

Funding God’s Policies, Defending Whiteness: Christian Nationalism and Whites’ Attitudes towards Racially-Coded Government Spending.

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Abstract

Research shows that white Americans who subscribe to “Christian nationalism”—an ideology that fuses Christianity with civic life—tend to draw more rigid racial boundaries. Such research, however, has focused on *overt* forms of racial prejudices. None have considered how Christian nationalism may influence whites’ *covert* expressions of racism which are often more relevant for the reproduction of inequality. This study addresses this gap by examining Christian nationalism’s influence on whites’ relative support for government spending that is racially-coded, using data from a nationally random sample. Multivariate analyses demonstrate that whites who more strongly adhere to Christian nationalism are less supportive of welfare spending and more supportive of border spending and spending to reduce crime relative to more racially-neutral government expenses. Findings suggest that resurgent Christian nationalism associated with Trumpism not only reinforces *overt* expressions of racism, but also undergirds more *covert*, “colorblind” expressions shaping the policy opinions of white Americans.

Key terms: Christian nationalism, racialized spending, race, welfare, crime, immigration

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Introduction

Since the election of George W. Bush, and particularly following the reaction to Barack Obama's presidency, sociologists have identified a powerful movement, primarily among white evangelicals, which seeks to marry their religious preferences to national polity, what researchers have referred to as "Christian nationalism" (Davis 2018; McDaniel, Nooruddin and Shortle 2011; Perry and Whitehead 2015a; Whitehead and Scheitle 2017). This trend, which has its roots in the Religious Right movement of the 1980s and 90s, has gained renewed attention in the past decade and was embodied in the campaign, election, and subsequent presidency of Donald Trump (Braunstein and Taylor 2017; Gorski 2017b; Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018). Indeed, Trump was successful in his 2016 presidential campaign in large part due to his ability to offer a symbolic renewal of "law and order," which supports white evangelicals' cultural and political preferences (Gorski 2017b). This, then, is a clear reflection of Christian nationalism's influence over white Americans' erection of racial boundaries and perceptions of outgroup threat following eight years of Obama presidency, which many in the public sphere pointed to as the death of white (Christian) supremacy in the United States (Jones 2016).

The embrace of Christian nationalism among white Americans brings with it implications far beyond determining who holds political offices. Research in sociology and political science shows that race and "racial coding" is often used by whites to determine whether they will support political agendas, particularly those involving the use of tax dollars (Banks 2014; Barkan and Cohn 2005; Fox 2004; Gilens 1996). White Americans who perceive that redistributive spending programs, such as welfare or affirmative action, primarily benefit racial minority groups report more animosity towards these programs (Gilens 1995; Kluegel 1987). At the same time, these perceptions fuel white support for punitive or restrictive federal spending that is

subtextually targeted at black or Latino Americans (Barkan and Cohn 2005; Cassiman 2008; Ledford 2016). These structural barriers thus act to maintain a system of minority oppression that allows whites to enjoy the benefits of white supremacy without having to acknowledge it explicitly (Alexander 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2003, 2015). Moving forward, then, it is important for researchers to monitor not only the growth of explicit racism in the United States, but also that of implicit or “new racism” (Bonilla-Silva 2015; Gilens 1995).

While much has been made of Christian nationalism’s connection to the revival of overt forms of ethnic and racial prejudice in the United States in recent years, such as whites’ antipathy towards immigrants (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011) and Muslims (Merino 2010; Shortle and Gaddie 2015), disapproval of racial exogamy (Perry and Whitehead 2015a), or blaming blacks themselves for their own deaths at the hands of police (Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2018), no research exists that explores how it may influence subtler aspects of whites’ racial attitudes. The current study addresses this gap by demonstrating the considerable influence of Christian nationalism on whites’ relative support for racially-coded government spending. The findings suggest that the embrace of Christian nationalism among white Americans will hinder racial equality in the United States not only by fomenting and emboldening overt white supremacy, but also by contributing to color-blind racism in American polity.

Background

Racial Coding and Attitudes Towards Political Spending

For some time, social science has been interested in explaining white Americans’ support, or lack of support, for government spending policies that pertain to race either overtly or symbolically (Banks 2014; Barkan and Cohn 2005; Brown-Iannuzzi et al. 2017; Gilens 1995; Goren 2003; see also, Krysan 2000). While it has become increasingly rare to find large numbers

of white Americans who will positively affirm measures of overt racism, they still largely oppose spending that they perceive to be more beneficial to racial minority groups (Ledford 2016; Schuman et al. 1997). In these cases, racially indicative markers such as “troublemakers” (Alexander 2012), “welfare queen” (Cassiman 2008), or “bad hombres” (Blake 2016) are used to symbolize not only the minority group targeted by government programs, but also to indicate the appropriate responses to spending directed towards these groups. This racial-coding is intended to draw upon whites’ preexisting racial prejudices and then use them to influence public opinion regarding government spending for or against these groups (Brown 1999; Harell et al. 2014).

