Race, Religion, and Environmental Concern Among Black and White Americans

Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Master of Science in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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2020

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Abstract

The topic of religion and environment has been widely discussed among scholars for several decades following Lynn White's pivotal thesis, "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis". Many studies have concluded that religion and environmentalism are negatively correlated. However, these works have not adequately addressed the role that race may play in shaping or moderating religious people's views and support of environmental issues. This paper serves to explore the intersection of race, environmentalism, and religion and to answer the question of whether Black religious fundamentalists have less environmental concern than White religious fundamentalists. An analysis of General Social Survey data from 1972-2018 shows that by many measures, Black fundamentalists are more likely to express environmental concern than White fundamentalists.

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Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my advisor, Kerry Ard, for her unwavering support, patient guidance, and excellent mentorship. I would also like to thank my committee members, Nicole Sintov, Greg Hitzhusen, and Robyn Wilson. Lastly, I would like to thank the School of Environment and Natural Resources at The Ohio State University.

Introduction

The topic of environment and religion has been increasingly studied for the past several decades, beginning in 1967 when Lynn White published a widely cited article in *Science* called "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis". The article was an important contribution to social science because it prompted examination of the relationship between religion and environmentalism. White states in his thesis "…surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order." The thesis proposed that the Judeo-Christian belief system should shoulder the blame for causing ecological or environmental crises, due to the prevalence of the religious ideology that man has dominion over nature (White, 1967). The attitude of man's dominion has been enforced by Biblical scriptures such as Genesis 1:26-28, where, after the creation of the Earth, God decrees that man shall have dominion over every living creature on the earth. White's thesis, while an important introduction to the topic and an essential piece to the overall body of literature, was an oversimplified take on the relationship between environmentalism and Christianity that did not include any empirical analysis.

In the years since the publication of White's thesis, a sizeable amount of literature has sought to test White's claims using empirical evidence. However, results are mixed and there is a noticeable void in this literature regarding the role that race may play in explaining the relationship between religion and environmental attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, and general concerns. For example, a 1976 survey conducted with a sample of 806 households in Washington State made no mention of the demographics of the sample but the results of the

study supported Lynn White's thesis in that non Judeo-Christian respondents were more likely to reject the notion that man should dominate nature when compared to Judeo-Christian respondents (Hand and Van Liere, 1984). In a phone survey of Tulsa, Oklahoma residents Eckberg and Blocker (1989) found Christianity was negatively correlated with environmental concern, however the researchers did not mention the demographics of their sample, stating only that they questioned 300 adults. Greeley (1993), used data from the 1988 General Social Survey (GSS), concluding that Catholics were more likely to support increased government spending on environmental issues compared to Protestants, but less likely than non-Christians. Race was not mentioned anywhere in the analysis. Similarly, Kanagy and Nelson (1995) examined 2,379 white adults from the 1987 Gallup Survey, concluding that religious people were no less likely than non-religious people to identify as environmentalists. As their sample indicates, the researchers did not seem to consider race an important demographic in their study (Kanagy & Nelson, 1995).

Race & Environmental Concern

The perception that people of color are less concerned about environmental issues is widely held (Pearson et al. 2018) yet has little empirical support. In a recent nationally representative survey of the US, 1,212 adults, environmental concern amongst non- Whites was consistently underestimated yet non- Whites were found to actually be *more* concerned about environmental issues than Whites (Pearson et al. 2018). These findings are in line with the Environmental Deprivation Theory holds that those that are more exposed to environmental hazards, such as non- Whites, are more likely to be concerned about the effects (Whittaker et al. 2004). Environmental justice research examining the exposure to air pollution of African Americans and Whites across the US over time has found that African Americans are consistently twice as likely to be exposed to toxic air (Ard, 2015). Moreover, it has been argued that those that are more knowledgeable about environmental issues are more concerned (Ard and Mohai, 2011). In a nationally representative survey, African American Americans (31%) were found to be more likely than White Americans (25%) or Hispanics (22%) to say they pay a lot of attention to news coverage of scientific progress (Jones et al. 2014, p.7). In a more recent and comprehensive work examining this issue, Lazri and Konisky (2019) used a nationally representative sample of 16,269 adults in America from Gallup spanning the years 2001 to 2015, finding that Blacks have a higher level of personal worry than Whites regarding environmental issues such as air and water pollution, which are typically issues of environmental justice. Blacks were found to have no less concern than Whites on traditional environmental issues, such as quality of the environment in general, species extinction, and loss of tropical rainforests.

