

The Influence of Resurgent Religious Ideology on Public Policy in Colorado

Terri Livermore

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Abstract

This grounded theory study will explore the degree of substantive impact in the past 20 years by resurgent religious ideology on Colorado's secularly based public policy including executive, legislative, judicial and citizen generated decisions.

Executive Summary

This qualitative study intends to discover, utilizing a grounded theory approach, whether resurgent religious ideology has substantively influenced Colorado's public policy in the past 20 years. To ensure a comprehensive approach, public policy and religiously based policy initiative were defined as broadly as possible. Public policy is defined as actions taken by all branches of government as well as including citizen initiatives. Religiously based policy initiatives are defined as those containing references to: public placement of the Ten Commandments, evolution vs. creationism, gay marriage and civil unions, moments of silence in addition to school prayer, and abortion as well as birth control and emergency contraception.

The literature review for this study indicates that the public role of religion in society began to diminish during the 17th and 18th centuries period of Enlightenment. 200 years later, a reactionary phenomenon described as religious resurgence began to surface in an effort to push religion back into the public sphere. While evident in all major religions around the world, the insistence on a publicly religious role creates specific issues when applied to secular democracies such as the United States. Colorado's Constitution, modeled on the U.S. Constitution, delineates the separation of church and state that generally creates an uneasy relationship between religion and politics. Resurgent religious ideology further tests that relationship.

Because the strength of grounded theory rests in its ability to place social research in the context of human thought and behavior, it provides the best approach to study this complex social issue. Grounded theory allows a theory to emerge utilizing the perspective of people directly involved with this social interaction. The study will rely initially on historical research of archived information including legislation, executive orders, citizen initiatives and court decisions, as well as secondary sources such as news accounts, speeches, television and radio broadcasts. Field research in the form of semi-structured, open-ended focused interviewing of individuals who have been identified as either strongly supporting or opposing religiously based public policy initiatives will follow. The field research will place this issue in the proper social context and assist in understanding how perceptions, as well as actions, have changed with regard to religious influence on policy decisions.

While anticipating an emergent theory, based on informal observation and a review of the existing literature, the researcher expects to generally find that, despite increasing religious rhetoric and attempts to influence public policy, the actual impact on public policy has been limited, primarily due to court decisions.

Introduction

The European Period of Enlightenment during the 17th and 18th centuries dramatically influenced the development of the government of the United States. Enlightenment consisted of the rise of science and rational thought, largely in reaction to and at the expense of religious authority. The balance of political power shifted from religious leaders to the scientific community. The Founding Fathers envisioned a society in which government would operate in the public sphere while religion would be relegated to the private sphere. However, what they failed to comprehend was the degree to which religion continued to influence individual perception, thought and action. In an unexpected and continuing backlash against the rise of rational thought, people of all faiths have begun pushing religion back into the public sphere.

This phenomenon, known as religious resurgence, is evident in the United States, most notably within Christian religious traditions. Religious resurgence entails people with overtly religious perspectives seeking greater involvement of a specific religious perspective in policy decisions. The growth of resurgent religious ideology has engendered much debate regarding the level of influence religion has exerted on current political decisions. Many studies have generally addressed this issue but most have focused on religiously based political rhetoric and the outcome of individual court decisions regarding specific religiously based policy issues.

Determining the actual impact of religious resurgence on public policy requires an overview of the entire public policy picture. An in-depth, single state analysis, including studying legislative decisions, executive branch actions, court decisions and citizen initiatives will provide a comprehensive look at the substantive impact of religion on policy. Previous studies have tended to scrutinize a single policy issue, such as prayer in school or abortion, rather than capturing a more complete picture by analyzing a multitude of issues including: public placement of the Ten Commandments, evolution vs. creationism, gay marriage and civil unions, moments of silence in addition to school prayer, and birth control and emergency contraception as well as abortion. The objective of this grounded theory study is to provide a broad context for the impact of religious resurgence on Colorado's public policy and determine, beyond the rhetoric, whether public policy has been substantively affected by religiously based ideology.