The systematic study of the effect racial-coding has on whites’ attitudes towards policy issues became a central issue for social scientists in the mid 1990s. Then three decades removed from the achievements of the Civil Rights movement, researchers began to identify mechanisms by which the American racial caste system had evolved (Alexander 2012). In his landmark book, *Why Americans Hate Welfare* (1999), political scientist Martin Gilens contends that among the principal forces driving opposition to redistributive spending is whites’ perceptions of blacks as both disproportionately poor and as lazy. Further, in a separate analysis, Gilens identifies whites’ racial attitudes as the single most important predictor of their opposition to welfare spending. In an examination of whites’ attitudes towards black and white mothers who receive welfare benefits, Gilens (1996) finds that negative perceptions of black mothers on welfare more than double the influence over their disapproval of welfare spending than do negative perceptions of white mothers on welfare. Along with this, a positive perception of welfare mothers had a stronger influence over whites’ approval of welfare spending if the mother in question was also white, indicating that it is not redistributive spending per se that whites are opposed to, but rather redistributive spending targeted towards a racial outgroup. This antagonism towards

redistributive spending is further supported by whites' perception of welfare recipients as mostly black or Latino (Bonds 2006; Brown-Iannuzzi et al. 2017; Fox 2004).

The effect of racial-coding in shaping attitudes towards policies is not limited to redistributive spending, however, but impacts white Americans' support of restrictive policies as well (Banks 2014; Barkan and Cohn 2005; Harris 2011; Hurwitz and Peffley 2005; Schram 2009). Ledford (2016), for example, finds that state level support for drug-testing requirements to receive welfare is largely influenced by the proportion of applicants who are black, showing that greater numbers of minority applicants increases support for legislation that restricts access to these benefits. Thus, the racial-coding of welfare spending not only reduces American support for the program at large, but also perceptions of racial minorities as criminal increases restrictive attitudes towards receiving welfare. This perception of minorities as being disproportionately criminal is also influential in shaping attitudes towards criminal punishment. Barkan and Cohn (2005) demonstrate that whites who erect strong racial barriers between themselves and black Americans are more likely to support government spending to fight crime. Their finding, they argue, is likely due to the use of "criminal" as a proxy for racial out-groups. This is further supported by findings presented by Harris, Evans, and Beckett (2011) that the criminal stigma attached to race leads to increased sanctions for minority defendants compared to their white peers in criminal proceedings. Most notably, Hurwitz and Peffley (2005) directly test the influence of racial-coding language on white Americans' support for anti-crime spending. Using experimental methods, the authors identify that whites' support for criminal punishment was increased when exposed to the racially-coded phrase "inner city crime."

Recently, researchers have explored the role of racial prejudice in shaping whites' attitudes towards immigration policy as well (Branton et al. 2011; Woods and Marciniak 2017).

Though American immigration is largely a matter of ethnicity rather than race, studies have shown that the processes of prejudice and boundary formation towards Latinos operates in almost an identical manner (Ayers et al. 2009; Fox 2004). In their analysis of attitudes towards immigration policies in the United States, for example, Ayers et al. (2009) show that white Americans who more strictly distinguish themselves from Latinos are more supportive of strong border policies even after controlling for perceptions of economic threat. Whites may also be more supportive of nativist or protectionist spending if they perceive Latino immigration as a social or racial threat. Branton et al.'s (2007) research points to significant differences in white Americans' attitudes and voting practices towards Latin immigration based on spatial distance from the U.S.- Mexican border. Those who are geographically closer to Latin America, and therefore are more immediately threatened culturally and racially by Latino immigration, they argue, are more likely to support restrictive border policies than are whites who are more geographically sheltered. Most recently, Woods and Marciniak (2017) demonstrate that invasive police action towards immigrants is more readily condoned if the immigrant is presented as (a) being from a Latin American country as opposed to Canada, and (b) the immigrant was presented as being "unauthorized."

Christian Nationalism and Racial Boundary Formation

A growing body of research has dedicated itself to the understanding of how the conflating of social identities impacts boundary formation and maintenance based on social cues. Within this line of inquiry is research targeting the tendency for Americans—and especially white Americans—to conflate their Christian identity with their national identity into what researchers have referred to as "Christian nationalism" (Davis 2018; Gorski 2017b; Perry and Whitehead 2015a). Those Americans who cling strongly to Christian nationalist ideology tend

also to believe in an idealized American history centered around Christian heritage and preeminence. As Gorski (2017a) notes, Christian nationalists tend to draw their religio-national identity far beyond the reach of American, or even Christian history, but to the exaltation of Israel as God's "chosen people." This link to the Old Testament conception of God as concerned with the geo-political order on Earth is significant for two reasons. First, it identifies Christian nationalists' preference for a God who aligns himself with specific national interests. While this is certainly not a characteristic that is historically unique to American Christian nationalism (Graham, Keenan, and Dowd 2004), it is significant here because it signals the perception of American-ism being closely related to God's will. Second, in conceptualizing America as the modern Israel, Christian nationalism promotes the erection and maintenance of racial and ethnic boundaries that are divinely justified.

