

# Promoting Conservatives: The Politics of Selection in the American Catholic Hierarchy, 1994-2008\*

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## Abstract

This note demonstrates the disproportionate share of promotions secured by a set of conservative bishops in the American Catholic hierarchy. These bishops appear in a November 1994 memo from conservative strategist Paul Weyrich to incoming House Judiciary chair Henry Hyde, identifying “more reasonable” bishops with whom House Republicans should meet. In the years since, the seventeen Latin-rite bishops named in the memo rose in the hierarchy at a much higher rate than those excluded from the list; three bishops on the Weyrich list have become cardinals. The note uses rare-events logistic regression to compare outcomes between the two groups for several definitions of promotion. For transfers unambiguously classifiable as promotions and for elevations to the cardinalate, the large differences in the probability of promotion are statistically reliable and robust to the inclusion of other predictors for advancement. These promotions have taken place amid the bishops’ increasing emphasis on abortion and social conservatives’ influence in the Republican Party. While we cannot categorically rule out coordination between New Right elites and church authorities, we hypothesize that the success of bishops on the Weyrich list arises from the compatible goals of conservatives inside and outside the Catholic hierarchy.

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# 1 Introduction

In little more than a generation, the American Catholic hierarchy has dramatically shifted its orientation to partisan politics. “May the angels, dear Jack, lead you into Paradise” cried Richard Cardinal Cushing after saying the Latin Mass for the slain John F. Kennedy, at whose wedding he had presided a decade earlier (Manchester, 1967, 589). In 2004, the next time either major party nominated a Roman Catholic, Raymond Burke, Archbishop of Saint Louis, announced he would deny communion to John F. Kerry for supporting legal abortion, and Michael Sheridan, Bishop of Colorado Springs, went so far as to forbid communion for Catholics supporting pro-choice candidates (Goodstein, 2004; Burke, 2007). This change paralleled shifts in the Catholic electorate; while Kennedy won 78 percent of the Catholic vote, Kerry garnered only 47 percent.

These two moments bookend an historic change in the relationship between the American Catholic hierarchy and the political parties, one that saw the bishops emerge from their political shell to become active on a wide range of issues ranging from human life to hunger, and then increasingly to emphasize the importance of abortion. These changes, in turn, lie embedded in the broader transformations of American political conflict and of the Catholic Church. For the former, social issues such as abortion and gay rights have arisen alongside traditional questions about economic distribution as dividing lines in American politics, and religiosity has largely replaced denomination as a major partisan cleavage (Layman, 2001; Wuthnow, 1988). Hence, the Republican Party — dominated for a century by northern Protestants and whose platform endorsed the Equal Rights Amendment four decades before the Democrats did so — has become the party of social conservatism for Protestants and Catholics alike. For the Catholic Church, the past fifty years have been a time of upheaval. The reforms of Vatican II encouraged a spirit of societal engagement. The rise of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops provided a forum for dueling narratives of liberals focusing on social justice and conservatives emphasizing doctrinal orthodoxy and opposition to abortion. Taken together, these developments shattered the church’s traditionally limited role in national politics and its alliance with the Democratic Party.

This note brings these themes together, demonstrating that bishops favored by conservative

elites received a disproportionate share of promotions, especially to cardinal, in the years since 1994, even after controlling for a variety of other factors. Rather than indicating coordination or access to inside information, this outcome, we suggest, emerges from the separate incentives of conservatives in and out of the church, linked by a common concern about abortion. Even though we employ multi-variate statistical analysis, this note — like much research based on archival material — is essentially exploratory, designed to suggest new avenues for investigation.

The key document comes from the papers of Paul M. Weyrich, a leading conservative strategist called the “godfather of the New Right” (Norquist, 2008, 340). On November 21, 1994, just after the Republicans had won control of the House of Representatives for the first time in forty years, Weyrich sent a memo to Henry Hyde, incoming chair of the Judiciary Committee. Hyde, a prominent Catholic conservative from the Chicago suburbs and the House’s most prominent pro-life advocate, sponsored the “Hyde Amendment” which since 1976 has barred using federal Medicaid dollars for abortions. The memo’s headnote is short: “Newt [Gingrich] told me he had asked you to act on my suggestion that a meeting be held with some of the Catholic Heirarchy (sic.) who are more reasonable. He can then get their input on some of the welfare and other questions, and won’t be bound by the USCC [United States Catholic Conference] which all during the Reagan Administration attacked his policies.”