Literature Review

Significant bodies of literature exist examining the religion since the period of Enlightenment, the phenomenon of religious resurgence, the development of the United States' secular government, and the uneasy relationship between religion and politics in a secular democracy. Underpinning those works are earlier philosophic works regarding the role of religion in human history, religion and politics in society and how the relationship has changed over time. The majority of current literature regarding the relationship of religion and politics has focused, at a national level, on the encroachment of religious doctrine on the public sphere and the implications for church-state separation, with specific attention toward how the courts have interpreted these constitutional issues. Generally, existing literature provides a broad discussion of the intersection of religion and politics, religious-political rhetoric or addresses one aspect, such as the development or outcome, of a specific religious issue in the context of public policy.

What is known

The role of religion in society changed during the period of Enlightenment during the 17th and 18th century. Enlightenment thinkers began to question the religiously based explanations for the origins of the universe and human behavior. They began to seek rational and scientific

explanations to answer those questions. Enlightenment was, as much as anything, a reaction against church authority and resulted in a secularization of society. Subsequently, social theory began to reflect the scientific approach as philosophers and sociologists began to write about the organization of society as a mechanistic function rather than functioning as a result of the grand design of a divine entity. This shift toward scientifically based rationalism was exemplified by Emile Durkheim, writing in the early 20th century and theorizing that religion represents nothing more than a collection of beliefs and practices imbued with a certain authority, which makes religion a product of society, or a social element, and not something which has been divinely inspired (Durkheim 1975). However, as the latter half of the 20th century began to unfold, the promise that science and reason would resolve questions regarding human existence and remained unfulfilled and people began to question the validity of a wholly scientific approach to these metaphysical issues.

Religious resurgence comprises a recognized phenomenon occurring around the world in the late 20th century in most major religions. The phenomenon is generally explained as a reaction against the increasing secularization of society that began with Enlightenment. When the promise of science and reason remained unfulfilled – scientists could not rationally explain the reason for human existence or the purpose of human life – people began to return to the mystical realm where they had always sought and found the answer to those existential questions (Armstrong 2000). Religious resurgence is particularly noticeable in secular societies. Those societies were constructed around the notion that religion would be private and separate from the public arena.

However, faced with an increasing presence of religion in the public sphere, a debate has raged regarding the proper role of religion in a secular democracy such as the United States. Religious conservatives tout the free exercise of religion clause while secularists tout the freedom from religion clause (Perry 2003). Conservative religious perspectives are pushing more prominently into the public sphere through increased religious rhetoric and the election of religiously motivated politicians. As religious perspectives have pushed further into the public sphere, opposition to the perception of increasing religious influence has become more vocal. The courts constitute the last line of defense, for both sides, in this conflict and several studies detail single-issue court decisions and their implications. However, court decisions have been somewhat inconsistent and have left gaps that each side attempts to exploit (Carter 1993). While the battle lines between secularism and political religion remain in a constant state of flux, the battle continues to rage.

What remains to be researched

Despite the body of research on the various elements of religion, society, secularism and democracy, whether growing public religiosity has had a *substantive, measurable* impact on public policy remains an open question. This paper will explore this topic by asking one central research and three secondary questions.

Central research question. Have religiously based ideologies substantively affected Colorado's public policy since religious resurgence?

Secondary research questions. What has been the substantive impact of an increasing public religious presence on public policy decisions; to what extent has religiously motivated

public policy been implemented; and what has been the impact on public perception regarding the influence of religion on public policy?

Methodology

This qualitative study will use a grounded theory approach to develop a theory of the substantive interaction of religion and politics in the current social environment. The study will rely initially on historical research of archived information followed by field research in the form of semi-structured, open-ended focused interviewing of individuals who have promoted religiously based public policy initiatives. The data gathered will be analyzed for content to understand patterns and categories that will form the basis for an emerging theory (Babbie 1986, Creswell 2003). The focused interviewing will provide essential context for the identified policy initiatives (Miller and Glassner 1997) and will also enable the researcher to understand those experiences in which they did not directly participate (Rubin and Rubin 1995).