Previous research on Christian nationalism has pointed to its role in establishing strict racial boundaries in marriage, adoption, and attitudes towards ethnic others among white adherents (McDaniel, Noorudin, and Shortle 2011; Perry and Whitehead 2015a, 2015b). In their study of attitudes towards immigrant populations, McDaniel et al. (2011) show that Americans who more strongly adhere to a vision of the United States as distinctly Christian were more likely to report antagonistic feelings towards immigrants. They go on to argue that members of the immigrant out-group present a symbolic threat to their conception of America's divine mission, leading to increased prejudicial attitudes. In subsequent studies, Perry and Whitehead (2015a, 2015b) demonstrate these processes at work in Americans' perception of the ideal family type. Using data from the Baylor Religion Survey, these authors show that Christian nationalist ideology not only has implications for Americans' conception of national boundaries, but racial boundaries as well. In their analysis of white Americans' attitudes towards interracial marriage,

Perry and Whitehead (2015a) identify Christian nationalism as a significant predictor of desires for strict racial boundaries in marital unions. Similarly, these authors show that Christian nationalism decreases whites' support of transracial adoption (Perry and Whitehead 2015b).

Most recently, research has identified Christian nationalism as a component in reducing empathy for racial others (Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2018). In their study of whites' explanation of disproportionate victimization of black Americans in police violence, Perry et al. (2018) demonstrate that those who strongly adhere to Christian nationalism were more likely to believe that police do not treat blacks differently than they do whites and that police shoot black Americans more often because they are "more violent" than whites. While these studies provide a clear picture of Christian nationalism's role in the formation of white racial boundaries, they are limited in that they exclusively analyze *explicit* forms of racial prejudice (e.g., anti-immigrant sentiment, animus toward interracial families, overtly racist notions of black criminality). The current study aims to extend this research by investigating how Christian nationalism may influence more covert forms of racism reflected in white Americans' attitudes towards racially-coded government spending.

Insofar as adherence to Christian nationalist ideology works to establish and fortify racial boundaries, it will also reproduce these boundaries in whites' beliefs regarding government spending. Thus, I predict that whites who more firmly embrace Christian nationalism will express lower levels of support for federal welfare spending, greater support for spending to secure and patrol national borders, and greater support for spending to reduce crime relative to their support of non-racially coded federal spending. Furthermore, I expect the influence of Christian nationalism to work independently of salient religious, political, and sociodemographic characteristics, or even more overt measures of racial prejudice.

Methods

Data

I examine data from the second wave of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS), which was collected in 2007, to test the influence of Christian nationalism on whites' support for racialized government spending. The BRS, modeled after the General Social Survey and intended to assess the religious beliefs and practices of American adults, was collected by the Gallup Organization. The second wave of the BRS also contains measurements of Christian nationalist ideology and a battery of questions assessing respondents' views on government spending programs. The unique compilation of religious practice and affiliation measurements, measurements of Christian nationalism, political views, and perception of government spending make it the best data available to address my expectations stated above.

A total of 3,500 potential respondents drawn from the population of the United States that owns a telephone were contacted using random-digit dialing and asked if they would be willing to complete a mailed questionnaire. The selection procedure was designed to include both listed and unlisted numbers by randomly generating the last two digits of the telephone number dialed. Of the 3,500 potential respondents contacted, 1,000 were given a brief phone interview to assess systematic bias in the types of people who were willing to participate based on gender, race, educational attainment, residential region of the United States, and rate of religious service attendance. The Gallup Group, which conducted these interviews, found no evidence of systematic bias in response rate. A total of 2,460 questionnaires were sent out, and 1,648 completed surveys were returned for a total response rate of 47.1%. Because I am interested in how Christian nationalism shapes whites' attitudes in particular, I limit the analysis to white

respondents. I use multiple imputation procedures to account for missing data on all independent variables (von Hippel 2007), resulting in an analytic sample of 1,313.

Measures

Relative Support for Government Spending Variables. The 2007 BRS contains a battery of eight questions which measure respondents' beliefs about federal spending for the following reasons: (1) Improving and protecting the environment, (2) Improving and protecting the nation's health, (3) Halting the rising crime rate, (4) Improving the nation's education system, (5) Funding the military, armaments, and defense, (6) Funding welfare, (7) Supporting scientific research, and (8) Patrolling and controlling our borders. Respondents were asked to select whether they believed the government spending is (1) "too much", (2) "just about right", or (3) "too little" for each of the eight expenditure categories. Three of these categories, welfare, border spending, and spending on crime, are racially implicit. To assess whites' *relative* beliefs about these three spending categories, I construct a ratio following the example of Schwadel and Johnson (2017) which compares these beliefs to those that are not racially indicative. To do this, I first calculate the mean response for each respondent across the five non-racially indicative expense categories: the environment, health, education, the military, and science. I then divide respondents' beliefs about spending for each of the racially-indicative spending categories by this mean. Thus, for example, measures of whites' relative support for welfare spending that are less than 1.00 indicate that the respondent is *less* supportive of welfare spending than they are to non-racialized spending categories, while responses of greater than 1.00 indicate that the respondent is *more* supportive of welfare spending than non-racialized spending categories. Because these outcomes have multiple values, I use ordinary least squares (OLS) regression as my model estimation procedure.ⁱ

