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The Conservative 1960s

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The American conservatives of the 1960s have arrived at last. Not in Washington, not in positions of power – they did that during the "Reagan Revolution" of the 1980s and the Republican Congresses of the 1990s. No, it is in history itself, the record of events, that the right is finally appearing. Now that the elephant has occupied the parlor, scholars are inquiring whence it came.

In the last few years a surge of monographs has appeared, describing how conservatives did not merely survive the 1960s but used those tumultuous years to launch a movement that would dominate the politics of the following era. John A. Andrew III and Gregory L. Schneider have analyzed Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), an influential association of conservatives formed in 1960. Rebecca E. Klatch has compared YAF activists to those in Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), a New Left group formed the same year. Mary Brennan has described "the conservative capture of the GOP" later in the decade. Rick Perlstein and William E. Pemberton have produced biographical studies of, respectively, Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan, who helped lead the conservative charge in the 1960s. Kurt Schuparra and Lisa McGirr have examined the New Right's breeding ground in California. Godfrey Hodgson and Jonathan M. Schoenwald have written general histories of what they call "the conservative ascendancy" and "the rise of modern American conservatism." In view of all this new scholarship, it is no longer excusable for historians of the 1960s to ignore conservatives. As William F. Buckley, Jr., says on the back cover of the paperback edition of Andrew's book, "a gaping hole in the social/political history of the sixties" has been filled.[1]

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[1] Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York:

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These new works reveal the secret history of the 1960s. The earlier generation of scholars concentrated on liberalism and radicalism: the New Frontier, the Great Society, the civil rights and antiwar movements, campus rebellions, the sexual revolution, the counter culture, feminism, environmentalism, gay liberation. None of this seemed to have much to do with conservatism. Moreover, as John Andrew points out, conservatives obscured their own importance by blaming on "the Sixties" everything they found noxious in subsequent life, making that decade virtually synonymous with the left.[2] Consequently, says Rebecca Klatch, the New Right has been the "untold story" of the 1960s.[3]

At the decade's beginning, the importance of conservatism was far more apparent than it would be later. In 1961 SDS leader Tom Hayden warned that young conservatives were active and organized. That same year, when M. Stanton Evans published his book *Revolt on the Campus*, he was describing a *conservative* uprising. "Historians," he predicted, "may well record the decade of the 1960s as the era in which conservatism, as a viable political force, finally came into its own."[4] His prediction would come true, but not for a third of a century. It is only recently that scholars like Leo P. Ribuffo, John Andrew, and Rick Perlstein have been able to agree that the 1960s should not be remembered as a decade of the left, but as one of polarization between left and right.[5] Historians are seeing both sides now.

This does not mean, however, that the two sides look the same. The recent scholarship indicates that, while the left and the right both took strides forward in the 1960s, they did so in very different ways, with different styles, methods, goals, and values. Indeed, these differences largely account for the prolonged invisibility of conservatives.

New York University Press, 1999); Klatch, *A Generation Divided: The New Left, the New Right, and the 1960s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Brennan, *Turning Right in the Sixties: The Conservative Capture of the GOP* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Pemberton, *Exit with Honor: The Life and Presidency of Ronald Reagan* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997); Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right: The Rise of the California Conservative Movement, 1945–1966* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998); McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Hodgson, *The World Turned Right Side Up: A History of the Conservative Ascendancy in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996); Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[2] Andrew, 1–2. [3] Klatch, 1. [4] Hayden and Evans cited in Andrew, 76, 149.

[5] Ribuffo, "Why Is There So Much Conservatism in the United States and Why Do So Few Historians Know Anything about It?", *American Historical Review* 99 (1994), 445; Andrew, 2; Perlstein, xv.

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One salient distinction between the New Right and the New Left was the former's emphasis on organization: the history of conservatism in the 1960s is essentially institutional history. At the local level, a group like California's Orange County School of Anti-Communism wove together networks of like-minded activists.[6] At the national level, a group like Youth for Goldwater was what one of its leaders, Dana Rohrabacher, called an "*incredible* organization" that was "*unbelievably* efficient." The New Left, said Rohrabacher, "didn't have anything like this at all."[7] This was not a new insight. In 1961, *The Nation* magazine observed that, while liberals focused on particular problems like racial segregation or the House Un-American Activities Committee, conservatives were building a movement.[8]

Besides creating new associations like the John Birch Society (1958), YAF, and the American Conservative Union (1964), the conservatives planned the capture of existing ones. Robert Welch urged Birchers to join the PTA in order to "take it over."[9] YAF tried to take over the liberal National Student Association.[10] With more success, conservatives in California plotted and carried out the seizure of the California Republican Assembly, an unofficial, mass-membership body.[11] This helped them take over, in turn, the state party and the governor's office. The Grand Old Party (GOP) in California, however, was just one piece of a larger machine. From the outset, says Andrew, YAF sought to master the national Republican Party and turn it to the right.[12] "The conservative capture of the GOP" is the subject and subtitle of Mary Brennan's book *Turning Right in the Sixties*.

As that title suggests, even the seizure of the Republican Party was but one step toward controlling more and larger organizations. YAF's Lee Edwards wanted conservatives to "place themselves not only in the U.S. House of Representatives, but in the television networks, in the universities, in corporations and companies and, perhaps, most important of all, in the Federal government."[13] The conservatives would use an organization (YAF) to take over an organization (GOP) to take over an organization (US government). Thus, consciously and systematically, they began their long march through the institutions of society.

Building, capturing, and preserving organizations required a high degree of discipline, of suppressing individual will or inclination for the sake of the group. Barry Goldwater was a maverick, criticizing Republican President Dwight Eisenhower in 1960 for "dime-store New Dealism";[14] but even

[6] McGirr, 60–61. [7] Klatch, 84. [8] *The Nation*, 27 May 1961, 359.
[9] Perlstein, 110; McGirr, 75. [10] Andrew, 92. [11] McGirr, 111, 116–26.
[12] Andrew, 5–6. [13] Ibid., 181. [14] Brennan, *Turning Right*, 24.

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Goldwater knew the value of party loyalty. When he lost the Republican presidential nomination to Richard Nixon in 1960, he told his fellow conservatives to stick with the party nevertheless. Four years later, when some conservatives denounced a liberal Republican as a "left-wing extremist," Goldwater continued to preach partisan solidarity, saying he did not want any Republicans defeated.[15] Ronald Reagan, running for governor of California in 1966, issued an "Eleventh Commandment" forbidding any Republican to speak ill of another.[16] Ideological purists grumbled about such pragmatism; but for Goldwater and Reagan, loyalty to the organization trumped personal or philosophical differences.