Role of Theory

Problem Statement

A casual observer of Colorado politics could notice the increasing level of religious rhetoric and references throughout the past 20 years. Never has this been more evident than following the 2004 elections when evangelical churches with the outspoken mission of helping to elect politicians with a specific Christian based perspective claimed victory following the re-election of President Bush and eleven different states that passed religiously motivated bans on gay marriage. Colorado, home to several evangelical churches, particularly the influential Focus on the Family, was not left out of this debate. The debate in Colorado focused on pro-choice Catholic politicians and whether or not they should receive communion if they disregard the church's teaching on this issue. A variety of people including religious leaders, secularists and politicians, commented on this issue over the months leading up to the election. In Colorado that debate represents only a piece of the puzzle as the upcoming election promises to showcase the issue of gay marriage.

Regardless of the specific topic, any broad discussion about religion and politics results in widely varied opinions depending on the participants' perspective. The opinions range from those who contend that individuals with a religious agenda have transformed public policy into a theocracy while others hold a diametrically opposite view that secularist politics specifically seek to eradicate religion's role in public life. Whether or not religion has actually influenced Colorado's political climate tends to get lost in the rhetoric. This study will explore the extent to which resurgent religious ideology over the last 20 years has substantively impacted Colorado's public policy.

Concepts

Religion in Modern Society. Religion's role in society has been analyzed and debated for hundreds of years, particularly since Enlightenment when some philosophers and scientists began to extend their inquiries beyond mere faith in tradition and religion. As early as Plato and Aristotle, philosophers began to question the validity of a specifically religious approach to explaining the origin and workings of the universe and humanity. In their search for the essence of the universe, these early Greek philosophers adopted a more rational and less mystical approach (Taylor 2001). Drawing on these early threads and then extending them far beyond what anyone previously had imagined, philosophers such as Descartes in the 17th century began

the development of modern philosophy that examined the universe and human life in it from a rational, scientific and mechanistic perspective rather than relying on the mystical beliefs previously acknowledged under religion (Descartes 1996). The early efforts of scientists and philosophers such as Galileo, Descartes and Newton among many others produced a period of Enlightenment in which rational thought became the standard for defining social interaction and rules. Following Enlightenment, philosophers such as Durkheim personified the science based or empirical approach to society. Durkheim established the concept of sociological functionalism that argues that human society works like a machine with separate parts working together to ensure the whole functions (Durkheim 1997) Durkheim, in his culminating work, sought to identify religion's role in society and concluded that religion originated from society rather than being divinely inspired. He wrote that religion was merely a part of the social system, although he acknowledged it played a critical part from which people derived meaning, authority, morals and social norms (Durkheim 2001). Religion has been present in human society as far back as has been discovered in human history. Its origins and role remain a focal point of great debate. However, the impact of the Enlightenment on the role of religion in society is evident. The logos, or rational scientific mind rose to prominence at the expense of the mythos, or non-rational justification for the meaning of life. Prior to Enlightenment, logos and mythos had been equal parts of the human equation. That shift in balance created the religious resurgence reaction beginning in the latter half of the 20th century as religion sought to regain a primary position in public society (Armstrong 2001).

Religious Resurgence. The Axial Age, 700 BCE – 200 BCE, saw a dramatic change in religious thought due to the intersection of cultures which required humans to expand their religious concepts beyond their localized perspectives and incorporate broader perspectives. The result of which was the development of internalized spirituality, universal transcendence and practical compassion (Armstrong 2001). The 20th century underwent a similarly dramatic transition period that continues into the 21st century. The successes of scientific discovery during the Enlightenment led people to think that logic and reason alone could lead them to an understanding of the universe and humanity. Secularization Theory written in the 1950s and 1960s, with its roots in the Enlightenment, contended that modernization necessitated that religion be pushed aside in society and in the minds of individuals (Berger 1999). However, as modern society progressed and secularism became established, counter-secularist movements also developed. Many of these movements are rooted in conservative or traditionalist religious doctrines that have worked the hardest at resisting modernity or rejecting it altogether. While these movements are diverse among many religious traditions, their commonality stems from their ardent religious inspiration, a return to religious authority, and the desire to regain certainty in lives thrust into uncertainty by modernity (Berger 1999). People who were feeling lost and unfulfilled by the promises of modernity began to make attempts to reinvent their faith within the context of modern society toward the end of the 19th century. These movements germinate from people who feel sacred values have been under aggressive attack from modernization and are seeking to regain their faith and return it to a prominent, if not central, role in society (Armstrong 2001).