Environmentalism and conservation have historically been thought to be concerns of the white elite class. Wealthy elites in New England in cities such as Boston and New Haven in the 19th century set aside lands and created urban parks for the recreation of city dwelling elites (Taylor, 2016: pp 45-48). The traditional US Environmental Movement of the 70s has often been criticized for leaving out people of color a hole that was filled by the Environmental Justice Movement (Taylor, 2014). The United Church of Christ had a major hand in growing the Environmental Justice Movement with the first national study showing that environmental hazards were more likely to be in communities of color (Bullard et al. 2007). This supported efforts of a burgeoning environmental justice movement that had emerged in the 1980s when African American communities in the South began to mobilize and resist the predatory siting of landfills and other toxic facilities in their neighborhoods (Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2014). It is not surprising this movement began with help from Black churches. Predominately African American Catholic congregations are more like to engage in community social service and social action activities than predominately white Catholic congregations (Cavendish, 2010). African American churches are generally more actively involved in certain types of secular social activities in their respective communities than are White churches, particularly activities pertaining to social inequality and civil rights. However, sample sizes of African American congregations are almost always much smaller than those studies examining White congregations (Chaves and Higgings 1992).

Race & Religion

Despite the lack of early studies discussion on the role of race in environmental concern, there are many indicators that it should be an important explanatory variable. Most glaring is the historic role African American religious institutions have had in galvanizing their congregations to join social movements like the Civil Rights Movement. The African American church is a phrase widely used by scholars and the general public alike to describe majority African American Christian congregations. The African American church can be considered the oldest and most stable institution in the African American community (Moore, 1991). According to the Pew Research Center, the overwhelming majority of Black Americans (79%) identify as Christians and 75% of Black Christians state that religion is very important in their lives. Post slavery, approximately 100 years of Jim Crow segregation meant that while African Americans were legally free and no longer considered the property of other people, they were still subjected to institutional racism and discrimination. Being barred from joining White churches, the African American church was important, not just as a place of worship, but as a safe haven and reprieve from the injustices of the outside world. (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: pp 205).

Religion, specifically Christianity, is deeply ingrained in Black American culture, and has been since Africans were brought to America as slaves and forced to convert to the religion of their masters (Frazier, 1964). Christianity provided a new form of social cohesion among slaves who had been stripped of the culture and tradition of their native lands (Frazier, 1964: pp. 3-10). Although they practiced the same religion, White Southern churches condoned slavery and segregation, so African Americans were not allowed to join those congregations, thus, the African American church emerged its own separate institution, and still exists as such today

(Gadzekpo, 1997; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: pp. 1, 8, 137; Frazier, 1964: pp. 6-16). Churches were among the few pieces of property that were owned by African Americans in decades before the end of segregation (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990) and were the sites of meetings and rallies during the Civil Rights Movement. Several decades prior to the Civil Rights era, many southern Black Christian leaders became involved in politics during the Reconstruction period. Their involvement was brief, however, as white supremacy was quickly re-established in the south. (Frazier, 1964: pp. 42-43) During the Civil Rights era, the church presented itself as a safe space and a stronghold where people could gather freely and share news about new developments in the movement (Kearns, 1996; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). African American secular organizations like the National Urban League, the National Associate for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and other civil right organizations were founded and developed with the support of African American church leaders and members. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was a political organization based in the African American church and founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990: 9; 97; 109; 151; 211).