Conservative organizations tended to be strictly hierarchical, controlled from above. Buckley's magazine, *National Review*, was financed in 1955 by businessmen who bought shares of stock; but all the *voting* shares were in the hands of Buckley himself. There was never any question of who was in charge. Similarly, Robert Welch retained complete control of the John Birch Society: anybody who disagreed with the founder was welcome to leave.[17] Andrew and Klatch agree that YAF had a "top-down" structure, with a small, self-selecting national board deciding policy and enforcing it among local chapters.[18] When the national office discovered that the chairman of one campus chapter of YAF was simultaneously chairman of the campus chapter of SDS, the national office severed relations with the local. (SDS people, in contrast, found the dual chairmanship amusing.) In 1969, YAF carried out a purge of libertarian chapters that dissented from the national organization's traditionalism.[19]

Many conservatives exhibited a devotion to organization that was close to absolute. Clif White, a leader of the Goldwater movement, controlled delegates to the 1964 Republican national convention by pairing each one with a partner whose job was to keep him in line. For White, such discipline was nothing new. In graduate school after World War II he had battled communists for control of the Cornell University chapter of the American Veterans Committee, and he copied their tactic of organizing his comrades into perfectly disciplined cells. When White moved from the progressive American Veterans Committee to the conservative wing of the Republican Party, he did not lose his taste for structure.[20]

Like the communists who taught him, White was a master of stealth. His group, plotting to make Goldwater president, worked under a code name,

[15] Perlstein, 95, 337. [16] Schoenwald, *Time for Choosing*, 11, 200.
[17] Perlstein, 73, 115. For Welch, see also McGirr, 76. [18] Andrew, 79, 90.
[19] Klatch, *Generation Divided*, 216–17, 227–33. [20] Perlstein, 376, 173–74.

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Suite 3505, and had a plan so closely guarded it was unknown even to Goldwater.[21] Nor was White the only conservative to duplicate the techniques of the communists. The Birch Society consciously copied the Communist Party's tactic of keeping its membership list secret.[22] The American Conservative Union did not deliberately adopt communist practices; but its organizational meeting, like that of the Birch Society, was held in secret.[23] With its authoritarian, rigidly controlled organizations, operating in secret, the New Right had more in common with the Old Left than the New Left. Indeed, the New Right included so many ex-Communists – Frank Meyer, Marvin Liebman, Whittaker Chambers, and more – that the congruity between the New Right and the Old Left may not be an analogy but a continuity.

Even when conservatives' actions were not deliberately hidden, they were done without fanfare. Whereas the New Left held massive or at least colorful demonstrations to call attention to social ills, the New Right operated mainly out of sight. A former Goldwater activist explained that this was one reason why "[y]ou hear so much about the left in the sixties" and so little about the right. "We never got the publicity and we weren't interested in that," she said. Her friends in YAF were busy with political campaigns, canvassing the precincts and finding conservatives to run as Republicans. "We knew," she said, "that's how you do it."[24]

The left demanded Freedom Now and Peace Now, but the right was more patient. The left took direct action to stop segregation or the Vietnam War: "If you really wanted to do good," recalled one SDSer, "you could do it now." In contrast, a young rightist said that YAF was "thinking of the future" and would not have an effect for another five years.[25] Thinking even longer-term, YAFer Lee Edwards told conservatives they needed a *twenty*-five year plan.[26] Most far-sighted of all was Robert Welch, who said he wanted the John Birch Society to "last for hundreds of years, and exert an increasing influence … throughout those centuries."[27] The Birch Society, YAF, and American Conservative Union all continue to exist. Although the Birch Society is not what it used to be and YAF has practically ceased to be, even those two outfits outlasted such opposed ones as SDS and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, both of which expired along with the 1960s.[28] The New Left would be ad hoc; the New Right would be ad infinitum. Thus, conservatives, working diligently through organizations,

[21] Ibid., 181, 183. [22] McGirr, 76. [23] Andrew, 214; Schoenwald, 62.
[24] Klatch, 85. [25] Ibid., 251, 2. [26] Andrew, 181. [27] Schoenwald, 77.
[28] Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 175.

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cultivated political fruits that they did not intend to harvest until years or decades or centuries later – another reason for the conservatives' long absence from the historical record.

Part and parcel with the conservatives' commitment to organization was their desire for positions of power. Indeed, the purpose of an organization was to bestow power. After young conservatives met at William Buckley's estate in Sharon, Connecticut, to organize YAF, Buckley reported: "What is so striking in the students who met at Sharon is their appetite for power." Stanton Evans – the author of the "Sharon Statement," YAF's declaration of principles – said in 1961 that conservative students represented "the group which, in 15 or 20 years, will be assuming the seats of power in the United States."[29] In his history of YAF, Gregory Schneider says the organization's goal from start to finish was "political power for the conservative movement."[30]

Of course, the New Left also sought power, but of a different sort. When radicals sat in at a lunch counter and forced a restaurant to desegregate, or when they occupied a building and forced a university to make concessions, they exercised power directly and immediately. They did not try to become managers of the restaurant or administrators of the university, nor to become legislators who could pass laws governing the restaurant or the university. Instead they sought to make the people in those positions of power act differently. Thus the New Left's power resided in its actions, not its organizations.

The New Right was different. For conservatives power came through a position, a public office, a job. The way for a person to achieve power was by joining a group that had it. That is what Ronald Reagan did, moving up through the Screen Actors Guild, then the Republican Party. "What's so terrible about Ronnie," said an actress whose career had been ruined by the blacklist Reagan supported, "is his ambition to go where the power is."[31] Terrible or not, "going where the power is" became the strategy for many conservatives.

It was not Reagan, however, who was most responsible for inspiring action by rightists in the 1960s. It was Barry Goldwater – or, to put it more precisely, Goldwater's presidential campaign of 1964. Goldwater himself had little appetite for power: one reason he lost the election was he did not particularly want to be president, and he conducted his campaign accordingly.[32] Nevertheless, it was that campaign that energized the New Right.

[29] Andrew, 58, 86.
[30] Schneider, 176.
[31] Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 32.
[32] Perlstein, 253, 418.

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Thirty-four of the thirty-eight YAFers Rebecca Klatch interviewed for her book took part in the Goldwater campaign, which she calls "a primary route to activism and to YAF." One of those thirty-four, David Keene, says that campaign was "the most important thing in the '60s" because it got most of the conservatives of his generation involved.[33]

An election campaign is the pursuit of a seat of power, and this sort of pursuit characterized the right much more than the left. SDSers told Klatch they had been inspired not by anyone's race for public office but by the civil rights and peace movements.[34] Their objective was to solve particular problems, not to get the power that would enable them to solve a host of problems. In the late 1960s, some New Leftists adopted a conspiratorial Marxism and fought each other for control of SDS, but in the process they destroyed the organization.[35] The pursuit of power marked the end of the New Left. It was only the beginning for the New Right.

For YAFers the organizational imperative did not end in the 1960s when they were young. As Klatch points out, disproportionate numbers of YAF alumni followed careers in government and political organizations – disproportionate, that is, to the numbers of SDSers. Some conservatives, notably libertarians and housewives, ultimately rejected politics as a vocation. Nevertheless, enough traditionalist conservatives took political jobs so that Klatch can say that "Washington, D.C., is full of ex-YAFers." One of those, David Keene, became chair of the American Conservative Union and an adviser to Republican Senator Bob Dole. Keene told Klatch that he could name fifty people in the capital who had been in YAF.[36] Among the YAF alumni who achieved political power were Congressmen Robert Bauman, James Kolbe, and Dana Rohrabacher; consultant Lee Edwards; organizer Howard Phillips; presidential speechwriter Patrick Buchanan and his assistant Tom Charles Huston; national security adviser Richard Allen; magazine editor R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr.; and fund-raiser Richard Viguerie.[37]

Not as many SDSers took up politics as a career. Instead, they – as well as libertarian conservatives – tended to go into education or social service. For example, one former SDS member, Carol Christman, became a social service administrator, setting up assistance centers for the unemployed. Her job was not a seat of power, and she thought of herself as being out of politics. Yet, whether she realized it or not, her work was a kind of direct action, solving a particular problem, much like her earlier labors in SDS. "For me now," she said, "this job is like a political passion."[38]

[33] Klatch, 81–85.
[34] Ibid., 74–81.
[35] Ibid., 201–02.
[36] Ibid., 229, 261–62, 284–85.
[37] Andrew, 216–20.
[38] Klatch, 284, 291–92.