Secular Democracy and Religion. The United States, founded during the period of Enlightenment share many of the characteristics of Europe's Enlightenment, specifically the notion that government and religion should be distinctly separated so that one may not unduly

influence the other. The principle of church-state separation has been essential to the modern notion of liberty and indicates that religion should remain a private matter. Religion, since Enlightenment, has been treated as a secondary or reactive issue to economics, politics or other realities (Almond 2003). The framers of the United States' Constitution specifically separated religion and politics in the First Amendment to the Constitution, also called the Establishment Clause, when they wrote, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..." (United States Constitution 1776). The explicit meaning for the role of religion has been debated since that document was written and continues to be debated today. The clash between political decisions in a secular democracy, designed to be representative of all its citizens, and the moral imperatives of specific religious faiths remains a difficult line to draw. The debate over this issue in the United States rages at a louder level over the past couple of decades as the religious resurgent movements seek to define their role and gain greater influence over the political system. Colorado is not exempted from this debate, as the framers of the state constitution borrowed the secular democratic notion of church-state separation from the U.S. Constitution when they wrote, "The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination, shall forever hereafter be guaranteed... No person shall be required to attend or support any ministry or place of worship, religious sect or denomination against his consent. Nor shall any preference be given by law to any religious denomination or mode of worship" (Colorado Constitution 1876). The language separating religion from the government has created an awkward relationship with the boundaries of that separation constantly being challenged by both secularists and religionists. Much debate has ensued regarding whether the separation is intended to create a government free from religion or religious practice free from government interference. Additional issues arise from notions of religious pluralism and equal opportunity in society for all religious faiths, including secularism (Carter 1993, Perry 2003). Defining a clear line has proven to be difficult in the past and the current resurgence of religion into the public sphere ensures that this uneasy relationship will remain uneasy for the foreseeable future.

Grounded Theory. Grounded theory methods are most useful when a researcher seeks to explain a social interaction or process. Its strength as a methodology comes from its ability to place social research in the context of human thought and behavior. Grounded theory enables the researcher to develop a theory from the perspective of the people involved in the process or interaction being studied rather than testing data to verify or debunk a particular theory that may or may not include a human element. Data based on field research forms the basis from which a grounded theory develops. The collected data is analyzed using coding and theoretical sampling procedures from which patterns and categories emerge. The data is constantly compared against new data in an effort to identify new categories and refine existing categories. Through that process theories emerge to explain the social phenomenon being studied (Glaser 1992).

Hypothesis

While the strength of the grounded theory approach lies in its open approach in allowing a theory to develop, rather than operating from preconceived notions, the researcher's previous work in the political arena has resulted in informal field observations from which a general hypothesis can be stated with regard to the research problem:

Despite an increase in religious rhetoric and attempts to influence public policy based on a religious perspective the actual impact on public policy has been limited, primarily due to court decisions.

An interesting follow-up study in the next decade or two could examine the following hypothesis:

Court appointments made during and influenced by the period of religious resurgence between 1985 and 2015 will enable religiously motivated public policy to have greater impact because decisions made by courts appointed during religious resurgence will favor a more religious perspective.

Methodology

The role of resurgent religious beliefs in politics within a democratic, secular government presents a complex issue with a diversity of opinions and theories regarding the appropriateness of including religious belief in politics, the impact of religious belief on policy and the potential outcomes. This study seeks to understand an interaction that is socially constructed. Religion and politics are both social elements whose interaction is a subjective social process. People's views regarding that interaction vary greatly depending on their perception of the world and what meaning they attach to religion and politics. Developing an understanding of the participant's socially constructed worldview requires the researcher to look for the complexity and nuance behind those views rather than attempt to narrow meaning into pre-determined categories (Creswell 2003).