Religion & Environmental Concern

In order to understand how race and religion interact to explain environmental concern we must first lay out how religious preference has been shown to co-vary with concern. While many studies focusing on denominational differences (Arbuckle, 2017; Schwadel & Johnson, 2017; Carlisle & Clark, 2018; Clements, et al., 2014), most studies based in the US have focused on Christianity or Judeo-Christian denominations, which is the focus of this paper. Beyond denomination, studies have also operationalized religiosity in a number of ways, such as commitment to religious practice. For example, Hand and Van Liere (1984) found that higher church attendance is correlated with less environmental concern for Judeo-Christians, with the exception of Episcopalians and Lutherans. This suggests that both religiosity as well as differences in denomination are important for accurately measuring environmental concern. Not considering denomination, Klineberg, et al., (1998) examined data from the Texas Environmental Survey spanning six years and found that non-fundamentalists were more likely to avoid using and buying products that were not eco-friendly.

The relationship between denomination, religiosity and environmental concern varies across studies. Sherkat and Ellison (2007) used data from the 1993 General Social Survey to study direct and indirect religious influences on environmental concern and activism. They found Church attendance had a positive effect on non-political environmental action, but a negative effect on political environmental activism. However, like others, while they controlled for race, they did not provide any in-depth analysis on the differences. Similarly, Smith, et al. (2018) found that higher church attendance correlates with higher environmental concern, however they also took a more nuanced perspective on religious beliefs, finding those with biblical

literalist, or fundamentalist beliefs, were negatively associated with future environmental concerns. Like others, the sample used in this study was one with majority White respondents. Conversely, Hand and Crowe (2012) found that religious attendance, frequency of prayer and strength of denominational identity were not found to be related to environmentalism overall. They also concluded that those with no religious affiliation have the highest average environmental beliefs and behaviors while fundamentalists have the lowest. GSS data was also used for this study but race was not mentioned or even included as a control variable (Hand and Crowe 2012). Carlisle and Clark (2018) found that Evangelical Protestant are least likely of all religious groups analyzed to support environmental spending. Finally, Shin and Preston (2019) found that Christians who hold stewardship beliefs have more concern for climate change than those who hold dominion beliefs, but like others, they did not control for race in their experiment.

In an attempt to better understand the relationship between Christian orthodoxy and environmentalism, Truleove and Joireman (2009) found that Christian orthodoxy, as measured by two scales – the Christian Orthodoxy Scale and the Scriptural Literalism Scale – as significantly negatively correlated with all three of the measures of environmental behavior: pro-environmental intentions, willingness to pay for environmental protection, and pro-environmental political behavior. Their study was limited by the sample, which was 192 psychology students at a private Christian liberal arts university. The participants were 87.5% white and therefore provided limited insight on the role that race might play regarding environmental behavior. In a sample of college students, who were 90 percent White, Fusco et al (2012), concluded that Christians were significantly less likely to participate in

environmentally responsible behavior, and their acceptance of global climate change was significantly weaker than other groups. In a nationally representative sample of approximately 10,000 respondents, Pfeifer, et al. (2016) measured environmental consumption – how often people consider the effect on the environment when making shopping decisions. Biblical literalists and those who believed in an involved God were found to be less likely to be environmental consumers than those who did not hold those same beliefs. In a nationally representative sample of approximately 10,000 respondents, Pfeifer, et al. (2016) measured environmental consumption – how often people consider the effect on the environment when making shopping decisions. Biblical literalists, and those who believed in an involved god, were found to be less likely to be environmental consumers than those who did not hold those same beliefs. Considering that political conservatism is closely correlated with religious conservatism, and political conservatism is also indicative of lower environmental concern (Hoffamn, 2011; McCright, et al., 2016) this lends further evidence to the hypothesis that religious conservatives and fundamentalists maintain less environmental concern, as environmental issues are highly politicized.

Those studies that have focused on Christianity have recently begun a discourse surrounding the "greening" of Christianity – the idea that Christians are becoming more concerned about environmental issues in the US, which would not support Lynn White's thesis. However, findings have largely not been supportive of the hypothesis that Christians have become "greener", and again the role of race in these possible trends has not been thoroughly examined. Konisky (2018) provides a recent study did not find support for this argument. In it he examined a sample derived from Gallup survey data from 1990-1991, 1999, and 2005-2015