Christian nationalism. To measure respondents' adherence to Christian nationalism, I utilize the Christian nationalism index outlined by Perry and Whitehead (2015a, 2015b). This index is composed of responses to the following six statements: (1) "The federal government should declare the United States a Christian Nation"; (2) "The federal government should advocate Christian values"; (3) "The federal government should allow the display of religious symbols in public spaces"; (4) "The federal government should allow prayer in public schools"; (5) "The success of the United States is part of god's plan"; and (6) "The federal government should enforce a strict separation of church and state" (reverse coded). These six indicators identify the extent to which individuals would like their religious preferences to be reflected or promoted by their government. Prior research has utilized this index to measure the extent of convergence between an individual's Christian and national identities and found that it acts as a social identity distinct from both religious and political identities (Davis 2018; Perry and Whitehead 2015a; Whitehead and Perry 2015). Testing of these measures yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.871 indicating that the measure is highly reliable. Responses to these questions ranged from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. These were then given a meaningful base of zero and summed to create a final Christian nationalism index ranging from (0) to (24).

Political views. The BRS asks participants to indicate their political identity; responses to this question range from (1) "extremely conservative," to (7) "extremely liberal." This measure was recoded into three discrete categories; conservatives, moderates, and liberals. Respondents were designated as conservative (contrast) if they indicated that they were either "extremely conservative," or "conservative." The liberal variable identifies those respondents who said they were either "liberal," or "extremely liberal," (coded as 1), and the moderate category identifies

respondents who claimed to be “leaning conservative,” “leaning liberal,” or “moderate” in their political views (coded as 1).ⁱⁱ

Racial trust. To ensure that these analyses are measuring whites’ subtextual racial attitudes as opposed to simply capturing overtly racist sentiments, I include controls for respondents’ expression of trust in racial outgroups. Within a battery of questions asking respondents “How much would you say that you trust the following people or groups?” are “Blacks or African Americans,” and “Hispanics or Latinos.” Responses to these questions range from (1) “not at all” to (4) “a lot” and were dichotomized so that respondents who indicated that they trusted blacks or Hispanics either “not at all” or “only a little” were coded as (1) and those who said that they trusted blacks or Hispanics “some” or “a lot” were used as a reference (0).ⁱⁱⁱ

Religious controls. Multivariate analyses include a battery of religious control variables to isolate the influence of Christian nationalist ideology. Respondents’ religious tradition is controlled for using a variation of the Steensland et al. (2000) RELTRAD system which is included within the BRS. For analysis, I created a series of dummy variables indicating membership to evangelical Protestant (contrast), mainline Protestant, Catholic, other religious traditions (including Jewish), and being religiously unaffiliated where self-reported members were coded as (1). How often respondents read their scriptures is controlled for using a survey item asking, “Outside of religious services, about how often do you read the Bible?” Responses range from (0) never to (8) several times a week or more often.^{iv} Finally, religious fundamentalism was measured by asking respondents how well “fundamentalist” describes their religious identity. Responses ranged from (1) “Not at all,” to (5) “very well.” Similarly, biblical literalism is measured using a variable indicating whether the respondent believes that the Bible is (1) “an ancient book of history and legends,” (2) “contains some human error,” (3) “unsure,”

(4) “is perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally,” or (5) “means exactly what it says, and should be taken literally.”

Sociodemographic controls. To demonstrate the robustness of Christian nationalism’s predictive power for whites’ attitudes towards racially targeted government spending, I include a battery of five sociodemographic control variables. Dummy variables are used for gender (women = 1, men = 0) and region (Southern residence = 1, other = 0). Household income is measured from (1) “\$10,000 or less” to (7) “150,001 or more.” Age is measured in years and ranged from 18 to 96. Finally, educational attainment is measured with a series of dummy variables indicating whether respondents had less than a high school education (contrast), a high school degree but no college (1), some college education but no bachelor’s degree (1), or a bachelor’s degree or greater (1). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics as well as the bivariate correlations between independent measures used in multivariate analyses with each of the three outcome variables.

Results

In order to assess the relative strength of each independent variable, Tables 2-4 present fully standardized regression coefficients. These measures overcome the uncertainty in comparison of traditional regression results by placing them in terms of standard deviation rather than unit changes. Thus, the coefficient presented in Model 1 of Table 2 ($\beta = -0.214$; $p < .001$) demonstrates that for one standard deviation increase in Christian nationalism, there is a corresponding decrease of (0.214) in relative support for welfare spending. As predicted, Christian nationalism is negatively associated with whites’ support for spending on welfare programs relative to their support for non-racially-coded government spending. Model 2 introduces controls for respondents’ political ideology. After the inclusion of political controls,

the influence of Christian nationalism is reduced, but remains negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.073$; $p < .05$). Results from this model also indicate, as one might expect, that compared to political conservatives, moderates ($\beta = 0.111$; $p < .01$) and liberals ($\beta = 0.298$; $p < .01$) are more supportive of welfare spending.

