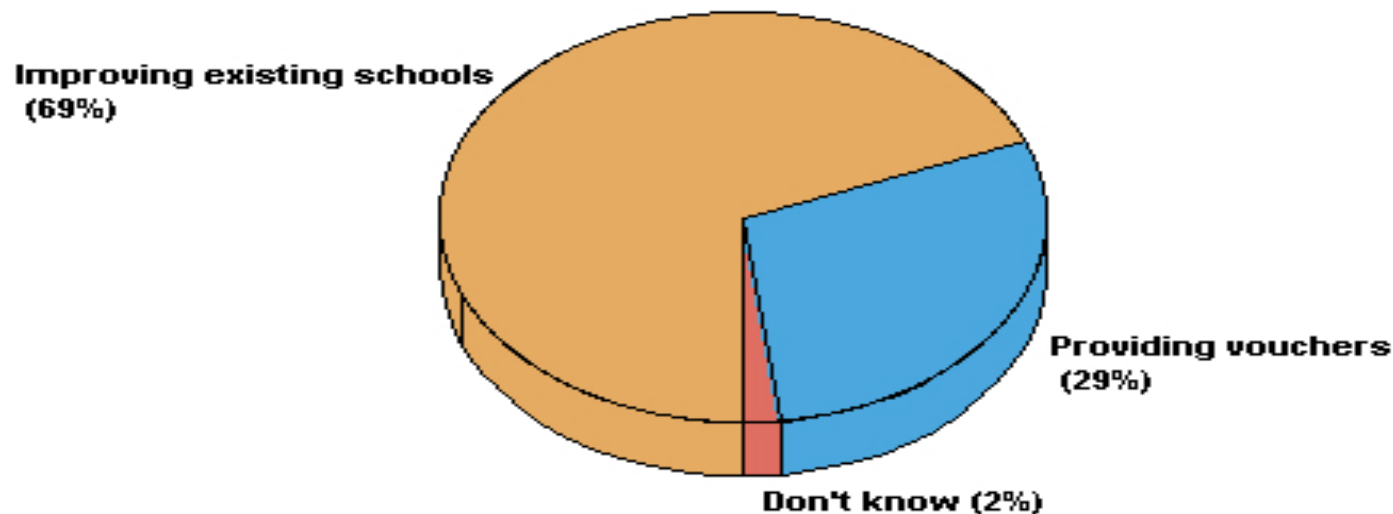
	Spoken Prayer	Moment of Silence/ Silent Prayer	Neither (vol.)	Both (vol.)
	%	%	%	%
8/8-11/05	23	69	5	3

Gallup Poll. Aug. 8-11, 2005. N=1,001 adults nationwide.

Most favor improving public schools over providing vouchers

Seven in 10 Americans say they would prefer improving existing public schools over providing vouchers for private or church-related schools

Which one of these two plans would you prefer -- improving existing public schools or providing more vouchers for parents to use in selecting and paying for private or church-related schools?



Source: Gallup / Phi Delta Kappa 6/02

Most favor compromise on Christmas celebrations in the public schools

33. Each December, many public schools present seasonal programs. Which of these statements best represents your views about such programs:

	2005
Public schools should be allowed to put on Nativity re-enactments with Christian music.	36%
Public schools should have assembly programs in December that have music from the Christian tradition, but religious music should not dominate.	33%
Public school programs in December should be entirely secular.	20%
None of the above (vol.)	6%
Don't know/refused to answer	4%

Why have the candidates and parties become so polarized?

■ You can blame:

- ❑ Liberals for imposing primary-election reforms
 - ❑ Conservatives for blocking campaign finance reforms
 - ❑ The news media for “yellow” journalism
-

Is there hope for moderates to win control in either party?

- **“New Democrat” moderates**
 - ❑ Senator Evan Bayh (IN)
 - ❑ Senator Joe Biden (DE)
 - ❑ Senator Barack Obama (IL)
 - ❑ Senator Mark Pryor (AR)
 - ❑ Governor Bill Richardson (NM)
 - ❑ Senator Tom Vilsack (IA)
 - ❑ Former Governor Mark Warner (VA)

 - **“Old Republican” moderates**
 - ❑ Senator Lincoln Chafee (RI)
 - ❑ Former NYC Mayor Rudy Giuliani
 - ❑ Senator Lindsay Graham (SC)
 - ❑ Senator John McCain (AZ)
 - ❑ Senator Mitt Romney (MA)
 - ❑ Senator Olympia Snowe (ME)
 - ❑ Senator Arlen Specter (PA)
-

Websites with further information:

- <http://people.uncw.edu/lowery>
 - <http://pewforum.org/religion-schools/>
 - <http://publicagenda.org/>
 - http://www.religionlink.org/tip_060109b.php
 - <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics>
 - <http://www.thearda.com/>
 - <http://www.tcf.org/>
 - <http://www.policyattitudes.org/>
 - <http://www.aei.org/>
 - <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kpollpdf.htm>
-



Roger C. Lowery, Ph.D.
Department of Political Science
University of North Carolina at Wilmington



My
Personal
Home Page

Links to My UNCW Web Pages

- [My philosophy of education](#)
- [PLS 101, American National Government](#)
- [PLS 203, Religion and Politics in the U.S.](#)
- [PLS 210, Library Research in Political Science](#)
- [PLS 292, The Religious Right in U.S. Politics](#)
- [PLS 302, Public Opinion and American Democracy](#)
- [PLS 303, Elections and Voting Behavior](#)
- [PLS 401, Senior Seminar in Political Science](#)
- [PLS 405, Political Parties in the United States](#)
- [PLS 510 handout](#)
- [Student-Response Systems manuscript](#)
- [Student-Response Systems powerpoint presentation](#)
- [Curriculum Vita](#)