Weyrich then lists eighteen bishops, categorized in descending order from cardinals to arch-bishops to bishops (Weyrich papers, accretion of 20 June 2003, box 12). The memo’s careful gradations of rank (as opposed to, say, an alphabetical list with first name and last name) indicate a close attention to the hierarchy of the church, and so render the memo a particularly apt source for analyzing promotion.

Table 1 lists the bishops in the same order and style as the memo, and includes their positions as of 1994 and 2008; those marked “Retired” did not move beyond their earlier posts. The list is anchored by Bernard Cardinal Law of Boston and John Cardinal O’Connor of New York, the two leading conservative prelates of the time. Several of the bishops have risen far in the hierarchy. Three — Theodore McCarrick, Sean O’Malley, and Francis Stafford — have been promoted to cardinal. Yet this evidence by itself remains suggestive, lacking both context and a control group. The rest of

Name	(Arch)diocese in 1994	Current position
Cardinal Bevilacqua	Philadelphia	Retired
Cardinal Law	Boston	Archpriest of St. Mary Major, Rome
Cardinal O'Connor	New York	Deceased
Archbishop Donoghue	Atlanta	Retired
Archbishop Stafford	Denver	Major Penitentiary, Rome
Archbishop McCarrick	Newark	Retired Archbishop of Washington, DC
Archbishop Beltran	Oklahoma City	Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Archbishop Curtiss	Omaha	Archbishop of Omaha
Coadjutor Archbishop Flynn	St. Paul	Retired
Bishop Gracida	Corpus Christi	Retired
Bishop Bruskewitz	Lincoln	Bishop of Lincoln
Bishop O'Malley	Fall River	Archbishop of Boston
Bishop Wuerl	Pittsburgh	Archbishop of Washington, DC
Bishop McDonald	Little Rock	Retired
Bishop Timlin	Scranton	Retired
Bishop Welsh	Allentown	Retired
Bishop Hart	Cheyenne	Retired
Bishop Elya	Newton (Melkite)	Retired

Table 1: “Reasonable” bishops identified in Weyrich letter with current position

the paper fills in the story both substantively and analytically. The following section provides further background on Weyrich, the Catholic bishops’ political involvement, and the process for appointing bishops and cardinals. We then introduce the methods and metrics used for understanding promotion, followed by results and discussion.

## 2 Context

### 2.1 Weyrich and the New Right

Paul M. Weyrich was born in Racine, Wisconsin in 1942. His father, a janitor at the local hospital, was Catholic and his mother Protestant. After serving as an aide to Senator Gordon Allott of Colorado, through whom he befriended the conservative Coors family, Weyrich founded the Heritage Foundation in 1973 and the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress the following year. Weyrich has headed Free Congress ever since. Weyrich has manifested religious commitment in his own life, joining the Melkite Church, a Eastern-rite church that recognizes the authority of the pope. In 1990, he took a

six-week leave to be ordained a Melkite deacon. As Weyrich wrote in a 1979 letter to Sen. William Armstrong, an evangelical Lutheran who later sat on the Free Congress board, “conservatism without Christian underpinnings is shallow and meaningless” (Weyrich Papers, PMW to Armstrong 31 May 1979, unprocessed accretion of 25 March 1993).

Alongside associates in the New Right, chief among them the direct mail pioneer Richard Viguerie, Weyrich sought to mobilize new allies who would expand conservatism’s appeal and, through them, build a “Pro-Family Coalition” transcending denominational boundaries and commanding an electoral majority (Viguerie, 1981; Himmelstein, 1990; Critchlow, 2007). The New Right consciously sought to cultivate and connect allies even in seemingly unlikely places, from gun owners to evangelicals to disaffected ethnics, and, then, to train and develop leaders for these constituencies (Weyrich, 1982, 1983; cf. Bellant, 1991). Indeed, Weyrich helped Jerry Falwell to found the Moral Majority in 1979 — and, although accounts differ, probably even came up with the name. For decades, Free Congress has hosted a series of weekly meetings where conservative groups with different priorities join together to strategize.

