Old Glory as Jesus:
The Relevance of Christian Nationalism in U.S. Politics

By

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Abstract

Why, despite significant trends towards secularization, has Christian nationalism continued to influence political attitudes and communication? This dissertation investigates the construction of and continued identification with Christian nationalism among Americans. First, I explore the construction of Christian nationalism through social media. Using content, I find that Christian nationalism offers a distinct topic profile, pattern of emotion language use that emphasizes fear, and reader response, compared to other religious and patriotic accounts. Second, I employ a survey experiment to test the effect of racial and religious demographic change on support for Christian nationalism among White Christians. Knowledge of the decline of Christianity in the United States (but not of White Americans) amplifies support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of discrimination against Christians, mediated by feelings of fear and disgust. Finally, using survey analysis and in-depth interviews, I find that, for Black Americans, widespread support for Christian nationalism broadens the boundaries around American identity. I conclude by discussing the implications and limitations of my findings.

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Chapter One: Translating Religion for a Secularizing Nation

[L]et us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. (Hebrews 12:1b-2a [New American Standard Bible])

[W]here the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17b [New International Version])

"Let's run the race marked out for us. Let's fix our eyes on Old Glory and all she represents. Let's fix our eyes on this land of heroes and let their courage inspire. And let's fix our eyes on the author and perfecter of our faith and freedom and never forget that where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom — and that means freedom always wins." Vice President Mike Pence, 2020 RNC

The intersection between religion and politics has intrigued political scientists since the inception of the discipline. Modernization theorists predicted that religion would recede from the public sphere, becoming an insignificant identity marker, as economies became more developed (Lipset 1959; D. Lerner 1958). While the United States has remained more religious than comparable countries (Norris and Inglehart 2011), religious disassociation and diversification is proceeding at a rapid pace (Baker and Smith 2015; Burge 2021; PRRI 2021).

Yet religion remains one of the most powerful structuring forces of American political life, with a significant proportion of Americans reporting that being a Christian is important to being an American (C. M. Jacobs and Theiss-Morse 2013). Religious identities have become increasingly reliable indicators of partisan affiliation (D. E. Campbell, Layman, and Green 2021), amplify partisan attachment (Mason and Wronski 2018), and contribute to affective polarization (Mason 2015). The partisan polarization fueled by the alignment of religious and partisan identities reduces policy responsiveness (Lee 2015), most recently in the efforts of

government agencies to coordinate public action to address the Covid-19 pandemic (Corcoran, Scheitle, and DiGregorio 2021; Perry, Whitehead, and Grubbs 2020a; 2020b) Polarization associated with religious identities also undermines democratic norms (Perry, Whitehead, and Grubbs 2022) and directly contributes to the rising threat of domestic political violence (Bond and Neville-Shepard 2021; Boorstein 2021; Jenkins 2021; Miller-Idriss, Pandith, and Faskianos 2021).

This dissertation aims to answer a number of questions animated by the disjuncture of secularization and the persistence of religion in American political life. How has religion remained so salient in American politics? How is the political content of identities communicated? What role do emotions play in influencing attachment to religious identities? And how are commitments to religious-national identities influenced by other identities? This dissertation proposes that religion remains an important part of American political life due to the fusion of national and religious identities, referred to as Christian nationalism. While Christian nationalism is undeniably influenced by other social categories like race and religious traditions, it cannot be reduced to other identity categories. Through Christian nationalism, religion retains a seat at the political table.

A Brief History of Christian Nationalism in the United States

The origins of Christian nationalism are disputed. Some historians see elements of Christian nationalism dating to the 2nd Great Awakening, during which the founding of the United States was mythologized (S. K. Green 2015). Clearer evidence for the presence of Christian nationalism emerged in the 1930s through the 1950s. This was an era of significant change for religious communities in the United States. The rise of biblical criticism, a method for studying the biblical text that originated in Germany and traveled to mainline seminaries in

the United States in the 1800s and that emphasized the human elements of the text, alarmed conservative Christians (Marsden 1991). These conservative Christians challenged the use of science to compromise historical Christian positions on human origins and became skeptical of progressive government policies. By the 1930s, an alliance was created between conservative Christian clergy and corporate executives to attack the New Deal and communism (Kruse 2015). One of the most important Christian nationalist thinkers emerged during this time, R.J. Rushdoony, a son of Armenian immigrants and Presbyterian pastor. Rushdoony argued in "The Institutes of Biblical Law" that biblical law should be applied to modern societies, a position he termed Christian Reconstructionism (Rushdoony 2012). Christian Reconstructionism is also referred to as dominionism, based on the idea that Christians should take dominion of all aspects of life, including politics. His vision for a Christian society included a strong emphasis on homeschooling and libertarian economic policy (Aho 2013; Blumenfeld 2000).

In the 1950s, the Eisenhower administration brought religion again to the fore of public life. Eisenhower believed that the Cold War was ultimately an ideological war. He supported the addition of "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and "In God we Trust" to currency, and he made frequent references to God in public addresses (Kruse 2015). Although he had undergone a religious conversion experience prior to assuming office, for Eisenhower the most important reason to draw attention to America's civil religion was to draw a distinction between the United States and the Soviet Union (Holl 2007). Anti-communism and fears of creeping socialism were increasingly tied to conservative Protestantism, popularized by the work of activists like Billy James Hargis. To be a true American meant being a Christian, and Big Government and social programs were simply the first steps towards the prohibition of Christianity and end of American capitalism (Martí 2020).

The 1960s constituted a significant departure from the civil religion of the Eisenhower era. In his religious history of the United States, Ahlstrom writes:

> The decade of the Sixties was a time, in short, when the old foundations of national confidence, patriotic idealism, moral traditionalism, and even of historic Judeo-Christian theism, were awash. Presuppositions that had held firm for centuries—even millennia—were being widely questioned. Some sensational manifestations came and went (as fads and fashions will), but the existence of a basic shift of mood rooted in deep social and institutional dislocations was anything but ephemeral… [I]t was perfectly clear to any reasonably observant American that the postwar revival of the Eisenhower years had completely sputtered out, and that the nation was experiencing a *crise de conscience* of unprecedented depth (1972, 1080–81).

The Supreme Court decisions *Engel v. Vitale* (1962) and *Abington v. Schempp* (1963) made state-sponsored prayer and Bible reading illegal, enforcing a division between expressions of religious belief and the key social institution of public schools (FitzGerald 2017). Enforcement of civil rights protections threatened the tax-exempt status of private religious segregated schools, leading to their political activism (Balmer 2007). But most significantly, according to Campbell and Putnam, gender roles and societal expectations of sexual behavior began to shift. They argue that sexual norms changed dramatically around homosexuality, abortion, premarital sex, and pornography, and that "[w]hile national norms shifted in a liberal direction in that era, that shift itself was felt as a fundamental moral challenge to conservative Americans of all ages" (Putnam and Campbell 2012, 116).

In response to these challenges, religious activists began to organize for political action. Initially, the Religious Right was founded to protect the tax-exempt status of segregated schools, but organizers looked for a philosophical underpinning with wider appeal. Rushdoony's thought failed to attract a significant following until the 1970s when, in the wake of the significant social changes of the 1960s, Christian activists began to build a political movement (Putnam and

Campbell 2012). Francis Schaeffer emerged as an important Christian thinker during this time. Schaeffer explicitly disavowed Rushdoony's more radical vision of reinstatement of biblical law, but Schaeffer agreed with Rushdoony that secularism posed a threat to a Christian America. He asserted that "the common people had the right and duty to disobedience and rebellion if state officials ruled contrary to the Bible. To do otherwise would be rebellion against God" (Schaeffer 1981). Schaeffer's work provided the ideological and philosophical backdrop for Christian political activists at the time, profoundly shaping the direction of the Religious Right (FitzGerald 2017).

The Religious Right needed to establish that Christianity played a unique role in American history and that state preference for religious (preferably Christian) values was legitimate. In the 1980s, David Barton began to publish articles and books for a Christian audience, arguing that the Founders of the United States were men of deep religious faith, that the principles of their faith were reflected in the founding documents, and that the US was intended to be a Christian nation in which the government was designed to reflect Christian values. In 1988 Barton created the organization WallBuilders, which aims to equip Christians to rebuild America's foundations. In 2005, Time magazine declared him to be one of the most influential evangelicals, with extensive influence on the thinking of Newt Gingrich, Ted Cruz, Mike Huckabee, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell Jr., and Glenn Beck. He has continued to exert influence over the religious right (TIME Staff 2005; Bradley Hagerty, Barbara 2012). Sam Brownback commented that Barton provides "the philosophical underpinnings for a lot of the Republican effort in the country today—bringing God back into the public square" (Bunch 2010).

Christian nationalist ideas are alive and well at the elite level in American politics. Some ministries have been created to serve politicians. For example, Capital Ministries hosts Bible studies for politicians at the national level, such as Ben Carson, Michelle Bachman, and Mike Pence, and they are increasingly active in many state capitals. Their Bible study guides emphasize policy issues, presenting the "biblical" perspective not just on abortion or same-sex marriage, but also on tax policy, immigration, and foreign policy (K. Stewart 2020). Project Blitz is a playbook for introducing increasingly Christian nationalist legislation into state legislatures. Proposed bills first promote a "Judeo-Christian heritage" with symbolic actions like the display of "In God We Trust" in public schools, then move to introduce Religious Freedom Restoration Acts and exemptions from civil rights protections (Taylor 2018). Efforts like these keep elites aware of Christian nationalist ideas, although there is a dearth of research on the success of such attempts, especially at the state level.

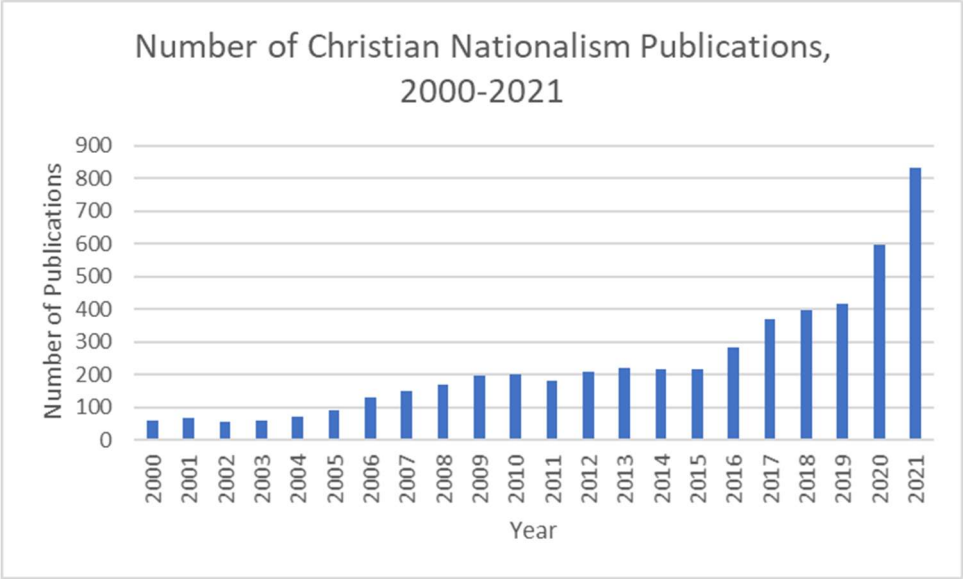
The State of Research on Christian Nationalism

Since the 2010s, a new body of literature has emerged that argues that the effects of religion on politics are largely divorced from religious tradition or religious practice and are instead a function of identities rooted in political theology, namely Christian nationalism. Gryzmala-Busse writes that identity fusion is "a culmination of a process of historical interpretation: the careful tending of national and religious identity at home, in schools, and if possible, in the public conversation. It is a product of favorably homogenous demographics and historical political opportunities. […] Fusion relies on the notion that a religion stands on the same side as the nation… fusion is an identity" (Grzymała-Busse 2015, 24–25). In the United States, this fusion has involved Christianity.

Religious/national identity fusion has been conceptualized by several scholars, who have provided similar concepts with different monikers. Whitehead, Perry, and Baker define Christian nationalism as "a pervasive set of beliefs and ideals that merge American and Christian group memberships" (Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018, 148). The construction of Christian nationalism entails a "blending of Christian and patriotic narratives and iconography that blurs or erases the line between religious and political community and identity" (Gorski 2009, 91), such that the distinctions between political and religious communities dissipate. Stewart, Edgell, and Delehanty use the language of public religious expression, through which "respondents expect religious beliefs to be an integral part of public life and political deliberation" (E. Stewart, Edgell, and Delehanty 2018, 18). For the sake of this prospectus, I will use the term "Christian nationalism" to refer to the fusion of national and religious identities.

Christian nationalism has become an important concept within scholarly work on religion and politics. Figure 1 charts the growth in Google Scholar citations referencing "Christian nationalism". It is immediately apparent that attention to Christian nationalism as a topic has increased significantly over the past two decades. Not only has the number of citations referencing Christian nationalism increased, but the concept has become more central to academic discussions. For example, 9% of all articles published in 2021 in the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion reference Christian nationalism.

Figure 1: Google Scholar citations of "Christian nationalism"



Peer-reviewed work on Christian nationalism has flourished in recent years. There are three main types of dependent variables that have been explored in this body of research: attitudes toward racial and religious minorities, attitudes on gender and sexuality, and attitudes towards authority and power.

The majority of studies that include some measure of Christian nationalism analyze attitudes towards religious and racial minorities. Christian nationalism has been associated with increased prejudice against Blacks (Perry and Whitehead 2015b; Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2019; Whitehead and Perry 2020), opposition to interreligious marriage (Perry and Whitehead 2015b) and increased tolerance for racists (Davis and Perry 2020). Stewart, Edgell, and Delehanty (2018) argue that Christian nationalism is associated with prejudice against Muslims, Jews, Buddhists, Mormons, and those who are spiritual but not religious. In particular, prejudice towards Muslims and resistance to mosque-building is highest among individuals with high levels of Christian nationalism (Choma et al. 2016; Dahab and Omori 2019; Edgell and Tranby

2010; Merino 2010; Sherkat and Lehman 2018; Shortle and Gaddie 2015). Also, as an intersection of religious and national identities, Christian nationalism is correlated with opposition to immigration (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011; Sherkat and Lehman 2018; Davis 2019; Straughn and Feld 2010).

Given the Christian Right's attention to gender issues, it is unsurprising that Christian nationalism has also been connected to attitudes on gender and sexuality. Christian nationalists have more traditional gender norms, such as believing that a husband should earn more than his wife and that women should prioritize child-rearing over careers. They oppose relaxation of societal standards or legal requirements for divorce (Whitehead and Perry 2020). And they are more likely to oppose same-sex marriage (Whitehead and Perry 2015; 2020).

Finally, Christian nationalism is related to attitudes on authority and power. Christian nationalists display more support for capital punishment and advocate for stronger punitive measures to address crime (Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2019) and are more likely to support gun rights and ownership (Whitehead, Schnabel, and Perry 2018). Christian nationalists are also skeptical of alternative sources of moral authority, namely science, in the situations in which they perceive that the scientific community stands in opposition to religious authority, such as evolution and masking to prevent Covid-19 (Baker, Perry, and Whitehead 2020; Perry, Whitehead, and Grubbs 2020a).

General Theoretical Framework: Social Identity Theory

This dissertation leans on insights from Social Identity Theory to answer questions about the influence of Christian nationalism. After the horrors of World War II and racial conflict of the American Civil Rights Movement, psychologists struggled to understand the role of groups

in intergroup conflict. Tajfel (1978) initiated a series of experiments to understand how individuals come to see themselves as part of a group and the effect that group salience has on ingroup and outgroup perceptions. He assigned individuals to arbitrary or meaningless groups in what came to be called the Minimal Group Paradigm, and he found that simply telling people that they are part of a group results in higher ingroup favoritism and outgroup denigration. Instead of operating on a principle of fairness, his subjects acted from a principle of group competition. Tajfel theorized that this tendency to evaluate one's own group positively while drawing contrasts with an alternate group serves the function of reinforcing self-esteem—people feel better about themselves when they have positive feelings about their own group vis-à-vis alternative groups (Tajfel 1978).

Turner and colleagues (1987) focused on the ways in which people assume group identities. People have a range of latent identities, ranging from a superordinate identity as "human" to a social identity to a subordinate identity (personal identity). They argued that individuals can move from one type of identity to another on the basis of the context in which they find themselves. They also developed the concept of prototypicality—groups are theorized to have prototypical members (either real or imagined) who exemplify the norms, traits, and stereotypes of the group. Once people classify themselves as part of a group, they depersonalize—they come to see themselves and other group members as prototypical and as interchangeable members of the group.

The Minimal Group Paradigm was helpful insofar as it established strong internal validity regarding the causal relationship of group categorization and in-group and outgroup evaluations. Its proponents argued that if the theory was supported in minimal group experiments, it would find stronger support in the real world. Political scientists began to integrate Social Identity

Theory, applying the theory developed using the Minimal Group Paradigm to real-world identities, such as race (Jardina 2019), nationalism (Theiss-Morse 2009b), and partisanship (Greene 2004). Social Identity Theory has now become an accepted theoretical framework in the discipline. Each section of my dissertation will draw insights from Social Identity Theory to explore puzzles in the study of Christian nationalism.

Christian Nationalism as an Identity

I argue that Christian nationalism is a distinct social identity. Christian nationalism has prototypical members (Jerry Falwell Jr., Paula White, David Barton) and in-group norms that also draw boundaries against outgroups (see (Bean 2016) for an example of the use of partisanship as an in-group norm that also draws boundaries). Moreover, I would argue that Christian nationalism is more than the sum of a Christian identity and a national identity. Empirical work has shown that Christian nationalism and religiosity operate at cross-purposes in explaining prejudice against immigrants and Blacks (Whitehead and Perry 2020). Both explicit and implicit to American identity is the idea that prototypical Americans are Christians (C. M. Jacobs and Theiss-Morse 2013; Park-Taylor et al. 2008; Theiss-Morse 2009). But Christian nationalism goes beyond an ethnonationalist approach to assert, not only that Christians have special status within the state, but also that the state should assume a Christian character.

Christian nationalism is admittedly not the only psychological construct that could influence attitudes on race, gender, immigration, and the proper role of government. Some Americans believe that the country should be highly individualistic, such that individual outcomes are contingent only on personal effort and that structural racism plays little to no role, a concept referred to as racial resentment (Kinder and Sanders 1996; Carmines, Sniderman, and

Easter 2011). It could also be the case that people's attitudes are shaped by a "set of connected beliefs animated by some fundamental, underlying value orientation that is itself connected to a visceral sense of right and wrong," called authoritarianism (Hetherington and Weiler 2009).

To test the extent to which these constructs correlate, I turned to the 2021 GSS. To measure Christian nationalism, I created an index of agreement with three statements: "The federal government should advocate Christian values", "The United States is part of God's plan", and "The U.S. would be a better country if religion had less influence" (reverse coded). Ranging from 3 to 15, this index has a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82 and loads on a single factor. Racial resentment is an index using three questions: worse outcomes for Blacks are due to a lack of motivation to succeed; Blacks no longer face discrimination; and Blacks should work their way up—and is a replication of a measure used in previous work (Yancy 2019).[1] I measured authoritarianism using a GSS question about preferences in child-rearing. Respondents were asked to rank the values they believe is most important to prepare a child for life; I created an authoritarianism index that combines ranks for children to obey and to think for themselves (which I reverse-coded) (Wronski 2015).

The correlations between these concepts is high, as indicated by Table 1. All of the correlations are statistically significant, with Christian nationalism being most strongly correlated with racial resentment (r=0.465), and then with authoritarianism (0.369). Could it be that Christian nationalism is simply a proxy for racial resentment and/or authoritarianism, or does Christian nationalism have independent effects?

[1] Symbolic racism contains four main attributes: denial of continuing discrimination, blacks should work harder, blacks have unfair advantages, and blacks make excessive demands. Unfortunately, the GSS does not contain measures that map directly onto this conceptualization.

Table 1: Correlation of Christian nationalism, racial resentment, and authoritarianism

	Christian Nationalism	Racial Resentment	Authoritarianism
Christian Nationalism	1.000		
Racial Resentment	0.4651 (0.000)	1.000	
Authoritarianism	0.3689 (0.000)	0.1975 (0.000)	1.000

Data from the 2021 GSS can provide some clues. First, I examined anti-immigrant attitudes, namely the extent to which respondents agreed that "America should limit immigration in order to protect our national way of life", with responses scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Table 2 presents the results of OLS regression analysis. The first model includes only religious, political, and demographic variables. Model 2 adds Christian nationalism to the base model; Model 3 adds racial resentment to the base model; and Model 4 adds authoritarianism to the base model. The final model includes all three. Several themes emerge. First, Christian nationalism is distinct from racial resentment. Although Christian nationalism and racial resentment both increase perceptions that immigration challenges the American way of life, the effect size of racial resentment is significantly larger than the effect size for Christian nationalism. Second, authoritarianism has distinct effects from Christian nationalism. Authoritarianism never achieves statistical significance. Finally, it is important to note that Christian nationalism cannot be conflated with religious practice more broadly. While Christian nationalism increases the perception that immigration challenges the American way of life, attendance at religious services decreases this perception.

If immigration is racialized, discussions around criminal justice policy are even more so. The 2021 GSS asks respondents which policy should be the priority for the U.S. criminal justice system: strengthening law and order through more police and great enforcement of the laws or

reducing bias against minorities in the criminal justice system by reforming court and police practices. Respondents who preferred larger investments in law and order are coded 1. The results of logistic regression are presented in Table 3. Unsurprisingly, racial resentment has the strongest effect, significantly increasing the probability that a respondent will prefer a focus on law and order. As the other constructs are added, the effect size of Christian nationalism diminishes, consistent with the earlier findings that these concepts are correlated. However, Christian nationalism independently shifts attitudes, above and beyond racial resentment and authoritarianism. Although it's not statistically significant, the sign on religious service attendance is negative, the opposite direction of Christian nationalism.

Third, does Christian nationalism have a distinct effect on political behavior, namely vote choice? The 2021 GSS asks respondents who they voted for in the 2016 presidential election. I created a dummy variable in which respondents who voted for Trump are coded "1", all others are coded "0". Results of logistic regression are presented in Table 4. Christian nationalism is significant when it is added to the basic demographic, religious, and political variables in Model 2. In Model 3, racial resentment exerts a strong influence over the probability of voting for Trump, but Model 5 shows that this relationship is fleeting. When all three constructs are included in Model 5, only Christian nationalism retains statistical significance, increasing the probability of voting for Trump. The effect of Christian nationalism is larger than another other variable in the model, with the exceptions of party identification and ideology. Again, although not statistically significant, religious service attendance has the effect of decreasing Trump support.

Taken together, several results become clear. First, Christian nationalism, racial resentment, and authoritarianism are distinct concepts. While strongly correlated and shifting

attitudes in similar directions, the effect sizes of these three constructs are different. Retention of statistical significance across the models is not uniform. We cannot assume that Christian nationalism is a proxy for racial resentment or authoritarianism. Second, Christian nationalism is an important predictor of attitudes. Christian nationalism has a statistically-significant effect across a range of attitudes, reflecting that its role should not be neglected in studies of public opinion and political behavior. Finally, Christian nationalism is not simply religious adherence or religious practice. Religious practice, in the form of religious service attendance, tends to work at cross-purposes with Christian nationalism, and, in two of these examples, fails to achieve statistical significance. Simply engaging in religious practices does not have a strong effect on attitudes; rather, political theologies that integrate belonging in the nation with adherence to a cultural Christianity has stronger effects.