Links to Other UNCW Web Pages

- [UNCW](#)
- [Political Science Department](#)
- [Randall Library](#)
- [SeaPort](#)
- [SeaNet \(old SeaWeb\)](#)
- [WebCT](#)
- [Careers in Political Science](#)

My Contact Information

Leutze Hall 260
Political Science Department
UNC Wilmington
Wilmington, NC 28403-5607
(910) 962-3225 [voice]
(910) 962-3286 [fax]
E-mail: lowery@uncw.edu

• Fall 2006 Office Hours

Links to Other Web Pages

-  [18th MP Brigade](#)
- [Until Then \(when our military personnel are out of harms way\)](#)
- [The Iraq Syndrome](#)
- [What is Political Science?](#)
- [What can you do with a PLS degree?](#)
- [Careers in Political Science](#)
- [Political Science Resources](#)
- [Index to Government & Politics Websites](#)
- [Register to Vote](#)



1. A Secular Society

- Religion in American Public Life
- For Goodness Sake
- Just How Secular Is Europe?

5. Mobilizing Religious Interests

6. Religion & Political Action

- Abortion attitudes by state
- Religious Identification - 4-category scale, 1948-2002
- Religious Identification - 7-category scale, 1960-1988
- Religious Identification - 8-category scale, 1990-1996
- Attitudes about the Accuracy of the Bible - 4 categories, 1964-1990
- Attitudes about the Accuracy of the Bible - 3 categories, 1990-2000
- Importance of Religious Guidance in Day-to-Day Living, 1980-2002
- Frequency of Church Attendance - 4 categories, 1952-1968
- Frequency of Church Attendance - 5 categories, 1970-2002
- Religion an Important Part of Life, 1980-2002
- Political Party Identification, 1952-2002

3. Religion and American Political Culture

- Centrist Public v. Polarized Government
- U.S. Views toward Muslims & Islam

4A. Religion & the State: No-Establishment Clause

- Religious Expression in NC Public Schools
- Religious Attitudes Interactive Questionnaire
- Evolution and the Law
- Reading the Polls on Evolution
- Politics and the Pulpit
- Morning-after Pill Controversy

4B. Religion & the State: Free-Exercise Clause

- *O Centro Espirita Case* - Legal Background
- *O Centro Espirita Case* - Court Decision
- Conscientious Objection and the Law
- Pledge of Allegiance and the Law
- Free Exercise v. Civil Liberties

7. Religion & Public Opinion

- American Piety in the 21st Century
- Religion & Politics Poll Report, 24 August 2006
- Assisted Suicide
- Bioethics
- Death Penalty
- Faith-Based Initiatives
- Gay Marriage
- Just War
- Human Rights
- Public Schools
- Right to Die
- Right to Die - Gonzales Decision
- School Vouchers
- War on Terrorism

8. Political Mobilization of Evangelical Protestants

- Decline of the Christian Coalition
- The Rise of Pentecostal Christian Groups

9A. Continuity and Change-- Catholicism

- ° American Catholic survey results

9B. Politics and Mainline Protestants

10. Rel. & Politics of Ethnic & Religious Minorities

11. The Other Minorities: Women & Gay People

12. Religion and American Political Life

PLS 302 Survey Data Web Sites - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites

Address <http://people.uncw.edu/lowery/pls302/Survey%20Data%20Web%20Sites/index.htm> Go Links



PLS 302
Public Opinion and American Democracy
Roger C. Lowery, Ph.D.

Survey Data
Web Sites

Academic and Non-commercial Polls and Archives

- [Americans and the World](#)
- [American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research](#)
- [American Religion Data Archive](#)
- [Annenberg Public Policy Center of the Univ. of Pennsylvania](#)
- [Atlas of U.S. Presidential Elections](#)
- [Center on Policy Attitudes](#)
- [Century Foundation: 2006 Public Opinion Watch Index](#)
- [Century Foundation: 2005 Public Opinion Watch Index](#)
- [Century Foundation: 2004 Public Opinion Watch Index](#)
- [Current Population Survey](#)
- [Democracy Corps](#)
- [Eagleton Institute \(Rutgers University\)](#)
- [Electoral Vote Predictor 2004](#)
- [Europinion Continuous Tracking Survey](#)
- [Franklin and Marshall University's Keystone Poll](#)
- [General Social Survey](#)**
- [Harvard University Institute of Politics](#)
- [Inter-university Consortium for Social and Political Research](#)
- [Kaiser Polls](#)
- [Marist College Institute for Public Opinion](#)
- [Mystery Pollster](#)
- [NES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior](#)**
- [National Network of State Polls](#)

Media and Commercial Polls and Archives

- [ABC News Poll](#)
- [ABC - Washington Post Poll](#)
- [American Research Group](#)
- [AP - IPSOS Poll](#)
- [Behavior Research Center](#)
- [Belden Russonello & Stewart](#)
- [CBS News Poll](#)
- [CNN - USA Today - Gallup Poll](#)
- [CNN - 2004 Exit Poll](#)
- [CNN - 2002 Exit Poll](#)
- [CNN - 2000 Exit Poll](#)
- [CNN - 1998 Exit Poll](#)
- [CNN - 1996 Poll Compendium](#)
- [Diageo/Hotline Poll](#)
- [Field Poll](#)
- [Fox News Poll](#)
- [Gallup Poll](#)
- [Global Strategy Group](#)
- [Gonzales Research Poll](#)
- [GQR Research](#)
- [Harris Poll](#)
- [Hart Research Associates](#)
- [ICR: International Communications Research](#)

<http://www.americanresearchgroup.com/> Internet