Catholics served an important role in the New Right coalition and, crucially for these purposes, Weyrich early on identified his most powerful ally. “A big factor here is that the liberal hierarchy clearly disagrees with the Pope. Pope John Paul is on our side and the people are on our side, so the American bishops will increasingly discover that the vise is tightening both from the top and the bottom” (Neuhaus, 1981, 557). By 1994, Weyrich had broadened his focus from electioneering to cultural conservatism writ large (Weyrich, 1991). Outreach to sympathetic Catholic bishops, therefore, follows from a longstanding New Right commitment to movement-building across institutional boundaries.

## **2.2 The Catholic Church and Abortion**

The Weyrich memo emerges from ideological disagreements, most virulent during the 1980s, among American bishops, dividing liberals who emphasized a “seamless garment” unifying life and social justice issues, and conservatives especially concerned about abortion. The liberals, long led by Joseph Cardinal Bernardin, Archbishop of Cincinnati and then of Chicago, found themselves in a quandary,

unreconciled to the Democrats' support of abortion but unwilling to ally with a Republican Party with which they disagreed on a panoply of issues. Early in the Reagan years, Bernardin headed the committee that produced *A Challenge to Peace*, the bishops' condemnation of atomic warfare and the arms race, which provoked tensions with Republican leaders (Castelli, 1983).

Nevertheless, abortion has remained the bishops' dominant political issue, and other concerns have receded somewhat since the climactic fights of the 1980s that Weyrich references. The 1994 memo was written as conservatives began to consolidate control across the hierarchy and to challenge liberals' influence within the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Two complementary reasons suggest themselves. The first is changing demographics among American bishops. After John Paul II assumed the papacy in 1978, Archbishop Jean Jadot, the longtime apostolic nuncio in the United States, was recalled to Rome. The new pope and his representatives moved to emphasize doctrinal orthodoxy over pastoral considerations in selecting bishops (Reese, 1989), and these orthodox leaders have taken a hard line on abortion. Two of the leading dioceses in the country gained new, highly conservative leaders: Bernard Law in Boston, and John O'Connor in New York. Both appear high on the Weyrich list. In a 1984 statement of bishops from Massachusetts and northern New England, Law made his priorities clear: "While nuclear holocaust is a future possibility, the holocaust of abortion is a present reality" (Bishops of New England, 1984, 217). O'Connor, who spent his career as a military chaplain and achieved the rank of Rear Admiral, was a hawk who had fought against much of the language in *A Challenge to Peace*, and had been a registered Republican (Prendergast, 1999, 186). He tangled with pro-choice New York Democrats Geraldine Ferraro and Mario Cuomo over abortion when he doubted "how a Catholic in conscience could vote for an individual explicitly expressing himself or herself as favoring abortion" (Byrnes, 1991, 119).

Second, the bishops' position on abortion matches the Republican Party's, while Democrats have been unwilling to go nearly so far as the bishops on issues such as economic justice and nuclear war even as the bishops themselves have disagreed. *A Challenge to Peace* proposed no less than a wholesale reorientation of American foreign policy, one that few elected officials embraced. As Timothy Byrnes (1991, 143–144) emphasizes:

Abortion is not simply one issue among many for the bishops. It is rather the bedrock,

non-negotiable starting point from which the rest of their agenda has developed. . . . There is an absolute consensus among the American bishops that abortion is evil and must be morally and politically resisted.

In turn, the distance between the parties on abortion, first in Congress and then in the mass public, has grown substantially over time, such that the bishops' views have increasingly lined up with those of the GOP (Adams, 1997). On two dimensions therefore — within the bishops' conference, and between the conference and the parties — abortion has become the salient issue. The Weyrich memo never mentions abortion. Given Hyde's and Weyrich's histories, there was no need. Hyde was the leading Catholic, pro-life voice in Congress. Since its inception, Free Congress has consistently supported only pro-life candidates (Weyrich, 1983). When combined with both men's conservative views on other issues, the memo's political context becomes clearer.