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Fitting comfortably with conservatives' emphases on organization and on achieving positions of power was a harmony between the older generation and the new. Older conservatives controlled organizations and therefore could bestow power on the young. If young conservatives wanted places in the network of organizations, they would need the support of their elders.

That helps to explain the origin of YAF. To be sure, it was young men, Douglas Caddy and David Franke, who took the lead in forming a national conservative youth organization. They did so, however, at the instigation and with the assistance of older men. Barry Goldwater suggested it; public relations professional Marvin Liebman and former New Jersey Governor Charles Edison set up a meeting where Edison urged young people to organize conservative groups on campus; Liebman then joined Caddy in persuading William Buckley to sponsor the founding meeting of YAF at his family's estate. The man who wrote YAF's statement of principles, Stanton Evans, was only in his twenties, but, as the editor of the *Indianapolis News*, he was already in a position of authority and influence. Also participating in the Sharon Conference were such senior statesmen as novelist John Dos Passos and *National Review* publisher William Rusher and editor Frank Meyer.[39] YAF, then, was the legitimate and loyal offspring of the Old Right.[40] There was no generation gap among conservatives.

Young conservatives admired their elders. At YAF national conventions students delighted in mingling with heroes like Goldwater, Buckley, Strom Thurmond, and John Wayne. Sociologist Lawrence Schiff studied students at the 1963 YAF convention and concluded that they demonstrated "a general dependence on adult figures to provide both programs and direction."[41]

Respect for elders is hardly surprising in conservatives, whose political philosophy is based on an appreciation of the past. Still, the extent to which young conservatives depended on older ones is remarkable. David Keene said that Frank Meyer was "a great influence" who would call him at two in the morning and make sure that Keene was not deviating from conservative principles. When the Virginia legislature asked former YAFer Kathy Rothschild and some of her female friends to testify against the Equal Rights Amendment in 1972, the women got help from an older one, Phyllis Schlafly, who told them how to answer the lawmakers' questions. As Rothschild reported the effect of Schlafly's tutorial on ERA, "We knew we were against it, and now we know why."[42] Gregory Schneider says that, unlike the New Left,

[39] Schneider, 33–34.
[40] Schneider, 14, 30–34; Klatch, 18.
[41] Schoenwald, *Time for Choosing*, 245.
[42] Klatch, 105, 266.

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YAF throughout most of the 1960s did not offer original political analysis but instead publicized the work of older conservatives.[43]

The young conservatives' dependence on their elders was not merely intellectual, but often professional and financial. At the time she testified against ERA, Rothschild was employed as the head of the Charles Edison Youth Fund, a conservative group. The previous head, who had originally hired Rothschild as a secretary, was a former executive director of YAF.[44] In 1960, the year Marvin Liebman helped Doug Caddy organize the conference to found YAF, Liebman also gave Caddy a job in his public relations firm.[45]

Young conservatives depended on their elders not only for personal livelihoods, but also for the funding of organizations like YAF. David Franke, another of YAF's founders, asked businessmen to donate money to the group. The appeal went out on stationery of the McGraw–Edison Company Committee for Public Affairs. Later Charles Edison and manufacturer Herbert Kohler solicited funds for YAF. The National Association of Manufacturers supplied the youth group with a list of three thousand conservative businessmen who might be asked to contribute.[46] Marvin Liebman supplied YAF with office space, expense accounts, even airplane tickets.[47] All this corporate largesse to YAF and other conservative youth groups did not go unnoticed. In reporting the "wave of conservatism" supposedly sweeping campuses in 1961, *The Nation* claimed that the illusion of a wave was created partly by business's funding of conservative campus groups.[48]

He who pays the piper calls the tune. When some libertarians urged YAF to join SDS in an umbrella organization opposing the war in Vietnam, YAF leaders refused, partly because they feared losing funding from older conservatives. As one traditionalist explained:

> [W]e had a big organization, we had a regular staff. So money needed to be raised for these things. The money came from donors, contributors, and it would be just impossible to explain to them why we were joining with a group that was involved with SDS.[49]

Disputes within YAF illustrated the power of the older generation over the younger. In 1961 there was a struggle between factions associated with two of the group's founders, Douglas Caddy and David Franke. Fearing that YAF would break apart, a band of elders that John Andrew calls "godfathers" of the organization – Buckley, Stanton Evans, Marvin Liebman, and William Rusher – persuaded YAF to accept their recommendations for

[43] Schneider, 56.
[44] Klatch, 266.
[45] Andrew, *Other Side*, 67.
[46] Ibid., 55, 78.
[47] Schneider, 38.
[48] *The Nation*, 27 May 1961, 358.
[49] Klatch, 224–25.

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operating the organization, including the appointment of an executive director chosen by Liebman. Rusher told his fellow "godfathers" that they needed to "find friendly forces" among the young people but noted that the older men would not leave the organization solely in the hands of those friendly forces: "for we can always add our own majestic baritone to their tenor."[50] The baritones could call the tune and prevent the tenors from forgetting the score.

Deference to older people was not absent on the left. Certainly SDSers had heroes and benefactors among the older generation. Nevertheless, young radicals rebelled against their elders more than conservatives did. Indeed, SDS was *born* in rebellion. Members of the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID) felt stifled by their parent organization, the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), so they changed their name to Students for a Democratic Society, adopted ideas and policies that LID opposed, and eventually broke free from LID altogether. Klatch says that YAF members had a very different attitude, contentedly considering themselves a sort of youth auxiliary to *National Review*. "In contrast to YAF's smooth relationship with and admiration for their parent organization," she maintains, "SDS's relationship to the Old Left was characterized by difficulty and tension."[51]

Nor was it only figurative parents against whom the New Left revolted. As one former SDSer, Barbara Haber, said, "We were going to live our lives differently than our parents." They did, and their parents were not always pleased. Parents of SDSers were less than half as likely as parents of YAFers to support their children's form of activism.[52] The conservatives of the 1960s may not have been one big happy family of helpful patriarchs and dutiful youngsters (plus an occasional matriarch like Phyllis Schlafly), but they came closer to that ideal than did their counterparts on the left.

When Barbara Haber said that her generation of leftists intended to live differently than their parents, she meant in part that the New Left repudiated the comfortable, safe life style of the American middle class. SDS and YAF were both predominantly middle class, but SDS drew fewer members than did YAF from the working class and lower middle class.[53] SDS's declaration of principles, the Port Huron Statement of 1962, famously began by describing the group as "people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort"; and for many SDSers the comfort was more than modest. That

[50] Andrew, 9, 110–15. Obviously there were no sopranos among these godfathers.

[51] Klatch, 19, 23, 28. For more on the "constructive" relationship between YAF and *National Review*, see Schneider, 39–40.

[52] Klatch, 32, 128.

[53] Andrew, 147–48; Schneider, 33; Klatch, 38.