Table 2: Effect on Anti-Immigrant Attitudes

VARIABLES	(1) Base	(2) Christian Nationalism	(3) Racial Resentment	(4) Authoritarianism	(5) All
Christian nat.		0.104***			0.087***
		(0.011)			(0.021)
Racial resent.			0.383***		0.330***
			(0.030)		(0.054)
Authoritarianism				0.037	0.003
				(0.026)	(0.026)
Attendance	-0.006	-0.043***	-0.002	-0.026	-0.046*
	(0.010)	(0.011)	(0.010)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Evangelical ID	-0.112*	0.028	-0.105	-0.291**	-0.121
	(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.054)	(0.108)	(0.110)
Party ID	0.130***	0.112***	0.085***	0.099***	0.071**
	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.016)	(0.028)	(0.027)
Ideology	0.249***	0.173***	0.175***	0.218***	0.070
	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.022)	(0.040)	(0.044)
White race	-0.078	0.003	-0.125*	-0.195	-0.221
	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.064)	(0.120)	(0.118)
Income	-0.023*	-0.019	-0.018	-0.024	-0.012
	(0.011)	(0.012)	(0.011)	(0.020)	(0.019)
Education	-0.077***	-0.054***	-0.048***	-0.065***	-0.030
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.016)	(0.017)
Age	0.013***	0.011***	0.011***	0.012***	0.010***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.001)	(0.003)	(0.003)
Female	0.076	0.020	0.056	0.027	0.021
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.089)	(0.086)
Constant	2.442***	1.523***	2.027***	2.971***	1.802***
	(0.231)	(0.253)	(0.225)	(0.438)	(0.457)
Observations	1,540	1,471	1,516	475	447
R-squared	0.377	0.411	0.435	0.345	0.436

Table 3: Effect on Preference for Law and Order

VARIABLES	(1) Base	(2) Christian Nationalism	(3) Racial Resentment	(4) Authoritarianism	(5) All
Christian nat.		0.271***			0.160*
		(0.042)			(0.067)
Racial resent.			1.045***		0.983***
			(0.111)		(0.165)
Authoritarianism				0.195**	0.160*
				(0.075)	(0.078)
Attendance	0.024	-0.078	0.044	0.007	-0.022
	(0.035)	(0.040)	(0.038)	(0.052)	(0.062)
Evangelical ID	-0.048	0.232	-0.127	-0.113	0.099
	(0.193)	(0.203)	(0.210)	(0.295)	(0.340)
Party ID	0.371***	0.348***	0.307***	0.342***	0.325***
	(0.053)	(0.056)	(0.060)	(0.077)	(0.089)
Ideology	0.532***	0.378***	0.360***	0.534***	0.210
	(0.080)	(0.086)	(0.089)	(0.117)	(0.138)
White race	0.126	0.353	-0.088	0.735	0.547
	(0.246)	(0.253)	(0.271)	(0.383)	(0.417)
Income	-0.111**	-0.097**	-0.097*	-0.106*	-0.093
	(0.036)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.053)	(0.058)
Education	-0.103**	-0.054	-0.042	-0.062	-0.000
	(0.032)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.047)	(0.051)
Age	0.012*	0.007	0.006	0.013	0.010
	(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.008)	(0.009)
Sex	-0.151	-0.213	-0.189	-0.069	-0.111
	(0.176)	(0.183)	(0.192)	(0.255)	(0.283)
Constant	-1.842*	-4.409***	-2.962***	-3.723**	-6.080***
	(0.763)	(0.893)	(0.830)	(1.253)	(1.473)
Observations	962	954	949	457	447

Table 4: Effect on Probability of voting for Trump in 2016

VARIABLES	(1) Base	(2) Christian Nationalism	(3) Racial Resentment	(4) Authoritarianism	(5) All
Christian nat.		0.136***			0.167**
		(0.028)			(0.051)
Racial resent.			0.369***		0.211
			(0.084)		(0.123)
Authoritarianism				-0.021	-0.018
				(0.040)	(0.059)
Attendance	0.023	-0.021	0.039	0.022	-0.034
	(0.023)	(0.026)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.047)
Evangelical ID	-0.224	-0.019	-0.082	-0.310	0.076
	(0.128)	(0.140)	(0.161)	(0.162)	(0.259)
Party ID	0.686***	0.673***	0.624***	0.682***	0.585***
	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.067)
Ideology	0.634***	0.553***	0.598***	0.611***	0.484***
	(0.051)	(0.057)	(0.069)	(0.061)	(0.104)
White race	1.115***	1.151***	0.710**	1.150***	0.744*
	(0.208)	(0.219)	(0.241)	(0.262)	(0.352)
Income	0.105***	0.098**	0.142***	0.056	0.055
	(0.030)	(0.032)	(0.040)	(0.034)	(0.049)
Education	-0.030	-0.013	-0.026	-0.016	0.009
	(0.023)	(0.025)	(0.029)	(0.029)	(0.043)
Age	0.036***	0.034***	0.037***	0.033***	0.032***
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Female	-0.027	-0.128	0.039	-0.087	0.025
	(0.117)	(0.125)	(0.144)	(0.144)	(0.213)
Constant	-9.616***	-10.588***	-10.414***	-8.645***	-10.078***
	(0.647)	(0.731)	(0.826)	(0.804)	(1.253)
Observations	3,271	3,002	2,156	2,099	944

Overview of Chapters

Abdelal et al. (2006) present a framework for research about identities, organizing research agendas by topics, among which are research about constitutive norms, relational comparisons, and cognitive models. This dissertation explores the construction of Christian nationalist identities through three chapters, each of which investigates Christian nationalism through one of the planks of Abdelal's framework. Constitutive norms are the rules that set the boundaries around group membership, that determine the characteristics that differentiate ingroup from outgroup members. To what extent are the constitutive norms of Christian nationalists different from secular patriotic groups and Christian non-nationalist groups? Relational comparisons glean information about identities by studying how members of one identity group compare themselves to outgroups. Does the demographic growth of racial and religious outgroups affect support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of group discrimination among White Christians, and how do the effects of religious and racial demographic change differ? Finally, cognitive models are the worldviews that help people understand the world and orient themselves towards issues. Why is support for Christian nationalism, an ideology correlated with racist attitudes, so strongly supported among Black Americans?

Chapter Two reports the results of a content analysis of sampled Facebook posts from 2019 representing three different types of groups: Christian nationalists, Christian non-nationalists, and patriotic groups. First, it compares the topics of posts, which define which issues are important to the group. The topics addressed vary widely between the three group types, indicating that Facebook posts reflect the stereotypes of group identities The emotional

content of Facebook post language is also evaluated, since emotion language provides further information to group members about how prototypical members interpret events. For example, should group members feel angry about the outcome of a particular court case, or fearful, or enthusiastic? The answer to this question tells group members not just what topics are important, but also the direction of how events should be evaluated. Again, groups differ in the types of emotion language that dominate posts, with Christian nationalists being most likely to express fear. Finally, the chapter uses reader response emojis to evaluate how group members respond to the topics and emotional content of Facebook posts. While stereotypical topics are not associated with more reactions, emotion language does correlate with the emotions expressed from readers through emoji reactions. Facebook communications provide insight into the worldviews for these identity groups, indicating that Christian nationalism cannot be conflated with patriotism or Christian groups at large. Rather, Christian nationalists have distinct norms, including a distinct use of emotion language to communicate how Christian nationalists feel about particular issues.

Chapter Three reports the results of a survey experiment in which respondents are provided with either a graph showing that non-Whites will become the majority in the US, a graph showing that non-Christians will become the majority in the US, or a control graph. Respondents presented with the racial demographic change graph do not report shifts in emotional response to the graph, support for Christian nationalism, or perceptions of discrimination against Whites or Christians, relative to the control group. Those respondents who were presented with information about religious demographic change, though, did feel disgust, anger, fear, and worry about pending change. Support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination were mediated by feelings of disgust. This analysis

of relational comparisons shows that Christian nationalism is not simply racism covered by a cross. Rather, the outgroup most likely to generate strong emotional reactions and the fusion of national and religious identities is non-Christians, who are seen as a threat.

Chapter Four argues that Black support for Christian nationalism is identity management. A sense of belonging to a national community is valued, but Black Americans are not considered prototypical Americans on account of their race. By emphasizing a different aspect of their identities—their identity as Christians—Black Christian Americans emphasize that they are indeed Americans. An analysis of survey data reveals that the more Black Americans see Christians as typical Americans, compared to Black Americans, the more they affirm the tenets of Christian nationalism. A series of interviews with Black Americans reveals a similar pattern. Participants who felt that they were excluded from American identity on account of their race were more likely to express support for Christian nationalism. For these participants, the application of Christian values to government means the application of the values of equality and racial justice. For Black supporters, Christian nationalism provides a cognitive model of American identity that is more inclusive and centers values that advance social justice.

All in all, the chapters point to the continued significance of religion in American public life. Instead of fading as a larger share of the United States population moves away from strong religious identities and frequent religious behaviors, secularization has highlighted the role of religious nationalism in the form of Christian nationalism as a social demarcation. While other social cleavages, namely race, continue to exert a strong influence over attitudes and to shape the expression of Christian nationalism, the religious identity aspect of Christian nationalism persists. This dissertation argues that religious identities that claim a privileged place in the nation are associated with strong emotions, heightening their influence over attitudes, and

making Christian nationalism an important topic of study for social scientists. It is notable that Christian nationalist commitments need not always track with intolerance and authoritarianism. In particular, Black Christian nationalists model a path by which an America inspired by religious tenets can be a more inclusive country. Which perspective will hold sway in the future remains to be seen.

Chapter Two: Words and Attitudes of the Heart: The Emotional Content of Christian Nationalist Communications

Introduction

In a 1994 speech, Pastor D. James Kennedy said:

> Our job is to reclaim America for Christ, whatever the cost. As the vice regents of God, we are to exercise godly dominion and influence over our neighborhoods, our schools, our government, our literature and arts, our sports arenas, our entertainment media, our news media, our scientific endeavors—in short, over every aspect and institution of human society (Kennedy 2010, 127).

The idea that the United States is or should be a Christian country guided by Christian principles, also known as Christian nationalism, is a popular one in the United States (Whitehead and Perry 2020). This understanding of American identity structures public opinion on a range of issues (Davis 2019; Goldberg 2021; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011; Shortle and Gaddie 2015; Whitehead and Perry 2015). While some of these ideas are rooted in previous eras of American history (Fea 2018; Gorski 2017; 2020), what "godly dominion" looks like in any particular time or in response to any particular scenario is not clear. After all, what Christian principles should guide government responses to a public health emergency? The freedom of individuals to make their own risk assessments of in-person contact in a worship service? Or submission to expertise and government authority, coupled with sacrifice for the well-being of the community? As a multivocal text and diverse tradition, the Bible and Christianity offer numerous, often contradictory lenses through which to view contemporary issues. How is the average Christian nationalist to inform their opinions?

I wish to extend special thanks to Holly Rains for her coding assistance for this project.

Christian nationalism is an important aspect of the Religious Right, a network of non-governmental organizations, lobbying groups, and activists (Goldberg 2006; Wilcox and Robinson 2011). One of the tasks these elites undertake is education and mobilization of the masses, defining for the public the priorities and preferences of a Christian America. This information is shared in many ways, but for day-to-day news, social media has become an important means through which Christian nationalist elites connect with the public (Butler 2006; Freire 2014). On a day-to-day basis, what are Christian nationalist elites signaling? What topics are most important to Christian nationalists, and how are Christian nationalist elites communicating their emotional responses to the events of the day? How are readers of Christian nationalist messages responding? And to what extent are any of these features unique to Christian nationalism, and not a function of the religious or patriotic elements of the group?

This chapter explores Christian nationalist social media messaging through a content analysis of Facebook posts from 2019. It compares the posts of Christian nationalist groups to Christian non-nationalist and patriotic groups, finding that Christian nationalist social media messaging is distinct both in terms of the topics of interest but also in terms of the emotion communicated through posts. Moreover, this chapter finds that readers are responsive to the emotional content of messages, and that Christian nationalist readers are particularly reactive.

Religious and Cultural Communication

In 1960, Klapper declared that communication produces, at best, minimal effects (Klapper 1960). In the years since, research has demonstrated that communication can influence opinion in significant ways, although effect size, causal mechanism, and moderating factors are vigorously debated (Kinder 2003; Tesler and Zaller 2017). In the field of religion and politics,

most work on communication effects has centered on the influence of the local pastor, finding, in agreement with Klapper, limited effects (Djupe and Calfano 2019). Not only are most pastors hesitant to engage in politicking from the pulpit (McDaniel 2009; Olson 2000), but the one-hour-a-week sermon has a brief half-life (McClendon and Riedl 2019).

Instead, the congregational context and influence of lay leaders have emerged as more important shapers of opinion in the pews (Bean 2016; Djupe and Gilbert 2008). However, these explanations do not provide much leverage for understanding similarities across congregations, many of which lack the structure of a denomination (in the case of non-denominational churches) or are situated in denominations divided by the issues of the day (Crary 2021; Gordon 2020; Sherwood 2021).

Transcending individual congregations and denominations is a larger evangelical sub-culture, consisting of merchandising, publishing houses, music labels, radio stations, celebrity pastors, and interest groups. This evangelical sub-culture helps "individuals form bonds with other like-minded consumers, and these affinities form the basis of a shared cultural identity" as the "evangelical marketplace itself helps define who is inside and who is outside" (Kobes du Mez 2020, 9). This shared cultural identity is not simply based on religious identity, but uses the fusion of religious and national identities to lay claim to privileged status within the body politic (Gryzmała-Busse 2015; Whitehead and Perry 2020). There have emerged a handful of organizations and individuals who are significant influencers in this sub-culture (Goldberg 2006).

Despite increased attention to the role of Christian nationalism in shaping attitudes and behaviors towards issues ranging from conspiracy thinking to criminal justice reform to vote choice to public health behaviors (Davis 2018; Djupe and Dennen 2021; Perry, Whitehead, and

Grubbs 2020a; Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018), to date there has not been any examination of the communications content of influential movement leaders, nor of its effect on communications consumers. Moreover, much of the work on Christian nationalist elites is confined to those elites themselves (Fea 2018; Kobes du Mez 2020; K. Stewart 2020); the lack of comparison groups complicates efforts to draw clear causal connections between Christian nationalism itself and the outcomes of interest, as other elements of communication, such as the religious content of communication or moralistic frames, may contribute to attitude formation (Clifford 2019; Garrett and Bankert 2020). Finally, emotional content plays a significant role in elucidating the frame of mind of communications' authors and in shaping audience responses and subsequent opinion and behavior (Brader 2006; Brader, Valentino, and Suhay 2008; Valentino et al. 2011), yet there has, to date, been no analysis of the emotional content of Christian nationalist communication.

While much religious communication occurs through more traditional channels, such as talk radio, books, or religious television programming, social media serves an increasingly important role. Traditional Christian religious authority was vested in local clergy or members of the denominational hierarchy, but the Internet has ushered in an era in which traditional authority is challenged. Through social media, both traditional religious authority and alternative religious voices can develop a following, create community, and engage in dialog with followers (H. A. Campbell 2017). Religious discussions on social media are commonplace, especially for White evangelical and Black Protestants, and complements consumption of other religious media (Pew Research Center 2014), and traffic to religious sites is often driven by a desire to access faith-based information, particularly on Facebook (Brubaker and Haigh 2017).

Communication, Shared Identity, and Hypotheses

It is often assumed that religious groups are other-worldly focused, but in fact religious individuals and groups operate in ways that generate here-and-now benefits for themselves and attempt to provide benefits to supporters. In their analysis of the use of Twitter by influential evangelical leaders, Burge and Williams find that accounts use Twitter in ways that develop the "personal brand" of the owner (Burge and Williams 2019). Moreover, Christian organizations use social media communications in ways that are sensitive to their intended audience, reflecting the strategic underpinnings of religious communications (Wilson and Djupe 2020). Like non-religious groups, religious groups' communication seeks to recruit and maintain membership (Gray and Lowery 1996; Salisbury 1969).

One way in which groups seek to achieve influence over their membership is by cultivating identities. In his study of the National Rifle Association communication's influence, Lacombe argues that "[a] politicized group identity enhances a group's ability to influence politics via outside lobbying by increasing the political salience and intensity of emotions held among group members, make it easier to mobilize them to engage in various forms of political participation" (Lacombe 2019). Religious communications also contribute to identity cultivation by linking in-groups and out-groups with norms and stereotypes (C. Hughes 2020). For example, interest groups that are associated with an identity signal which political values and positions are important for in-group members to hold and which other groups are allies or foes through their communications with the public (Rothschild 2020). In her ethnography of American evangelical churches, Bean describes how issue positions on topics like abortion are used as markers of identity (2016).

Christian nationalist rhetoric has long focused on issues related to the family and gender (Kobes du Mez 2020). In particular, abortion has emerged as the most important issue in politics

among the Religious Right, which has considerable overlap with Christian nationalism (R. T. Hughes 2012; McCrummen 2021). During the 1990s, rising acceptance of same-sex marriage led the issue to become more important to Christian nationalists, who argued that the strength of the nation was dependent on the one-man-one-woman marriage model (Whitehead and Perry 2015). Transgender issues remain central to Christian nationalist lobbying efforts (Gabbatt 2021). Finally, religious liberty has emerged as a central frame, either on its own or when applied to other issues, as in the Supreme Court case *Masterpiece Cakeshop, Ltd. V. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* (Lewis 2017). Information consumers gravitate toward information that is consonant with their pre-existing beliefs and identities (Iyengar and Hahn 2009) and use media consumption to strengthen their identities and respond to identity threat (Long, Eveland, and Slater 2019). For Christian non-nationalists, stereotypical issues include immigration and racial and economic justice (Nast 2020; Stanton 2021; Wallis 2016; 2006).

> Hypothesis 1: Christian nationalists' posts will have a heavier focus on abortion, LGBT issues, and religious liberty relative to Christian non-nationalists' posts. Christian non-nationalists' posts will focus on race, immigration, and economics relative to Christian nationalists' posts.
>
> Hypothesis 2: Readers will be more likely to engage with posts about the group's stereotypical topic areas.

Communications can not only build social identities, but also influence the emotions experienced by group members. Once individuals identify as part of a group, they begin to experience emotional reactions on the basis of their social identities (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005; Mackie, Smith, and Ray 2008). There are three main emotions that are most commonly assessed in religion in communication: anxiety, anger, and disgust. Anxiety is a response to situations that seem uncertain or dangerous, like outbreaks of disease , terrorist attacks, or other events that are perceived to be life-threatening (Brader, Groenendyk, and Valentino 2010; Jost et al. 2017).

The threat need not be associated with physical danger; for example, Brader found that images and music in campaign ads can trigger feelings of anxiety (Brader 2006), and Fea argues that the Christian nationalist movement is undergirded by fear (Fea 2018). Anger can result when goals seem to be slipping away but are still in reach, especially when blame can be assigned to another person or when the situation is deemed unfair (Lazarus 1991), or when violations of fairness or care are perceived (Russell and Giner-Sorolla 2011). Disgust is a less commonly studied emotion in political science. However, in psychology, disgust is often studied as an emotional reaction that protects humans from physical danger (for example, from decaying corpses), and more recently the study of disgust has been applied to symbolic or moral contamination, with some attention paid to the special role of disgust for religious individuals (Choma et al. 2016; Djupe et al. 2021; Haider-Markel et al. 2017; Haidt 2012; Miller et al. 2017; Ritter and Preston 2011). Finally, sadness is described as disappointment or a feeling of loss and has been associated with slower cognitive processing, fewer blame attributions, and withdrawal (Brader and Marcus 2013; Kim and Cameron 2011).

As prototypical group members, the elites of organizations communicate their emotions around social identity-related stimuli through their communications. Readers who claim membership in the same social group respond to social identity-related stimuli, as well as take emotional cues from the communications of elites, experiencing their own emotional reactions (Lin and Haridakis 2017). Internet news consumption tends to be well-sorted, with individuals consuming news from like-minded sources (Lin and Haridakis 2017). Homophilic information exposure and consumption should be especially strong on social media sites like Facebook, the algorithms for which funnel users to like-minded pages and in which individuals select pages to follow on a regular basis.

Hypothesis 3: The use of emotion language in posts will vary by group type.

Hypothesis 4: The type of emotion language in posts will vary by topic.

There is reason to believe that Christian nationalists, specifically, experience group emotions, such as a sense of threat (E. Green 2017; Piacenza and Jones 2017). For example, the American Center for Law and Justice, headed by Jay Sekulow and one of the leading Christian nationalist legal advocacy firms, publicized their petition on their Facebook page on May 10, 2020. It states, "The Left is criminalizing the execution of the U.S. Constitution. The Deep State is undermining the rule of law and the conservative agenda. This is a constitutional moment for the American people. It's a really big deal. It puts our republic at risk" (American Center for Law and Justice 2019). Posts like these communicate that there is an in-group (Christians, whose norms include being politically conservative and true Americans/constitutionalists) and an out-group (the Left, the Deep State) that poses an existential threat of values to the nation (Bean 2016). It is probable that appeals like these lead to an emotional reaction, not because the average petition-signer is concerned that they will end up in court against the Deep State, but because the average petition-signer feels that there is a threat to their national, religious, and partisan group (with these 3 identities having been largely fused together for those in the Christian nationalist movement). Social Identity Complexity Theory would lead us to expect that these overlapping identities would lead to particularly strong effects (Roccas and Brewer 2002), especially as these identities are supported by strong organizational structures (Wilcox and Robinson 2011). On the other hand, Christian non-nationalists are not as well-organized and experience more cross-cutting cleavages (Sitman 2021), which should dampen group emotional responses.

Hypothesis 5: Emotion language in posts will correlate with reader reactions.

Hypothesis 5a: All negative emotions will be negatively correlated with love emoji reactions.

Hypothesis 5b: Anger language will be positively correlated with angry emoji reactions.

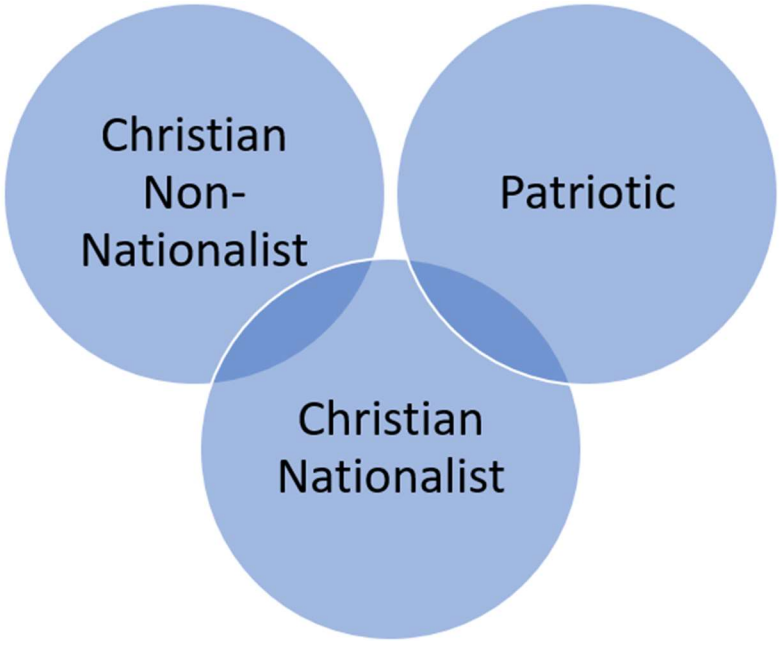
Hypothesis 5c: Sad language will be positively correlated with sad emoji reactions.

Hypothesis 5d: Readers of Christian nationalist posts will have stronger reactions to emotion language than readers of Christian non-nationalist posts.

Method

Content analysis provides a set of tools for characterizing message content, making inferences about message senders, and capturing reader response (Berelson 1952). I utilized Facebook posts because Facebook is the largest social media platform and almost all organizations and individuals identified as central to the Christian nationalist movement use it as an informational and mobilizational tool, as evidenced by their robust presence on their social media sites. I compared three types of organizations: Christian nationalists, Christian non-nationalists, and secular patriotic groups. Christian non-nationalist and patriotic groups were selected as comparison groups because they share important overlap with Christian nationalist groups. Both Christian nationalist and Christian non-nationalist groups are religio-political groups in which political attitudes are an important part of religious group identity. Christian nationalist groups often present themselves as simply being patriotic and proud of their American identity. A two-stage sampling strategy is used to identify (1) individuals and organizations that are prototypical of Christian nationalism and Christian non-nationalism; and (2) the specific texts to be analyzed.

Figure 2: Venn Diagram of Group Types



To identify prototypical Christian nationalist organizations, I turned to The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism, in which Katherine Stewart identifies the major Christian nationalist organizations shaping the movement (2020). These include think tanks that provide the ideological basis for the movement (WallBuilders, Chalcedon, Falkirk Center, and Family Research Council), legal advocacy firms (Alliance Defending Freedom, American Center for Law and Justice), and explicitly political organizations (Capital Ministries and Faith and Freedom Coalition). In Believe Me: The Evangelical Road to Donald Trump, John Fea developed the concept of the court evangelical, a religious leader who draws close to the presidency to maximize political power (Fea 2018). His book and blog highlighted the activities of court evangelicals, providing a sampling frame of powerful evangelical elite individuals. Among the names most frequently mentioned are Eric Metexas,

Franklin Graham, Ralph Reed, and Robert Jeffress. All of these individuals and organizations have active public Facebook accounts.

To identify Christian non-nationalists, I turned to the principal supporters of the organization Christians against Christian Nationalism and to an open letter "Against the New Nationalism", published in Commonweal (*Commonweal* 2019). Many of the signers were professors; since I am interested in the effects of messages on public opinion, I did not include them if they did not also have a strong public presence through Facebook or other media outlets. Christian non-nationalist organizations included in the sample are legal organizations (Americans United for the Separation of Church and State), political organizations (Faith in Public Life, the Friends Committee on National Legislation, and the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty), think tank-type organizations (Red Letter Christians, Sojourners, National Council of Churches, Bonhoeffer Institute, Faithful America, and EthicsDaily), and prominent individuals (William J. Barber, Dr. Cornel West, Elizabeth Eaton, Michael Curry, Sister Simone Campbell, and Russell Moore).