### **2.3 Appointing Bishops**

Understanding the politics of bishops' promotion requires information about the church and its operation; this section provides a primer. Scholars have conducted little systematic research on American bishops' characteristics or, especially, on the predictors of advancement within the hierarchy (cf. Donovan, 1958; Hanna, 1989; Ritty and Coriden, 2002). The Catholic Church in the United States is currently divided into 178 Latin-rite dioceses and archdioceses, each led by a bishop or archbishop known as an ordinary. Archdioceses tend to be larger and more prominent and archbishops as metropolitans have some influence over other bishops in their region.<sup>1</sup> The Vatican has wide discretion in making episcopal appointments. The formal requirements are minimal: bishops must have been priests for at least five years, be in good standing and at least 35 years of age (Canon 378). More importantly for these purposes, under canon law a bishop must present the pope with his resignation at the age of 75 (Canon 401). While the pope may not accept this resignation immediately, the provision places an effective age limit on new appointments.

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<sup>1</sup>Most archdiocese and some diocese also have auxiliary bishops who assist the ordinary in administering the church. In some cases, a bishop is named coadjutor for a diocese or archdiocese, giving him the right of succession when the incumbent dies or retires.

The pope retains the ultimate authority over the appointment of Catholic bishops, and opportunities for direct influence by lay Catholics or political leaders are limited. Despite this authority, most cases follow a standard procedure (USCCB, 2004). The most important figures in the process are the papal nuncio (the pope's representative in Washington), who first proposes three candidates for a vacancy, and the American members of the Congregation for Bishops in Rome, which considers the nuncio's recommendation and forwards a name to the pope (Reese, 1989). Bishops on the Weyrich list have been well represented on the Congregation for Bishops. O'Connor — who learned Italian so as to be a more effective force on the Congregation — served from 1985 until his death in 2000, when Law replaced him (O'Callaghan, 2007, 124). Stafford joined the Congregation in 1998 after he was made a cardinal. Their service on the Congregation provided these prelates an unmatched opportunity to advance the careers of others who supported their priorities for the church. At the same time, John Paul II moved to centralize appointments, and to limit theological liberals' influence. As he wrote after a controversial episcopal appointment in the Netherlands in 1985, "In the last analysis, the Pope has to take the decision. Must the Pope explain his choice? Discretion does not permit him to do so" (Willey, 1992, 88).

Elevation to the cardinalate proceeds along different lines and with a different calendar. Membership in the College of Cardinals is a personal honor unattached to any particular office and is granted solely at the discretion of the pope. The primary role of the College is to elect a new pope. Canon law requires cardinal electors to be under the age of 80 and limits the number of voting members to 120. Senior members of the Vatican bureaucracies composing the Curia and leaders of prominent archdiocese (such as New York and Boston) typically become cardinals, although this practice is not mandatory. Moreover, the convention that certain positions are cardinalatial influences the appointment process for them.

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Data

To test our conjecture that bishops identified by Weyrich were more likely to advance in the church hierarchy, we first identify the relevant comparison group of bishops. Weyrich's list includes eight archbishops, eight bishops, one coadjutor archbishop, and one Eastern-rite bishop. Since no auxiliary bishops appear on the list, we exclude them from the dataset. We also eliminate Eastern-rite bishops and archbishops. The opportunities for advancement within the Eastern-rite jurisdictions are sufficiently distinct that it would be inappropriate to conduct a pooled analysis. The dataset, therefore, contains the 170 Latin-rite ordinary and coadjutor bishops and archbishops, including seventeen on the Weyrich list, who held office as of November 21, 1994.<sup>2</sup>

We seek to understand advancement within the hierarchy. That said, defining advancement is hardly straightforward given the variety of changes in status that bishops undergo. While moving from a bishopric to an archbishopric clearly represents a move up in the hierarchy, moving from the Diocese of Alexandria to the Diocese of Houma-Thibodeaux, as Bishop Sam Jacobs did in 2003, less obviously constitutes a meaningful promotion. Hence, we define three outcome variables with increasingly restrictive metrics of advancement (*Official Catholic Directory* 2008).