and found that Christians, regardless of their denomination and controlling for whether they were a racial minority or non-minority, among other variables, have actually become less concerned about the environment over time across many measures. However, the study did not account for any specific differences among Black and White respondents. Similarly, Hand and Crowe (2012) used data from the General Social Survey for 1993, 2000, and 2010 to test the question of whether or not environmental attitudes, beliefs, or reported behavior of religiously affiliated people have significantly changed over the past twenty years. Their research did not point to a socially significant change in religiosity and environmentalism over the last twenty years, nor did it factor race into the analysis. Clements, et al., (2014) used data from 2010 GSS with a sample size of 1,430, finding Christians reported lower levels of environmental concern than non-religious respondents. In addition, people belonging to faiths other than Christianity reported more willingness to pay or sacrifice for the environment and performed more private environmental behaviors compared to Christians (Clements, et al., 2014). Changes in level of environmental concern have indeed fluctuated over time, but religious denomination does not explain those trends (Carlisle & Clark, 2018).

Religion, Race & Environmental Concern

The theory that race is socially constructed is much more accepted among scientists of all disciplines today than in the past when race was believed to be a strictly biological concept. Although no longer believed to be purely biological, scientists do not agree on the conceptualization of race (Morning, 2007) However, it is critical to the advancement of science that scientists continue to gather data on race, as it has such great social significance (American Sociological Association, 2003). As race is socially constructed, its conceptualization varies among cultures and therefore will interact differently with religion and concern across contexts.

The literature that has examined how different racial and religious groups view environmental issues is sparse but those studies that are available demonstrates the importance of understanding how different religions and racial characteristics interact to explain environmental concern. Arbuckle (2017) found that Evangelicals and Black Protestants express less concern about climate change than non-religious respondents. While the study used a nationally representative sample from the Coordinated Congressional Election Survey, only Black Protestants were categorized; no Black people of other denominations. However, Carlisle and Clark (2017) found that Black Protestants are consistently more likely to declare approval of pro-environmental spending in comparison to other denominations and those without religious affiliation. Black Evangelical Protestants are also more likely than White Evangelical Protestants to believe that there is solid evidence that the Earth is warming, but less likely than White Catholics and Mainline Protestants (Carlisle and Clark, 2017).

Arp & Boeckelman (1997) used census tract data to locate respondents from majority Black communities located between 0 and 3 miles of polluting industries between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, Louisiana, sampling 102 White households and 402 African American households. Results showed that African American church members were more likely to be environmentally active than non-members; although, income, levels of anger, and levels of community participation, rather than religion were found to be more statistically significant factors to predict activism (Arp & Boeckelman 1997). Church attendance was not found to indicate a pattern of activism among white respondents. Clements, et al., (2014) found Black Protestants to be less willing to pay or sacrifice for the environment and to perform fewer private environmental behaviors than Mainline Protestants. Their study used a cross section of data from the 2010 GSS and was not longitudinal, therefore no conclusions could be made about Black Protestants or Black people belonging to other denominations levels of environmental concern over time.

The existing body of literature has yet to thoroughly examine how the intersecting social statuses of race and religion work together to create environmental values. My goal in this thesis is to explore the intersection of race, environmentalism, and religion by determining the level of environmental concern among Black American religious fundamentalists in comparison to their White counterparts. I hypothesize that Black American religious fundamentalists do not have any less environmental concern than White religious fundamentalists. I also hypothesize that Christianity is negatively correlated with environmental concern. This information will provide insight into trends on environmental concern by race and religious affiliation over the last several decades.

Data and Methods

The data used in this thesis comes from the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS conducts thorough, in-person surveys which have tracked hundreds of trends regarding American public opinions and values since 1972. Since questions are repeated yearly, these data were conducive to this project, which seeks to demonstrate changes in environmental concern over time. Data from the years 1972 through 2018 were analyzed in this project. The dependent variable is *natenvir*, which reflects respondent's response to the question, "We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I'm going to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to name some of these problems, and for each one I'd like you to tell me whether you think we're spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount. Are we spending "too much", "too little", or "about right" amount of money on improving and protecting the environment?" The independent variables analyzed are *fund*, *race*, *year, educ, age, partyid, income, race/fund interaction* and *Christian*. The survey questions for the *fund* variable inquire about how fundamental or liberal a respondent is in their religion. The response options included fundamentalist, moderate, liberal, and not applicable. For this analysis, a categorical variable was created with the categories *fundamentalist* and *not fundamentalist*. For *race*, the response options included African-American, White, and other. For this analysis, only African-American and White were used. The "other" responses were excluded. The variable *year* is the year in which the survey took place. Years 1973 to 2018 are represented. The *educ* variable measures how many years of education a respondent has. Responses ranged from 0 to 20 years of