To identify patriotic groups, I turned to the U.S. Code, Title 36: Patriotic and National Observances, Ceremonies, and Organizations ("U.S. Code: Title 36. PATRIOTIC AND NATIONAL OBSERVANCES, CEREMONIES, AND ORGANIZATIONS" n.d., 36). I eliminated the organizations that specified religious orientations, age of membership, or occupational group. Of the remaining groups, I identified the groups that would have broad reach, resulting in the selection of American Gold Star Mothers, the Congressional Medal of Honor Society, Daughters of the American Revolution, and Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Having identified the organizations and individuals most representative of the Christian nationalist and non-Christian nationalist leadership, I used *CrowdTangle*[2] to cull all posts from each of these pages from 2019, resulting in a population of 25,933 posts (CrowdTangle Team 2021). I randomly sampled 1,600 posts, deleting any duplicates for a final sample of 1,558 posts. 2019 was selected as the year for analysis because it was prior to the 2020 election cycle and Covid-19 pandemic, both of which events would likely shift emotional language and response, thereby limiting the generalizability of the project.

After the posts were sampled, common stop words, punctuation, and capitalization were removed. The NRC Emotion Lexicon was then applied to the resulting list of words, providing a count of each type of emotion word (anger, anxiety/fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, disgust) used in each post. The NRC Emotion lexicon is based on Plutchik's theory of emotions; was developed and tested through crowdsourcing; and has become a well-established lexicon for emotions research (Plutchik 1980; Mohammad and Turney 2010). The word counts were then converted into percentages such that the emotion scores represent the percent of emotion words comprised of each emotion.

I also wanted to measure reader reactions. First, I needed a measure of the quantity of reader reactions. When readers scroll through their Facebook feeds, posts that capture their attention are most likely to receive some kind of emoji response ("Like", "Angry", "Love", etc.) as an interaction. I could not just use the raw number of interactions, though. The number of interactions would be dependent on the number of followers (groups with more followers would get more interactions, regardless of the post content), so I needed to create a measure for

[2] *CrowdTangle* is a service provided by Facebook for researchers. It allows researchers to identify pages they are interested in and provides a database of posts from selected pages, along with a myriad of metrics like the number of comments.

interactions that took into account the number of followers for each group. The dataset from *CrowdTangle* was incomplete on the number of followers at posting, missing some measures seemingly at random. For each organization, I found the average number of followers over 2019, and then created a measure of interactions that was: total interactions / mean number of page followers. This measure should provide an indication of which posts are getting more or fewer interactions, taking audience size into account. *CrowdTangle* did not have any measures of number of followers for the following pages: Gold Star Mothers, the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, Capitol Ministries, Congressional Medal of Honor, Falkirk Center, Sojourners, Bonhoeffer, Elizabeth Eaton, and Ralph Reed. 3% of Christian nationalist pages lacked followers at posting data, 34% of patriotic groups lacked followers at posting data, and 8% of Christian non-nationalist pages lacked followers at posting data. Due to the number of patriotic groups missing total group follower data, I have not compared included patriotic groups in comparisons of reader interaction quantity.

CrowdTangle also provided data on readers' emoji reactions (Like, Love, Sad, Angry, Haha, Care, Wow). "Like" was the most common reaction by far, its meaning is ambiguous (Tran et al. 2018). Some readers click "Like" to acknowledge the post, others to signal agreement. Consistent with other analysis (Eberl et al. 2020), I have not included "Like" emoji reactions in my analysis as a marker for any particular kind of emotion. Using the remaining emoji reactions, I calculated the share of reader emoji reactions for each emoji type. For example, if a post has an angry reader emoji score of 37, 37% of the reader emoji reactions were Angry.

Posts were also coded by topic. Topics in some posts were intertwined in such a way that coding for only one topic would lead to unreliable and misleading results. For example, there

was a series of posts about whether religious health care providers should be required to provide contraception that they believe cause abortion and thereby violate their religious beliefs. These posts are about abortion but presented in a religious liberty frame. I decided to allow up to 2 codes for each post. Of the 1,382 posts with emotion posts, 319 received 2 codes. As a check on topic coding, a second coder was given a random sample of 175 posts (over 10% of the sample) and asked to code them by topic using a codebook provided by the author. The codes allocated were identical 74.3% of the time, an acceptable level of intercoder reliability (Neuendorf 2017).

Finally, posts were also coded for partisan references. I created a dummy for any mention of President Trump (including the words "Trump" or "president" if used in references to President Trump); a dummy for mentions of non-Trump Republican politicians and politics (including specific politicians like McConnell, "conservative" in reference to political ideology, or "Republican" in reference to the political party); and a dummy for mentions of Democratic politicians and politics (such as individuals like Pelosi or Biden, "Democrat" in reference to the political party, or "liberal" in reference to the political ideology).

Findings

Stereotypicality and Topic Analysis

Hypotheses 1 and 2 concerned the topics an organization would post about and reader response, arguing that topics more central to a Christian nationalist identity would appear in posts more often and would lead to more reader response. Table 5 presents the topics that were coded, providing the percent of posts falling into each category. Because some posts address multiple topics, the percentages for each organization will not sum to 100. Inspirational posts are the most common topic for all groups. These posts may provide a Bible verse, a tribute to an

inspiring person, or a motivational comment, but they do not contain political content. This finding is consistent with other studies that have found that even politically-active religious actors retain a focus on religious (or, in the case of patriotic groups, generally inspiring) topics (Burge and Williams 2019; McDaniel 2009). Announcements (such as advertisements for book sales or notices about upcoming streamed worship services) constituted the other important non-political category for all groups. But then the topics groups posted on diverged significantly. Among Christian nationalists, the most common political topics were religious liberty (15.14%), abortion (14.46%), and ideologies and political behavior (explicit endorsement of ideological thinking or political mobilization) (12.69%). LGBT-related posts constituted 5.32% of posts, a significant number, but reflecting the declining focus on LGBT issues since *Obergefell*.

The distribution of topics for the Christian non-nationalist pages also points toward confirmation of the theory that communications stress stereotypical topics. Inspiration posts and announcements again constitute a large percentage of the posts (21.89% and 14.41%, respectively). Very few of the posts focus on abortion or religious liberty, suggesting that Christian non-nationalists have their own agendas and are not simply responding to Christian nationalists or the Religious Right. Race and ethnicity posts are the most common political post (15.25% of all posts), with immigration being the second most common topic (10.17%). Economics-related posts are 6.64% of the total. Other important topics are ideologies/political behavior and international issues. For patriotic groups, military affairs topics are most common (13.68% of posts). Instead of simply responding to each other, each group is emphasizing the topics it feels are central to its own identity, as expected by Hypothesis 1.

Table 5: Percent of posts addressing each topic, by organization type

	Christian nationalists	Patriotic	Christian non-nationalists
Abortion	**106** **14.46%**	0 0.00%	3 0.42%
Race and Ethnicity	11 1.50%	0 0.00%	**108** **15.25%**
Immigration	7 0.95%	0 0.00%	**72** **10.17%**
Military Affairs	6 0.82%	**16** **13.68%**	2 0.28%
Criminal Justice	5 0.68%	0 0.00%	34 4.80%
Education	31 4.23%	0 0.00	11 1.55%
Economics	5 0.68%	0 0.00%	**47** **6.64%**
Ideologies and Political Behavior	**93** **12.69%**	3 2.56%	**47** **6.64%**
International issues	**63** **8.59%**	0 0.00%	**45** **6.36%**
Women	6 0.82%	0 0.00%	26 3.67%
Announcements	**165** **22.51%**	**31** **26.50%**	**102** **14.41%**
Institutions	22 3.00%	0 0.00%	22 3.11%
Health Care	3 0.41%	2 1.71%	6 0.85%
Religious Liberty	**111** **15.14%**	0 0.00%	35 4.94%C[3]
LGBT Issues	**39** **5.32%**	0 0.00%	26 3.67%
Environment	1 0.14%	0 0.00%	29 4.10%
Guns	8 1.09%	0 0.00%	21 2.97%
Inspiration	**226** **30.83%**	**68** **58.12%**	**155** **21.89%**
Evolution/Science	5 .068%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%

[3] Religious liberty fell just short of the 5% threshold for Christian non-nationalist organizations. However, it is a central topic for understanding how religious organizations are framing issues, so I included it as a topic of consideration so that I can compare Christian nationalist to Christian non-nationalist posts.

There is a similar pattern for the quantity of reader responses.

Table 6 shows the correlation between topic and quantity of reader interaction (as a percent of total followers). For Christian nationalists, few topics are strongly correlated with quantity of interactions. Contrary to expectations, none of the stereotypical political topics are associated with increased engagement. In fact, religious liberty posts receive fewer reader interactions. Instead, for Christian nationalists, posts explicitly addressing ideology or political behavior generate a higher rate of interaction. For Christian non-nationalists, non-political posts (announcements, inspiration) were correlated with fewer reader interactions, consistent with prior literature linking moralized politics with increased engagement and polarization (Clifford 2019). Immigration, a stereotypical topic, is associated with increased engagement, as predicted. This evidence does not provide strong support for Hypothesis 2, indicating that readers are not consistently choosing to interact with posts on the basis of the post's topic alone.

Table 6: Correlation of topic with reader interaction quantity, by organization type

	Christian Nationalist	Christian Non-Nationalist
Abortion	-0.054 (0.151)	-0.022 (0.564)
Inspiration	0.004 (0.913)	**-0.106 (0.007)**
Guns	0.066 (0.080)	-0.039 (0.324)
Environment	0.013 (0.727)	-0.052 (0.191)
LGBT	-0.034 (0.365)	**0.128 (0.001)**
Immigration	-0.038 (0.316)	**0.216 (0.000)**
Religious Liberty	**-0.131 (0.000)**	-0.046 (0.247)
Race and Ethnicity	-0.011 (0.774)	0.045 (0.252)
Health Care	-0.021 (0.581)	-0.034 (0.386)
Institutions	0.057 (0.126)	0.063 (0.111)
Announcements	**-0.127 (0.001)**	**-0.100 (0.011)**
Women	-0.020 (0.594)	-0.055 (0.160)
Economics	-0.007 (0.846)	0.069 (0.079)
International	-0.050 (0.179)	-0.071 (0.071)
Ideologies	**0.143 (0.000)**	0.001 (0.867)
Science	-0.000 (0.996)	No observations
Military	-0.035 (0.350)	-0.023 (0.561)
Education	0.000 (0.999)	0.005 (0.898)
Criminal Justice	-0.015 (0.695)	0.000 (0.998)

Note: Confidence levels in parentheses.

Emotion as Signaled in Posts

Hypothesis 3 concerns the use of emotion language in posts, arguing that different types of organizations should manifest different emotional profiles. Figure 3 shows the percent of each kind of emotion language found in posts. The mean of sadness language is not significantly different across the groups. Disgust language comprises 5.52% and 4.80% of Christian nationalist and Christian non-nationalist emotion language, respectively. Disgust language comprises on 2.47% of emotion language in patriotic groups, and the difference between patriotic groups on one hand, and the two religious groups on the other, is statistically-significant.

The groups also differ in their use of fear language. 14.16% of Christian nationalists' emotion language reflects fear, compared to 10.76% for patriotic groups and 11.43% for

Christian non-nationalist groups. T-tests show that Christian nationalists use significantly more fear language than Christian non-nationalists ($p=0.003$) and patriotic groups ($p=0.042$), providing support for the argument that Christian nationalist elites communicate fear at a high rate.

This data allows for ranking the types of emotions communicated by each group. Table 7 shows that, of these three emotions, Christian nationalist posts utilize fear language more than anger language, which is more common than disgust language. T-tests indicate that fear language is greater than anger language ($t=9.401$, $p=0.000$), fear language is greater than disgust language ($t=12.349$, $p=0.000$), and anger language is greater than disgust language ($t=3.916$, $p=0.000$). Sadness language is not statistically indistinguishable from anger or disgust but is less than fear language ($t=10.334$, $p=0.000$).

Finally, Table 8 provides further support that these groups use emotion language differently, comparing Christian nationalist and Christian non-nationalist post to patriotic posts (the reference group). Posts from Christian nationalists and Christian non-nationalists are more likely than patriotic groups to use disgust language. Christian nationalist posts have, on average, 3.457 percentage points more fear language than patriotic posts, and Christian non-nationalist posts have, on average, 4.210 percentage points more anger language than patriotic posts.

Figure 3: Percent of emotion language by organization type

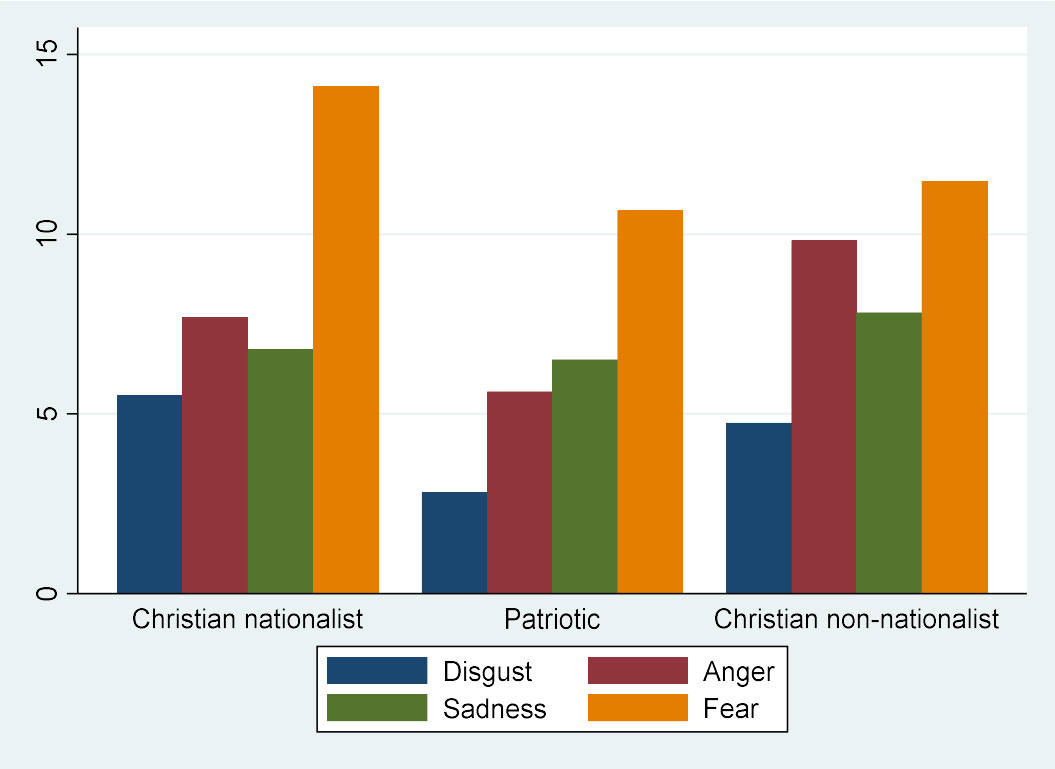


Table 7: Means of percent emotion language by organization type

	Means (Standard error)		
	Christian Nationalist	Patriotic	Christian Non-Nationalist
Disgust	5.516 (0.386)	2.474 (0.637)	4.803 (0.327)
Anger	7.693 (0.457)	5.473 (1.065)	9.826 (0.590)
Fear	14.164 (0.621)	10.762 (1.710)	11.426 (0.604)
Sadness	6.824 (0.446)	6.332 (1.119)	7.820 (0.484)

Table 8: Effect of organization type on emotion language use

	Disgust	Sadness	Fear	Anger

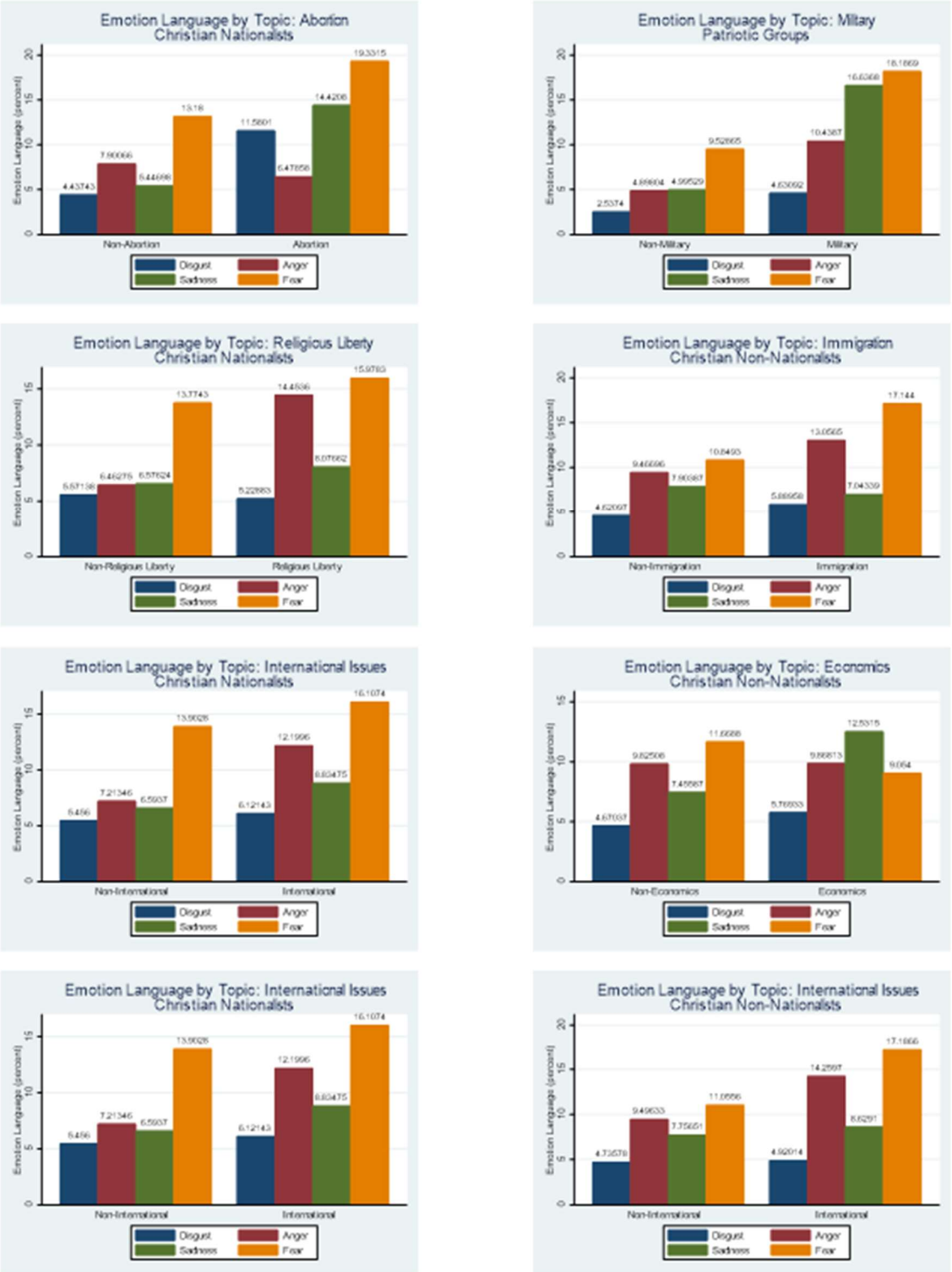
Christian nationalist	2.701** (0.954)	0.297 (1.264)	3.457* (1.680)	2.067 (1.422)
Christian non-nationalist	1.939* (0.953)	1.301 (1.263)	0.828 (1.678)	4.210** (1.421)

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from OLS; standard errors are in parentheses. Patriotic groups are the reference group. Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05)

Hypothesis 4 proposes that the topic should influence the type of emotion language used. I find some support for this hypothesis. Topics that were addressed by at least 5% of posts for each group type are analyzed. First, I conducted t-tests to compare the mean of each kind of emotion language between posts that do and do not discuss a particular topic. For Christian nationalists, there were no statistically significant differences in emotion language for the LGBT and ideology topics; for Christian non-nationalists, there were no statistically significant differences in the race/ethnicity, ideology, and religious liberty topics. The bar graphs presented in Figure 4 show the mean of each type of emotion language, comparing across topics. Christian nationalist posts about abortion use significantly more disgust, sadness, and fear language. Christian nationalist posts about religious liberty and international affairs use significantly more anger language. Patriotic groups' posts about military affairs use significantly more sadness language. Christian non-nationalists' posts about immigration and international affairs use more fear language; posts about economics use more sadness language, and posts about international affairs use more anger language. Otherwise, the differences in type of language use is not statistically-significant. Groups are not using the same type of language when writing about diverse topics, and the topics that are most central to a group's identity (especially abortion for

Christian nationalists) use language that is more emotion-laden than posts that are about other topics.

Figure 4: Emotion language by topic and organization type



These findings are confirmed by a larger OLS regression model that measures the effect of each type of topic while holding all the others constant (presented in

Table **9**). Over the past 40 years, religious groups have sorted along partisan lines, with conservative Christians becoming more affiliated with the Republican Party and the religious left more associated with the Democratic Party (G. Layman 2001; McCarthy, Olson, and Garand 2019). Consequently, the models control for mentions of partisan actors, which on their own may explain emotion language. Because emotion shifted more significantly for Christian nationalists, the model below assesses only Christian nationalist posts. Here, abortion is associated with more disgust language and sadness language, but less anger language. Religious liberty posts were associated with anger language, much more so than fear language. A few of the results for other topics are worthy of mention. Race and ethnicity topics were associated with more disgust, but upon closer examination these posts discuss, with disgust language, instances of racial discrimination. Finally, immigration and economy topics have strong effects on anger and fear, as demonstrated by large coefficients. However, the small number of posts addressing either of these topics should limit our confidence in these results.

Table 9: The effect of topic on emotion language for Christian nationalists

Christian nationalists only	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
VARIABLES	Disgust	Sadness	Anger	Fear	Fear-Anger
Abortion	**7.197*** **	**7.453*** **	**-4.115** **	2.682	**6.797** **
	(1.486)	**(1.720)**	**(1.742)**	(2.381)	**(2.691)**
Guns	-1.702	2.559	1.781	2.489	0.709
	(3.957)	(4.578)	(4.638)	(6.337)	(7.163)
Environment	-4.181	-5.578	-8.239	-11.435	-3.196
	(9.492)	(10.982)	(11.126)	(15.203)	(17.184)
LGBT	-1.495	-2.389	-2.872	-2.157	0.716
	(1.956)	(2.263)	(2.293)	(3.133)	(3.541)
Immigration	-4.163	-0.370	8.110	**22.821*** **	**14.711** *
	(4.330)	(5.010)	(5.075)	**(6.935)**	**(7.839)**
Religious Liberty	0.122	1.107	**5.473*** **	-0.595	**-6.069*** **
	(1.221)	(1.412)	**(1.431)**	(1.955)	**(2.210)**
Race & Ethnicity	**8.117** **	1.726	-1.745	-7.885	-6.140
	(3.148)	(3.642)	(3.690)	(5.042)	(5.699)
Health Care	0.431	1.588	1.914	-5.555	-7.469
	(5.473)	(6.332)	(6.415)	(8.766)	(9.907)
Institutions	2.987	-0.650	3.520	4.060	0.540
	(2.388)	(2.763)	(2.799)	(3.825)	(4.323)
Women	-2.557	-1.759	-1.407	**12.663** *	**14.070** *
	(4.438)	(5.134)	(5.202)	**(7.108)**	**(8.034)**
Economy	1.481	3.115	**-8.984** *	**16.296** **	**25.280*** **
	(4.333)	(5.014)	**(5.079)**	**(6.941)**	**(7.845)**
International	1.408	1.861	0.841	0.048	-0.793
	(1.567)	(1.813)	(1.837)	(2.510)	(2.837)
Ideology	-0.496	-1.668	-2.257	0.037	2.294
	(1.413)	(1.634)	(1.656)	(2.263)	(2.557)
Evolution	-4.331	-6.878	-6.089	-13.558	-7.469
	(5.473)	(6.332)	(6.415)	(8.766)	(9.907)
Military	**8.793** **	-3.247	3.457	**12.682** **	9.226
	(3.870)	(4.477)	(4.536)	**(6.198)**	(7.005)
Education	-0.448	-3.500	-2.245	-2.694	-0.448
	(2.100)	(2.430)	(2.461)	(3.363)	(3.801)
Criminal justice	-0.471	-3.469	9.383*	-2.598	-11.980
	(4.731)	(5.473)	(5.545)	(7.577)	(8.564)
Non-Political	-0.461	**-2.590** *	**-5.612*** **	**-8.329*** **	-2.718
	(1.267)	**(1.466)**	**(1.485)**	**(2.029)**	(2.293)
Democrat mention	**5.113*** **	**3.963** *	3.246	-1.027	-4.273
	(1.907)	**(2.206)**	(2.235)	(3.054)	(3.452)
Trump mention	-0.419	-0.713	**-4.802*** **	**-7.872*** **	-3.070
	(1.466)	(1.696)	**(1.718)**	**(2.348)**	(2.654)
Republican mention	**-5.446** **	-3.816	1.917	-1.849	-3.766
	(2.429)	(2.811)	(2.847)	(3.891)	(4.398)
Constant	4.331***	6.878***	10.255***	17.725***	7.469***
	(1.219)	(1.410)	(1.429)	(1.952)	(2.206)
Observations	634	634	634	634	634
R-squared	0.121	0.118	0.136	0.129	0.086

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from OLS; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05)

Groups create and maintain social media pages to communicate with readers and, if possible, influence readers. From the testing of Hypothesis 2, we learned that there is not a clear connection between the topic of a post and the quantity of reader interactions with the post. Instead of focusing on the topic, Hypothesis 5 projects that the emotion language used by groups will affect the emotional reaction of readers. OLS was used to calculate the effect sizes for each type of language on reader emoji reactions for Christian nationalists and Christian non-nationalists; the results are presented in

Table **10**. First, Hypothesis 5a anticipates that "love" reader emoji reactions will be negatively correlated with all four types of negative emotion language (anger, disgust, fear, and sadness). There is fairly consistent support for this hypothesis. For Christian nationalists, increases in the use of negative language decrease the use of love emojis. For every percent increase in the use of anger language, for example, the percent of emoji responses that are "love" decrease by 0.560. These results are all significant at the .01 or .001 level, and sad language use has a larger effect on "love" reactions than on any other type. For Christian non-nationalists, the use of anger, fear, and sad language also decrease "love" reader reactions. Disgust language does not have a statistically significant effect on "love" emoji reactions. In comparing the two group types, anger does not depress "love" reactions for Christian non-nationalists as much as it does for Christian nationalists—the coefficient for Christian non-nationalists is half the size of the coefficient for Christian non-nationalists. On the other hand, fear language has a larger effect on Christian non-nationalists than it does for Christian nationalists. Disgust language only suppresses "love" reactions for Christian nationalists, and the effect of sad language is only slightly larger for Christian nationalists. These results support the argument that negative emotion language depresses "love" reactions.