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fact, however, made them uncomfortable. Holding egalitarian ideals, many in the New Left felt embarrassed by their privileges. "There was a lot of guilt," said one, "for having things." Consequently, young radicals felt a kind of relief in the privation they endured in the movement. While toiling twelve hours a day, seven days a week, for SDS, Cathy Wilkerson lived and labored in a shack with a space heater and no furniture but a mattress on the floor. "It was totally primitive but it was wonderful," she said.[54]

Hairshirts were less in fashion among young conservatives. Rebecca Klatch contrasts Cathy Wilkerson's SDS hovel with the space Allen Brandstater occupied while serving as YAF executive director for California. Thanks to the $60,000 his organization raised in 1967, said Brandstater, "We had a nice suite of offices that were in a brokerage firm … It was like being a young businessman."[55] At the national level, William Rusher criticized Marvin Liebman for playing the "rich uncle" by giving YAF so much money that the organization's directors got into the habit of spending "lavishly."[56] Fiscal extravagance was less of a problem in SDS.

When they got older, New Leftists and New Rightists continued to have different attitudes toward wealth and what it brought. Despite, or because of, their middle-class backgrounds, many former SDSers took blue-collar jobs. Sue Jhirad may have been an extreme case when she gave up a teaching position at MIT to toil as, successively, a drill press operator, assembly line worker, and welder; but other ex-SDSers worked in such trades as shipping clerk, daycare provider, "temp," and taxi driver.[57]

Some libertarians who previously had belonged to YAF exhibited the same downward mobility as SDSers. However, the traditionalists, the majority of YAF, did not. While several former New Leftists reported leading "economically marginal" adult lives, no traditionalists did. As they grew older, conservatives got white-collar employment in business, government, or politics. Whereas SDS's Sue Jhirad quit her job as a professor of English to become a drill press operator, YAF's Don Devine quit his job as professor of Political Science to become director of the Office of Personnel Management for Ronald Reagan's government of the United States.[58]

Besides the leftists' and rightists' different degrees of success in attaining wealth, there also was a different attitude toward that wealth once it was attained. While former SDSers who later prospered suspected that they were betraying their earlier ideals, former YAFers who prospered believed that they had stuck to theirs. Both were correct. Having always said that

[54] Klatch, 47, 100. [55] Ibid., 103. [56] Andrew, 109.
[57] Klatch, 240, 241, 243, 247, 282. [58] Ibid., 272, 282–83.

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extraordinary performance should be extraordinarily rewarded, well-to-do conservatives thought they had only gotten what they deserved. This was as true of libertarians as it was of traditionalists.[59]

Since conservative activists of the 1960s felt little compunction to undergo physical hardship, it is perhaps unsurprising that few of them fought in Vietnam. The recent books on conservatism mention scores of rightist young men but only record that two of them – YAF's James Kolbe and Jerry Norton – went to war.[60] This number exceeds by only one the number of SDSers who did so. (A stalwart of Progressive Labor joined the army and got himself stationed in Vietnam but failed in his clandestine mission to establish contact with representatives of the National Liberation Front.)[61] Moreover, Norton, one of those two YAFers who served in Vietnam, not only disagreed with his group's endorsement of the war but also accused its leaders of hypocrisy because of their calling for the United States to fight on to victory in Vietnam while at the same time they "judiciously do everything they can to avoid serving there themselves."[62]

Norton had a point. Anticommunism was one of the foundations of the conservative movement, and the principal justification for the United States' waging war in Vietnam was to stop the spread of communism. It made sense, then, for YAFers to organize rallies supporting the war effort.[63] Beyond that, however, they would not go. Because many YAF leaders became activists when in college or even high school, they were sufficiently young, healthy, and unencumbered by family that they could have served in Vietnam.[64] Yet, with rare exceptions, they did not. Instead they fought the communists not with rifles but with phone calls and the ringing of doorbells, with pamphlets, meetings, speeches, and demonstrations. If Young Americans for Freedom limited their war against communism to the secure terrain of metaphor, older conservatives could hardly be expected to venture onto more dangerous ground. Lisa McGirr's book about the New Right in Orange County, California, bears the ironic title *Suburban Warriors*, emphasizing how these soldiers of conservatism fought their battles from the comfort of home.

Unquestionably, many young conservatives went to fight in Vietnam. For the most part, however, these conservatives in uniform had not been political activists, or at least not ones prominent enough to be noticed in history books. One example is John McCain, now a Republican US Senator. He joined the Navy and went to war primarily out of a family tradition of military service, as the title of his memoir, *Faith of My Fathers*, suggests. In this

[59] Ibid., 312. [60] Andrew, 219; Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 148.
[61] Klatch, 256–57. [62] Schneider, 148–49. [63] Ibid., 94. [64] Klatch, 89.

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respect, his motive was traditionalist conservative. However, politics seems to have had very little to do with it. His autobiography records no political activism, or even interest, before he joined the Navy. Stopping communism may have been another reason for going to Vietnam; but, if so, it was not important enough for him to mention in his book.[65] It seems, then, that conservative activists did not go to war, and conservatives who went to war were not activists.

Even when political conservatives confronted the enemy in a physical way, with a possibility of violence, there was little for them to fear. YAF's most daring, provocative actions included blocking SDS from occupying Stanford University buildings and themselves occupying (for one night) the office of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.[66] There is a qualitative difference, however, between baiting a council of war resisters and baiting the Klan or the cops. Unlike New Leftists who marched in Birmingham or remained in university buildings after the police had come to eject them, New Rightists rarely had their heads cracked or their backsides bounced down stairs. Some libertarian conservatives broke from their traditionalist allies in YAF by demonstrating against the war and getting roughed up by the police. For the most part, however, conservative activists avoided such unpleasantness.[67] They might read *The Conscience of a Conservative* and cheer Barry Goldwater when he proclaimed that "we would rather die than lose our freedom,"[68] but few of them actually put themselves in harm's way.

This may be another reason that, until recently, historians have paid little attention to the decade's conservatives. Developing a mailing list or publishing a newsletter may, in the long run, be just as important as sitting in at a segregated lunch counter; but it is not as interesting, much less inspiring. People enjoy writing and reading about courage, and the New Left displayed more of it than did the New Right. This won the left an early claim on the history of the 1960s.

Devoted to organizations, striving for positions of power, cooperative with elders, and averse to physical hardship or danger – all this sounds like a description of Lyndon Johnson.[69] The fact that conservatives of the 1960s had so many personal characteristics in common with one of the decade's

[65] McCain, with Mark Salter, *Faith of My Fathers* (New York: Random House, 1999), viii, 20, 51, 162.
[66] Schoenwald, *Time for Choosing*, 248; Schneider, 116.
[67] Klatch, 126.
[68] Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 66.
[69] See Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*, vol. 3: *Master of the Senate* (New York: Knopf, 2002).

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pre-eminent liberals suggests that any analysis of the New Right must go beyond techniques and personalities in order to reveal political ideas and values. What did conservatives of the 1960s intend to do with the power they so avidly sought? What did they want – not for themselves but for the country and the world?

Most of the recent books on '60s conservatism identify three ideological tendencies in the movement: libertarian, traditionalist, and anticommunist. Libertarians advocated maximum freedom for the individual – freedom especially from impositions of the state: laws, regulations, taxes. Traditionalists advocated doing things the old-fashioned way. Anticommunists advocated strong, even drastic action to stop the spread of Marxist–Leninism abroad and at home. Largely through the efforts of the *National Review* circle, conservatives managed to "fuse" these three tendencies into one grand movement after World War II.