education. The variable age represents a respondents age at the time of the survey. Responses ranged from 18 to 89 and over. Those who did not know or did not answer were eliminated. The variable *partyid* identifies the respondent's political affiliation. Response options included strong Democrat, not strong Democrat, Independent near Democrat, Independent, Independent near Republican, not strong Republican, strong Republican, other party. For the purpose of this analysis, the responses for strong Democrat and not strong Democrat were combined, as were the responses for strong Republican and not strong Republican. They were then named Democrat and Republican, respectively. All other responses were excluded. The *income* variable represented the respondent's family income in the last year. Answers ranged from less than $1000 to over $25,000. Those who did not know or did not answer were excluded from this analysis. I predicted that the independent variables of education, age and political party, would be positively correlated with the dependent variable, such that the more years of education someone has, the younger they are, and the more politically liberal a respondent is, the more likely they would have responded that the government is spending "too little" on protecting the environment.

The data in Table 2 shows that the percentage of African American Americans who identify themselves as "fundamentalists" is consistently higher than the percentage of White Americans who identify the same way across all years that data is available. White Americans have been more likely to identify themselves as "liberal" than African American Americans across all years for which data is available. There was a survey response option of "moderate," but those responses have been excluded from this analysis, for simplicity. For the purposes of this paper,

environmental concern is measured as level of support for governmental spending on environmental protection and improvement.