Hypothesis 5b argues that anger language should be positively correlated with angry emoji reactions. For Christian nationalists, there is a positive relationship between anger language and angry emoji reactions, and this relationship is statistically significant. However, the three other emotions also contribute to angry emoji reactions, and the effects of disgust and sad language are stronger than that of anger language. For Christian non-nationalists, the sign of the effect of anger language is positive, but the coefficient is small and does not achieve statistical significance. No negative emotion language produces statistically-significant results. Hypothesis 5b is supported for Christian nationalists, but not for Christian non-nationalists.

Hypothesis 5c argues that sad language should be positively correlated with sad emoji reactions. For Christian nationalists, the coefficient for sad language is positive and is statistically significant. Anger and fear language also increase sad emoji reactions, but the coefficient size is smaller than for sad language. For Christian non-nationalists, sad language also produces a statistically-significant and positive effect on sad emoji reactions. Fear language also increases sad emoji reactions, but sad language has a stronger effect. For both Christian nationalists and Christian non-nationalists, then, sad language produces sad reactions.

Finally, Hypothesis 5d predicted that, because Christian nationalists have more overlapping identities than Christian non-nationalists, Christian nationalists should have stronger responses to emotion language than Christian non-nationalists. In terms of the number of results that are statistically significant, there is some support for this hypothesis. Eleven of the coefficients for types of emotion language are statistically significant for Christian nationalists, while only five of the coefficients are significant for Christian non-nationalists. Comparing the models across the two groups, the r-squared value for the Christian nationalist model is larger than the r-squared for the Christian non-nationalist model. For Christian nationalists, emotion

language explains 13.3% of the variance in love emoji reactions; for Christian non-nationalists, emotion language explains 8.8% of the variance. For Christian nationalists, emotion language explains 9.2% of the variance in angry emoji reactions; for Christian non-nationalists, emotion language explains only 1.5% of the variance. And for Christian nationalists, emotion language explains 8.9% of the variance in sad emoji reactions, while for Christian non-nationalists, emotion language explains only 7.2%. Both the larger number of significant results and the larger r-squared values for Christian nationalist models point to stronger reactions among Christian nationalists than Christian non-nationalists.

Table 10: Effect of emotion language on emoji reader reactions, by organization type

	Christian Nationalists			Christian Non-Nationalists		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Language Use	Love Emojis	Angry Emojis	Sad Emojis	Love Emojis	Angry Emojis	Sad Emojis
Anger	-0.560***	0.221**	0.240**	-0.241*	0.060	0.087
	(0.134)	(0.074)	(0.082)	(0.121)	(0.060)	(0.091)
Disgust	-0.455**	0.308***	0.060	0.172	0.088	-0.251
	(0.163)	(0.090)	(0.100)	(0.220)	(0.110)	(0.166)
Fear	-0.297**	0.113*	0.194**	-0.497***	0.105	0.218*
	(0.099)	(0.055)	(0.061)	(0.113)	(0.056)	(0.085)
Sad	-0.658***	0.267***	0.388***	-0.552***	0.041	0.530***
	(0.143)	(0.079)	(0.088)	(0.137)	(0.068)	(0.103)
Constant	79.504***	4.182**	7.249***	75.230***	6.116***	14.193***
	(2.350)	(1.300)	(1.437)	(2.658)	(1.327)	(2.000)
Observations	607	607	607	515	515	515
R-squared	0.133	0.092	0.089	0.088	0.015	0.072

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from OLS; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05)

Conclusion

Messages matter. Social media communications are, in part, about building identities-about signaling the topics that are important to the group and about communicating how group members feel about those topics. The three groups studied here have some elements in common:

Christian nationalist and Christian non-nationalist groups are both religiously-oriented and both engage in discussion of political topics, while Christian nationalist and patriotic groups are both associated with strong support for the United States. However, these groups work to develop distinct identities, focusing their social media presence on stereotypical topics that are unique to each type of group. Christian nationalists post most frequently on abortion, religious liberty, and political ideologies; Christian non-nationalists post on race, ethnicity, immigration, and economic issues, and patriotic groups post on military issues. Moreover, they communicate different emotional profiles. Christian nationalist posts have a higher concentration of fear language, while Christian non-nationalist posts stand out for high levels of anger language. Message topics are also related to the types of emotion language used.

The use of emotion language in turn influences reader reactions. This study did not find evidence that the emotion language used in posts affects the quantity of reader reactions. However, there is evidence that negative emotion language is strongly correlated with fewer "love" reader reactions. The relationship between specific emotions (sad language and sad emoji reactions; anger language and angry emoji reactions) is also present, although other emotion language contributes to these emoji reactions as well. Finally, the relationship between emotion language and reader response is stronger for Christian nationalists than for Christian non-nationalists.

This study illustrates several implications for future research. First, the emotional content of language has distinct profiles, such that emotion language profiles can vary by topic or group type, and different types of emotion language have different effects on readers. Simple valence measures of emotion (positive or negative) are a starting place, but lack the ability to make more nuanced arguments about emotion. Second, comparative perspectives are helpful. Christian

nationalism has become a popular topic over the past few years, but most studies limit their analysis to Christian nationalism itself. Comparing Christian nationalism to other forms of politicized religion (like the religious left) and to groups with a strong nationalistic bent (such as patriotic groups) draws our attention to the unique attributes of Christian nationalism itself. For example, even though past work has drawn attention to punitive attitudes or support for authoritarianism (Gorski 2020; Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2019), both of which are rooted in anger over lost privilege and feelings of persecution, this study finds that anger is actually more prevalent on the Christian left. This draws us back to investigations of how much of Christian nationalist impulses are driven by anger over trespassed symbolic boundaries, and how much by moral certitude that accompanies involvement in a politicized religion.

This study is a first exploration of Christian nationalist social media messaging, and therefore paves the way for future work. Topics were coded by hand, a labor-intensive process that limited sample size, both in terms of the number of posts sampled and the number of groups included in the study. Future work should use computerized topic modeling to identify key topics areas, and a comparison of computerized topic analysis to the more traditional coding approach developed here would be particularly beneficial. Second, while this study focused on negative emotion language, future work should examine the roles of more positive emotion language, such as trust or joy. These positive emotions may play important roles in building communities, especially imagined communities in online spaces, in mobilizing for political action, and in generating interactions with social media posts. Finally, more attention should be paid to religious liberties framings. On the one hand, some research points to the conclusion that religious liberties framings increase tolerance (Lewis 2017), making this communications turn a positive one for promoting intergroup interactions. On the other hand, though, this study finds

that religious liberty topics are associated with anger, and other authors note that feelings of persecution may be contributing to fear and anger among Christian nationalists (Gorski 2020). Future research should use experimental designs to assess how the framing of religious liberties impacts audiences, especially Christian nationalists.

Chapter Three: Facing Exile from the Promised Land? White Christian Responses to Demographic Change

Introduction

During an interview in 2002, John MacArthur, an influential pastor, said:

> What we're seeing in America is depravity bursting through some of the protective fences that we've tried to build around it. We've tried to deal with morality on a cultural basis, on a law basis. We've tried to maintain a Judeo-Christian moral standard in America, and we've been able to do that through the centuries, but as it says in the fourteenth chapter of Acts, "God has allowed all the nations to go their way." […] When Christian influence is strong, it's because there are many Christians. And as the non-Christians begin to outnumber the Christians and as they begin to gain the ascendency and the power and the culture moves away from the Christian beginnings, […t]he seams start to burst and out comes the depravity, and we're seeing that all over everywhere in America (MacArthur 2002).

His words point to a fundamental concern among many in America—the United States has fewer and fewer Christians, and, consequently, Christianity has less of an influence on American life, with disastrous consequences. For Christian nationalists, or those who endorse an ideology that "constructs a conflated view of American identity and religious identity" (Shortle and Gaddie 2015, 440), the decline of American Christianity cannot be separated from the decline of America itself.

At the same time, the United States is becoming more racially diverse, so much so that the US Census predicts that the US will become a majority-minority country by the year 2040 (Frey 2018; 2020). Pointing to strong correlations between attitudes about race and attitudes about a Christian America, some have argued that the rise of the Religious Right and of Christian nationalism are largely about fears of White decline, not Christian decline (Jones 2016).

What emotions are triggered when White Christians become aware of racial and religious demographic shifts, and how do these shifts influence support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of "reverse discrimination" against Christians and Whites? What plays the stronger potential threat role—religious or racial demographic change? This project unpacks these questions through the use of an experiment embedded in a national survey, priming either racial or religious demographic change relative to a control condition. My findings suggest that religious demographic change produces stronger negative emotional reactions, namely disgust and fear, than racial demographic change. These emotional reactions mediate the relationship between religious demographic change and support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of anti-Christian and anti-White discrimination. Conversely, racial demographic change has little discernable direct or indirect impact on Christian nationalism support or perceptions of discrimination.

Literature Review

The predominant argument in the current literature is that Christian nationalism is driven by fear. For example, John Fea, a historian of American religion, writes, "This political playbook [of Religious Right activists and Donald Trump] was written in the 1970s and drew heavily from an even longer history of White evangelical fear. It is a playbook characterized by attempts to "win back" or "restore the culture." It is a playbook grounded in a highly problematic interpretation of the relationship between Christianity and the American founding. It is also a playbook that too often gravitates toward nativism, xenophobia, racism, intolerance, and an unbiblical view of American exceptionalism. It is a playbook that divides rather than unites" (Fea 2018, 6–7). In her history of evangelical masculinity, Kobes du Mez argues that

"[f]rom the Cold War to the present, evangelicals have perceived the American nation as vulnerable", and that the fear experienced by evangelicals contributes to militant expressions of masculinity (2020, 297).

So what are White Christian nationalists afraid of? Traditionally, scholars have argued that White Christian nationalists are concerned about cultural change. During the 1950s, the stamping of the United States with a Judeo-Christian identity was ubiquitous— "In God We Trust" was added to the Pledge of Allegiance, President Eisenhower began Cabinet meetings with silent prayer, and America's religious character was a cherished virtue in the ideological war against Communism (Kruse 2015). The 1960s marked a significant departure, epitomized by Supreme Court decisions making public school prayer and Bible reading unconstitutional. Despite claims that they comprised the Moral Majority, Christians began to feel like a cultural minority under attack from secularism (Smith and Emerson 1998). Rapid secularization has been sensed among the public, and Christians in particular feel that they are becoming a persecuted minority (E. Green 2017; Jones 2016). A vision of the US as a country straying from its Christian heritage continues to be promulgated by mega-church pastors like Robert Jeffress and is a central feature of Christian media (Nelson 2021).

In addition to the role of religious expression in public life, changes to national attitudes around gender and sexuality are also theorized to have contributed to Christian nationalism. Issues of gender and sexuality are often linked to religious concerns (Bjork-James 2021; Whitehead and Perry 2020). In *Jesus and John Wayne*, Kobes du Mez describes a conservative

Christianity that embraces militant masculinity[4], asserting that men should be warriors defending women and the nation, eager for demonstrations of power that would challenge the narrative of the decline of Christianity (2020). Challenges to this worldview, especially on the issues on abortion and same-sex marriage, are seen as persecution and as violations of religious freedom (Lewis 2017).

More recently, scholars have asserted that Christian nationalism is driven by racial attitudes. Some of the earliest Religious Right organizations emerged as a reaction to school desegregation policies, with abortion chosen as a cover for race-related activism (Balmer 2007). Since then, attitudes about race and Christian nationalism remained linked. Support for Christian nationalism predicts support for racially-coded government spending (Davis 2019), opposition to interracial marriage (Perry and Whitehead 2015a), and tolerance for racists (Davis and Perry 2020). Opposition to immigration, an issue that has become increasingly racialized, is also predicted by White Christian nationalism (Edgell and Tranby 2010; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011; Sherkat and Lehman 2018). Some scholars have even argued that White Christian nationalism is not only correlated with negative racial attitudes, but is also a dog-whistle for Whiteness and symbolic racism (Braunstein 2021). Whitehead and Perry write that "[White Christian nationalism] is "Christian" in name, but only as a code of sorts. Much like labels such as "terrorists," "welfare queens," "illegals," and "criminals" become racially-coded dog whistle terms in our political discourse, so has the term "Christian" in the minds of many conservative

[4] Kobes du Mez argues that "in the 1940s and 1950s […] a potent mix of patriarchal "gender traditionalism", militarism, and Christian nationalism coalesced to form the basis of a revitalized evangelical identity" (11). Evangelical leaders have described a nation at risk, from enemies within (feminists, socialists, secularists) and without (Muslims, the Soviet Union) that needs strong men to defend it, even if doing so compromises traditional Christian virtues.

Americans. It stands for "good and decent (white, native-born) citizens."" (Perry and Whitehead 2020c).

The existing literature has made the fusion of religious, racial, and national identities a subject of frequent public discourse. However, the causal mechanisms underlying this fusion remain unclear. Racial and religious demographic change have coincided, making untangling their effects in correlational analyses difficult. Moreover, while qualitative analyses have explored the role of emotion in Christian nationalism using elite discourse (Fea 2018), there have not been any studies of emotional reaction among the general public, or of how those emotional reactions might be responding to demographic shifts.

Theory

One of the most consistent findings in psychology is that individuals divide their social world into groups, compare between groups, and try to elevate the status of their own group in order to build individual self-esteem (Tajfel et al. 1971). Some groups emerge as dominant; in the United States, Whites and Christians have historically been dominant groups, in terms of demography, power, and status as prototypical Americans (Jardina 2019; Joshi 2020; Theiss-Morse 2009). Group status threat occurs when a dominant group senses that it may be losing dominance, and symbolic shifts, such as demographic change, can trigger group status threat (Mutz 2018). In the United States, race is a significant social cleavage such that some Whites (especially White Christians) see rising numbers of non-Whites as a significant threat (Craig and Richeson 2014; Key 1949; Jones 2016). Religion has also been a defining feature of the United States, and Christians, especially White evangelicals, see the rising number of non-Christians as a significant threat (Smith and Emerson 1998; Toqueville 2021). While threat can be along

material lines, symbolic threats, especially those symbolic threats associated with American identity, have become a more significant motivator of attitudes (Edgell and Tranby 2010; Sides, Tesler, and Vavreck 2019).

Historically, Whites and Christians have constituted a numerical majority. However, those trends are shifting. By the year 2040, the United States will be a majority-minority country in which there will be more non-Whites than Whites, and awareness of these demographic shifts has been found to be associated with greater conservatism and more opposition to immigration, attitudes that are in favor of maintaining the history of White dominance (Craig and Richeson 2014; Major, Blodorn, and Major Blascovich 2018; Mutz 2018). At the same time, younger people are de-identifying with Christianity, contributing to a long-term trend of secularization (Hout and Fischer 2014; G. C. Layman et al. 2021; PRRI 2021). Growing numbers of non-Whites and non-Christians challenge the group dominance of White Christians, leading to increased support for ideologies and actions that entrench White and Christian dominance (Blalock 1967; Quillian 1996).

Emotion plays an important role in political attitudes. Even if individuals do not expect to be affected by demographic change, people experience emotional reactions on the basis of their group memberships. When people see themselves as members of a group, "they see the world not in terms of the implications of events and objects for them personally, but in terms of the implications for their ingroup" (Mackie, Smith, and Ray 2008, 1871). White Christians could experience emotional reactions to treatment on the basis of either their racial or religious identities, but I anticipate that religious demographic change is more likely to lead to a sense of group status threat. References to religion (especially Christianity) pervade American civic symbols (Gorski 2017), politicians' rhetoric frequently make use of religious allusions (Domke

and Coe 2008), and a fusion of Christian and American identity is used to frame political attitudes and behavior, including the January 6 insurrection (Jenkins 2021), in ways that eclipse references to race, which are often subtler (Mendelberg 2001).

H1. White Christians will have stronger emotional reactions to religious demographic change than racial demographic change.

While historians of Christian nationalism have concluded that demographic change produces fear (Fea 2018), symbolic group threats can result in an array of emotions, including anger, disgust, and fear (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005). Emotions can have distinct effects. Disgust is an emotional reaction to contamination and loss of purity. In an intergroup context, exposure to outgroups triggers disgust due to the risk of contamination of the ingroup (Choma et al. 2016; Ritter and Preston 2011), raising the value of stronger in-group boundaries. Because individuals withdraw from stimuli associated with disgust, disgust responses are also associated with greater outgroup prejudice (Miller et al. 2017). Racial and religious demographic change constitute a threat to the purity of a White Christian America, giving rise to greater support for stronger symbolic boundaries around American identity and stronger perceptions of threat from outgroups.

H2. For White Christians, disgust will be associated with increased support for Christian nationalism and increased perceptions of discrimination against Whites and Christians.

A second emotion associated with group status threat is anger. Anger is a common reaction when status is taken away or goals are obstructed (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005). When triggered by feelings of unfairness or goal obstruction, anger can lead individuals to adopt more conservative ideological orientations and support policies that reinforce social hierarchies (Banks

2014; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, and Foucault 2018). Moreover, anger is associated with greater reliance on hot cognition and stereotypes (J. Lerner and Keltner 2001).

H3. For White Christians, anger will be associated with increased support for Christian nationalism and increased perceptions of discrimination against Whites and Christians.

Finally, fear may be linked to preferred conceptualizations of the nation and to perceptions of discrimination. Fear is associated with openness to persuasion (Albertson and Gadarian 2016; Brader 2006), risk aversion (J. Lerner and Keltner 2001), and to an interruption in formerly-established beliefs, identities, or ideologies (Brader and Marcus 2013; Vasilopoulos, Marcus, and Foucault 2018). To the extent that Christian nationalism is a framework that builds exclusionary boundaries around American identity (Edgell and Tranby 2010), fear should decrease reliance on pre-conceptions of the content of American identity. Moreover, because fear makes individuals more open to ideologically opposed sources (Redlawsk, Tolbert, and Franko 2010), fear should decrease suspicion of outgroups and perceptions of discrimination.

H4: For White Christians, fear will be associated with decreased support for Christian nationalism and decreased perceptions of discrimination against Whites and Christians.

There are strong social norms against being perceived as prejudiced against "the other", let alone expressing outright fear of outgroups (DiAngelo 2018; Mendelberg 2001). Moreover, many evangelicals have adopted a worldview that emphasizes strength; a desire to avoid being perceived as weak may lead some individuals to not express their feelings as "afraid". Respondents may be more likely to express a less-loaded emotion—worry—instead of fear (Redlawsk, Tolbert, and Franko 2010).

H5: For White Christians, worry will be associated with decreased support for Christian nationalism and decreased perceptions of discrimination against Whites and Christians.

Finally, as illustrated in Figure 5, the effect of group status threat should be mediated by emotion. White Christians will not have a uniform response to group status threat in the form of demographic change. Some individuals may have no emotional response or may have a positive response. Without the specified emotional responses, I do not expect that treatment will shift support for Christian nationalism or perceived discrimination against Christians or Whites. Because treatment is temporally prior to emotional reactions which are temporally prior to attitude shifts , I anticipate that emotion will mediate the relationship between treatment, on the one hand, and support for Christian nationalism and perceived discrimination, on the other.

H6: Treatment will not be associated with direct effects on Christian nationalism or perceptions of discrimination.

H7: Emotional reactions will mediate the relationship between treatment and support for Christian nationalism/perceived discrimination.

Figure 5: General Model

Method

In order to test these hypotheses, an embedded experiment was administered in a survey to a sample of American adults recruited by Survey Sampling International (SSI) between May 27 and June 13, 2021.[5] The sample included 1,459 total participants and its demographic profile closely resembled that of the American National Election Studies and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study. Because this project is focused on understanding how White Christians respond to demographic change, the analysis will be constrained to those respondents who racially identified as White and religiously as a member of a Christian denomination (Orthodox Christian, Catholic, Protestant, or Mormon).

Individuals in the sample were randomly assigned to one of three groups[6] and presented with the following directions, "We are interested in understanding quantitative skills. You will

[5] Thank you, Dr. Donald Haider-Markel, for making space available for this experiment on your survey.

[6] Table 5 in the Appendix describes any differences in the means of key variables across treatment groups.

be presented with a graph and must spend at least 15 seconds studying it. Afterwards, we will ask you several questions about the information presented in the graph." Group status threat is triggered by demographic change whereby the dominant group becomes the numerical minority (Mutz 2018). The race treatment group (Treatment 1, Figure 7) saw a graph that showed that non-Whites will outnumber Whites around the year 2040, the religion treatment group (Treatment 2, Figure 8) saw a graph that showed that non-Christians will outnumber Christians by the year 2040, and the control group (Control condition, Figure 6) saw a graph that showed that geographically-mobile individuals will outnumber geographically-stable individuals by the year 2040. The time period included on the graph highlights the significant changes in the percent of the population belonging to the dominant group vs. non-dominant groups, and the brightest colors were reserved for the lines demonstrating this transition (blue for the dominant group, red for the total of non-dominant groups). This framing for the control was chosen because it should not prompt any group identities or stereotypes, especially not racial or religious ones, and because geographic mobility has been used as a control in prior similar studies (Craig and Richeson 2014). The control condition also required the participants in this condition to be exposed to a graph and undergo an exercise similar to the exercises in the treatment conditions. This should ensure that any observed treatment effects are a result of the information presented in the conditions rather than the exercise itself. The race treatment graph presents accurate information drawn from the US Census, while the graphs for the religion treatment and control groups are identical to the race treatment group, except for the graph labels. Because the information in the religion treatment and control condition was inaccurate, respondents were presented with a debriefing statement at the end of the survey questionnaire.