As politics, triune conservatism worked: conservatives gained control of the government in the 1980s and '90s. As philosophy, however, fusion of libertarianism, traditionalism, and anticommunism has not been so successful. Neither the conservatives themselves nor the historians who describe them have been able to marshal the three ideological tendencies into logical consistency.

To begin with, there is no agreement on what constitutes traditionalism. *Which* traditions should be perpetuated? What happens when traditions conflict? The United States has a tradition of religious devotion but also a tradition of separation of church and state. There is, as libertarians would insist, a tradition of individualism; but also, as Alexis de Tocqueville pointed out, a tradition of voluntary cooperation and even of conformism. Then, too, there is the question of *whose* traditions. What happens when American customs differ from those of the rest of the Western, Christian world? Which set is "traditional"? This raises the question of timing. Does a traditionalist try to perpetuate what is standard practice today? Or what was standard until recently (for example, before the New Deal)? Or what, as traditionalist Richard Weaver argued, was standard practice until the onset of decadence in the fourteenth century?[70] The problem that conservatives have, then, is too much, or too many, of a good thing. So multifarious and mutually contradictory are the traditions in traditional conservatism that political scientist Samuel P. Huntington declared in 1957 that it was futile to attempt to produce a coherent set of continuously held conservative ideas. There *was* no conservative intellectual tradition, he said. The only essential idea uniting

[70] Weaver cited in Hodgson, *World Turned*, 25.

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conservatives was that radical change must be opposed; the only thing they had to change was change itself.[71]

In order to use traditionalism as a category of analysis, one must stipulate which traditions are involved. George H. Nash, a pioneer in the study of postwar conservatism, says that traditionalists were the party of conservatives who "urged a return to traditional religious and ethical absolutes" and a rejection of relativism.[72] Some of the more recent books, however, modify Nash's analysis by saying that it was not only traditionalists who believed in absolutes. Jonathan Schoenwald, William Pemberton, and Lisa McGirr all assert that the belief in an objective, immutable moral order characterizes all types of conservatives, including libertarians.[73] Godfrey Hodgson agrees, but points out that such a belief also characterizes many liberals.[74] It is difficult to believe that the civil rights movement was inspired by a burning sense of moral relativism.

If belief in an objective moral order is not the defining characteristic of traditionalism, what is? Godfrey Hodgson says that traditionalism consists of a stress on "tradition, order, community, religion, and the organic model of society." The key words here are *order* and *community*. When Hodgson and most other historians talk about traditionalism, they usually mean a tendency to call upon government, in the name of community, to enforce order: every town needs a sheriff. Hodgson calls this strand of conservatism "traditionalist-authoritarian."[75] Mary Brennan says that Russell Kirk, one of the founders of postwar traditionalism, advocated "active government."[76]

Once traditionalism has been explicated so as to reveal that its essential component is active, authoritarian government, it is obvious that, from a logical point of view, conservative fusionism is confused. Every historian of recent conservatism has pointed out the contradiction between libertarianism and traditionalism. Libertarians insist on individual freedom, with minimal restraints by the state. Traditionalists reply that the state must keep people in line. Libertarians say that anybody who buys an American flag has a right to burn it. Traditionalists say there ought to be a law against such

[71] Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," *American Political Science Review*, 51 (1957), 455, 457, 468–69, 471–72. Huntington, however, contradicts his main point by listing several ideas on which he finds "substantial agreement" among conservatives, e.g., religion as the foundation of civil society, the superiority of the community over the individual, and human inequality (p. 456).

[72] Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), xiii.

[73] Schoenwald, 18; Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 45; McGirr, *Suburban Warriors*, 164.

[74] Hodgson, 90. [75] Ibid., 17–18. [76] Brennan, *Turning Right*, 10.

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desecration.[77] Libertarians maintain that an individual woman must be left free to decide whether to have an abortion. Traditionalists argue that the government must enforce the community's religious values by preventing it.[78] When libertarian economist F. A. Hayek submitted his contribution to an anthology whose editor sought to find a consensus among conservatives, Hayek subverted the project by titling his chapter "Why I Am Not a Conservative."[79]

The stark contradiction between the first two elements of conservative ideology has led to a desperate search for a third element that could serve as a cushion between the pounding opposites. Anticommunism seems to fit the bill. Libertarians view communism as the antithesis of individual liberty; traditionalists see it as running against not only the American grain but the whole fabric of Western civilization. Here, then, is something on which libertarians and traditionalists can agree and for which they can strive side by side. Thus, in the 1960s, a shared anticommunism was what held together the diverse segments of the conservative movement.

That, at least, is what the recent historians of conservatism maintain. William Pemberton says anticommunism "partly resolved" the tension between libertarians and traditionalists; Gregory Schneider says it "straddled" the two camps. George Nash describes it functioning within the conservative movement as "cement"; Jonathan Schoenwald, as a "common bond"; Lisa McGirr, as a "discursive bond"; Mary Brennan, as a "common cause."[80] Everybody seems to agree that it was anticommunism that enabled conservatives to stick together.

Unanimous agreement, however, does not make a proposition correct. The power of anticommunism to unify antagonists had definite and rather constricted limits. Lyndon Johnson was anticommunist: he sacrificed his presidency to fight a war against communism. Even SDS declared in its Port Huron Statement that "as democrats we are in basic opposition to the communist system."[81] Despite their anticommunism, neither LBJ nor SDS joined the conservative alliance.

Moreover, although conservatives agreed on the evil of communism, that did not stop the quarreling on the right. When anticommunism was put into practice, it ran up against the principles of libertarianism. Senator Robert Taft, a foe of both the New Deal and NATO, deplored American

[77] Klatch, *Generation Divided*, 214–15.
[78] McGirr, 235–36.
[79] Hayek, "Why I Am Not a Conservative," in *What Is Conservatism?* ed. Frank S. Meyer (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), 88–103.
[80] Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 47; Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 12; Nash, 179; Schoenwald, 28, 33–34; McGirr, 168; Brennan, 10.
[81] Klatch, 26.

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aggressiveness in waging the Cold War in 1949, saying it resulted in bloated government and diminished freedom.[82] Two decades later some libertarians in YAF expressed similar views. Not only did they consider the military draft a gross violation of personal liberty, but they also deplored the government's repression of the antiwar movement.[83] The traditionalists who dominated YAF, however, supported the war and showed that support, in part, by calling for the government to prevent corporations like IBM from trading with communist nations that might be aiding the Viet Cong. Thus YAF's anticommunism led it to urge the state to curtail free enterprise.[84] In practice, then, anticommunism was just another authoritarian tradition that conflicted with libertarianism. Therefore, anticommunism would not be very effective in uniting the different kinds of conservatives. More was needed.

George Nash identifies another "cement" holding the right wing together. Conservatives "were increasingly cognizant," he says, "of the need to avoid either quixotic antistatism or morose authoritarianism if their movement was to capture national power and respect."[85] Again the magic word: *power*. Conservatives were nothing if not practical, and they knew that in order to capture the Republican Party, then the United States government, they would have to make compromises. Particularly after the defeat of straight-talking Barry Goldwater in 1964, conservatives conducted what Kurt Schuparra calls "a retreat from ideological purity." This pragmatism made possible the "triumph of the right."[86] If conservatives could tone down their extremist message in order to mollify the general electorate, surely they could do so to mollify each other. The libertarian and the traditionalist could ignore each other's heresies if so doing would propel both of them into political office.