Model 3 adds the control for overt distrust of black Americans, which has little effect on the association of Christian nationalism ($\beta = -0.071$; $p < .05$) with whites' relative support for welfare spending. Model 4 adds controls for respondents' religious characteristics. Results indicate that after isolating Christian nationalism from the influence of purely religious characteristics of respondents, its association with whites' attitudes towards welfare increases both in strength and significance ($\beta = -0.148$; $p < .01$). Further, after isolating these characteristics, the differences between political moderates ($\beta = 0.138$; $p < .001$) and liberals ($\beta = 0.319$; $p < .001$) from conservatives are also increased. Results from this model also demonstrate that those who believe that the Bible is the literal word of God are significantly more supportive of welfare spending relative to racially-neutral spending categories than those who are not ($\beta = 0.085$; $p < .05$), as are those who read the Bible more frequently ($\beta = 0.096$; $p < .01$).

Model 5 adds controls for respondents' sociodemographic characteristics and represents the full analytic model. Results from this model indicate that, net of respondents' political ideology, overt distrust of racial others, religious affiliation and practices, and salient sociodemographic factors, Christian nationalism is significantly associated with whites' relative disapproval of the use of federal funds for welfare spending ($\beta = -0.160$; $p < .001$). Furthermore, the effect of Christian nationalism is among the strongest in this model and is second only to income ($\beta = -0.171$; $p < .001$) among variables negatively associated with whites' support for

welfare spending. These results affirm my expectation that whites who more stringently adhere to Christian nationalist ideology will be less supportive of redistributive spending compared to government spending that is not racially-coded.

Tables 3 and 4 utilize the same analytical models discussed for Table 2 and yield substantively similar results. Thus, for the sake of brevity, I will discuss only the complete models presented in these tables. Model 5 in Table 3 examines whites' relative support for spending to secure the United States border and identifies several significant predictors. Here we see that, after inclusion of relevant controls, Christian nationalism ($\beta = 0.166$; $p < .001$) is a positive predictor of white Americans' relative support for border spending, which supports my expectations. Also, as one might expect, political moderates ($\beta = -0.245$; $p < .001$) and liberals ($\beta = -0.370$; $p < .001$) are relatively less supportive of spending to secure the border than are political conservatives, and women ($\beta = -0.090$; $p < .001$) are less supportive of border spending than are men. Finally, unlike whites' relative support for welfare spending, overt expression of distrust towards Hispanics ($\beta = 0.061$; $p < .05$) is a significant, positive predictor of whites' relative support for border spending.

Table 4 presents the results of multivariate models predicting white Americans' relative support for spending targeted at "reducing the rising crime rate." Once again, Christian nationalism ($\beta = 0.140$; $p < .01$) is shown to have a significant and positive relationship with whites' relative support for spending on crime compared to racially-neutral government spending. These results also indicate that political ideology plays a significant role in whites' attitudes towards criminal spending. Consistent with prior research on attitudes towards crime, political moderates ($\beta = -0.138$; $p < .001$) and liberals ($\beta = -0.188$; $p < .001$) are relatively less supportive of government spending on crime than are political conservatives. Table 4 also

demonstrates that respondents' age ($\beta = 0.018$; $p < .01$) has a positive and significant relationship with whites' support for spending targeted at crime in the United States.

Taken together, the results presented in Tables 2 through 4 demonstrate that white Americans' vision of a government that explicitly favors Christianity in its identity, symbols, and values, manifested in Christian nationalism, may also inform their attitudes towards ostensibly irreligious, but racially-coded, social issues. Furthermore, these results demonstrate that the association between Christian nationalism and whites' relative support for racially-coded spending is not reducible to their political ideology, overt racial distrust, religious belief and practice, or sociodemographic characteristics.

Discussion and Conclusions

Scholars and journalists alike have expressed concern about what white Christian nationalism means for the American racial-political landscape (Gorski 2017a). Numerous studies show that white Christian nationalism is linked with overt indicators of white supremacy, including explicit xenophobia and racism (McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011; Perry and Whitehead 2015a, 2015b; Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2018). But ethnic and racial inequality since the 1980s has more often been reproduced through systemic, structural patterns supported by covert, symbolic racism (Alexander 2012; Bonilla-Silva 2003, 2015; Harell, Soroka, and Ladner 2014; Woods and Marciniak 2017). Studies have yet to determine whether white Christian nationalism may reinforce these important, but subtler forms of racism as well. Using relative support for racially-coded government spending as a test case, the current study unequivocally affirms that white Americans who more strongly adhere to Christian nationalist ideology are more likely to oppose spending for policies that are racially-coded to benefit minorities (like welfare) and favor spending for policies that are racially-coded to punish

minorities (law enforcement, border patrol). Notably, Christian nationalism is significantly linked to whites' attitudes toward these policies even when controlling for their overt distrust of Latinos or blacks suggesting that Christian nationalism may predict more subtextual, implicit racial prejudices potentially affecting whites' policy preferences. These findings are consistent with extant research both on Christian nationalism's influence over white racial-boundary formation and maintenance (Gorski 2017b; McDaniel, Nooruddin, and Shortle 2011; Perry and Whitehead 2015a, 2015b; Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2018), as well as research identifying both implicit and explicit racial prejudice as influential over whites' support for racialized government spending (Barkan and Cohn 2005; Bonds 2006; Cassiman 2008; Gillens 1996; Krysan 2000).