Results

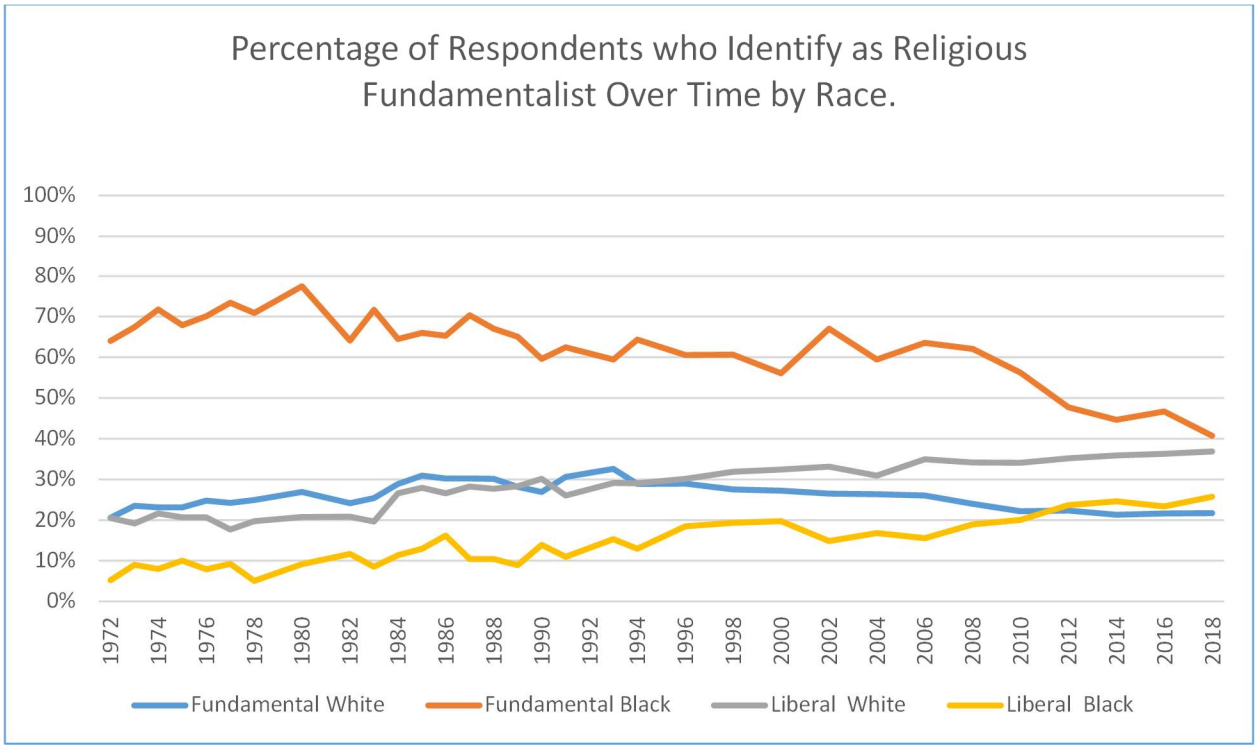

Figure 1: Percentage of Respondents who Identify as Religious Fundamentalist Over Time by Race

For figures one and two, the data were converted to percentages of respondents for ease of comparison. Figure one illustrates that in general, the percentage of fundamental Black Americans has remained relatively the same over time with a modest decline in the past 10 years, yet consistently higher than the percentage of fundamental Whites. The percentage of Black Americans who identify themselves as fundamentalists is consistently higher than the percentage of white Americans who identify the same way across all years that data is available. The lowest percentage Black respondents who identified as religiously fundamental in any given year was 41%, whereas the lowest percentage of White respondents who identified as religiously fundamental in any given year was 21%. Conversely, the percentage of Black respondents who identified as liberal has remained relatively consistent over time, with a

modest increase in the past 10 years, yet consistently lower than the percentage of White respondents who identified as liberal. The lowest percentage Black respondents who identified as liberal in any given year was 5%, whereas the lowest percentage of White respondents who identified as liberal in any given year was 18%.

Table 1 shows a breakdown of responses on the dependent variable, *natenvir.* Table 1 shows that across the years 1972 to 2018, 11 percent of White fundamentalists on average said we were spending too much on the environment and 55% said too little. The biggest difference is shown between White and Black fundamentalists, where 67% of Black fundamentalists answering that we are not spending enough money as a society to improve and protect the environment whereas only 55% of White fundamentalists had the same response. Conversely, African American fundamentalists were also less likely than white fundamentalists to answer that we are spending too much on improving and protecting the environment. 6% of Black fundamentalists believe we are spending too much in comparison to 11% of White respondents. The responses between Black and White liberals were nearly identical to one another.

Average Concern Across All Years			Sd. Dev.
White Fundamentalists	Too Much	11%	4%
	About Right	34%	6%
	Too Little	55%	8%
Black Fundamentalists	Too Much	6%	3%
	About Right	27%	7%
	Too Little	67%	7%
White Liberals	Too Much	7%	3%
	About Right	25%	4%
	Too Little	68%	6%
Black Liberals	Too Much	8%	8%
	About Right	23%	12%
	Too Little	69%	13%

Table 1 - Average concern of Black and White fundamentalists over time

Figure two combines the variables of race and fundamentalism as well as race and support for environmental spending to demonstrate levels of fundamentalism and levels of environmental support over time. The average number of Blacks who say we are spending too little on environmental protection (Too Little Black) has remained relatively steady across all years, save for a sharp decrease in 1985, a sharp increase in 1989 and more gradual increase since 2014. The number of White respondents who say we are spending too little on environmental protection (Too Little White) has tended to be consistently lower than Black respondents over time.