Anticommunism and the desire for power, however, were not the only glues holding conservatives together. There were also some basic principles that are only faintly suggested by the term *anticommunism*. Although the recent books provide remarkably little analysis of these principles, the books present evidence that makes such an analysis possible. Data that the historians mention briefly, in passing, sometimes almost with embarrassment, may be gathered and organized into an interpretation of the ideological basis of 1960s conservatism.

People joined the conservative movement for reasons that are perplexingly numerous and diverse. Some conservatives resented government

[82] H. W. Brands, *The Strange Death of American Liberalism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 59–60. [83] Klatch, 121–23. [84] Schneider, 106.
[85] Nash, 179. [86] Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right*, xv.

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interference in the free market. Some objected to attempts to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor. Some opposed racial desegregation. Some accepted desegregation in principle but opposed the means chosen to implement it: federal intervention, busing, or affirmative action. Some were outraged by America's frustration and eventual defeat in Vietnam. Some were even more outraged by protests against the war. Some thought the United States had abandoned its God-given mission as the last best hope of mankind and had become instead a stooge for the United Nations. Some conservatives were repelled by riots on campus or in ghettoes. Some feared ordinary muggers and murderers, now that the police had been restrained by a Supreme Court solicitous to the accused. Some conservatives were against abortion. For some it was pornography, homosexuality, or LSD.[87]

In view of this enormous complex of conservative motives, it is impossible to identify a single grand cause of them all. Still, it is feasible to group some of these motives together on the basis of a more general, underlying motive, and to suggest that some of these general tendencies were more important than others as the motors of conservatism in the 1960s.

Of all the issues, the ones least binding on conservatives were the moral or religious ones. The most powerful conservative leaders spoke warmly of these causes – "morality," said Ronald Reagan as he ran for governor of California in 1966, "is the main issue of the campaign"[88] – but did little beyond that. After young women in bikinis passed the collection plate at one of his rallies in Beverly Hills, Barry Goldwater was not likely to implement a new age of sexual puritanism.[89] Though he welcomed the votes of the religious right, he had little patience with some of their views. When the Moral Majority's Rev. Jerry Falwell declared that "good Christians" should oppose Sandra Day O'Connor's nomination to the Supreme Court, Goldwater replied that "Every good Christian ought to kick Falwell right in the ass."[90] Nor was Ronald Reagan, a ladies' man, remarried divorcé, teller of dirty jokes, and creature of Hollywood, inclined to enact into law a severely restrictive personal morality.[91] As governor of California, he signed a liberal abortion law that increased legal abortions in that state from five hundred in 1967 to a hundred thousand in 1972 and two hundred thousand in

[87] For representative lists of conservative issues, see Schoenwald, 157; Hodgson, 158–59; McGirr, 209. [88] McGirr, 203.

[89] Perlstein, 484. Some delegates to the 1964 Republican National Convention took time off from nominating Goldwater to attend San Francisco's Condor Club, where a few weeks earlier Carol Doda had started a nationwide rage for topless dancing. Cheering on the silicone-enhanced headliner, the Republicans shouted, "In your heart, you know she's ripe." Cf. *Playboy*, Sept. 1966, 160–64. [90] Pemberton, 137. [91] Hodgson, 179.

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1980.[92] After conservatives seized political power in the 1980s and '90s, many of those alarmed principally by moral and religious problems were disillusioned by their fellow conservatives' failure to address those problems.[93] Here conservative libertarianism undermined conservative social control.[94]

While moral issues divided conservatives, economic, racial, or nationalistic issues brought them together. Moreover, these three kinds of issues had one thing in common: a conviction that Americans, especially in recent years, had gone too far in the pursuit of human equality. Samuel Huntington declared in 1957 that conservatives agreed that "[e]xcept in an ultimate moral sense, men are unequal."[95] In the coming years, conservatives would bear him out. In 1964, the introduction to a book titled *What Is Conservatism?* said conservatives in general opposed "the characteristic leveling egalitarianism of the time."[96] In criticizing the graduated income tax, with its tendency toward economic leveling, Barry Goldwater declared that "an egalitarian society is an objective that does violence to both the charter of the Republic and the laws of nature." The California Republican Assembly deplored the United States Supreme Court's "one man, one vote" ruling on apportionment for promoting "mob rule" by making everyone's vote count the same.[97] Young Americans for Freedom's Sharon Statement repeatedly hailed *liberty* and, of course, *freedom*, but never used the word *equality*.[98] When the founders of the American Conservative Union wrote their statement of principles, they began by paraphrasing the Declaration of Independence, saying that the organization "holds firm the truth that all men are endowed by their Creator with unalienable rights."[99] They overlooked the bit about "created equal." Thus, while extolling American traditions, conservatives abandoned a tradition of equality going back at least as far as 1776. Conservative traditionalism was selective.

Conservatives stressed the idea that because different people have different talents, they also should have different opportunities and different rewards. "Only a philosophy that takes into account the essential differences between men, and, accordingly, makes provision for developing the different potentialities of each man," said Goldwater, "can claim to be in accord with Nature."[100] But did certain groups of "men" have less potential and less

[92] McGirr, 231; Schuparra, 152; Pemberton, 75–76. [93] McGirr, 225, 236.
[94] Hodgson, 310–11. [95] Huntington, "Conservatism as an Ideology," 456.
[96] Meyer, *What Is Conservatism?* 3. This passage comes from the introduction, for which no author is listed. The introduction mentions Meyer in the third person; but since he was the editor, he may have written it. [97] McGirr, 165, 131.
[98] Andrew, *Other Side*, 221–22. [99] Andrew, 213. [100] Andrew, 17.

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achievement and therefore deserve less reward than others? Conservatives of the 1960s believed that inferior individuals appeared in all groups, including women. However, the weaker qualities were found in particular abundance among certain groups, namely, the poor, the black, and the non-American.

Russell Kirk, whose 1953 book *The Conservative Mind* became an important intellectual resource for conservatives in the 1960s, made no secret of his belief that "civilized society requires orders and classes" and that "economic leveling" was not "economic progress."[101] Wealthy Americans showed their appreciation for conservative philosophizing like this by supporting conservative organizations like the John Birch Society,[102] conservative laws like California's tax-cutting Proposition 13,[103] and conservative politicians like Goldwater and Reagan.[104] Once conservatives took control of governments, they passed laws (tax cuts, most conspicuously) making the rich richer.[105] Hodgson notes that between 1973 and 1993, two decades of conservative ascendancy, the share of the nation's wealth received by the poorest fifth of Americans declined from 5·5 percent to 4·6 percent, while that of the richest fifth rose from 41·1 percent to 44·6 percent.[106]

As Lisa McGirr makes clear, however, in her study of the conservative hotbed of Orange County, California, the great majority of conservatives were not multimillionaires like Walter Knott or Walt Disney. Rather, they tended to be people of the middle class: upwardly mobile and determined to stay that way. Doctors, dentists, engineers, military officers, small-business owners, city officials, contractors – these people (and their wives) were the "suburban warriors" who fought under the banners of Goldwater and Reagan.[107] As one Orange County woman declared, the country's economic opportunity "made you so thrilled to be an American that you wanted to do everything you possibly [could] to keep it this way."[108] One thing she and the heroes of other success stories could do was devote time, energy, and money to conservative candidates and causes. Conservatism in the 1960s was a genuine populist movement embraced by many in the middle class.[109] They attacked the welfare state to stop it from taking wealth and power from them and giving it to the poor.[110]

[101] Kirk cited in Schoenwald, *Time for Choosing*, 20. [102] Ibid., 62.
[103] Hodgson, *World Turned*, 205.
[104] Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 48–49; McGirr, 134; Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 65; Schoenwald, 201. [105] Schuparra, 152.
[106] Hodgson, 302. See also Kevin Phillips, *The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath* (New York: Random House, 1990).
[107] McGirr, 28–29, 43, 85–88. [108] Ibid., 83. [109] Hodgson, 109. [110] McGirr, 154.