A qualitative study utilizing a grounded theory approach provides the best avenue for exploring the impact of religious resurgence on public policy in Colorado. The wide diversity of opinions and the volatile nature of the topic lend themselves an approach in which archived data and participant views are combined through an objective process that develops patterns and meaning beyond the surface. Grounded theory offers the researcher the opportunity to study the interaction between these two social elements based on information specific to Colorado over the past two decades, rather than relying on pre-conceived notions and competing perceptions of previous authors regarding the influence of religion on politics. Grounded theory creates a research process that allows theories to develop inductively from categories and patterns identified through constant comparison of data gathered throughout the study (Glaser 1992). A grounded theory strategy works well with regard to studies of complex social issues and interactions, as opposed to other strategies of inquiry in which a specific hypothesis or theory is declared and then tested for accuracy.

Research of archived public policy data will provide the historical context necessary for uncovering early patterns in religiously based policy influence, as well as directing the researcher toward the appropriate persons for field research. The field research will consist of semi-structured, open-ended focused interviews of people identified as proposing or participating in religiously based attempts to create or influence public policy in Colorado. Focused interviewing allows the researcher to understand, historically and socially, how each participant has constructed their worldview with regard to the interaction of religion and politics. Participant views are essential to uncovering meaning behind the social interaction. Asking general questions enables the researcher to understand how participants arrived at their views through

interactions with others and the historical and cultural norms from which they operate (Creswell 2003).

The universe of study

The universe of this study encompasses a specified set of archived data and an identified group of individuals who have been active with regard to this issue. The universe of study for the archived data is defined as state level Colorado public policy initiatives introduced, passed or otherwise presented, with religiously based content, since 1985. Requiring as broad a perspective as possible to truly capture “public policy,” initiatives to be examined include state-level legislative initiatives, executive branch actions, court decisions (including decisions made by courts outside Colorado relevant to initiatives originated in Colorado), and citizen initiatives. For the purposes of this study, religious content is defined as prayer in school (including moments of silence), the placement of the Ten Commandments in public places, items related to the evolution vs. creationism (and intelligent design), abortion (including emergency contraception and birth control) and gay marriage (including civil unions)

The universe of individuals who will comprise the field research component of the study include Colorado politicians who sponsored religiously motivated initiatives, Colorado politicians or citizens who were actively involved in supporting religiously motivated initiatives, and Colorado politicians or citizens who were actively involved in opposing identified initiatives.

Study sample

No sampling technique is required for the archival research, as the sample will include all initiatives conforming to the previously defined parameters. Similarly, the individuals identified for focused interviews will be identified through their connection to the archive research data. Attempts will be made to conduct interviews with the sponsors of all identified initiatives, ardent supporters of the initiatives who rose to a level of visibility through identification in secondary sources such as news accounts, legislative histories or other research documents, and individuals who opposed the initiatives who rose to a level of visibility through identification in secondary sources such as news accounts, legislative histories or other research documents.

Study site

The primary archival research will take place in Denver, Colorado utilizing the State Capitol library, the Supreme Court library, State Archives, Colorado Secretary of State’s archives, newspaper archives and the Internet. The field research will occur at various locations throughout Colorado depending on the identified participants where they request the interviews to occur.

Dates of study

This study will occur over an eight-month period from September 2005 through May 2006. The archive research will take place from September through November, with the field research following from December through March. The data analysis and writing will take place from February through May.

Data collection techniques

The data necessary for this study consists of two types of research: archival and interviews. The archival research occurs first and includes document research and audio-visual research. This research will generate quantitative and textual data. The archival research will yield information regarding the numbers and types of religiously motivated public policy initiatives promoted in Colorado during the study period. It will also indicate the outcome of each initiative. Further information will also be gathered with regard to statements made by proponents and opponents, observations of individuals who witnessed each initiative, and other contextual data, including the wording of the initiatives themselves. Lastly, the archival research will identify the individuals from whom focused interviews will be sought.