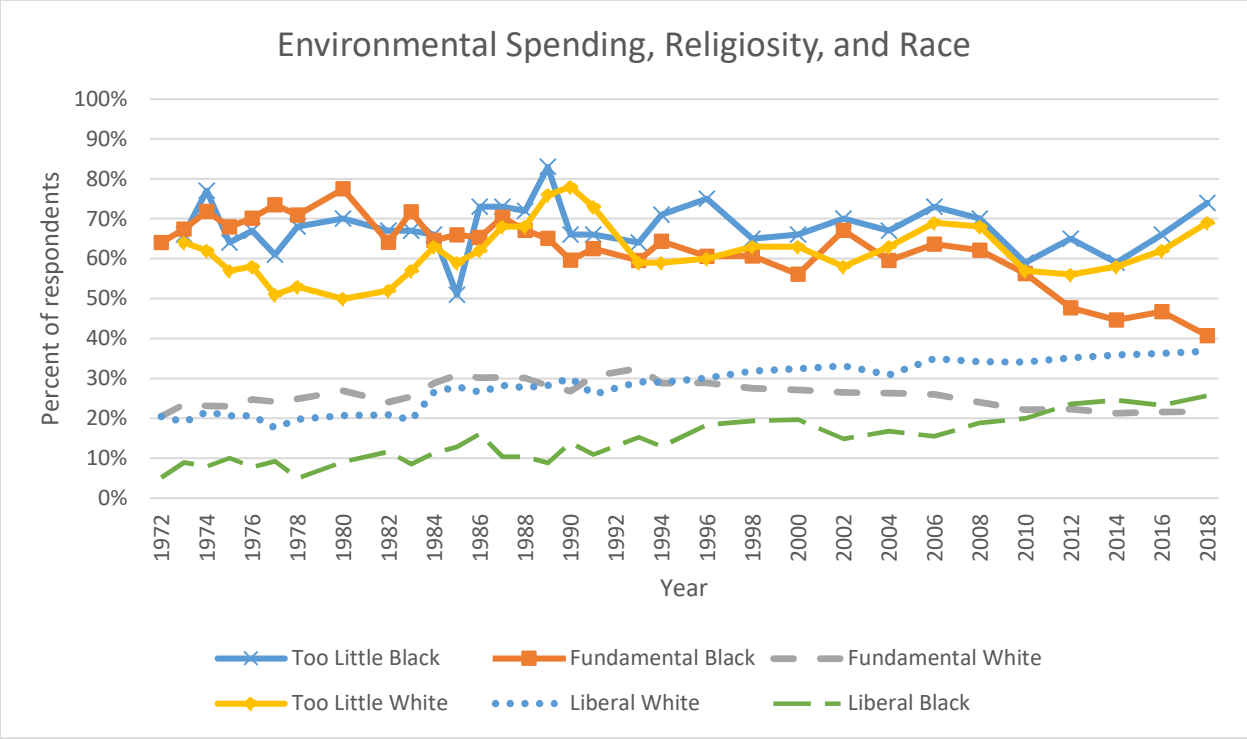

Figure 2 - Support for environmental spending, religion and race

Table two presents multivariate regression models of pooled samples for the General Social Survey from 1972 to 2018. Model 1 serves as the null model, containing the control variables year, education, age, political party, and income. The dependent variable is *natenvir*. Those who responded there was "too much" spending on the environment coded as 0, those who thought spending was "just right" coded as 1, and those who thought "too little" coded as 2. Model 1 shows the expected relationships between education, age and political party, such that the more years of education someone has, the younger they are, and the more politically liberal a respondent is the more likely they would have responded that the government is spending "too little" on protecting the environment. Each new model adds one new variable or interaction to the null model.

The variable *fund* reflects how religiously fundamental the respondent was. It was made into a categorical variable where fundamentalist was coded as 0 and not-fundamentalist was coded as 1 and combined those who answered they were either “moderate” or “liberal”. A two-way interaction variable was created for black fundamentalist and not black fundamentalist using the variables race and fund. The variable Christian was created from the GSS variable *relig*. Model 2 introduces the variable of fundamentalism and model 3 introduces the variable of race. Model 4 includes an interaction between race and fundamentalists, demonstrating a statistically significant difference in environmental concern between White fundamentalists and Black fundamentalists, such that White fundamentalists are significantly less likely to be concerned about environmental issues compared to black fundamentalists. Models 2-5 show that religious fundamentalism is consistently, and significantly, negatively correlated with environmental concern. Models 5 examines how environmental concern varies by Christianity specifically. This model supports the hypothesis that Christianity is negatively correlated with environmental concern.