The least restrictive definition deems any change in position to be a promotion. The Vatican is under no obligation to provide new appointments to bishops, the logic goes, so any move could be considered an endorsement of that bishop's performance. A second, more restrictive rubric excludes all bishop-to-bishop transfers, such as Jacobs' move to Houma. The transfers that remain, which we refer to as "upgrades," include only changes that unambiguously reflect promotion: elevations from bishop to archbishop, transfers between archbishoprics, and transfers to the Vatican. Finally, we consider elevation to the College of Cardinals. Given these definitions of advancement, censored outcomes do not pose a major problem. The cohort of bishops that Weyrich observed in 1994 has by

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<sup>2</sup>Raymond Burke, probably the most outspoken conservative among American bishops in the last decade, was named Bishop of La Crosse on 10 December 1994, and so is excluded from this sample. Nevertheless, Burke's subsequent promotions to Archbishop of Saint Louis and to Rome as Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura support the overall argument adduced here.

now largely climbed its upward ladder; only 19 of the 170 bishops remain under the age of 70 as of 2008, and the 2007 and 2008 *Official Catholic Directories* record no changes in status save retirement for any bishop in the sample.

The multivariate models include controls for bishops' backgrounds and ecclesial careers prior to 1994. Several variables track career progression: age, number of years since ordination and since consecration as a bishop. In addition, dummies measure whether bishops were ethnic or racial minorities, belonged to a religious order, were ordained in the same province as their current diocese, or had served in the Roman Curia (*Catholic Almanac; Official Catholic Directory; Annuario Pontificio*).<sup>3</sup>

## 3.2 Procedure

We evaluate the substantive strength and statistical reliability of the association between presence on the Weyrich list and promotion outcomes using both bivariate and multivariate techniques. For each outcome, bishops can be classified into a 2 x 2 table based on whether their name appeared on the list and whether they were promoted. Since most bishops neither appeared on the Weyrich list nor received any kind of promotion, we use Fisher's exact test to test for independence in these tables (Agresti, 1990).<sup>4</sup> We also conduct a multivariate analysis to determine whether the success of bishops on the Weyrich list can be accounted for by characteristics that were observable in 1994. We use logistic regression with a correction for rare events as proposed by King and Zeng (2001).<sup>5</sup> In our data, using the rare-events correction produces more conservative estimates than standard logistic regression for each outcome.

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<sup>3</sup>We include only professional service in the curial bureaucracy, not educational training, leadership positions in a religious order, or service as a consultant while residing in the United States.

<sup>4</sup>The Fisher test uses the sampling distribution for 2 x 2 tables with fixed margins under the null hypothesis of independence to provide exact p-values, thus avoiding the need to use large-sample approximations.

<sup>5</sup>Parameter estimates from logistic regression are biased in general, and this bias becomes more pronounced when the outcome of interest is relatively uncommon. This model also makes the standard assumptions for logistic regression, most notably that the odds of promotion are a multiplicative function of the predictors and that the outcomes are conditionally independent.

Outcome	On Weyrich List	Not on list	Odds Ratio	p-value
Changed positions	5 of 17 (29.4%)	26 of 153 (17.0%)	2.03	0.20
Promoted to higher position	5 of 17 (29.4%)	11 of 153 (7.2%)	5.29	0.012
Elevated to cardinal	3 of 14 (21.4%)	4 of 148 (2.7%)	9.53	0.015

Note: p-values derived from Fisher’s exact test. Analysis for elevation to cardinal excludes archbishops in the College of Cardinals at the time the letter was drafted.

Table 2: Bivariate analysis of relationship between Weyrich list and advancement

## 4 Results

Bishops recommended by Weyrich were far more likely to advance in the hierarchy than those who did not appear in his memo, and those who advanced advanced far. Simple cross-tabulations reveal the magnitude of this difference. Using the broadest definition of advancement, 29 percent (5 out of 17) of the Weyrich bishops were promoted, as opposed to 17 percent (26 out of 153) of the remaining bishops. While this difference is substantively important, it does not quite attain statistical significance at the .05 level using the Fisher test. As the threshold for advancement becomes more restrictive, both the statistical significance and the substantive importance of the Weyrich effect increases. Bishops on the Weyrich list were four times more likely to receive a major promotion (from bishop to archbishop or transfers between archbishoprics or to the Vatican) and eight times more likely to be made cardinal. Weyrich’s prescience in identifying future cardinals is particularly impressive; of the seven bishops in office in 1994 who have since become cardinals, three — Cardinals Stafford, McCarrick, and O’Malley — appear on the list.