The field research will consist of semi-structured, focused interviews based on several open-ended questions. The study will require interviews of direct proponents and opponents to accurately place the initiatives in the proper social context.

Topics

The archival research will consist of examining several types of documents and audio-visual sources. The documents include:

Legislation and related legislative history documents: date and site viewed, overall content summary, religious content, bill sponsor, sponsor's political affiliation, year introduced, bill number and outcome. The outcome will be further broken down into whether the bill passed, and if so, what was the vote count, did it ultimately become law and if so, how and if not, why not. If the bill died, where in the process did it die, why, and what was the vote count;

Executive orders and departmental decisions: date and site viewed, overall content summary, religious content, individual who issued order/decision, political affiliation, year of order/decision, what the order/decision impacted, and the outcome of the order/decision;

Court decisions: date and site viewed, summary of issue that prompted the case including the year the issue became relevant and the mechanism by which it was implemented, summary of the court decision, the court case number, which court (district courts, court of appeals, supreme court), the year of the decision and textual information for context;

Citizen initiatives: date and site viewed, initiative summary, year proposed, identified proponents (group and/or individual), significant donors, opposition groups, primary opponents identified by donor information, outcome and vote count and textual information for context;

Newspaper accounts: date and site viewed, summary of article, specific initiative to which it relates, prominent individuals supporting and opposing initiative, other recorded observations and textual information for context; and

Speech transcripts: date and site viewed, summary of speech, specific initiative to which it relates, and textual information for context.

The audio-visual research includes:

Legislative hearings: date and site listened to, summary of hearing, hearing date, hearing location, named participants, and other information for context;

Floor debates: date and site listened to, summary of debate, specific initiative to which it relates, debate date, debate location, named participants, and other information for context;

Recordings of speeches: date and site listened to, summary of speech, specific initiative to which it relates, speech date, speech location, speaker(s), and other information for context;

Television broadcasts: date and site listened to, summary of news story, specific initiative to which it relates, story date, station, newscasters, named participants in story, and other information for context; and

Radio broadcasts: date and site listened to, summary of broadcast, specific initiative to which it relates, broadcast date, station, participants, and other information for context.

The field research will consist of focused interviews with sponsors, proponents and opponents of religiously motivated initiatives identified during the archival research process. The interviews will be conducted face to face when possible and over the phone if necessary.

Generic data to collect from all interview participants: Interview date, date notes typed, specific initiative, participant's political affiliation, employment position, support or oppose initiative, religious affiliation, researcher's context notes.

Semi-structured, open-ended interview questions:

Why did you support/oppose initiative?

What role did religion play in your decision to support/oppose initiative?

How do you view the role of religion in politics?

Data recording

The data recording process for this study will be as structured as possible to ensure that consistent data is captured across topics and with the various participants. Two forms will be developed specifically to capture the previously noted variables with regard to archival research: one form for document research and another for audio-visual research. The forms will comprise the basis for the content analysis of the archival research.

The focused interviews will be semi-structured, with open-ended questions. The interview will be taped for accuracy and the researcher will also take handwritten interview notes. Those two sources will be used to compile the field notes on which the content analysis will be conducted.

Data analysis and output

Each initiative during the study period determined to have religious content as previously defined represents a unit of analysis. The additional research will provide social context around the initiatives, without which the ability to develop an accurate theory in response to the research problem would be questionable.

Content analysis of the archived research and focused interview field notes will be the primary method of data analysis. The nature of this study prohibits direct observation, so analyzing the content of relevant documents, recordings, other people's observations, and information from the people directly involved provides the best method for addressing the research question. The data will be coded for manifest and latent content in an effort to produce a paper that is both valid and reliable. The coded data will be recorded into tally sheets with the initiatives representing the primary records. The coded data will yield categories and themes that will be placed into theoretical models. These initial results will constantly be compared against new data to further refine the categories, themes and models until a final theory regarding the research problem emerges.