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Then, too, there were the troubling demands by black people. Except for a few members of YAF who took part in civil rights demonstrations,[111] conservatives' reaction to the black freedom struggle ranged from indifference to resistance. With breathtaking understatement Gregory Schneider says that "the civil rights movement never appealed to conservative young people as it did to liberal or radical youth."[112] Many Southerners in YAF ferociously opposed desegregration, and the national organization took no position on the issue.[113] Nor did the freedom struggle gain the support of older people on the right. The California Republican Assembly declared that the FBI should not protect civil rights workers in the South by operating independently of local police.[114] Since Southern police generally enforced white supremacy, the California Republicans were, in effect, defending it. Indeed, one of CRA's leaders declared that "The essence of freedom is the right to discriminate." Barry Goldwater voted against the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[115] He and YAF both opposed attempts to pressure South Africa to end *apartheid*.[116] William Buckley, Goldwater, and other conservatives opposed the busing of children to desegregate schools.[117] Although the Republican Party had been the party of Abraham Lincoln and emancipation, in the 1960s it refused to woo black voters and therefore became increasingly the party of whites.[118]

Some recent historians of conservatism assert that their subjects did accept racial equality in principle. Gregory Schneider says YAF had nothing against the objectives of the civil rights movement per se, and William Pemberton says Ronald Reagan "detested racism and bigotry."[119] Why, then, did conservatives fail to support the actual, practical drive for racial equality? Some, like the John Birch Society, thought (or at least said) that the black freedom struggle was part of a communist plot to sow disorder in America.[120] More commonly, conservatives like Goldwater said that the movement called upon the federal government to exert powers that rightfully, constitutionally, belonged to state and local government.[121] Did conservatives, then, favor passage of state and local civil rights laws? Not necessarily, because such laws might impinge upon the freedom of the

[111] Klatch, *Generation Divided*, 77. [112] Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism*, 58.
[113] Klatch, 78, 352. Thousands of Southerners quit YAF in 1968 when the national organization repudiated the presidential candidacy of the blatantly racist George Wallace.
[114] McGirr, 130. [115] Perlstein, *Before the Storm*, 341, 363–64.
[116] Hodgson, 98; Klatch, 228.
[117] Schoenwald, *Time for Choosing*, 181; Perlstein, 461; McGirr, 239.
[118] Schoenwald, 142; Perlstein, 379.
[119] Schneider, 58; Pemberton, *Exit with Honor*, 56.
[120] Hodgson, 65–66; McGirr, 184. [121] Andrew, *Other Side*, 209; McGirr, 184.

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individual. California's fair housing law, for example, was said to violate the homeowner's right to dispose of his property as he saw fit, including his right to sell or rent only to whites.[122] Barry Goldwater believed that the government had the power to forbid discrimination by public organizations: he supported desegregation in the Phoenix public schools and the Arizona National Guard.[123] Like other conservatives, however, Goldwater did not believe that even local government could legitimately impose such egalitarianism on private persons or groups. But, what if that government itself were practicing discrimination – say, by refusing in Mississippi to register black people to vote? And what if *non*-governmental groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee were to campaign, as they did in 1964, to register black voters? Would conservatives *then* join the movement? Apparently not. If any rightist group assisted or even endorsed the Mississippi Summer Project, the historians have failed to report it.

In view of all this, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, as a whole, conservatives were no friends of racial equality. William Buckley may have been more outspoken than most when he said in 1957 that white Southerners had a right to deprive African Americans of the right to vote because whites were "for the time being … the advanced race."[124] There is evidence, however, that he was not the only conservative who was untroubled by discrimination against black people. Buckley's *National Review* associate, publisher William Rusher, said that civil rights activists were only helping the communists when they interfered with "the delicate social problem which is gradually working itself out in the southern United States."[125] When Barry Goldwater was asked about racism in his hometown of Phoenix, he said, "There was never a lot of it," even though when he was eleven the local Chamber of Commerce boasted of the city's "very small percentage of Mexicans, Negroes, or foreigners." When the Ku Klux Klan of Georgia and Alabama endorsed Goldwater for the presidency, the chairman of the Republican National Committee, Dean Burch, responded by saying, "We're not in the business of discouraging votes."[126]

Some conservatives made black people seem unwelcome. David Franke, a New Yorker, complained that many southern blacks moved north in pursuit of bigger welfare checks.[127] One Young Republican leader who opposed California's fair housing law explained that blacks "haven't made themselves acceptable."[128] Conservatives running for office learned to speak in a "code" that would appeal to racial prejudice while not appearing overtly racist. As

[122] Perlstein, 342; McGirr, 133, 185. [123] Perlstein, 18. [124] Hodgson, 81.
[125] Andrew, 132. [126] Perlstein, 21, 428. [127] Andrew, 130. [128] Perlstein, 342.

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William Pemberton observes, "attacks on welfare, street crime, and affirmative action all had racial overtones."[129] Indeed, for conservatives welfare was a kind of summary of much that had gone wrong with America, granting benefits not only to African Americans, but also to others who deserved to remain poor.

Besides the poor and the black, a third group whom conservatives did not want to raise arbitrarily from their natural level were people of foreign countries, many of whom happened to be poor and of some color other than white. Godfrey Hodgson points out that Americans of many different political stripes believed that their country was better than all others.[130] However, conservatives held this belief more often and more firmly than did liberals or radicals, and conservatives were more likely to put American supremacy into practice.

In the 1960s, conservatives thought that, when dealing with world affairs, the United States should not pay too much attention to the interests or wishes of other countries. Young Americans for Freedom's Sharon Statement listed only one criterion by which to judge American foreign policy: "does it serve the just interests of the United States"?[131] Consequently, the United States should not allow itself to be hamstrung by international organizations, treaties, or world opinion.

The particular bugbear of conservatives was the United Nations. By belonging to and cooperating with that body, conservatives believed, the United States was placing itself under the control of communists and incompetents – a Gulliver tied down by Lilliputian hordes. In 1960, conservatives vilified the organization for taking the side of the Congolese government against rebels backed by Belgium. If the United States would not get out of the United Nations, conservatives thought, it should at least prevent communist China from getting in.[132]

Conservatives also tried to block the Limited Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty of 1963. They believed that instead of making an agreement with the Russians and trusting them to comply with the agreement, the United States should go all-out in the nuclear-arms race and win. YAF circulated a national petition against the test ban. The group's national chairman, Robert Bauman, testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the treaty was a "first step toward ultimate surrender" to the communists.[133]

What enraged conservatives was their perception that in recent years the United States had been subjected to dangerous and humiliating abuse.

[129] Pemberton, 56. [130] Hodgson, 306. [131] Andrew, 222.
[132] Ibid., 135–38; Schneider, 64–65. [133] Schneider, 65–68.