Two limitations to these findings must be acknowledged before proceeding. First, the results presented in this paper are derived from cross-sectional survey data and therefore cannot speak to the causal direction of the relationship between Christian nationalism and attitudes towards racially-coded government spending. Numerous studies, however, have demonstrated that beliefs shape policy attitudes (Gillens 1999; Kluegel 1987; Krysan 2000), and thus, there is certainly precedent to contend that Christian nationalism is the driving force of the relationship, not vice versa. Second, the data analyzed in this paper are now ten years old. That said, there is ample evidence that Christian nationalism in America has not dwindled in the decade since the second wave of the BRS was collected (Gorski 2017b; Jones 2016; Whitehead, Perry, and Baker 2018). Therefore, I argue that these estimates may be *conservative*, and analysis of more contemporary data would likely identify a similar, if not stronger, connection between Christian nationalism and racial-coding of government spending for white Americans.

These limitations notwithstanding, it is abundantly clear that the entrenchment of Christian nationalist ideology in American society, manifested in the expression of white supremacy and development of neo-liberalism and the “Alt-Right” movements, pose a great threat to progress towards racial and ethnic equality. The findings presented above hold three key implications for the future of racial justice in the United States. First, the structural inequalities that contribute to wealth disparities between black and white Americans will gain support rather than criticism in American discourse. By contributing to white resistance to welfare and Affirmative Action, which white Americans are already apt to view as an “unfair advantage” to black Americans (Gilens 1999; Kinder and Sanders 1990), the structural *status quo* that disproportionately benefits whites will be upheld. Second, the problem of racial-targeting within the United States is likely to continue. A growing body of research points to the role of Christian nationalism in both the desire to utilize formal social control through policing efforts (Davis 2018), as well as whites’ willingness to blame black Americans for their experience of police brutality and deny racial differences in police violence (Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2018). These findings extend this knowledge by pointing to Christian nationalism as a motivation for white Americans to increase funding to these policing efforts. Finally, to the extent that Christian nationalism takes root in American politics, the United States will continue to increase the difficulties facing Latino migrants. This is significant not only because these increased efforts to restrict Latino access to the United States often work more to keep immigrants *in* the United States than to keep them out (Massey Durand and Pren 2016; Massey and Pren 2012), or do little to deter undocumented migration (Cornelius and Salehyan 2007), but also because increased border control efforts make migration far more lethal an affair than they had been historically (Cornelius 2001).

The influence of Christian nationalism in its capacity to influence white Americans' attitudes towards ostensibly irreligious social issues, particularly those pertaining to race, poses a unique threat to the American political landscape. As the United States grapples with inequalities and injustices facing its minority population, understanding how and why resistance to these progressive efforts arises becomes increasingly important. To this end, the scientific exploration of white Christian nationalism and its impact beyond interpersonal manifestations but also in the understanding of more abstract and structural processes in American society is essential. Before the U.S. can fully address the issues of racial and ethnic oppression, we must first learn to deconstruct the boundaries erected around whites via Christian nationalism.