Additionally, the study findings will include the use of thick, rich description so as to convey to the readers not only the content of the issue, but the quality and how it has impacted people and policy.

Study limitations

Religious influence on public policy affects the entire United States at a federal, state and local level. This study proposes to study only the impact of religious resurgence on state level public policy in Colorado. The conclusions developed from this study can only be directly applied to Colorado, although broader generalizations regarding religion and politics may surface.

The study is further limited by the availability of documents and people. It relies heavily on the accessibility of specific documents and recordings as well as the willingness of politicians and activists to be interviewed on the record with regard to a politically sensitive topic. While the identified documents all reside in the public domain, uncovering every initiative as defined in the parameters of the study may not be possible – this is particularly true with regard to executive branch directives and decisions. The study participants, particularly the elected politicians, may not be entirely forthcoming with information regarding their true views behind religiously motivated public policy initiatives. This will be especially true if they perceive that revealing some information may harm their political career or ambition.

While every precaution will be taken to ensure objectivity of data collection and analysis, the religious and political perspective of the researcher will be clarified at the beginning of the written product so as to document any potential bias with regard to data analysis, interpretation and resulting conclusions. The researcher will seek to ensure objectivity by using validation strategies including the triangulation of data, participant checking of researcher information regarding their contributions, and the use of thick, rich description to convey the social context of each element as clearly as possible. Additionally, the researcher will have a minimum of two editors review the document to ensure the researcher used language that does not present either a religious or political bias in the written product.

The researcher will appropriately utilize a grounded theory approach by maintaining an open mind and allow for the potential for the data to negate the hypothesis as well as the researcher's years of informal observation with regard to this issue.

Study Procedures to Protect Human Subjects

Focused interviews will only be conducted with the voluntary participation and informed consent of the participants with the additional understanding that the public nature of the study prohibits the researcher from offering anonymity to the participants and that anything they say is considered to be on the record. The researcher's assessed risk for participants primarily consists of potential political harm based on their religious beliefs or their perceptions regarding the intermingling of religion and politics.

Potential Conclusions and Significance of Study

The issues of religion and politics comprise two inescapable facets of modern society and the relationship between these two elements has been debated by thousands of people from policy tables to dinner tables. In the United States, much of the debate and even a great deal of literature, has focused on the significance of church-state separation, what it really means, and the rhetoric surrounding the debate. What has been left undocumented is the degree which religion, since the recognized resurgence of religion into public life, has influenced public policy. In other words, what religiously motivated policies have actually been passed and implemented as opposed to those that have only been talked about or introduced into the process.

Based on informal observation and a review of the existing literature, the researcher expects to generally find that religiously motivated public policy has had little substantive impact of religion on public policy in Colorado. Additionally, the substantive impact that has occurred has probably resulted primarily from executive orders and departmental decisions, the political arena with the fewest checks and balances in Colorado's democratic system.

This study may assist scholars, politicians and the public in developing a deeper understanding of the interaction of the social processes of religion and politics as well as obtaining knowledge regarding the actual degree of influence religion currently has on public policy. Depending on the outcome, rather than increase understanding it may motivate politicians from both sides of the debate to exploit the research for their personal agendas in either seeking to promote greater religious influence on public policy or mute what influence currently exists.

Conclusion

Religion and politics currently exist in an uneasy relationship in Colorado and this relationship has been exacerbated by the social phenomenon known as religious resurgence. A literature review of this topic has demonstrated the continuing and disparate nature of the debate regarding the impact of religious ideology on public policy. This qualitative grounded theory study will explore the degree of substantive impact of resurgent religious ideology on state-level public policy in Colorado. The grounded theory approach, utilizing both archival research and field research in the form of focused interviews, offers the best approach to this complex, social research problem. The emergent theory process enables the research problem to be placed in the proper social context as indicated by the perceptions of the participants and the archived data. Through this process a comprehensive theory regarding the role resurgent religious ideology plays in Colorado's public policy arena can be developed.

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