The Weyrich effect persists after controlling for a variety of characteristics that potentially affect advancement within the church hierarchy. In these models, the only consistently significant predictors were age, prior experience in the Roman Curia, and presence on the Weyrich list. The results from a parsimonious specification with these variables are presented in Table 3. As expected, age is negatively related to promotion; bishops closer to retirement age in 1994 were less likely to advance to new positions. Bishops who had worked in the Vatican were more likely to advance.<sup>6</sup> By serving in

<sup>6</sup>Of the nine bishops with curial experience, five changed positions and four received major upgrades. Three bishops — Egan, Levada, and Rigali — were elevated to the cardinalate. Only two prelates on the Weyrich list (Bruskewitz and Wuerl) served in the Vatican. Many observers speculate that Wuerl will be made a cardinal after Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, his predecessor in Washington, becomes ineligible to vote in conclave when he turns 80 in 2010.

	Outcome:		
	Change	Upgrade	Cardinal
(Intercept)	14.02*** (3.25)	10.47** (3.77)	1.75 (5.01)
Weyrich	1.10 (0.76)	2.11* (0.83)	2.01* (0.96)
Age	-0.26*** (0.06)	-0.22*** (0.07)	-0.09 (0.08)
Curia	1.55 (0.82)	2.03* (0.89)	2.41* (0.97)
N	170	170	162
-2logl	115.26	74.75	42.22

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Table 3: Rare-events logistic regression estimates for multivariate models predicting advancement within church hierarchy

the church bureaucracy, they became known and evinced a degree of doctrinal orthodoxy, rendering their success unsurprising. As in the bivariate analysis, the statistical and substantive significance of the Weyrich effect increases as the definition of advancement becomes more selective.

The results presented in Table 3 demonstrate that bishops on the Weyrich list were more likely to be promoted. Estimates of the magnitude of the Weyrich effect depend on both age and curial experience, as shown in Figure 1. These estimates compare the expected probability of advancement for bishops appearing on the list to the expected probability for other bishops at different ages, assuming no prior service in Rome. The vertical intervals in Figure 1 represent the uncertainty associated with our estimates of the Weyrich effect; positive values indicate that bishops on the Weyrich list were more likely to advance. When these intervals lie above the zero axis, we can rule out the possibility of no effect with 95% confidence. Appearing on the Weyrich list is associated with a large increase (on the order of thirty percentage points) in the probability of receiving a major promotion for bishops in their fifties. The effect appears much smaller for bishops approaching retirement age such as Bishop Gracida of Corpus Christi, who was 71 in 1994. The estimates for the difference in the probability of becoming a cardinal are less precise and do not change much as a function of age, but are consistent with a large Weyrich effect, particularly given the low overall probability of joining the cardinalate.