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations

| Variable | Range or Description | Mean or % | SD | Correlation with Welfare Spending | Correlation with Border Spending | Correlation with Spending on Crime |
|---------------------------------|---|--------------------|-------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Welfare Support | 0.33 - 1.88 | 0.73 | 0.29 | - | - | - |
| Border Support | 0.33 - 2.5 | 1.10 | 0.37 | -0.16*** | - | - |
| Crime Support | 0.33 - 2.14 | 1.10 | 0.26 | -0.08** | 0.42*** | - |
| Christian nationalism | 0 - 24 | 11.80 [†] | 6.51 | -0.17*** | 0.33*** | 0.25*** |
| Conservative | <i>Contrast</i> | 32.41% | - | -0.21*** | 0.41*** | 0.23*** |
| Moderate | 1= moderate | 47.35% | - | -0.01 | -0.12*** | -0.11** |
| Liberal | 1= liberal | 17.63% | - | 0.26*** | -0.35*** | -0.21*** |
| Distrust Black | 1= distrust | 18.50% | - | -0.00 | - | 0.05 [†] |
| Distrust Hispanic | 1= distrust | 22.01% | - | - | 0.06** | - |
| Evangelical | <i>Contrast</i> | 30.60% | - | -0.06* | 0.20*** | 0.11*** |
| Mainline Protestant | 1= Mainline Protestant | 24.49% | - | -0.04 | -0.05 [†] | 0.05 |
| Catholic | 1= Catholic | 24.02% | - | -0.01 | 0.00 | 0.04 |
| Other Religious Tradition | 1= Religious Other | 8.45% | - | 0.01 | -0.02 | -0.04 |
| Religiously Unaffiliated | 1= Religiously Unaffiliated | 11.35% | - | 0.11*** | -0.18*** | -0.11*** |
| Scripture Reading | 0 (Never)-8(Several Times a Week or More Often) | 3.16 | 2.98 | -0.02 | 0.18*** | 0.12*** |
| Religious Fundamentalism | 1 - 5 | 1.97 | 1.31 | -0.03 | 0.25*** | 0.14*** |
| Biblical Literalism | 1 - 5 | 3.14 | 1.52 | -0.04 | 0.25*** | 0.19*** |
| Female | 1= Female | 56.59% | - | 0.03 | -0.13*** | -0.03 |
| Southern | 1= Southern | 28.87% | - | -0.04 | 0.06* | 0.04 |
| Income | 1 - 7 | 4.53 | 1.52 | -0.20*** | -0.02 | -0.05 [†] |
| Age | 18 - 96 | 52.38 | 16.37 | -0.05 [†] | 0.08** | 0.10*** |
| Less than High School Education | <i>Contrast</i> | 6.7% | - | 0.10** | -0.00 | 0.00 |
| High School | 1= High School but no College | 23.17% | - | -0.07* | 0.13*** | 0.11*** |
| Some College | 1= Some College but no Bachelor's Degree | 31.33% | - | -0.05 [†] | 0.01 | -0.01 |
| Bachelor's Degree or More | 1= Bachelor's Degree or Greater | 39.86% | - | 0.06* | -0.14*** | -0.11*** |

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .00$

Table 2. OLS Regression of Christian Nationalism on Relative Support for Welfare Spending

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | |
|--|-----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE |
| Christian Nationalism | -0.214*** | (.00) | -0.073* | (.00) | -0.071* | (.00) | -0.148** | (.00) | -0.160** | (.00) |
| Political Views^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moderate | | | 0.111** | (.02) | 0.110** | (.02) | 0.138*** | (.02) | 0.112** | (.02) |
| Liberal | | | 0.298*** | (.03) | 0.297*** | (.03) | 0.319*** | (.03) | 0.286*** | (.03) |
| Racial Trust | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trust Black | | | | | -0.030 | (.02) | -0.021 | (.02) | -0.041 | (.02) |
| Religious Controls^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mainline Protestant | | | | | | | -0.008 | (.02) | -0.005 | (.02) |
| Catholic | | | | | | | 0.010 | (.02) | 0.016 | (.02) |
| Other Religious Tradition | | | | | | | -0.009 | (.03) | -0.005 | (.03) |
| Religiously Unaffiliated | | | | | | | 0.065 | (.03) | 0.052 | (.03) |
| Scripture Reading | | | | | | | 0.096** | (.00) | 0.087* | (.00) |
| Religious Fundamentalist | | | | | | | 0.024 | (.01) | 0.017 | (.01) |
| Biblical Literalist | | | | | | | 0.085* | (.01) | 0.068* | (.01) |
| Sociodemographic Controls^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | | | | | | | | | 0.014 | (.02) |
| Southern | | | | | | | | | -0.001 | (.02) |
| Income | | | | | | | | | -0.171*** | (.01) |
| Age | | | | | | | | | -0.012 | (.00) |
| High School | | | | | | | | | -0.124* | (.04) |
| Some College | | | | | | | | | -0.159** | (.04) |
| Bachelor's Degree or More | | | | | | | | | -0.063 | (.04) |
| Constant | 0.847*** | (.02) | 0.701*** | (.03) | 0.705*** | (.03) | 0.639*** | (.04) | 0.895*** | (.07) |
| N | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | |
| R ² | 0.05 | | 0.10 | | 0.10 | | 0.12 | | 0.15 | |

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)

^a Conservatives, Evangelicals, Males, Non-Southerners, and Less than high-school degree as contrast categories.

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 3. OLS Regression of Christian Nationalism on Relative Support for Spending to Secure the Border