Multivariate Linear Regression Models Predicting Environmental Concern

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
Year	0.003	** 0.000	0.003	** 0.000	0.003	** 0.000	0.003	** 0.000	0.002	** 0.000
Education (Years of Education)	0.015	** 0.000	0.014	** 0.000	0.014	** 0.000	0.014	** 0.000	0.013	** 0.000
Age	-0.007	** 0.000	-0.007	** 0.000	-0.007	** 0.000	-0.007	** 0.000	-0.007	** 0.000
Political Party	0.051	** 0.000	0.051	** 0.000	0.050	** 0.000	0.050	** 0.000	0.049	** 0.000
Income	0.000	** 0.001	-0.001	** 0.509	0.000	0.738	0.000	0.731	0.000	0.979
Fundamentalism			-0.048	** 0.000	-0.053	** 0.000	-0.064	** 0.000	-0.050	** 0.000
Race (0=white 1= black)					0.028	** 0.004	-0.009	** 0.615	-0.009	0.583
Race Fund Interaction							0.064	** 0.004	0.068	** 0.002
Christian									-0.079	** 0.000
N (Respondents)	29,037		29,037		29,037		29,037		29,037	
R-Squared	0.070		0.071		0.071		0.072		0.073	

Source : General Social Survey

**p<.01
*p<.05

Table 2 - Multivariate Linear Regression Models Predicting Environmental Concern

Discussion and Limitations

This paper set out to provide a fresh perspective on the subject of race, religion, and environment, and statistically explain what, if any, differences in environmental concern may exist by race and religion in the United States. The question of whether Black religious fundamentalists hold less environmental concern than White religious fundamentalists was posed and answered. White fundamentalists are significantly less likely to be concerned about environmental issues, as measured by support for spending on environmental issues, compared to black fundamentalists.

While this paper certainly makes a meaningful contribution to the existing body of literature, it is not without limitations. Some aspects of this analysis were limited by the availability of data. Initially, there was to be included in the analysis a graph to illustrate variation in race, political party, and environmental concern over time. White and Black Democrats, Republicans and religious fundamentalists and their opinions on environmental spending over time, however, the GSS sample of Black respondents who identified as Republican consistently very small across all years. The number of respondents ranged from as few as four in some years, to a maximum of 26 in other years. The sample size was so small that an accurate statistical analysis could not be performed. The issue of how to measure religiosity should not go unmentioned. Typical of social science, some data have various ways they can be measured and quantified, and various methods can be employed to analyze them. Were time and data collection a non-issue, this paper would have also explored how psychological theories, such as Moral Foundations Theory can explain religious people's levels of environmental concern.

Christianity is not a monolith. Within Christianity, there are many denominations with undoubtedly unique qualities and differences among them that would account for variation in responses to topics such as support for environmental concern. Differences in denomination were not accounted for in this project. Even among Black Christians, there are many denominations – Baptist, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical and Pentecostal, among others. There are also those who identify with no particular denomination, but still attend church services and practice Christianity. The body of literature would benefit from an analysis of differences in environmental concern by denomination among Black Christians. This paper used a nationally representative sample, but future studies should work to understand if region is a variable that impacts environmental concern by race and religion.

This research has practical and political implications, and can be expanded upon to explore more thoroughly the relationship between race, religiosity and various topics under the umbrella of environment and natural resources, including, but not limited to environmental concern, support for environmental spending, climate change, and environmental justice. Future research should seek to better interpret and understand the relationship between not only Christianity but other religions in America, and the environmental beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes of those people so that these populations are not excluded from conversations and communication regarding religion and environment.

This line of research can also be bolstered to develop ways in which environmental information can be communicated to religious people in America. There currently exists little to no information on how Black Americans view environmental issues in relation to morality and religion. This is data is important to know because the Black American community is

disproportionately affected by environmental and climate issues. Because of that fact there is an ever-growing section of the population who is active in the environmental justice movement. The church has long served as the center of social justice movements in the Black community. As previously mentioned, according to the Pew Research Center, the overwhelming majority of Black Americans (79%) identify as Christians and 75% of Black Christians state that religion is very important in their lives. That is a major segment of the black population, and therefore there is a lot to learn from this group. As environmental racism is an issue of social justice, knowing the ways in which the Black Christian community feel about environmental issues can help clergy and policymakers better communicate information to that demographic.

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