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Triumph in World War II should have brought about a "pax Americana," lamented one YAFer. Instead, however, his generation grew up seeing "lines of refugees escaping from the Communists" and "photographs of American kids with their arms wired behind their back, shot through the head, in ditches."[134] And that was *before* Vietnam. With the growing and seemingly endless sacrifice of American lives there in the 1960s, conservatives demanded an intensified war effort that would bring "total victory." They viewed as treasonous those dissenters whom Robert Bauman called "pacifists, left-wing extremists and beatniks calling for retreat."[135] Conservatives thought Americans should stop criticizing their country, and eventually the conservatives got what they wanted. By 1982, with Reagan in the White House, journalist Burton Yale Pines could exult that "the massive rejection of the United States, its civilization, and its history" was over.[136]

If the United States had gone overboard by attempting artificially and unnaturally to raise poor people, blacks, and foreign nations to the level of the middle class, whites, and the United States, that excessive egalitarianism at least had the benefit of uniting the conservative movement. Libertarians and traditionalists could agree that a poor man should either accept his poverty graciously or make himself richer by working harder, not by getting aid from the state. Libertarians and traditionalists could agree that blacks really did not face much discrimination; or, if they did, then there was not much that the government, especially the federal government, could or should do about it. Libertarians might denounce the draft and refuse to serve in Vietnam, but at least they could agree with traditionalists that *somebody* should make sure that the United States prevailed there. However much conservatives might quarrel among themselves on other issues, all could work together to clip the wings of a mad democracy. Anti-egalitarianism, then, was the strongest cement holding together the diverse strands of conservatism.

The historians of 1960s conservatism, however, do not draw this conclusion. They point out that in this or that respect conservatives did something that violated the precept of human equality. They may even mention that conservatism was, as a whole, anti-egalitarian.[137] However, they do not say that an objection to equality, and to the democracy that stems logically from a belief in equality, was what conservatism was mainly about. Instead, they say again and again that the great force unifying the movement was anticommunism. Even Godfrey Hodgson, who begins his book, *The World*

[134] Klatch, 30–31.
[135] Bauman cited in Schneider, 96.
[136] Pines cited in Hodgson, 306.
[137] See, e.g., McGirr, 12.

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Turned Right Side Up, by saying that "traditional conservatism … acted as a shield for racism, class and money privilege," refrains from interpreting the "conservative ascendancy" in those terms.

The historians' reluctance to describe conservatism as essentially undemocratic probably stems from most conservatives' reluctance to accept that description. Abraham Lincoln, a Republican, once said that the United States was "dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal." The most intractable problem facing American conservatives in the 1960s was Americans' widespread approval of these words. Few politicians would disavow them. Samuel Huntington might say publicly that "men are unequal"; but he was a Harvard professor, not a candidate for office. Barry Goldwater *was* a candidate, and he deplored egalitarianism, but look what happened to him when he ran for office outside Arizona. The John Birch Society might intone incessantly that America was a republic, not a democracy; and other conservatives in Orange County, California, might agree.[138] Elsewhere, however, conservatives knew that, in order to win elections, they could not afford to repudiate democracy. While the Young Americans for Freedom and the American Conservative Union might leave the word *equality* out of their declarations of principles, they would not explicitly renounce the concept.

Conservatives could not storm the citadels of power while flying the flag of inequality. Instead, it was necessary for them to wave other banners: liberty, tradition, anticommunism. Indeed, as Hodgson points out, they even tried to pin the tag "elitist" on liberals who supported unpopular, albeit egalitarian, actions like busing.[139] Elitism was the ideology that dared not speak its name. Thus, even though conservatives largely succeeded in stopping equality in its tracks, sometimes even rolling it back, they never dared to claim credit for their achievement. That is a final reason why the conservatives of the 1960s remained invisible for so long.

In fact, the flight from elitism may account for the invisibility of American conservatives not only in the 1960s but ever since the 1930s. In 1994, as the wave of books on 1960s conservatism was about to appear, Alan Brinkley published an article in the *American Historical Review* on "The Problem of American Conservatism," the centerpiece in a "forum" on the subject. Brinkley argued that the historiography of conservatism went through three stages in the twentieth century. In the Progressive period, before World War II, historians argued that conservatism was the preserve of "entrenched anti-democratic interests." The historians did not like it, but at least they paid

[138] Schoenwald, 227; Perlstein, 110; McGirr, 165.
[139] Hodgson, xiv; Schuparra, *Triumph of the Right*, xviii.

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it the honor of dissection. After the war, however, consensus historians like Richard Hofstadter argued that conservatism was a sort of mental illness, not the ideological expression of a privileged class but a result of a mysterious "status anxiety" among people who were falling, rising, or unsure of the direction in which they were headed. Literary critic Lionel Trilling went so far as to say that conservatism, with a few exceptions, expressed itself only as "irritable mental gestures which seem to resemble ideas." New Left scholars of the 1960s and later, said Brinkley, did not take seriously the ideas and values of conservatives. As a result of all this, conservatism had been written out of the "mainstream" of American history.[140]

As Brinkley pointed out, however, one reason for historians' failure to take conservatism seriously was the fact that conservatism "rested on a philosophical foundation not readily distinguishable from the liberal tradition, to which it is, in theory, opposed." Twentieth-century conservatism proclaimed a commitment to individual freedom, a commitment shared by liberals.[141] What Brinkley did not say, however, was that, while liberals advocated such freedom for everybody, conservatives believed that it had been earned only by some, particularly those who were middle class, white, and American. Conservatives could not come right out and say that, though, because they were constrained by democratic prejudices – either their own or those of an electorate they feared. Nobody hoping to win an election could quote with approval Gustave Flaubert's description of the human race as "a vast association of cretins and rabble."[142] In late twentieth-century America it would not even do to restrict that description to dark-skinned people from the southern hemisphere. Therefore, conservatives had to defend "liberty" in the abstract, for all classes, races, and nationalities. By defending liberty and not explicitly rejecting equality, however, they ended up sounding very much like liberals. That is why their philosophy did not cohere, why liberal Lionel Trilling dismissed it as a jumble of irritable mental gestures, and why conservative Samuel Huntington admitted that there was no such thing as a conservative intellectual tradition.

Conservatives in America were like churchgoers who, over the years, had come to doubt most of the teachings on which they had been raised but

[140] Brinkley, "The Problem of American Conservatism," *American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), 410–12; and "Response to the Comments of Leo Ribuffo and Susan Yohn," 450. Cf. also Michael Kazin, "The Grass-Roots Right: New Histories of U.S. Conservatism in the Twentieth Century," *American Historical Review*, 97 (1992), 136–55, which reflects the growing seriousness with which historians were taking conservatism after eleven consecutive years of Republicans in the White House.

[141] Brinkley, 415, 424.

[142] Hodgson, 25.

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could not bring themselves to leave the church. Democracy is the religion of modern times and equality its fundamental article of faith. Since the 1960s American conservatives have castigated many people who were not up to snuff – welfare recipients, African Americans, Congolese, or Vietnamese – yet most conservatives could not commit apostasy by denying the principle of human equality. They might refuse to share their wealth with the poor, deny black children a place alongside whites in school, and ignore the clamor at the United Nations; but then they would proclaim their faith in equality. Such is the power of democratic dogma. That, too, is the most basic reason why conservatism, though the regnant force in American politics today, remains outside the "mainstream" of historiography.

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