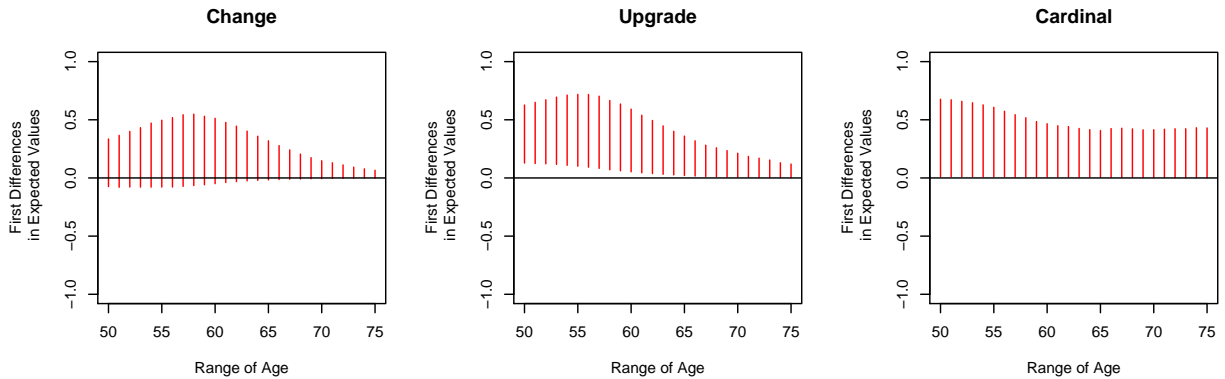


Figure 1: Predicted differences in probability of advancement as function of age

## 5 Discussion

For these results, questions of interpretation and external validity probably loom larger than those of model specification and internal validity. While they can fairly conclusively rule out chance or luck as the reasons, the results here — strong as they may be — cannot alone provide a deep explanation as to why the bishops on Weyrich’s list have risen so far. Nor do the archives yield any smoking guns. Rather, three explanations seem plausible: information, collusion, and confluence of interests. Neither archival nor statistical evidence offer definitive means to parse the three stories, all of which point in similar directions through somewhat different routes. First, Weyrich, by virtue of reading the Catholic press, hearing from sources around the country about promising bishops, and having allies in the Congregation of Bishops, might have had some level of inside information about which figures to cultivate. For a layman, whose professional responsibilities emphasize conservative movement-building in order to persuade officials in Washington, to know about the sprawling affairs of the American church surely merits note. Yet, given that the memo is addressed to Hyde and not to the church, inside information about promising figures seems unlikely to explain the whole story.

A second explanation asserts that conservative Catholic elites such as Weyrich directly influenced the selection of bishops by applying pressure to or even colluding with church leaders to advance favored candidates. If this mechanism was, indeed, responsible for the success of bishops on Weyrich’s list, it would represent a striking example of partisan lay interference in the process of

episcopal appointments. Nevertheless, the archives fail to reveal such communication. While the data cannot categorically exclude this explanation, it is worth emphasizing that the promotion outcomes observed here need not emanate from direct influence or collusion.

Third, conservative bishops' disproportionate promotion most likely emerges not from any direct linkage but through a confluence of interests between laymen such as Weyrich and conservatives in the Congregation of Bishops, as well as John Paul II and Benedict XIV. Weyrich, when he talked in 1981 about the vise tightening around liberal bishops "from the top and the bottom," adumbrated this notion nicely. For each group, abortion looms large. And beyond its shared mutual importance as a marker of a society sanctifying life (cf Luker, 1984, ch. 7), bishops who put abortion first are likely to be consistent doctrinal conservatives inside the church, who will not make trouble on issues ranging from ordaining women to empowering the laity. For observers outside the church, such figures tend to deemphasize issues where the bishops' priorities have stood on the Left. As the foregoing should indicate, Law, O'Connor, and Stafford shared priorities with the New Right, especially around abortion, and also had the institutional status to influence future selection of bishops. The success of curial veterans, another group noted for doctrinal orthodoxy but not necessarily familiar to New Right elites, lends credence to this mechanism. These three explanations are not mutually coexclusive. Inside information and confluence of interests offer a particularly compatible explanation without resort to conspiracy theory: movement conservatives, the argument goes, know the most about those with whom they share goals.

Turning briefly to the political implications, discerning the relationships among American conservatism's constituent parts has often proven elusive. This note tackles one of many such relationships — between the New Right and the Catholic hierarchy. It employs the idea of a confluence of interests to shed light on the ties that bind the Right's component elements. In particular, the research here suggests that the selection of conservative bishops provides a mechanism for understanding the changing politics of the Catholic Church and, in turn, abortion's centrality in structuring American politics at the elite level.

This note shows that bishops on Paul Weyrich's 1994 list to Henry Hyde have been promoted — especially to cardinal — at a vastly higher rate than those excluded from it. Yet given the sug-

gestive nature of the evidence here, it raises questions even as it answers them. For scholars of American politics, it suggests a further venue to explore in stitching together the institutional bases of conservative resurgence. For scholars of the Catholic hierarchy, it both confirms bishops' increasing conservatism and establishes a clear set of covariates to promotion, rooted in bishops' age (important given mandatory retirement rules) and prior experiences. Finally, for scholars of American religion in an age of increased elite polarization, it begins to flesh out the relations between politics inside and outside church walls.

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