Figure 6: Control Condition Graph (Geographic Mobility)

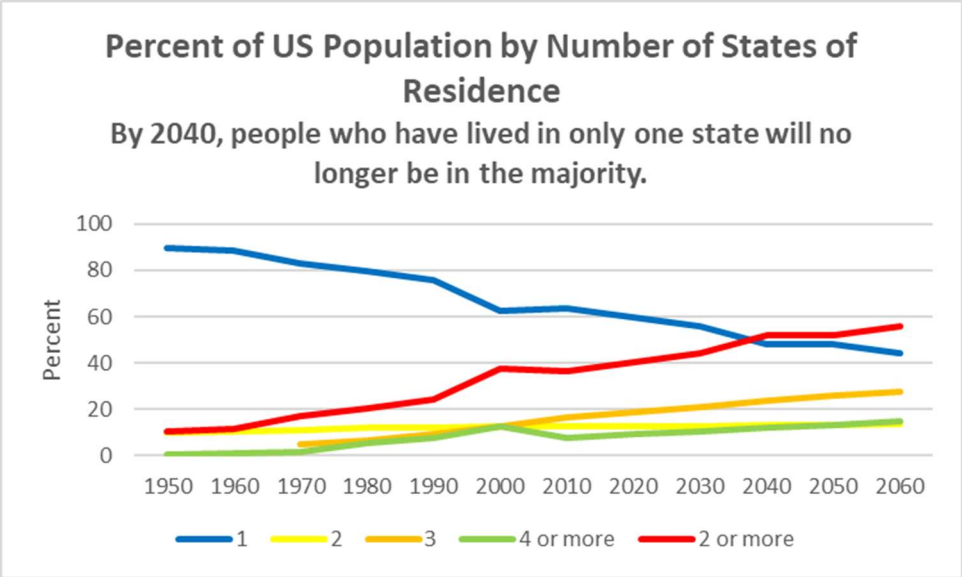


Figure 7: Race Treatment Graph

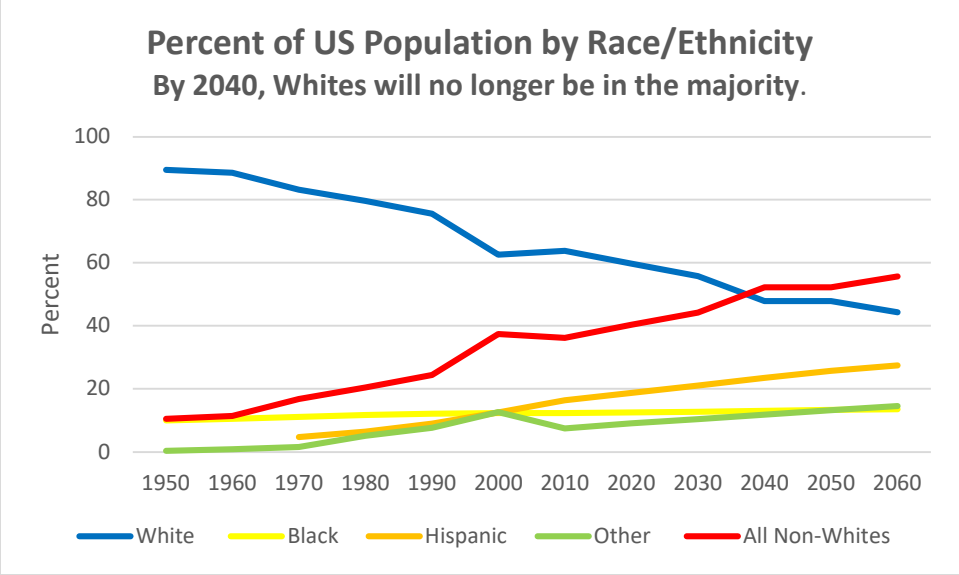
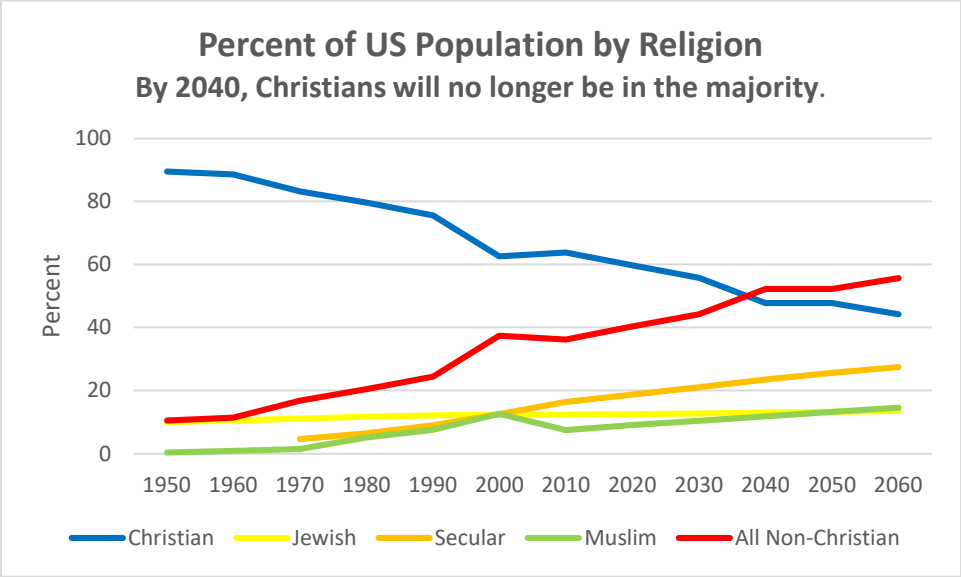


Figure 8: Religion Treatment Graph



After viewing the graphs, respondents were asked to identify the best description of the graph from among four options; 75.09% of respondents answered correctly. Individuals in the control group were the least likely to provide a correct description, with 72.35% answering correctly. The results of the models were sensitive to the inclusion of those who did not correctly understand the treatment. In order to ensure that I am capturing the effect of raised awareness of demographic change, the analysis includes only those respondents who answered the manipulation check correctly.

Respondents were asked, "To what extent did you experience these emotions while viewing the graph?" assessing Worried, Angry, Afraid, and Disgusted on a scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (an extreme amount). Then respondents were asked to express their agreement with the Christian nationalism scale developed by Perry and Whitehead (Perry and Whitehead 2015a; Whitehead and Perry 2020), which includes the following statements: The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation; The federal government should advocate

Christian values; The federal government should enforce strict separation of church and state (reverse coded); The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces; The success of the United States is part of God's plan; and The federal government should allow prayer in public schools. Each of the individual components are measured on a scale of 0 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly agree). Responses to these six questions were combined into a single additive index, ranging from 1 (not supportive of Christian nationalism) to 25 (strongly supportive of Christian nationalism), with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.814. Respondents were then asked to assess to what extent Whites and Christians experience discrimination, with responses ranging from 1 (none at all) to 4 (a lot).

The analyses include controls shown to affect emotion and support for Christian nationalism. Evangelical identity is measured with a dummy variable asking respondents if they describe themselves as born again. Frequency of religious attendance is measured on a scale from 0 ("Never attend") to 6 ("Attend more than once a week"). Party identification and political ideology are measured with a 7-point scale in which higher values indicate stronger Republican or conservative affiliation, respectively. Symbolic racism is measured with the 4-item ANES racial resentment scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.804). The analysis also includes a dummy variable for male gender. Age is measured on a scale from 1 to 9, representing decades; income with a 9-category variable; and education with a 7-category variable. These controls are used in all predictions of the dependent variables. See Appendix 1 for summary statistics and question wordings.

Models were analyzed using structural equation modeling with Stata. The variables included in the model were not normally distributed, which can produce standard errors that are too small when using maximum likelihood; to correct for non-normality, standard errors are

bootstrapped with 500 replications (Kline 2015). At first, I only allowed the emotion variables to co-vary (anticipating that shifts in one emotion would be correlated with shifts in other emotions), but the model fit statistics for these models were mediocre at best. Albertson and Gadarian (2016), citing Imai et al. (2010), argue that mediation analysis must meet two conditions. The first is that treatment is not conditioned on mediators or outcomes. Random assignment satisfies this condition. The second is that the value of the mediator is not affected by other variables; in other words, that the mediating variable can be treated as if it is also randomized, conditional on treatment status and pretreatment characteristics. We know that the distribution of underlying emotional propensities is not random. Religious and political variables are associated with emotional profiles (Banks and Valentino 2012), and my model allows for emotions to be predicted by treatment and by the religious and political variables in the model (evangelical identity, religious service attendance, and symbolic racism). After making this modeling choice, my model fit statistics showed significantly better fit[7], and modification indices did not indicate a need for any additional changes. Additionally, the strong significance levels for many of these added variables points to the need to include them in the models of emotion, and the fact that treatment shifts emotion, even after accounting for other predictors of emotion, provides further evidence that treatment is indeed having an effect.

Findings[8]

[7] Some commonly-used fit measures, like chi-squared, tend to be sensitive to sample size, pointing to poor model fit in large samples. Other statistics, like the RMSEA , CFI, or SRMR are better tests of model fit. My models have low significance values in chi-squared tests (pointing to poor model fit), but the other measures of model fit point to good to moderate fit.

[8] Full SEM model results are presented in the appendix.

Emotion

I used ordered logit models (without controls) to evaluate the effect of treatment on emotional reactions, the results of which are presented in Table 11. The control condition is used as the comparison group for the race and religion treatment groups. The group receiving the religion treatment report significantly more anger, fear, worry, and disgust than the control group and the effect size of treatment is consistently larger for the religion treatment group than the race treatment group. The race treatment group is statistically indistinguishable from the control group. These models provide the first evidence that news of religious demographic shifts are producing shifts in how White Christians feel, in support of H1.

Table 11. Comparing effect of treatment on emotional reaction

	Worry	Anger	Fear	Disgust
Race treatment	1.123 (0.136)	0.942 (0.119)	1.075 (0.133)	1.013 (0.128)
Religion treatment	1.634*** (0.195)	1.304** (0.160)	1.425*** (0.173)	1.419*** (0.173)

Notes: Odds ratios are estimates from ordered logit comparing treatment groups to the control group with coefficients presented as odds ratios; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.01; ** < .05; * < .10)

Christian Nationalism

Consistent with H6, there is no direct effect of either treatment on support for Christian nationalism. However, treatment does shift support for Christian nationalism when it is channeled through emotion (confirming H7). For White Christians receiving the religion treatment, disgust elevates and fear depresses support for Christian nationalism, consistent with H2 and H4, respectively. The indirect effects of worry and anger are not significant, disconfirming H3 and H5.

The full model results (reported in Appendix 1) show that the racial and religious variables are behaving as expected. Symbolic racism is consistently associated with Christian nationalism, both directly and indirectly, and for both treatments. The religion variables (identifying as born again and religious service attendance) are associated with more intense emotional reactions and more support for Christian nationalism. In general, the religion variables have stronger effects on Christian nationalism in the religion treatment group.

Both models perform reasonably well. The model fit statistics are within acceptable ranges, and the R-squared values are relatively large. Consistent with H1, the religion treatment tends to produce stronger effects than the race treatment. The religion treatment has larger coefficients and smaller p-values in explaining emotional reactions, and only the religion treatment produces statistically significant effects on Christian nationalism (albeit indirectly).

Table 12: Indirect Effects of Treatment on Christian Nationalism

	Race Treatment	Religion Treatment
Direct effect	0.096 (0.691)	-0.467 (0.511)
Indirect effect: Worry	0.179 (0.157)	0.598 (0.440)
Indirect effect: Disgust	0.015 (0.157)	0.721* (0.382)
Indirect effect: Fear	-0.060 (0.189)	-0.813* (0.372)
Indirect effect: Anger	0.008 (0.104)	0.096 (0.298)
% of Effect Mediated	59.833%	56.109%
N	255	262
R-squared	0.449	0.513
CFI	0.981	0.989
TLI	0.951	0.973
RMSEA	0.065	0.051
SRMR	0.047	0.032

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from SEM; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.01; ** < .05; * < .10)

Anti-White Discrimination

After being asked about their support for Christian nationalism, respondents were asked to rate the amount of discrimination against Whites. There is no direct effect for either treatment (H6), but treatment does have an indirect effect through emotion (H7). This is the dependent variable for which we would most expect that being made aware of racial demographic change would increase feelings of racial threat for White Christians. However, the race treatment does not have any indirect or direct effects on perceptions of anti-White discrimination. The religion treatment also fails to produce any effect. Of the four mediating pathways, disgust is the closest to statistical significance (p=0.11). Although not statistically significant, the signs for disgust and fear are in the predicted directions (positive and negative, respectively). The indirect effects of anger and worry are insignificant (contrary to H3 and H5).

The racial and religious control variables are important predictors of the dependent variable. The race treatment, on average, produces slightly stronger emotional reactions. For disgust, fear, and worry, born again identification produces the strongest effect on emotion in the religion treatment, but it fails to have a direct effect that is statistically significant. Church attendance is a predictor of perceptions of anti-White discrimination.

The models perform well for both treatment groups. There are no clear patterns as to which model best fits the data.

Table 13: Indirect Effects of Treatment on Perceptions of Anti-White Discrimination

	Race Treatment	Religion Treatment
Direct effect	0.090 (0.544)	-0.081 (0.103)
Indirect effect: Worry	0.071 (0.047)	-0.066 (0.097)
Indirect effect: Disgust	0.033 (0.025)	0.098 (0.061)
Indirect effect: Fear	-0.049 (0.035)	-0.005 (0.098)
Indirect effect: Anger	0.008 (0.013)	0.056 (0.051)
% of Effect Mediated	24.324%	50.307%
N	255	262
R-squared	0.343	0.382
CFI	0.980	0.988
TLI	0.951	0.971
RMSEA	0.048	0.051
SRMR	0.047	0.033

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from SEM; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.01; ** < .05; * < .10)

Anti-Christian Discrimination

Respondents were also asked how much they believed that Christians were victims of discrimination. Neither treatment produces a direct effect (H6); instead, the effect of treatment is mediated through emotion (H7). Being made aware of racial demographic change does not

change attitudes about anti-Christian discrimination. The religion treatment, though, does produce an indirect effect. Individuals who are made aware of religious demographic change and consequently experience higher levels of disgust are then more likely to assert that Christians are discriminated against (H2). The coefficient on the effect on fear is negative, but fear does not achieve significance (contrary to H4). Anger and worry also fail to produce statistically significant results (contrary to H3 and H5).

The control variables behave as expected. Symbolic racism is associated with more perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination, and, in general, symbolic racism is associated with slightly stronger effects for individuals in the race treatment. Identifying as born again is associated with stronger emotional reactions and, directly, stronger perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination. Identification as born again produces a larger effect on disgust, fear, worry, and directly on the dependent variable for the religion treatment group than for the race treatment group. Attendance at religious services is also consistently significant and positive, although there is no consistent pattern of its relationship to treatment groups.

The models show good fit. The R-square values for the models are relatively high. The models are a better fit for the religion treatment group. The r-square value for the religion treatment model is significantly higher than that for the race treatment group. Moreover, the model fit statistics are slightly better for the religion treatment models. These statistics, as well as the fact that only the religion treatment produces statistically-significant effects, are additional evidence that religious demographic change (and not racial demographic change) is contributing to perceptions of religious discrimination.

Table 14: Indirect Effects of Treatment on Perceptions of Anti-Christian Discrimination

	Race Treatment	Religion Treatment

Direct effect	-0.017 (0.124)	-0.081 (0.092)
Indirect effect: Worry	0.054 (0.035)	-0.056 (0.068)
Indirect effect: Disgust	0.002 (0.024)	0.197** (0.067)
Indirect effect: Fear	-0.056 (0.040)	-0.053 (0.068)
Indirect effect: Anger	0.010 (0.021)	-0.003 (0.035)
% of Effect Mediated	34.390%	52.795%
N	255	262
R-squared	0.344	.429
CFI	0.980	0.989
TLI	0.950	0.971
RMSEA	0.065	0.051
SRMR	0.047	0.033

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from SEM; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.01; ** < .05; * < .10)

Conclusion

Christians have long occupied a dominant position in the United States, with extensive political and cultural influence. Over the past 50 years, identification with Christianity has declined. For some Christians, this shift has sounded alarm bells. For them, declines in the number of Christians (relative to other religious identities, including the non-religious) reflects a decline in the status of Christianity and the influence Christians have in the country. At the same time, declines in the number of Whites (relative to other racial groups) have signaled another significant shift, challenging the dominant status of Whites. Does religious or racial change have a stronger effect on White Christians? What emotions result? And how does awareness of demographic change affect Christian nationalism and perceptions of anti-White and anti-Christian discrimination?

It is undeniable that race and religion have long been intertwined throughout American history, which is precisely what makes studying their effects difficult. A recent trend in the

study of Christian nationalism has been to emphasize the importance of race, occasionally to the extent that religion and religious identities are eclipsed. This experiment is an effort to separate the effects of race and religion by focusing on shifts that are rapidly affecting the character of the United States- racial and religious demographic change. The experimental approach allows us to isolate one variable, testing for average treatment effects, and is well-designed to capture causal effects. This experiment has demonstrated that we ignore the effects of religious diversification at our peril. Overall, exposure to religious demographic change produces more negative emotional reactions, support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of discrimination against Christians.

Why might this conclusion differ from other recently-published works? Historians and journalists have tended to focus on elites in telling a sweeping story of race and religion over decades (sometimes centuries). This project takes a different approach—measuring public opinion. We know that elites have more firmly entrenched and well-structured opinions than the masses, so the complex ways in which elites knit race and religion together may not be as clear among the general public. Social scientists studying Christian nationalism have tended to use correlational methods to analyze public opinion, which are weak at identifying causal effects. It could be the case that another underlying variable is predicting both racial and religious attitudes—namely symbolic racism. Much of the work on Christian nationalism does not explicitly control for symbolic racism, and omitting this variable may lead to an inflation in the importance of Christian nationalism in predicting race-related dependent variables. Not only does this experiment include measures of symbolic racism, but finds that, even after controlling for it and other factors, religious demographic change prompts shifts in attitudes.

This is not to say that race doesn't matter—indeed, it does. In each model, symbolic racism is statistically significant, pointing to its importance as we seek to understand Christian nationalism and religious identities. Moreover, the fact that White Christians respond to the threat of religious demographic change with shifts in perceptions of anti-White discrimination point to the intertwining of religion and race. However the relative ineffectiveness of the race treatment in explaining the dependent variables under consideration points to a more complicated relationship between race, racism, and Christian Nationalist attitudes than we may have previously thought.

This project also points to the importance of emotion in understanding responses to change. Exposure to information about demographic change was often insufficient to explain attitude shifts—the effect of treatment was mediated through emotion. Most research on White Christian politics has centered on fear. This project confirms what political psychologists have learned about emotion- emotions have distinct effects, disgust leads to actions to restore purity, and fear can demobilize. Fear had a negative indirect effect on support for Christian nationalism. Disgust, on the other hand, produced positive indirect effects to increase support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination. Recent work has begun to explore the role of disgust in Christian political attitudes (Djupe et al. 2021), and this project points to the need to continue investigating this emotion.

Future research should also continue to explore the effects of religious demographic change. Specifically, we know that many non-Christian religions are racialized. When respondents think about declining numbers of Christians, are they thinking of a growing number of secular individuals, or a growing number of non-White, non-Christian religious adherents? If it's the latter, the results may be more racialized than this experiment indicates. Also, it could be

the case that future racial demographic change has been more publicized, and therefore the effect of the race treatment was muted.

The silver lining is that the effect of the religion treatment is often not direct—it is often funneled through emotion. To the extent that perceptions of threat and disgust of the other can be ameliorated, such that knowledge of demographic change fails to trigger negative emotions, there may be opportunities to reduce commitments to Christian nationalism and perceptions of discrimination.

Chapter Four: Holy Nations: American Identity and Black Support for Christian Nationalism

Introduction

> We will reach the goal of freedom in Birmingham and all over the nation, because the goal of America is freedom. […] We will win our freedom because the sacred heritage of our nation and the eternal will of God are embodied in our echoing demands.
>
> Martin Luther King, Jr. Letter from a Birmingham Jail, 1963

The history of Christianity in the United States has long been intertwined with the country's problematic history of race. For many years, early White American settlers balked at proselytizing enslaved Black persons, fearful that Christianity would facilitate emancipatory movements, social organization, and skills like literacy. However, over time Christianity became a tool for continued White supremacy. White pastors admonished slaves to be submissive to their masters and Black-led Christian practice was highly circumscribed. Due to these practices prior to emancipation and to religious segregation after, Black and White Christianity in the United States evolved differently (Raboteau 1999).

The existing literature about Christian nationalism emphasizes its role in perpetuating systems of racism. In a panel discussion, Robert Jones, a scholar specializing in religious public opinion, commented that, "In theory, there's a difference between White Christian nationalism and Christian nationalism. In the U.S., it is almost always White Christian nationalism that's the thing that we're talking about. […] I think it just comes down to something as simple as this—White Christians having this very deep seeded idea that America is really their own private promised land, meant for them" (Jones, Tisby, and Tyler 2021). The connections between

racism and Christian nationalism have become a focal point for researchers, who point to correlations between support for Christian nationalism and racially-coded government spending (Davis 2019), tolerance for racists (Davis and Perry 2020), opposition to critical race theory in schools (Goldberg 2021), and rejection of interracial marriage and transracial adoption (Perry and Whitehead 2015b; 2015a). Some authors have concluded that Christian nationalist rhetoric primarily serves as a dog whistle for symbolic racism (Braunstein 2021; Perry et al. 2021).

Despite drawing helpful attention to links between Christian and White racial identities, this body of literature fails to address the puzzle of Black support for Christian nationalism. Black Americans are more likely to support Christian nationalism, an ideology tightly linked to racist attitudes, than White Americans, and Christian nationalist organizations and events are becoming more diversified (Goldberg 2021). Why does Christian nationalism find strong support among Black Americans? Are supporters buying into a "Christianity [that] is responsible for the slave mentality reflected in the thinking and behaviour of the so-called Negroes here in America today," as Malcolm X would argue (X, n.d.)? Or is Black support for Christian nationalism a clear-eyed response to experiences of racial discrimination? Why do Black Americans support Christian nationalism at such high rates?

This chapter argues that, for Black Americans, Christian nationalism constitutes an identity management strategy. Given the rigidity of black racial boundaries around American identity, Black Christians can instead emphasize the Christian nature of the country to carve out a place for Christians at the heart of American identity. This chapter uses survey data to demonstrate that Black Americans who evaluate Christians as more "American" than Blacks express stronger support for Christian nationalism. To build upon these findings, evidence from interviews demonstrates that Black Christians who feel that their racial identities limit their

prototypicality as Americans are more likely to endorse Christian nationalism. These participants describe a Christian America as one that explicitly promotes racial justice. For Black Americans, then, Christian nationalism endorsement broadens the boundaries of American identity.

Social Identity Theory

Social Identity Theory explores the ways in which group affiliations affect behaviors and attitudes. As individuals seek to maximize their self-esteem and as a mechanism to simplify social interactions, individuals divide the population into groups, identifying with one or more groups. In the quest for enhanced self-esteem, individuals evaluate their own group positively and often evaluate relevant out-groups negatively. While experiments have shown that groups can be formed on the basis of arbitrary distinctions (Tajfel 1978), some of the more important groups in the United States are formed along racial (Jardina 2019; Tesler 2013), religious (Bean 2016; McDaniel 2009), and national (Theiss-Morse 2009) lines. In terms of achieving goals from collective action and in addressing systemic issues, national identification carries heavy weight. Being seen as an equal member of the nation carries with it the ability to make claims upon the nation. For example, individuals who believe that Blacks violate norms of American identity like strong work ethic are less supportive of policies to address racial discrimination (Henry and Sears 2002; Sears et al. 1997).

Social identities vary in terms of the permeability of group boundaries. In the U. S. racial boundaries are seen as relatively impermeable. Some experiments show that participants classify individuals as people of color even when they are presented as mixed-race with some White parentage (Ho et al. 2011). Religious boundaries are more open, as religious affiliation is seen as

an individual choice (Finke and Stark 2005). The relationship between racial and religious boundaries is complicated; although churches remain highly segregated, there has been significant movement towards congregation diversification during the 1990s through 2010s (Edwards, Christerson, and Emerson 2013). Perceptions of the permeability of national identities varies. Some individuals adopt a civic nationalist view, according to which any person can be a full member of the nation if they adopt the ideals, values and creeds of the nation. Others, though, adopt an ethno-nationalist approach, which ties ethnic, racial, religious or other ascriptive characteristics to national belonging (Kosterman and Feshbach 1989).

Strategies of Low-Status Group Members

Because individuals adopt social identities to enhance their self-esteem, how do individuals in low-status groups think about their identities? If boundaries are permeable, individuals in low-status groups seek to join high-status groups (Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1997). But if boundaries are impermeable, as is the case with racial, ethnonational, and some religious boundaries, individuals may adopt other strategies. Strategies of social creativity work to change the emphasis assigned to the comparative dimensions under consideration, change the out-group to which the group is compared, or create new dimensions along with the groups can be compared. A strategy of social competition is one in which a low-status group directly challenges the status of the supposedly-high-status group (Douglas et al. 2005). Strategies of social mobility, or of disassociation from the in-group, could also be employed, although Jackson et al. find that social mobility is less likely when group boundaries are impermeable (1996). Other strategies focus on re-categorization. Super-ordinate recategorization occurs when individuals place themselves in a group that also includes the higher-status out-group. For example, “nation” may be a superordinate identity for Blacks. Sub-ordinate recategorization

occurs when individuals distance themselves from other group members by creating sub-groups. A low-class student may divide the group of low-class students into "heading to college" and "not heading to college" and then associate themselves with the "heading to college" group (Radmacher 2007).

Each of these strategies, though, assumes that the same identity remains relevant for low-status group members. But individuals do not possess only one possible social identity. Instead, each individual has a virtually infinite number of possible social identities available to them, and the question then becomes one of which identity with be used for categorization (Tajfel et al. 1971). An alternative strategy could be for low-status group members to assert membership in a higher-status group that lies along a different dimension. In experimental work, Mussweiler et al. find that "social identities may be actively recruited or strategically deemphasized in ways that function to protect the individual self from a situation of comparative interpersonal threat" (2000). In other words, members of a low-status racial group, faced with impermeable boundaries, may instead opt to emphasize their membership in a higher-status religious group, an especially attractive option when a religious identity offers enhanced access to high-status national identity as well. Inclusion of a second, higher-status social identity need not preclude a retained commitment to the original, lower-status group.