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | |
|--|----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|---------------------|-------|
| | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE |
| Christian Nationalism | 0.384*** | (.00) | 0.172*** | (.00) | 0.169*** | (.00) | 0.162*** | (.00) | 0.166*** | (.00) |
| Political Views^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moderate | | | -0.270*** | (.00) | -0.268*** | (.00) | -0.263*** | (.02) | -0.245*** | (.02) |
| Liberal | | | -0.410*** | (.03) | -0.407*** | (.03) | -0.404*** | (.03) | -0.370*** | (.03) |
| Racial Trust | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trust Hispanic | | | | | 0.057* | (.00) | 0.057* | (.02) | 0.061* | (.02) |
| Religious Controls^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mainline Protestant | | | | | | | -0.039 | (.03) | -0.050 [†] | (.03) |
| Catholic | | | | | | | -0.014 | (.03) | -0.022 | (.03) |
| Other Religious Tradition | | | | | | | -0.009 | (.04) | -0.012 | (.04) |
| Religiously Unaffiliated | | | | | | | -0.042 | (.04) | -0.045 | (.04) |
| Scripture Reading | | | | | | | -0.019 | (.00) | 0.003 | (.00) |
| Religious Fundamentalist | | | | | | | 0.030 | (.01) | 0.022 | (.01) |
| Biblical Literalist | | | | | | | -0.024 | (.01) | -0.018 | (.01) |
| Sociodemographic Controls^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | | | | | | | | | -0.090*** | (.02) |
| Southern | | | | | | | | | -0.011 | (.02) |
| Income | | | | | | | | | 0.044 | (.01) |
| Age | | | | | | | | | 0.051 [†] | (.00) |
| High School | | | | | | | | | 0.029 | (.04) |
| Some College | | | | | | | | | 0.004 | (.04) |
| Bachelor's Degree or More | | | | | | | | | -0.029 | (.04) |
| Constant | 0.843*** | (.00) | 1.149*** | (.00) | 1.139*** | (.03) | 1.168*** | (.05) | 1.083*** | (.08) |
| N | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | |
| R ² | 0.15 | | 0.25 | | 0.25 | | 0.25 | | 0.27 | |

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)

^a Conservatives, Evangelicals, Males, Non-Southerners, and Less than high-school degree as contrast categories.

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Table 4. OLS Regression of Christian Nationalism on Relative Support for Spending to Reduce Crime

| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | | Model 3 | | Model 4 | | Model 5 | |
|--|----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|-----------|-------|
| | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE | β | SE |
| Christian Nationalism | 0.275*** | (.00) | 0.167*** | (.00) | 0.166*** | (.00) | 0.157*** | (.00) | 0.140** | (.00) |
| Political Views^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Moderate | | | -0.148*** | (.02) | -0.147*** | (.02) | -0.142*** | (.02) | -0.138*** | (.02) |
| Liberal | | | -0.206*** | (.02) | -0.205*** | (.00) | -0.201*** | (.02) | -0.188*** | (.03) |
| Racial Trust | | | | | | | | | | |
| Trust Black | | | | | 0.025 | (.02) | 0.025 | (.02) | 0.033 | (.02) |
| Religious Controls^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mainline Protestant | | | | | | | -0.023 | (.02) | -0.042 | (.02) |
| Catholic | | | | | | | 0.039 | (.02) | 0.021 | (.02) |
| Other Religious Tradition | | | | | | | 0.025 | (.03) | 0.020 | (.03) |
| Religiously Unaffiliated | | | | | | | 0.007 | (.03) | 0.006 | (.03) |
| Scripture Reading | | | | | | | -0.001 | (.00) | 0.011 | (.00) |
| Religious Fundamentalist | | | | | | | 0.014 | (.01) | 0.007 | (.01) |
| Biblical Literalist | | | | | | | 0.016 | (.01) | 0.015 | (.01) |
| Sociodemographic Controls^a | | | | | | | | | | |
| Female | | | | | | | | | 0.000 | (.01) |
| Southern | | | | | | | | | -0.019 | (.02) |
| Income | | | | | | | | | 0.018** | (.01) |
| Age | | | | | | | | | 0.083 | (.00) |
| High School | | | | | | | | | 0.026 | (.03) |
| Some College | | | | | | | | | -0.009 | (.03) |
| Bachelor's Degree or More | | | | | | | | | -0.051 | (.03) |
| Constant | 0.968*** | (.00) | 1.080*** | (.02) | 1.078*** | (.00) | 1.062*** | (.03) | 1.002*** | (.06) |
| N | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | | 1,313 | |
| R ² | 0.08 | | 0.10 | | 0.10 | | 0.11 | | 0.12 | |

Source: Baylor Religious Survey (2007)

^a Conservatives, Evangelicals, Males, Non-Southerners, and Less than high-school degree as contrast categories.

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

ⁱ Testing of these variables' distributions reveal that they do not violate the assumptions of OLS regression.

ⁱⁱ Though previous research on Christian nationalism (Davis 2018; Perry, Whitehead, and Davis 2018; Whitehead and Perry 2015) has measured respondents' political views continuously, I contend there is no measureable distance between "extremely conservative" and "conservative," and it is therefore more appropriate to group these into theoretical categories. Additional analyses were conducted with the original coding for political ideology and results (available upon request) were not substantively different.

ⁱⁱⁱ Because most respondents were hesitant to select responses that were overtly prejudiced, there was very little variation within racial trust variables. Thus, roughly two thirds of white respondents stated that they trusted all racial groups (whites included) "some." To capture the effect of those that were willing to indicate overt racial prejudice, I dichotomize these measures to examine those individuals who tend not to trust racial others.

^{iv} Models were also estimated controlling for frequency of religious service attendance and prayer alongside scripture reading, as well as a composite measure of religiosity comprising all three of these measures. Results did not vary substantively between these models.