When applied to national identity, Social Identity Theory offers a second pathway through which racial identities affect identity strategies. Identity denial occurs when "an individual who does not match the prototype of an in-group sees that identity called into question or unrecognized by fellow group members" (Cheryan and Monin 2005, 717). In their study, Cheryan and Monin argue that Asian Americans who sense that they are not accepted as "true" Americans experience identity denial that they practice a strategy of identity assertion by

changing their behavior or attitudes to appear more prototypical. In the US context, individuals who feel that they are denied national identity on the basis of their racial identity may practice identity assertion by emphasizing their national membership on the basis of religious claims.

Part I: Statistical Analysis

Theory and Hypotheses

Members of minority groups in the United States are members of low-status groups within the United States' racial hierarchies, and their racial identity precludes them from achieving the stereotypical traits associated with American citizenship (Theiss-Morse 2009). Because American racial boundaries are relatively impermeable, members of minority groups cannot change their racial status. Therefore, some members of minority groups look to other dimensions of identity that might afford them access to a higher-status group.

Religion offers one such identity. Stereotypical Americans are Christian (Edgell et al. 2016; C. M. Jacobs and Theiss-Morse 2013; Theiss-Morse 2009), so by emphasizing a Christian identity, members of minority groups inch closer towards inclusion in an American identity. This is the logic that Martin Luther King Jr. alludes to in his sermon "Paul's Letter to American Christians," in which he says, "Segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we all have in Christ. It substitutes an "I-it" relationship for the "I-thou" relationship" (King Jr. 2014). But more importantly, Christian nationalism emphasizes a very particular integration of Christianity and national identities that is more powerful than a shared religious identity. Christian nationalists argue that the United States was founded by Christians, on Christian principles, for the purpose of creating a nation explicitly modeled on Christian principles, in which Christianity

is elevated (Anderson 2012; Fea 2018). In emphasizing a Christian identity, Christian nationalists are making an explicit claim to elite membership in the nation and to the use of religious values in shaping national policies. This should be more attractive to people who have a marginalized racial identity.

H1. Black respondents will be more likely to affirm Christian nationalism than White respondents.

Christian nationalism is distinct from the more general types of nationalism more commonly studied due to its religious component. Some work has emphasized that religiosity and Christian nationalism are distinct concepts and that religiosity and Christian nationalism work differently on shaping opinions (Whitehead and Perry 2020). When it comes to predicting Christian nationalism, though, I would argue that religiosity is an important variable. Religiosity is the avenue through which most people will be exposed to Christian nationalist ideas. People who frequently attend church and spend time with fellow congregation members are more likely to come into contact with Christian nationalist ideas. But I don't anticipate that this effect will be uniform across racial groups. The concept of Christian nationalism is commonplace in many White-majority churches, and some churches have been founded explicitly on this principle (Bailey 2020; Whitehead and Perry 2020). Exposure to Christian nationalist arguments through frequent religious service attendance should increase support for Christian nationalism among White Christians. Meanwhile, Black-majority churches have been more heavily influenced by theological movements like the Social Gospel and Black liberation theology (Gates 2021; Raboteau 1999; Wald and Calhoun-Brown 2014), neither of which are associated with Christian nationalist thinking. With a lower likelihood of exposure to Christian nationalist ideas from their churches (because Black Christians are less likely to attend White-majority churches than White

Christians are), the effect of service attendance on Christian nationalism should be weaker for Black Christians. Consequently, I expect that:

H2a. Higher religious service attendance will be associated with higher Christian nationalism scores.

H2b. Higher religious service attendance will be more weakly related to Christian nationalism for Black respondents than for White respondents.

For White Americans, both their racial and religious identities are prototypical for American national identity. Therefore, regardless of whichever identity they perceive as being more American, they experience no incentive to emphasize a different identity. Consequently, their evaluation of the prototypicality of different aspects of their identity for American identity should have no bearing on their likelihood to support Christian nationalism. Black Americans, on the other hand, belong to a racial group that is not considered prototypical in terms of American identity. But every individual person has a virtually infinite number of potential identities. The more a Black respondent identifies their religious identity with Americanness (compared to their racial identity), the more likely that respondent will be to affirm Christian nationalism. This relationship will be moderated by Christian identity. Black Americans who can assert a Christian identity will be sensitive to growing gaps between the Americanness evaluations of the religious and racial identities, while Black Americans who are not Christians will not.

H3a. The difference between evaluations of Americanness of White versus Christian will not shift Christian nationalism support among White Christians.

H3b. Black Christians who more positively associate Christians as Americans (as opposed to Blacks as Americans), will have higher support for Christian nationalism.

Method

These data were obtained through an online survey fielded by Dynata between August 20 and August 25, 2020.[9] The survey was completed by 1,730 respondents, and the resulting sample is comparable to samples drawn by other surveys, such as the 2019 American Community Survey, 2016 American National Election Study, and 2019 Cooperative Congressional Election Study.

The dependent variable is Christian nationalism. The survey asks respondents to indicate their support for three statements from the Perry and Whitehead Christian nationalism index, which employs responses to the following questions: "The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation"; "The federal government should advocate Christian values"; and "The federal government should allow prayer in public schools." Respondents could respond to each question with "strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree." Responses were combined into an additive index with a Cronbach's alpha of .866. Factor analysis confirmed that these three items load onto a single factor; the first factor has an eigenvalue of 2.367 and a screeplot shows a distinct "elbow" at the first factor.

The main independent variable is a measure of Americanness. The survey asked respondents to rate how strongly a variety of groups were "identified with America and all things American", ranging from "1" (not at all American) to "7" (absolutely American). In order to compare how a person feels about the belongingness of their racial and religious group, I subtracted the respondent's racial group score from the score for Christians. For example, a Black respondent who rated the Americanness of Blacks as 5 and of Christians as 6 would have a

[9] Special thanks for Dr. Donald Haider-Markel for his assistance in procuring these data.

score of: 6-5 = 1. Positive scores indicate that respondents believe that Christians are more American than their racial group; negative scores indicate that respondents believe that their racial group is more American than Christians. Measures that capture comparative assessments have been previously utilized in the identity literature (Berthold et al. 2013; Terracciano et al. 2005; Verkuyten and Martinovic 2016).

The models also include control variables. Party identification and ideology were measured on a 7-point scale, with Republican Party identity and conservative ideology having higher values. Dummy variables were created for respondent self-identification as racially Black or non-Hispanic White; self-identification as female; and self-identification with a Christian religious tradition (Protestant, Orthodox, Catholic, or Mormon). Highest educational attainment is measured on a 7-point scale (with higher values indicating higher attainment), and income on a 12-point scale (with higher values indicating higher income). Born-again identification is measured with a dummy variable, and religious service attendance is measured on a 6-point scale for which higher codes indicate more frequent attendance. Finally, in the original survey design, the Christian nationalism and group Americanness questions follow a survey experiment, so a categorical variable is used to indicate whether a respondent was assigned to one of the two treatment groups or the control group. Summary statistics for all variables are provided in Table 15.

Table 15: Summary Statistics

	Sample	Minimum	Maximum	Mean / Proportion	Standard Deviation
Christian nationalism	Black	0	9	5.152	2.339
	White	0	9	4.987	2.962
Americanness	Black	-6	6	-0.091	1.615
	White	-6	6	-0.172	1.028
Born again	Black	0	1	0.549	.50
	White	0	1	0.323	.468
Attendance	Black	1	6	3.230	1.702
	White	1	6	3.033	1.750
Party ID	Black	1	7	2.248	1.488
	White	1	7	4.509	2.088
Ideology	Black	1	7	3.164	1.475
	White	1	7	4.176	1.889
Education	Black	1	7	4.685	1.485
	White	1	7	5.355	1.471
Income	Black	1	12	5.333	3.436
	White	1	12	7.763	3.613
Female	Black	0	1	0.612	0.489
	White	0	1	0.420	0.494
Christian	Black	0	1	0.539	0.500
	White	0	1	0.570	0.495

Findings

The results from OLS models are provided in Table 16 and Table 17. The dependent variable for each model is Christian nationalism. Table 16 presents effects of the independent variables on Christian nationalism for both non-Hispanic White and Black respondents. The models are tested independently for Black and White respondents in Table 17.

Hypothesis 1 theorized that Black Americans should be more supportive of Christian nationalism than White Americans. Table 16 presents the results of an OLS regression in which Christian nationalism is the dependent variable. The model includes the full sample of non-Hispanic White and Black respondents. Looking at the controls, more educated respondents are less likely to identify with Christian nationalism, as are people who are younger. Party

identification has a sizable effect on Christian nationalism support; moving from strong liberal to strong conservative increases Christian nationalism support by 2.069 points (on a 9 point index). The religion variables also exert strong influence. Identifying as born again increases Christian nationalism support by 1.224 points. Moving from never attending religious services to attending more than once a week also increases Christian nationalism support by 2.651 points. All of these findings are consistent with what might be expected, except for the relationship between age and Christian nationalism.

The focus for H1 is the difference between non-Hispanic White and Black support for Christian nationalism. These two groups are differentiated by the non-Hispanic White dummy variable, for which Black respondents are coded "0" and non-Hispanic White respondents are coded "1". The variable is statistically significant, and the sign is negative, meaning that, controlling for demographic, religious, and political variables, non-Hispanic White respondents are less likely to support Christian nationalism than Black respondents. This evidence is consistent with H1.

Hypothesis 2a predicts that higher attendance will increase support for Christian nationalism for all respondents, and Hypothesis 2b predicts that this effect will be weaker for Black respondents than White respondents. Table 16 indicates that, for all respondents, higher religious service attendance increases Christian nationalism support. But the more targeted evidence to evaluate these hypotheses are found in Table 17, which differentiates between White and Black respondents. For White respondents, education and age are negatively associated with Christian nationalism support. Identifying as born again and Christian and Republican Party ID are positively related to Christian nationalism. The models presented in columns 1 and 2 are very similar—both produce R-squared values of 0.435, which is an indication that these models

explain a relatively high proportion of the variation in Christian nationalism. Introducing the interaction term does not improve the performance of the model for White respondents.

The model in column 4 explores the predictors of Christian nationalism among Black respondents. Fewer independent variables are statistically significant. Income is negatively associated with Christian nationalism for Black respondents; it is not statistically significant for White respondents. Party identification is not statistically significant for Black respondents. Age is negatively associated with Christian nationalism, while born again identification is positively associated. Attendance is positively related to Christian nationalism. This model does not explain variation in Christian nationalism support nearly as well as the model for White respondents did—here, the R-square is 0.194.

These models show that religious service attendance is positively associated with support for Christian nationalism for all respondents, consistent with predictions in Hypothesis 2a. In column 1, attendance predicts Christian nationalism. Holding other variables constant at their means in the model in column 1, moving from the lowest rate of religious service attendance to the highest increases Christian nationalism support by 3 points for White respondents. Religious service attendance is statistically significant for Black respondents, but the coefficient is much smaller. Moving from the lowest frequency of service attendance to the highest results in a gain of only 1.23 points on the Christian nationalism scale. The probability that the effect of religious service attendance on Christian nationalism are the same is $p=0.0004$. These results are evidence in support of Hypothesis 2b—attendance does not affect religious service attendance as much for Black respondents as it does for White respondents.

Finally, Hypothesis 3a predicts that evaluations of which groups are most American should not shift Christian nationalism for White respondents, while Hypothesis 3b proposes that

Black Christian respondents will increase their support for Christian nationalism. Column 2 in Table 17 presents the results for a model that interacts the difference in religious and racial group evaluations and Christian identification. For White Americans, not only is the Americanness evaluation term insignificant, but the interaction term is as well. Consistent with Hypothesis 3a, White respondents' support for Christian nationalism does not seem to depend on which groups are considered more stereotypically American. The story is different for Black respondents. Identifying as a Christian on its own, or evaluations of group Americanness on its own does not contribute to Christian nationalism support. Instead, the two must co-occur. Christians who rate Christians as being more American than Blacks are more likely to support Christian nationalism. Moving from the minimum value of Americanness (in which respondents rate Blacks as much more American than Christians) to the maximum level of Americanness (in which respondents rate Christians as much more American than Blacks) while holding other variables at their means results in a 5.61 point increase in support for Christian nationalism among Black Christians. For Black non-Christians, the same shift drops support for Christian nationalism by 2.094 points. These results are presented in Figure 9 and are consistent with Hypothesis 3a and 3b.

Table 16: Effect of Race on Christian Nationalism Support

VARIABLES	(1)
Non-Hispanic White	-0.678**
	(0.238)
Christian	0.735***
	(0.169)
Education	-0.157*
	(0.066)
Income	0.008
	(0.027)
Age	-0.022***
	(0.005)
Female	-0.179
	(0.172)
Born Again	1.224***
	(0.178)
Attendance	0.530***
	(0.051)
Party ID	0.345***
	(0.049)
Ideology	0.039
	(0.053)
Constant	3.371***
	(0.449)
Observations	865
R-squared	0.373

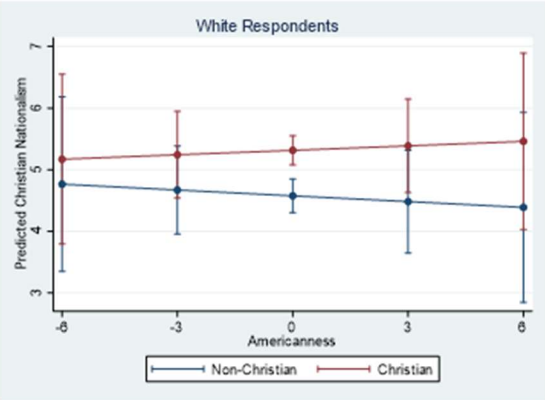
Notes: Coefficients are estimates from OLS; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05.

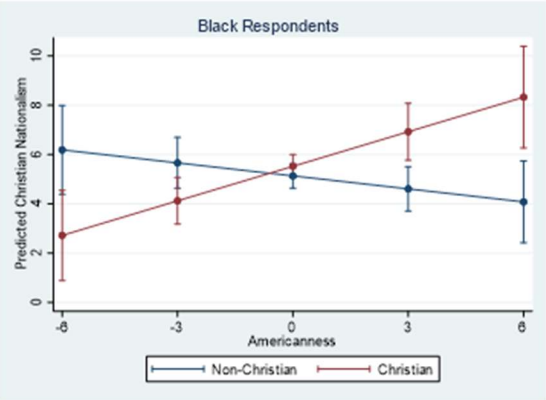
Table 17: Effect of Group Prototypicality and Christian Identity on Christian Nationalism Support

	(1) White	(2) White	(3) White	(4) Black	(5) Black	(6) Black
Americanness	-0.002	-0.038		0.103	-0.174	
	(0.085)	(0.123)		(0.108)	(0.138)	
Christian	0.731***	0.746***	0.246	0.361	0.416	
	(0.189)	(0.193)		(0.358)	(0.349)	
Christian x Americanness		0.068			0.642**	0.463
		(0.170)			(0.207)	
Education	-0.160*	-0.160*		-0.164	-0.175	
	(0.074)	(0.074)		(0.135)	(0.131)	
Income	0.030	0.029		-0.114*	-0.121*	-0.184
	(0.030)	(0.030)		(0.056)	(0.055)	
Female	-0.186	-0.184		0.483	0.392	
	(0.196)	(0.196)		(0.370)	(0.361)	
Age	-0.023***	-0.023***	-0.116	-0.027*	-0.027**	-0.216
	(0.006)	(0.006)		(0.011)	(0.010)	
Born Again	1.252***	1.252***	0.196	1.189**	1.132**	0.248
	(0.202)	(0.202)		(0.356)	(0.347)	
Attendance	0.571***	0.570***	0.338	0.246*	0.280**	0.209
	(0.057)	(0.057)		(0.106)	(0.104)	
Party ID	0.405***	0.405***	0.280	-0.204	-0.193	
	(0.053)	(0.053)		(0.128)	(0.124)	
Ideology	0.028	0.029		-0.046	-0.042	
	(0.058)	(0.058)		(0.131)	(0.127)	
Constant	1.474**	2.203***		6.203***	6.652***	
	(0.544)	(0.537)		(0.951)	(0.796)	
Observations	707	707		157	157	
R-squared	0.435	0.435		0.194	0.244	

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from OLS; standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05. Columns 3 and 6 present standardized coefficients for significant coefficients from models 2 and 5, respectively.

Figure 9: Marginal Effects





Part II: Teasing out Racial Differences in Christian Nationalist Support

Research Questions

The statistical analysis described above provides evidence in support of the hypothesis that Black Christians who see Christian identity as more central to American identity than their racial identities are more likely to affirm Christian nationalism, but a correlational research design leaves several important questions unanswered.

When respondents are answering questions about the prototypicality of racial and religious groups for national identities, it is not clear from the survey questions whether they are providing their own evaluations or what they believe to be true of the population at large. For example, it is possible that a respondent could believe that their racial identity is as prototypical as their religious identity, but answer that the larger society would rate their racial group as much less prototypical. It is also possible that respondents believe that their own racial group does not exemplify traits seen as American. In his analysis of respectability politics, Hakeem Jefferson argues that sizable numbers of Black Americans believe that their racial group would be more respected if group members behaved "responsibly" or "behaved better" (Jefferson 2019). Understanding how participants identify in racial and religious terms and how they see their racial and religious groups within a larger American society can provide further insight into the relationships observed in the statistical analysis above.

Research Question 1: How do participants describe the relationship between their racial and national identities? To what extent are racial identities seen as impenetrable barriers to inclusion as Americans?

Second, the survey data does not provide insight into how respondents connect attitudes around prototypicality to experiences of identity denial. The survey instrument did not contain

measures to directly assess how strongly the respondent identified with their national or racial identities, nor whether respondents had had experiences that challenged their sense of belonging in the national community. Because each person's experiences are unique, an interview setting in which participants are able to describe their experiences and reactions to them should be better able to provide insights into how participants think about the relationship between racial, religious, and national identities, and why.

> Research Question 2: How do participants respond to challenges to belonging that arise from their racial identities? Do they link their Christian identities to their national identities?

Finally, the concept of Christian nationalism has largely emerged from an analysis of White theological and political development over the past 75 years. De facto racial segregation in seminaries, religious bodies, and churches means that Black and White Christians may be drawing on different understandings of the relationship between Christianity and the nation. For example, black liberation theology argues that God identifies so thoroughly with the oppressed that God becomes synonymous with oppressed groups (in this case, Black Americans) (Gates 2021). Consequently, if "Christian America" is informed by different theologies or values, similar levels of support derived from survey questions may be masking important differences.

> Research Question 3: How do participants talk about the values of a Christian America?

Method

Survey questions about Christian nationalism only allow respondents to report their level of agreement or disagreement with the prompt. They do not provide respondents with an

opportunity to discuss how they are reflecting on the question or to provide examples or life experiences that reflect their responses. Qualitative interviews provide flexibility for participants to ask questions of clarification and to describe how they are arriving at their response. To develop a better understanding of how Black Christians view race, religion, and nationalism, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Black Christians in Kansas.[10]

On May 27, 2021 I received approval from the University of Kansas' Office of Research to conduct interviews with individuals on the topic of racial, religious, and national identities. I began recruitment through personal contacts, who facilitated contacts with potential study participants. Recruitment continued with a snowball sampling technique; at the conclusion of each interview I asked if the participant was aware of other individuals I should speak to. In all, I was provided with 21 names of possible participants, and by September 2021 the snowball sampling strategy was yielding the names of referrals who were already in the project. I was unable to find contact information for four referrals. I contacted seven referrals through email, Facebook Messenger, and/or phone but received no reply. One referral refused participation. From June to October, 2021, I interviewed a total of nine individuals. One participant revealed during the interview that they identified racially as White, which leaves a total of eight study participants whose interviews will be analyzed here. Of the participants, three were pastors. Two participants were female; six were male. All eight participants live in the same mid-sized city and its environs in rural Kansas. They range in age from 40 to 80. Respondents' highest educational attainment varied from a high school diploma to seminary or master's degrees.

[10] My sincere thanks to all those who participated in interviews and/or referred me to potential participants.

Prior to interviews, participants were provided with an information statement summarizing the research project and participant rights. At the beginning of the interview, I reviewed the information statement and received verbal consent to participate and to record the interview. The interview process was semi-structured. I worked from a basic interview protocol (supplied in Appendix 2), but at times diverged from the protocol to interrogate topics in greater depth as the interview unfolded.

Interviews were conducted by videoconferencing or by phone. In-person interviews were deemed unsafe due to the Covid-19 pandemic, necessitating the use of these modes. Literature reviews of modality suggest "that videoconferencing is a viable alternative to face-to-face research" (Howe 2021), but the study was designed to compensate for possible problems that might arise in this format. First, virtual interviews may be inferior to face-to-face interviews in developing rapport between the interviewer and participant. In order to help participants feel more comfortable, I started each interview by mentioning the name of the person who had referred them to me and by chatting about how our days had been thus far. I encouraged participants to place themselves in a location where they were comfortable, and I conducted interviews from my home office while sipping coffee, which provided an informal backdrop. The first question in each interview was about how they came to understand what being an American meant, which allowed all the participants to reminisce about their childhoods and families. This question seemed to set participants at ease. Second, virtual interviews may present technical issues. If participants expressed concern about using videoconferencing technology, I offered to conduct the interview by phone, which two participants opted for. For those who opted for videoconferencing (Zoom), I provided step-by-step instructions for logging into the meeting, as well as my phone number should any technical issues arise. To address

privacy concerns, participants were warned in consent documentation that our conversation may not be secure, but that videoconferencing meetings had been assigned a private passcode. Explicit verbal consent to record was obtained at the beginning of each interview, and procedures around the deleting of recordings and generation of de-identified transcripts were also reviewed. I believe that these procedures helped participants feel comfortable; at the conclusion of each interview, I asked if I may re-contact them, and all participants agreed. Several participants encouraged future interactions by inviting me to their churches or workplaces. Each participant also demonstrated investment in the process by carefully considering possible referrals for future interviews.

Findings

Research Question 1 asks how respondents evaluate the intersection of their racial and national identities and the extent to which being Black inhibits inclusion as Americans. All interview participants related experiences of race-based discrimination, such as name-calling, job discrimination, housing discrimination, or feeling unwanted in majority-White spaces. However, participants differed in how their racial identities affected their sense of belonging to a national community or that the effect of race could be mitigated. One set of participants, including Anthony, Michael, and Caleb, did not communicate a sense that their feelings of belonging as Americans were undermined by their racial identities. Upon being asked whether spending his high school years in white-majority Oklahoma affected his sense of belonging to a national community, Anthony quickly replied, “Nope. Never was a question. And I know this is why—because my grandparents raised me primarily, and they embraced a Judeo-Christian worldview. […] My grandfather told me, ‘boy, you’ve got to work hard, save your money, treat people right.

In this country anybody can make it.' […] So I've never felt in any context that I was any less American than in any other context". He argued that the problem for Black Americans was not a lack of opportunity or even racist attitudes of White Americans, but instead a lack of personal responsibility among Black Americans, men in particular. When asked about how he thinks about himself racially, Caleb first reflected on the current state of equality in God's eyes before discussing how his experiences had led him to feel equal to others. Caleb said that his mother was White and father African-American, and because he was biracial he didn't feel divisions like race, stating that "Being in the state that I am now, I'm understanding that God is not a respecter of persons. [Growing up], the people that we were around were real accepting of us". When asked about experiences of discrimination during his growing-up years, Michael told of working for a very religious, White farming family and of how kind and inclusive they had been, not only to Michael but also to his older brothers, who had also worked on the farm. During his career as a salesperson, he found that his friendliness with White customers enabled him to build relationships and succeed. He told a story of dropping in on a new business during his sales travels, recounting that, "they didn't know what Black was, so to speak, and I told one guy, you know, if it's all right with you, I'll see you in another month. And he said, well, he was a White guy, if you want to, come on back. So when I go back home I tell my boss, I said, I'm gonna get me a new customer, and sure enough I went back the next month, talked to him some more, and I got an order". All of these participants were involved in multi-racial or white majority churches. For each of these participants, any disadvantages associated with their racial identities could be overcome through individual strategies like hard work and personal relationships.

Research Question 2 brings in religious identities, asking whether religious identities are linked to national identities through support for Christian nationalism, especially in response to

feelings of exclusion on the grounds of race. All of these respondents expressed ambiguous support for Christian nationalism. For Michael, the United States should be a place where everyone is free to speak their own mind. He told of a woman living in his small town who vocally expressed her atheist beliefs. The community distanced itself from her, but Michael said, "I don't believe in reaching somebody's heart just because you got enough people behind you to do what you want to it. It ain't right […] My vision of a Christian American would be kinda like I was saying, that you come and go as you please, you go to whatever church, Catholic or whatever, and you get treated like any other people, there's no difference". Anthony was quick to say that he felt that a federal declaration that the United States was a Christian nation would be "a national tragedy, a disservice to the faith and a disservice to the country" because the country does not currently subscribe to the Christian principles the country was founded upon. He also expressed concern that display of overtly Christian symbols would necessitate the display of symbols from all other faiths, which he felt would cheapen Christian symbols.

Research Question 3 probed the content of Christian values. In other words, to the extent that participants think there was, is, or should be a Christian America, what does that country look like? For participants who did not see themselves as systemically excluded from an American community, a Christian America had values that need not reference racial group categories. When asked to describe the Christian values that America is based upon, Anthony jumped to list the heterosexual nuclear family, personal responsibility, and strong work ethic. In talking about racial differences, he says "it is very clear the biggest problem in Black America is Black men, not White people, not lack of opportunity, but a lack of Black men being responsible for themselves and for their choices". More importantly, both Anthony and Caleb emphasize that Christian values are important because they unify the population around a single vision.

Over and over, Caleb laments division in the country and calls for people to come together. He says that Christianity was a founding principle for the United States, but that the emphasis on group identities, such as ethnic or sexual identities, represent rebellion from a common identity as God's people and as Americans. Anthony expresses a similar sentiment, thinking about Christian values as a shared narrative, and when the country deviates from consensus around those values, "we see the culture splinter. And we've seen the culture splinter, I think, and we continue to splinter".

For this first group of participants, race is not a systemic, defining feature of the country, nor an unsurmountable impediment to personal well-being. Because racial categories are not significant barriers to belonging in the national community, there is less need to turn to alternative identities to establish a stronger claim to prototypicality as Americans. These respondents did not express strong support for a Christian America or for other measures of Christian nationalism, because too much attention to race or religion is counter to a Christian value of unity.

The other participants, though, had a different perspective on Research Question 1, communicating that they felt that they were regarded as less American by others on account of their racial identities and that discrimination and exclusion based on race were unavoidable. Martin describes growing up with two different understandings of what it meant to be American. For Whites, being American meant being patriotic, working hard, and having good morals, and that those traits would result in success in life. But he found that there was a different standard applied to Black Americans. His father tried to run for city council 1944, but, despite being an upstanding citizen, lost. His school used racist literature, such as Little Sambo stories, which communicated to him that he was not seen as equal with his White classmates. In Marshall's

town, schools were segregated by race, and his school received hand-me-down supplies from the White schools in town. His teachers and other middle class, educated Blacks he came into contact with, emphasized that he would need to work twice as hard as Whites to mitigate the effects of racial discrimination. Members of his community experienced violence at the hands of the KKK. John related stories of housing discrimination, of not being able to move in particular neighborhoods, even in recent years, due to his race. He also pointed to a lack of economic opportunities, stating "[W]e have always been a lesser. […] They look for our labor. […] Here in [name of town], as I emphasized before, we get educated, well educated. But we cannot find the employment equivalent to our education". Each of these stories emphasized that these participants felt that they were not treated as equal members of the national community, that they were seen as "less American" because of their race.

Research Question 2 asks how or if religious identity relates to participants' responses to feelings of exclusion. For this group of participants, the effect of perceived impenetrable barriers affected support for Christian nationalism, depending on whether a religious identity was available. The participant who lacked a strong religious identity responded to discrimination by moving away from notions of a Christian America. When asked about her religious identity, Gloria said that she was raised Christian by virtue of being raised in the United States where Christianity is the dominant religion, but does not describe extensive experiences of religious socialization or involvement in religious communities. Since her childhood she has been interested in comparative religion and thinks of her religious identity more in terms of spiritual-but-not-religious. When asked about the role of Christianity in how people think about being American, she comments, "because I undertook to study Christianity and to study politics and to study matriarchy, you know, and all the intersections of those things, part of what I concluded is

that being, being American is not defined by being a Christian, in spite of the fact that that is the direction politically that has bene promoted historically for the citizens of this country". She references Frederick Douglass' 1852 speech, "What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July" as a significant influence on her thinking, especially his critique of American Christianity as being supportive of White supremacy. She attributes widespread Black support of Christianity, in part, to the success of White propaganda campaigns to use Christianity as a means to quiet Black resistance to oppression. Instead of affirming a religious identity, Gloria has practiced social creativity by accentuating the strengths of her racial group. She talked about the artistic achievements of her father, a poet and member of the Black Power movement, and decried the public's lack of awareness of Black contributions.

However, other participants leaned into their religious identities as a response to perceptions of discrimination, providing several paths through which religious identity and involvement in religious communities provided relief. First, religious beliefs affirmed participants' sense of self-worth. After relating stories of racial discrimination, John says, "Christ teaches us in his program that we are basically all equal in the sight of God. […] That's powerful. […] So we all brothers and sisters, no matter what color our skin may be, we are all human beings." Martin talked about how, when faced with feelings of exclusion, he turns to his faith: "It's been very important, the role of religion, because you're taught that we're all created in God's image and He is no respecter of persons". Michael referred to Bible stories about Abraham to say that all people are God's children and that God loves all people, regardless of their skin color. These themes of God loving all people were echoed in almost all interviews.

Second, participation in religious rituals provided emotional support. Marshall cites the emotional release experienced within religious services, saying that "the singing, the preaching,

all are cathartic when it comes to Black folks, because at least for that one, two, three, four hours on a Sunday you can express your emotions and no one is going to criticize you for that". He also referenced songs sung during church services that provide emotional support, such as "I'm Going to Lay Down My Burdens at the Riverside". Prayer served a similar function for Martin, who said that when he encounters frustrations in his work in a local racial justice advocacy group, he "pray[s] and ask[s] the Lord to get me through it, you know, what I'm dealing with. The reason I'm getting it [resistance] is because of who I am and You promised to work things out for us and to show us what to do and to be our guide and companion, so I'm asking You to do that in my life. That's what got me through it". In her conversations, Gloria has noted that the majority of Black people faced with discrimination will talk about "leaning on the Lord" during their struggles. Engagement in religious practices provides emotional release and comfort in the face of discrimination.

Third, leaning on a religious identity often included involvement in Black religious communities, which are also attributed with developing a sense of comradery. Martin points to the benefits of interacting with others who have shared experiences, stating that the Black church is "where people come and they can interact with one another, they know they can express their feelings and feel a sense of […] inclusiveness and togetherness and so forth and people are likeminded". This sense of comradery extends beyond the local congregation. Despite her lack of a current religious identity, Gloria pointed to her work to reinstate Fifth Sundays, when all local Black congregations shared a worship service and meal. She said, "The 5th Sunday had gone by the wayside during the time of repression [during the 1970s and 1980s] that made it so that people kind of retreated into just holding on. […] In the mid-90s I got those black ministers together and got them to restart doing the Sundays there, […] to have a communal service".

Marshall also pointed to the Black church as an institution that extends across communities and regions. In effect, these participants describe the Black church and Black religious denominations as institutions that build an imagined community, fostering a shared Black Christian identity across the country.

Finally, and of most significance for this study, for these participants, Black religious identity extends the boundaries of American identity so that it includes Black Christians. When asked about how Black Americans think of themselves as fitting into the broader American society, Marshall immediately said, "I can give you a good example, and it's one that I knew I would bring forward and that you would probably inquire about in an indirect way, and that is one of the major institutions within the Black community, and, you know it, it's the church." With reference to Research Question 3, the liberatory elements of a Christian America became evident when participants were asked to describe the values of a Christian America. Participants who saw race as deeply affecting their belonging were more likely to refer to Christian values that necessitated attention to racial group identities. When asked what values were important to a Christian America, Marshall quickly replied, "Oh, I can tell you. Freedom, justice, democracy, […] peace." Referencing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Letter From Birmingham Jail", he says that God calls for the United States to be a country that cares for the poor and treats people fairly. In summarizing his answers, I ask Martin if he's saying that, for Black Americans he knows, justice and liberty and freedom are at the heart of their vision of Christian values for America, and he responds, "You're right on target with that, that's exactly right". Gloria believes, from her involvement with Black Christians, that this focus on justice is rooted in Black Liberation Theology, a strand of theology that has been important in many Black denominations.

In discussing his lack of support for a separation of church and state, Martin remarks, "if you're following what the church preaches in Christianity and love your neighbor as yourself, etc., well, a lot of these issues, social issues and stuff that we have, racial issues, all kinds of other things, well, you'd approach them different, they wouldn't exist. But it seems like by being able to separate church and state, well, you'd try in some lefthanded way, to justify having the different like there is, you know, the division that there is now". Marshall remarks concerning the removal of prayer from public schools, "[Prayer] is central in the black community prayer is a way of talking to God. And so, for many Black citizens, when prayer was taken out of the school it was slapping their face, because there are many Black folks who feel that our basic laws, and they didn't call them laws, they called them what was right, moral, and what was wrong, immoral, many of our laws are based in Christian principles". In other words, Christian values communicate morality and equality, so the integration of Christian values into public spaces likewise communicates morality, equality, and inclusion in the national community.

To be clear, the focus is not on necessarily convincing White Christians to accept Black Christians. When asked if the United States behaves as a Christian country, John says, "to be truthfully speaking, [I think they're a] bunch of hypocritical people saying one thing but they don't really mean it. […] I just don't like the way that they carry it out, but I still love them". The failure of White Christians to behave in ways consistent with Christian values echoed throughout the interviews. One participant referenced Dr. Martin Luther King's comment that 11:00 am on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America, another lamented the lack of racial diversity at most churches in his town, and another talked about his discomfort as a Black man in White-majority Christian spaces. Instead, the strategy of emphasizing a religious

identity and an important role for religious identity in the nature of the nation focuses on affirming inherent dignity and situating oneself within the larger national community.

Discussion and Conclusion

Christian nationalism has long been associated with White Christians and analyzed as a project that protects White privilege by implicitly linking Whiteness and Christianity to American identity. However, a large number of Black Christians support tenets of Christian nationalism and Black Americans are at least as likely to support Christian nationalism as White Americans. Why are Black Americans supportive of Christian nationalism?

This chapter argues that Christian nationalism does not have a single meaning or implication among all Americans. For Black Americans, Christian nationalism can be a mechanism for expanding the boundaries around American identity to include non-White Americans. In the first part of this chapter, I used survey data to demonstrate that support for Christian nationalism among Black respondents is associated with how respondents assess the relative Americanness of their religious vs. racial group. More positive assessments of being Christian (compared to being Black) as prototypical for American identity were associated with greater support for Christian nationalism for Black Christians. In other words, Black Christians who saw Christians as being more American than Blacks were more supportive of Christian nationalism. A vision of American identity that prioritized Christianity provided Black Christians with an avenue through which they could claim inclusion as prototypical Americans. This relationship did not hold for White respondents, who need not rely on religious identity to achieve prototypicality as Americans.

Interviews with Black Christians provided more evidence to support this relationship. Participants varied in terms of the extent to which they believed that their racial identities inhibited their full inclusion as Americans. Participants who believed that race was not a barrier to American identity were less supportive of Christian nationalism. While their religious identities were important, they did not assert that Christianity should be at the center of American identity. Rather, they expressed support for unity, regardless of racial or religious cleavages. Participants who felt that their racial identities limited their inclusion as Americans expressed stronger support for Christian nationalist precepts, such as federal government support of Christian values. However, in their discussion, their definitions of Christian values included concepts like racial justice, equality, and democracy, concepts that explicitly include Black Americans within an American identity.

There are several implications of these findings. First, these findings point to the need for targeted study of Black Christians. Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of work on the effects of White Christian nationalism, but support for Christian nationalism transcends racial boundaries. Why individuals support Christian nationalism can vary based on their social location and how they assess their belonging within the larger national community, and focusing on non-White Christians can provide insights into how Christian nationalism is operating. Second, this chapter makes a contribution to the growing literature on the mediating role of race in evaluations of the effect of Christian nationalist support on attitudes. While several studies have found no effect (Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2019), others have concurred with these findings that Christian nationalism does shift attitudes differently for Black and White respondents (Perry and Whitehead 2019; Perry et al. 2021). In particular, it draws attention to the ways in which commonly-used measures of Christian nationalism may be interpreted

differently by members of different racial groups. For Black Americans, Christian nationalism is associated with support for social justice, including government policies to address structural racism, while for White Americans, Christian nationalism is associated with greater support for a laissez-faire approach, including on race-related issues (Kruse 2015).

This study suffers from several limitations. First, as a correlational study, assertions of causality are difficult to prove. Future research should explore alternative methodological approaches that would test stronger causal statements around the effects of identity denial and identity priming on support for Christian nationalism. Additionally, the inclusion of more participants in the interviews would allow for greater certainty around the conclusions presented here. Not only is the sample size small, but these participants were also drawn from a single geographic location. Non-Black participants were not included in the sample, limiting comparative analyses.

Christian nationalism as a concept has drawn a great deal of attention within both the religion and politics academic community and among the popular press. The general conclusion is that Christian nationalism entails support for a racial hierarchy that elevates White Americans. However, the story is very different for Black Americans, for whom Christian nationalism entails inclusion as true Americans.

Chapter Five: The Salvation of Old Glory in a Secularizing World

The United States is becoming more secular in several senses. Fewer Americans affiliate with a religious tradition or religious identity. Americans engage in religious behaviors like church attendance less frequently. Religion is increasingly seen as a private, personal choice, and scientific explanations of events are privileged over supernatural ones. For over 50 years, public institutions have differentiated themselves from religious ones, by, for example, reducing allusions to religious traditions like prayer in public school. Yet, in an era of secularization, many Americans are drawn to a national identity that explicitly links religion and patriotism. Why has Christian nationalism persisted? And to what extent is Christian nationalism distinct, and not simply a manifestation of other identity attachments?

These questions merit serious consideration. Groups have begun to battle over which rights should be advanced by the state or protected from state interference. The most publicized battles feature rights that exist in tension with each other, such as a same-sex couple's right to purchase a wedding cake without discrimination versus a baker's right to refuse to be affiliated with rituals that violate his deeply-held religious beliefs. Americans who believe that Christians deserve a prized place at the national table will increasingly find themselves jostling with Americans with other worldviews who challenge Christian privilege.

Second, the study of Christian nationalism forces re-examination of a paradox underlying the study of religion and politics: the contradiction of religion's pro-social and anti-social correlates. Religion has been associated with civic activity and volunteerism (Putnam and Campbell 2012), generosity and charitable giving (Willard, Shariff, and Norenzayan 2016), and less aggressive behavior and more helping behavior (Saroglou et al. 2005). At the same time,

though, religion is also linked with prejudice against ethnoreligious outgroups, rooted in "an order-based fear of the unknown, the perception of the outgroup as a symbolic threat to our values, and authoritarian attitudes of conservatism, conformity to authority, and legitimized aggression" (Saroglou 2021, 69).

Finally, national identity is a potential tool to ameliorate social divisions. The United States is experiencing extreme levels of polarization on many levels. The gap between rich and poor is large and growing (McCarty, Poole, and Rosenthal 2016), politics in rural and urban settings differ dramatically (Cramer 2016), and the salience of race as a political cleavage is significant (Hajnal 2020; Jardina 2019; Tesler 2012). Over the past fifty years, these social divisions have increasingly mapped onto partisan identities, creating mega-identities with dangerous consequences for gridlock and even political violence (Finkel et al. 2020; Perry 2022; Walter 2022). As a super-ordinate identity, national identity could serve as a uniting force, bridging these divisions (Gaertner and Dovidio 2012; Transue 2007). While masquerading as an inclusive national identity valuing freedom and equality, Christian nationalism instead maps onto already-existing cleavages, and therefore has the potential to exacerbate political and social divisions.

Review of Findings

This dissertation explored the boundaries of Christian nationalism in the United States and the motivations for adopting an identity which fuses religion and nationality. Chapter Two used social media communications to explore how organizations and elites characterize the issues of the day, the emotional content of the language used by writers, and the emotional

responses of readers. Applying insights from Social Identity Theory and the psychology of emotion to communications, I hypothesized that social media communications are a mechanism through which group norms can be communicated and around which individuals communicate and experience emotions related to their group identities. Christian nationalist communications were compared to Christian non-nationalist and patriotic communications to reveal similarities and differences between group types. Content analysis of a sample of Facebook posts from 2019 revealed that groups use social media communications to indicate which issues are important to the group. Christian nationalist communications emphasize abortion, LGBT issues, and religious liberty, none of which were featured in Christian non-nationalist or patriotic groups' communications. Posts associated with these topics were not associated with more reader interaction. Instead of generating traffic, they indicated to readers which issues are priorities for the group and the group's stances on these issues. Christian nationalist communications had a significantly higher level of fear language, while Christian non-nationalist posts were associated with anger language. Christian nationalist groups used fear language most often when discussing stereotypical topics, with the exception of religious liberty topics, for which anger language dominated. Communications have an influence on readers. Readers react to negative emotion language with fewer "love" emoji reactions, and they respond to anger language with anger emoji reactions. These responses are stronger for Christian nationalist groups than for the other group types.

These results indicate that communications matter. Groups' topics are selected strategically by authors to indicate the norms of the group, and readers respond to the emotional content of messages. Second, Christian nationalism is a religious nationalism cannot be reduced to either religion or nationalism. Christian nationalist communications featured distinctly

different content and used a different profile of emotion language than either Christian non-nationalist or patriotic communications.

Next, Chapter Three contrasts the effects of religious and racial demographic change on support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of discrimination. Drawing insights from Sociofunctional Threat Theory, a theory that integrates Social Identity Theory with the psychology of emotion, I hypothesized that individuals experience emotional reactions when they sense that their racial and religious group is in decline and that these emotions should, in turn, influence their opinions on group privilege, namely the role of religion in American public life and perceptions of discrimination against group members. To test this theory, survey respondents were presented with one of three graphs showing change over time: racial demographic change, religious demographic change, and change in geographic mobility (the control). White Christian respondents who were made aware that Whites could become a minority in the United States within the next 20 years reported no change in emotional state and were no more likely to express support for Christian nationalism or to believe that Whites or Christians were discriminated against. However, respondents who were made aware of declining numbers of Christians in the United States were more likely to experience the negative emotions of worry, anger, fear, and disgust. While no treatments produced direct effects, respondents who experienced fear reported less support for Christian nationalism while respondents who experienced disgust reported greater support for Christian nationalism. Disgust also mediated the effect of the religious demographic change treatment on perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination.

These findings point to a conclusion that Christian nationalism is not exclusively a response to racial demographic change. Rather, the rapid secularization of the United States

produces negative emotions in White Christians. Those White Christians who are disgusted by increased religious diversity in the country are more likely to draw boundaries around American identity that explicitly reference Christianity and are more likely to see Christians as targets of persecution.

Finally, Chapter Four asks why Black Americans express strong support for Christian nationalism. I utilize the logic of Social Identity Theory to examine how multiple identity categories intersect, arguing that Christian nationalism is an identity management strategy that, by placing Christianity central to American identity, creates space for Black Christians to be prototypical Americans. The more Black Christians feel that Christians are more representative of American-ness than Blacks, the more strongly they support Christian nationalism. White American support for Christian nationalism is not affected by their weighting of racial and religious prototypicality. Interviews with Black residents of a mid-sized Great Plains town demonstrated the emancipatory nature of Christian nationalism. Participants who did not believe that there were racial barriers to inclusion as Americans had ambivalent feelings about a Christian America. Those participants who more keenly perceived racial discrimination were more supportive of a Christian America envisioned as a epitomized by values of racial justice and equality. For Black supporters of Christian nationalism, religious nationalism is a path towards expanded national symbolic boundaries.

Themes

Although each of these studies addressed a separate research question, three main themes emerge. First, Christian nationalism is distinct. It is not reducible to nationalism or religion or

race. From Chapter Two, we know that Christian nationalist, Christian non-nationalist, and patriotic groups do not discuss the same issues, do not define group boundaries in similar ways, and communicate with different emotional profiles. Christian nationalist groups are not simply expressing patriotic or nationalistic sentiments. Nor are they in lock-step with other Christians, as evidenced by differences between Christian nationalist and Christian non-nationalist groups.

More notably, though, Christian nationalism is not reducible to racism. Increased attention to racial issues in 2020, including to the role of race in American Christianity, has been important for identifying the ways in which White Christians have employed religious rhetoric and symbols to advance White supremacy (Yukich and Edgell 2020; Jones 2020). However, Christian nationalism is not simply racism, even among White proponents. Chapter Three demonstrated that racial demographic change does not increase negative emotions, but religious demographic change does. Moreover, only religious demographic change shifts support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination. The full models in Chapter Three include symbolic racism, which is indeed related to stronger negative emotional reactions to both racial and religious demographic change, as well as to support for Christian nationalism, perceptions of discrimination against Whites, and perceptions of discrimination against Christians. Racial attitudes play a role. But religious and racial demographic change have distinct effects on support for religious nationalism.

Second, emotion is important to the study of identities. People think of their futures as tied to the futures of the groups with which they identify, and individuals experience emotional responses when group-related stimuli are made salient. As presented in Chapter Three, White Christians experienced significantly higher levels of disgust, worry, anger, and fear when they were made aware of religious demographic change. In other words, when made aware that their

religious group would soon lose demographic dominance, individual White Christians experienced negative emotions.

Emotional reactions are also present in elite communications. Group leaders use emotion to signal to group members how the group feels about particular issues. Chapter Two highlights patterns in which elites signal their emotion through social media posts using language associated with specific emotion profiles. Even though all groups may address a particular issue like economics, they do so through an emotional profile distinct to the group. These elite communications matter in that readers respond with their own emotional reactions. In fact, readers sometimes respond with reactions that are more intense than those signaled by elites, by, for example, responding to elite fear language with anger.

Finally, while racial identities are not determinative, race does matter in shaping the motivations for embracing Christian nationalism. Black and White Americans think about the relationship between their belonging to the national community and their religious identities differently. White Americans, who are prototypical Americans on the basis of their racial identity, already belong. But, as discussed in Chapter Four, Black Americans can lean on their religious identities as Christians to stress that they, too, are prototypical Americans. Indeed, each of the participants in the interviews in Chapter Four brought up, without prompting, their racial identities as Black and acknowledged that racism challenges the notion that Black Americans are fully American. For those who felt especially excluded, the idea of the United States as a Christian nation was prophetic—a call for the United States to more fully embody Christian principles of love and equality.

Gaps and Future Directions

My research has several shortcomings, some of which point to a need for future research. First, these chapters indicate that more attention to the role of emotion in group identities, particularly Christian nationalism, is needed. Chapter Two suggested that Christian nationalist communications are dominated by fear language. Chapter Three demonstrated that fear generated by exposure to religious demographic change decreased support for Christian nationalism while disgust generated by exposure to religious demographic change increased support for Christian nationalism and perceptions that Christians are targets of discrimination. While these emotions predicted reader responses and support for Christian nationalism, it is less clear whether or how they translate into political behavior.

Additionally, while Chapters Two and Three focused exclusively on negative emotions, positive emotions are also likely to play a role in building attachments to group identities and to facilitating (or inhibiting) the effects of group identities on behavior. A significant percentage of Christian nationalist Facebook messages were inspirational, intended to instill confidence, enthusiasm, and peace in readers. How do enthusiasm and confidence affect support for Christian nationalism, trust in information provided by religious leaders, and tolerance for outgroup members? And how do positive emotions affect the willingness of group members to take action to advance the goals of the group, like contacting elected officials or voting?

Second, the effects of secularization deserve further attention. Despite strong efforts in the 1980s and 1990s to wage a war for the culture of the country, Christian nationalists have altered their battle plans in light of a declining share of the population that ascribes to Christianity. Instead, Christian nationalists have come to use the language of religious liberties

and First Amendment rights. Several studies have argued that this rights turn will increase generalized tolerance and respect for the religious rights of other groups (Djupe, Lewis, and Jelen 2016; Lewis 2017). However, Chapter Three demonstrated that religious demographic change increases negative emotions, which then increase support for Christian nationalism and perceptions of anti-Christian discrimination. The analysis of emotion from Chapter Two showed that anger language is most prominent in discussions of topics through a religious liberty frame. None of these outcomes—belief that your group is targeted, feelings of anger and disgust—are associated with tolerance. Christian nationalists have made the courts and legal action a focus of their activity. Religious liberty claims often assert that members of the LGBT community are requiring that Christians violate their conscience—do religious liberty frames increase support for pro-LGBT policies specifically? And, given increasing popular support for LGBT equality, how does the endorsement of religious liberty claims by courts affect public trust in judicial institutions?

Finally, I return to the general question of the role of religion in politics. Some have argued that civil religion and Christian nationalism emerged differently in the United States and produce different results, with the former leading to greater national unity and public service and the latter dividing the country into "us" and "them" (Gorski 2017). The Christian values ascribed to Christian nationalism by Black participants would be classified as civil religion, and these values were associated with strong support for equality and inclusion, as reported in Chapter Four. But the line between these two concepts is not so clear. In August 2021, President Biden quoted Isaiah 6:8, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?," answering that the US military had responded to the call to go to Afghanistan. This use of civil religion, intended to point to values of self-sacrifice for others and public service, provoked fierce

criticism of Biden's use of religion as inappropriate (Huckabee 2021; Stetzer 2021). The high levels of anger resulting from Christian non-nationalist communications calling for wider national boundaries and more concentrated attention to those on the margins (from Chapter Two) points to the need to better understand, in a rapidly secularizing country, the circumstances under which references to religious texts or values promote pro-social attitudes. Who responds to civil liberties frames (especially when compared to Christian nationalist frames), which types of messengers are the most effective, to whom is greater tolerance afforded, and to what extent can civil religion framings increase support for policies that would address inequities or challenge partisan alignments?

Final Thoughts

Religion has long played a significant role in American public life. As early as 1630, John Winthrop declared that Puritan settlements would be a "city upon a hill", demonstrating for the world how religiously-informed behavior would lead to civic harmony and prosperity. In *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville noted that religion held a strong influence over the political practices of Americans by directing attention to the needs of the community and equality.

Ironically, when religious identities are fused with national identities, these benefits of religion for a thriving democratic political system are compromised. Identity fusion can be used to draw distinctions between "true and worthy Americans" and "others," conferring greater benefits of citizenship and national belonging on a select few. Especially problematic is the

tendency of White Christian nationalism to reinforce religious boundaries with ones drawn along racial and partisan lines.

Christian nationalists cannot simply be dismissed as a fringe element of American society—the tenets of Christian nationalism are held by millions of Americans, and, as a core constituency of the Republican party, Christian nationalist sentiments can be translated into political outcomes. Yet Christianity and the Bible are multivocal, containing teachings that would elevate Christians above non-believers, but also teachings that call for compassion and love across social cleavages. The challenge going forward is to identify paths through which Christian nationalists can be invited to embrace a more inclusive notion of what it means to be American.

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Appendix 1

Table 18: Randomization analysis.

Means for each group are presented, along with the p-value of any t-tests significant at the .1 level. Of White Christians, 170 respondents (30.69%) were assigned to the control group, 186 respondents (33.57%) to the race treatment group, and 198 respondents (35.74%) to the religion treatment group.

	Control vs Religion	Control vs Race	Religion vs Race
Born again/evangelical			
Attendance			
Party ID	Control = 4.355 Religion = 3.797 p-value = 0.029		
Ideology		Control = 4.630 Race = 4.270 p-value = 0.0834	
Symbolic racism			
Age			
Education		Control = 4.835 Race = 5.188 p-value = 0.027	Race = 5.188 Religion = 4.934 p-value = 0.091
Male			
Income			

Table 19: Summary Statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Christian nationalism	554	14.724	5.348	1	25
Whites face discrimination	552	2.451	1.039	1	4
Christians face discrimination	553	2.535	1.019	1	4
Support for violence	554	3.123	1.371	1	5
Worried	554	2.655	1.932	1	7
Angry	554	2.439	1.927	1	7
Afraid	554	2.527	1.936	1	7
Disgusted	554	2.525	1.980	1	7
Born Again	554	0.336	0.473	0	1
Attendance	554	2.435	1.726	0	5
Party ID	552	4.020	2.416	1	7
Ideology	538	4.413	1.917	1	7
Symbolic racism	554	9.283	4.156	0	16
Male	554	0.525	0.500	0	1
Education	554	4.989	1.485	1	7
Income	554	5.177	2.619	1	11
Age	554	4.953	1.767	1	9

Question Wording and Response Percentages for White Christians

Below is a list of questions. To what extent did you experience these emotions while viewing the graph?

	Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Quite a bit	Very much	An extreme amount
Worried	257 46.39%	60 10.83%	65 11.72%	57 10.29%	41 7.40%	52 9.39%	22 3.97%
Angry	309 55.78%	44 7.94%	42 7.58%	53 9.57%	41 7.40%	44 7.94%	21 3.79%
Afraid	288 51.99%	52 9.39%	48 8.66%	57 10.29%	40 7.22%	47 8.48%	22 3.97%
Disgusted	294 53.07%	57 10.29%	33 5.96%	60 10.83%	33 5.96%	52 9.39%	25 4.51%

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Mostly agree	Undecided	Mostly disagree	Strongly disagree
The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation.	123 22.20%	107 19.31%	134 24.19%	83 14.98%	107 19.31%
The federal government should advocate Christian values.	136 24.55%	157 28.34%	138 24.91%	69 12.45%	54 9.75%
The federal government should enforce strict separation of church and state.					
The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces.	169 30.51%	166 29.96%	123 22.20%	59 10.65%	37 6.68%
The success of the United States is part of God's plan.	124 22.38%	138 24.91%	165 29.78%	54 9.75%	73 13.18%
The federal government should allow prayer in public schools.	208 37.55%	134 24.19%	119 21.48%	52 9.39%	41 7.40%

Just your impression, in the United States today, is there a lot of discrimination against these groups, or not? Nor each group below, please indicate.

	A lot	Some	Only a little	None at all
Whites	96 17.39%	190 34.42%	133 24.09%	133 24.09%
Christians	102 18.44%	208 37.61%	127 22.97%	116 20.98%

Irish, Italians, Jewish and many other minorities overcame prejudice and worked their way up. Blacks should do the same without any special favors.

Agree strongly	198 35.74%
Agree somewhat	168 30.32%
Neither agree nor disagree	109 19.68%
Disagree somewhat	41 7.40%
Disagree strongly	38 6.86%

Generations of slavery and discrimination have created conditions that make it difficult for blacks to work their way out of the lower class.

Agree strongly	113 20.40%
Agree somewhat	133 24.01%
Neither agree nor disagree	97 17.51%
Disagree somewhat	91 16.43%
Disagree strongly	120 21.66%

Over the past few years, blacks have gotten less than they deserve.

Agree strongly	105 18.95%
Agree somewhat	109 19.68%
Neither agree nor disagree	146 26.35%
Disagree somewhat	81 14.62%
Disagree strongly	113 20.40%

It’s really just a matter of some people not trying hard enough, if blacks would only try harder they could be just as well off as whites

Agree strongly	149 26.90%
Agree somewhat	163 29.42%
Neither agree nor disagree	131

	23.65%
Disagree somewhat	65 11.73%
Disagree strongly	46 8.30%

Would you describe yourself as a 'born-again' or 'evangelical Christian', or not?

Yes	368 66.43%
No	186 33.57%

Lots of things come up that keep people from attending religious services even if they want to. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?

More than once a week	72 13.00%
Once a week	140 25.27%
Once or twice a month	50 9.03%
A few times a year	82 14.80%
Seldom	115 20.76%
Never	95 17.15%

In politics TODAY, do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent, or what?

Republican	209 37.73%
Democrat	205 37.00%
Independent	132 23.83%
Other	8 1.44%

Would you call yourself a strong Republican or not very strong?

Strong	148 70.81%
Not very strong	61 29.19%

Would you call yourself a strong Democrat or not very strong?

Strong	148

	72.20%
Not very strong	57 27.80%

Do you think of yourself as closer to the Democrat or Republican party?

Republican	42 30.00%
Democrat	39 27.86%
Neither	59 42.14%

In general, would you describe your political views as:

Very liberal	53 9.85%
Liberal	57 10.59%
Slightly liberal	42 7.81%
Moderate/ middle of the road	142 26.39%
Slightly conservative	48 8.92%
Conservative	99 18.40%
Very conservative	97 18.03%

What was the last grade in school you completed?

8th grade or less	2 0.36%
High school incomplete [grades 9, 10, 11]	16 2.89%
High school complete [grade 12]	106 19.13%
Some college, but no degree	97 17.51%
Associates degree	56 10.11%
College graduate / bachelor's degree	195 35.20%
Postgraduate degree, such as Master's	82 14.80%

Last year, that is in 2020, what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?

Less than $20,000	65

	11.73%
20 to under $30,000	45 8.12%
30 to under $40,000	42 7.58%
40 to under $50,000	48 8.66%
50 to under $75,000	101 18.23
75 to under $100,000	94 16.97%
100 to under $125,000	53 9.57%
125 to under $150,000	51 9.21%
$150,000 to under $175,000	21 3.79%
$175,000 to under $200,000	16 2.89%
$200,000 and above	18 3.25%

Do you currently describe yourself as male, female, transgender, or something else?

Male	219 52.53%
Female	262 47.29%
Transgender	1 0.18%

What is your age?

18-19	2 0.36%
20-29	45 8.12%
30-39	108 19.49%
40-49	70 12.64%
50-59	74 13.36%
60-69	137 24.73%
70-79	103 18.59%
80-89	13

	2.35%
90-99	2 0.36%

Table 20: Full Results for White Christians

	Christian Nationalism		Perceptions of Discrimination against Whites		Perceptions of Discrimination against Christians	
Treatment Type	Race	Religion	Race	Religion	Race	Religion
Disgust Symbolic racism	0.051* (0.021)	0.047* (0.020)	0.051* (0.022)	0.047* (0.021)	0.051** (0.017)	0.044* (0.020)
Born Again	0.575* (0.285)	0.810* (0.296)	0.575 (0.244)	0.810* (0.325)	0.575* (0.285)	0.842** (0.294)
Attendance	0.130 (0.068)	0.080 (0.071)	0.130* (0.065)	0.078 (0.070)	0.130 (0.077)	0.079 (0.071)
Treatment	0.383 (0.205)	0.807*** (0.192)	0.383* (0.189)	0.797*** (0.202)	0.383 (0.172)	0.811*** (0.228)
Anger Symbolic racism	0.049* (0.022)	0.030 (0.024)	0.049* (0.022)	0.030 (0.021)	0.049** (0.018)	0.028 (0.018)
Born Again	0.384 (0.259)	0.508 (0.258)	0.384 (0.308)	0.509 (0.310)	0.384 (0.267)	0.523* (0.251)
Attendance	0.124* (0.058)	0.164* (0.063)	0.124* (0.057)	0.164* (0.073)	0.124* (0.067)	0.128* (0.057)
Treatment	0.191 (0.214)	0.581*** (0.210)	0.191 (0.165)	0.580*** (0.182)	0.191 (0.175)	0.883*** (0.204)
Fear Symbolic racism	0.060** (0.020)	0.050* (0.023)	0.060** (0.021)	0.050** (0.019)	0.060*** (0.017)	0.048* (0.020)
Born Again	0.411 (0.305)	0.727* (0.295)	0.411 (0.253)	0.730* (0.324)	0.411 (0.246)	0.780* (0.268)
Attendance	0.131* (0.063)	0.127 (0.062)	0.131* (0.061)	0.128 (0.076)	0.141* (0.066)	0.129* (0.057)
Treatment	0.438* (0.181)	0.857*** (0.197)	0.438* (0.179)	0.851*** (0.175)	0.438* (0.175)	0.883*** (0.204)
Worried Symbolic racism	0.065** (0.024)	0.072*** (0.021)	0.065** (0.021)	0.073*** (0.020)	0.065*** (0.018)	0.070** (0.022)
Born again	0.351 (0.266)	0.821** (0.314)	0.351 (0.325)	0.824* (0.313)	0.351 (0.237)	0.886** (0.287)
Attendance	0.064 (0.064)	0.106 (0.062)	0.064 (0.066)	0.107 (0.075)	0.064 (0.064)	0.108 (0.062)
Treatment	0.333 (0.217)	1.048*** (0.221)	0.333 (0.176)	1.044*** (0.199)	0.333 (0.188)	1.080*** (0.211)
DV Disgusted	0.040 (0.341)	0.894* (0.421)	0.085 (0.060)	0.122 (0.078)	0.006 (0.070)	0.242*** (0.058)
Anger	0.043	0.165	0.043	0.098	0.054	-0.004

	(0.520)	(0.506)	(0.055)	(0.097)	(0.078)	(0.058)
Fear	-0.136	-0.949*	-0.111	-0.006	-0.126*	-0.060
	(0.613)	(0.405)	(0.077)	(0.095)	(0.068)	(0.076)
Worry	0.538*	0571	0.214***	-0.062	0.160**	-0.052
	(0.275)	(0.403)	(0.058)	(0.085)	(0.073)	(0.061)
Treatment	0.095	-0.467	-0.196*	-0.081	-0.017	-0.076
	(0.694)	(0.511)	(0.082)	(0.133)	(0.124)	(0.107)
Party ID	0.066	0.220	0.068	0.017	0.062	0.102**
	(0.202)	(0.203)	(0.038)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.034)
Ideology	0.669**	0.340	-0.022	0.047	0.066	0.004
	(0.237)	(0.208)	(0.050)	(0.055)	(0.050)	(0.049)
Symbolic racism	0.349***	0.414***	0.064***	0.063***	0.051**	0.030*
	(0.091)	(0.068)	(0.014)	(0.012)	(0.017)	(0.015)
Born again	1.816*	2.116***	-0.175	-0.121	0.018	0.367*
	(0.725)	(0.719)	(0.155)	(0.114)	(0.128)	(0.174)
Attendance	0.759***	0.460**	0.119***	0.110**	0.128***	0.118***
	(0.204)	(0.179)	(0.028)	(0.038)	(0.036)	(0.035)
Education	-0.439*	0.039	-0.028	0.033	0.042	-0.002
	(0.213)	(0.223)	(0.039)	(0.042)	(0.054)	(0.053)
Income	-0.046	-0.109	-0.019	0.025	-0.038	0.036
	(0.124)	(0.123)	(0.020)	(0.026)	(0.023)	(0.030)
Male	-1.737**	-0.973	0.083	-0.092	0.004	-0.078
	(0.532)	(0.575)	(0.113)	(0.141)	(0.132)	(0.109)
Age	-0.259	-0.175	-0.088*	-0.081	-0.078*	-0.044
	(0.214)	(0.169)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.034)	(0.036)

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from SEM; bootstrapped standard errors are in parentheses.
Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05)

Table 21: Results for Full Sample

	Christian Nationalism		Perceptions of Discrimination against Whites		Perceptions of Discrimination against Christians	
Treatment Type	Race	Religion	Race	Religion	Race	Religion
Disgust Symbolic racism	0.051* (0.026)	0.047* (0.093)	0.051** (0.018)	0.047* (0.022)	0.051* (0.021)	0.044* (0.022)
Born Again	0.575 (0.308)	0.810** (0.263)	0.575* (0.280)	0.827** (0.277)	0.575 (0.314)	0.860*** (0.263)
Attendance	0.130* (0.057)	0.078 (0.073)	0.130* (0.060)	0.080 (0.062)	0.130 (0.067)	0.080 (0.061)
Treatment	0.383 (0.219)	0.797*** (0.218)	0.383 (0.206)	0.807*** (0.203)	0.383 (0.187)	0.821*** (0.176)
Anger Symbolic racism	.049* (0.023)	0.030 (0.018)	0.049** (0.018)	0.030 (0.022)	0.049* (0.020)	0.029 (0.022)
Born Again	0.384 (0.294)	0.495 (0.255)	0.384 (0.277)	0.509* (0.254)	0.384 (0.281)	0.537* (0.231)
Attendance	0.124* (0.053)	0.163** (0.063)	0.124* (0.059)	0.164** (0.062)	0.124* (0.058)	0.163* (0.064)
Treatment	0.191 (0.186)	0.573** (0.186)	0.191 (0.182)	0.580*** (0.181)	0.191 (0.178)	0.593** (0.190)
Fear Symbolic racism	0.060* (0.027)	0.051** (0.017)	0.060** (0.019)	0.050* (0.021)	0.060** (0.020)	0.047* (0.020)
Born Again	0.411 (0.319)	0.748** (0.287)	0.411 (0.261)	0.730* (0.285)	0.411 (0.279)	0.759** (0.247)
Attendance	0.131* (0.060)	0.129* (0.061)	0.131* (0.059)	0.128* (0.064)	0.131* (0.056)	0.127* (0.061)
Treatment	0.438* (0.217)	0.869*** (0.188)	0.438* (0.184)	0.851*** (0.189)	0.438* (0.176)	0.871*** (0.176)
Worried Symbolic racism	0.065* (0.027)	0.073*** (0.019)	0.065*** (0.019)	0.073*** (0.023)	0.065*** (0.020)	0.069** (0.022)
Born again	0.351 (0.270)	0.850** (0.298)	0.351 (0.254)	0.824** (0.296)	0.351 (0.273)	0.858*** (0.251)
Attendance	0.064 (0.051)	0.109 (0.070)	0.064 (0.062)	0.107 (0.061)	0.064 (0.062)	0.106 (0.063)
Treatment	0.333 (0.233)	1.064*** (0.218)	0.333 (0.174)	1.044*** (0.201)	0.333* (0.162)	1.064*** (0.205)
DV Disgusted	0.040 (0.349)	0.873 (0.401)	0.085 (0.064)	0.132 (0.079)	0.005 (0.064)	0.249*** (0.066)
Anger	0.044	0.154	0.043	0.104	0.054	0.002

	(0.526)	(0.410)	(0.068)	(0.094)	(0.092)	(0.061)
Fear	-0.132	-0.932*	-0.111	-0.014	-0.127	-0.066
	(0.569)	(0.471)	(0.081)	(0.107)	(0.075)	(0.086)
Worry	0.536	0.585	0.214**	-0.070	0.161*	-0.059
	(0.334)	(0.344)	(0.073)	(0.091)	(0.070)	(0.081)
Treatment	0.095	-0.475	-0.196	-0.078	-0.017	-0.074
	(0.736)	(0.531)	(0.113)	(0.114)	(0.111)	(0.096)
Party ID	0.068	0.214	0.068*	0.020	0.061	0.104***
	(0.204)	(0.151)	(0.031)	(0.035)	(0.070)	(0.030)
Ideology	0.576*	0.345	-0.023	0.044	0.067	0.002
	(0.281)	(0.226)	(0.036)	(0.052)	(0.046)	(0.038)
Symbolic racism	0.348***	0.413***	0.064***	0.064***	0.051**	0.030
	(0.082)	(0.073)	(0.012)	(0.014)	(0.017)	(0.016)
Born again	1.826***	2.114***	-0.172	-0.131	0.015	0.364*
	(0.548)	(0.607)	(0.140)	(0.144)	(0.157)	(0.144)
Attendance	0.759***	0.461*	0.119***	0.109**	0.128***	0.117*
	(0.146)	(0.186)	(0.031)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.048)
Education	-0.439	0.044	-0.028	0.031	0.042	-0.001
	(0.254)	(0.200)	(0.050)	(0.041)	(0.048)	(0.046)
Income	-0.047	-0.109	-0.019	0.025	-0.037	0.036
	(0.125)	(0.097)	(0.030)	(0.024)	(0.030)	(0.027)
Male	-1.732***	-0.990	0.087	-0.083	0.002	-0.069
	(0.513)	(0.557)	(0.091)	(0.126)	(0.120)	(0.124)
Age	-0.242	-0.163	-0.083**	-0.074*	-0.084*	-0.040
	(0.181)	(0.160)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.036)

Notes: Coefficients are estimates from SEM; bootstrapped standard errors are in parentheses. Significance levels: ***<.001; ** < .01; * < .05)

Appendix 2

Survey Question Tabulations

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The federal government should declare the United States a Christian nation.

	White	Black
Strongly agree	207 (24.24%)	29 (17.58%)
Agree	215 (25.18%)	59 (35.76%)
Disagree	198 (23.19%)	35 (21.21%)
Strongly disagree	234 (27.4%)	42 (25.45%)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The federal government should advocate Christian values.

	White	Black
Strongly agree	224 (26.23%)	46 (27.88%)
Agree	289 (33.84%)	48 (29.09%)
Disagree	165 (19.32%)	44 (26.67%)
Strongly disagree	176 (20.61%)	27 (16.36%)

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: The federal government should allow prayer in public schools.

	White	Black
Strongly agree	302 (35.36%)	56 (33.94%)
Agree	275 (32.20%)	66 (40.00%)
Disagree	139 (16.28%)	32 (19.39%)
Strongly disagree	138 (16.16%)	11 (6.67%)

Please bring to mind individuals who are citizens of the United States. In your mind, how "American" are people who belong to the following groups? That is, how strongly are they identified with America and all things American? (ranges from 1 = not at all American to 7 = Absolutely American)

Mean (Standard deviation)	White	Black
Blacks		5.62

		(1.79)
Whites	6.21 (1.19)	
Christians	6.04 (1.34)	5.53 (1.54)
Americanness	-0.17 (1.03)	-0.09 (1.61)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	White	Black
8th grade or less	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.61%)
High school incomplete	15 (1.76%)	5 (3.03%)
High school degree or equivalent	119 (13.95%)	41 (24.85%)
Some college but no degree	137 (16.06%)	32 (19.39%)
Associate's degree	99 (11.61%)	25 (15.15%)
College graduate/ bachelor's degree	243 (28.49%)	41 (24.85%)
Graduate degree	240 (28.14%)	20 (12.12%)

Do you currently describe yourself as male, female, or transgender?

	White	Black
Female	359 (42.04%)	101 (61.21%)
Not female	495 (57.96%)	64 (38.79%)

Last year (2019), what was your total family income from all sources, before taxes?

	White	Black
Less than $10,000	34 (3.99%)	24 (14.55%)
$10,000-19,999	54 (6.33%)	21 (12.73%)
$20,000-29,999	55 (6.45%)	15 (9.09%)
$30,000-39,999	72 (8.44%)	17 (10.30%)
$40,000-49,999	61 (7.15%)	15 (9.09%)
$50,000-59,999	62 (7.27%)	20 (12.12%)

$60,000-69,999	38 (4.45%)	10 (6.06%)
$70,000-79,999	57 (6.68%)	12 (7.27%)
$80,000-89,999	45 (5.28%)	5 (3.03%)
$90,000-99,999	47 (5.51%)	2 (1.21%)
$100,000-149,999	183 (21.45%)	13 (7.88%)
More than $150,000	145 (17.00%)	11 (6.67%)

What is your age in years?

Mean (Standard deviation)	White	Black
	47.08 (15.65)	45.76 (18.15)

Do you consider yourself to be a Born Again Christian?

	White	Black
No	578 (67.68%)	76 (46.06%)
Yes	276 (32.32%)	89 (53.94%)

Lots of things come up that keep people from attending religious services even if they want to. Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services... more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?

	White	Black
Never	251 (29.39%)	37 (22.42%)
Seldom	142 (16.63%)	28 (16.97%)
A few times a year	121 (14.17%)	28 (16.97%)
Once or twice a month	74 (8.67%)	20 (12.12%)
Once a week	200 (23.42%)	36 (21.82%)
More than once a week	66 (7.73%)	16 (9.70%)

Do you consider yourself a Republican, Democrat, or independent, or what? (Note: “Other” coded as .)

	White	Black
Strong Democrat	112	63

	(13.27%)	(39.13%)
Democrat	85 (10.07%)	53 (32.92%)
Not very strong Democrat	52 (6.16%)	11 (6.83%)
Independent (don't lean toward either party)	157 (18.60%)	22 (13.66%)
Not very strong Republican	92 (10.90%)	5 (3.11%)
Republican	142 (16.82%)	2 (1.24%)
Strong Republican	204 (24.17%)	5 (3.11%)

How would you describe your political views?

	White	Black
Extremely liberal	105 (12.30%)	25 (15.15%)
Liberal	91 (10.66%)	38 (23.03%)
Somewhat liberal	72 (8.43%)	21 (12.73%)
Moderate	234 (27.40%)	62 (37.58%)
Somewhat conservative	103 (12.06%)	9 (5.45%)
Conservative	131 (15.34%)	5 (3.03%)
Extremely conservative	118 (13.82%)	5 (3.03%)

Interview Protocol

- [Thank participants for participating. Review consent form and obtain oral consent.]
- [Obtain permission to record. Begin recording.]
- [Ask if participant has any additional questions.]
- As you were growing up, where did you learn about what it meant to be American?
- People sometimes have different ideas of what a "real" American is like. How would you describe a "real" American? Do you think that your perspective is similar to other Black [residents of the community]?
- [If I don't know how they racially identify, ask, "How do you identify yourself racially?"]
- When do you (or Black people you know) feel like your identity as an American is affirmed? When do you (or others) feel like your American identity is challenged by others?

- When you (or other Black people you know) feel like their American identity is being challenged, how do you/they respond?
- I'd now like to ask you a few questions about religion.
    - How do you describe your religious identity?
    - [Try to understand their religious background and current religious involvement.]
- I'm going to read some statements to you. As you hear each one, I'd like to hear what comes to mind for you.
    - The federal government should declare the US a Christian nation.
    - The federal government should advocate Christian values.
    - The federal government should enforce a separation of church and state.
    - The federal government should allow display of religious symbols in public places.
    - The federal government should allow prayer in schools.
    - The success of the United States is part of God's plan.
- What have we not talked about that you think I should know?
- Are there other people you would recommend I speak with? [If they provide names, ask if I may mention that the participant has referred me to the potential participant.]
- If I have additional questions, may I contact you again?
- [Thank participant.]