

May God Protect Us: The Effect Of Perceived Existential Threat And White Christian Nationalism Among American Evangelicals

By: Alaina Cline



Minchillo, John. 2021. *A Trump Supporter Holds a Bible as he Gathers with Others Outside the Capitol*. AP News. January 6. apnews.com/article/photos-election-jan6-trump-washington-f69b5f03316eaeef2044d520bc7ffe49a

Research Question And Methodology

Research Question: How does perceived existential threat and alignment to white Christian nationalism influence the type and level of political participation among American evangelicals?

Methodology: Self-designed survey targeted at evangelical populations

Methodology: Survey sought to measure conflation of religion with nationhood and their level of fear to threats to status quo

Literature Review

A Narrative Of Perceived Persecution In Evangelicalism

Evangelicals imagine themselves as an embattled and persecuted minority

Fear and anger as necessary political motivator for evangelicals

Fear underlies political values such as positions on race, gender, immigration, and the LGBTQ+ community

An Underlying Sense of Threat Amongst White Christian Nationalist Values

Us vs. them mindset, with 'them' always threatening 'our' power and privilege

Zero sum game: one party always loses power when the other gains power

Empirical truth matters little; focus on *perception* of loss of power

If the U.S. moves away from its Christian foundations, we will not have a country anymore.



I consider documents like the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution to be divinely inspired.



White Christian Nationalism Findings

Medium-High Alignment to white Christian nationalism

Fear is intertwined with white Christian nationalism

Moral Values, Perceived Patriotism, and a Complex Relationship with Power

If other racial groups attain higher status in society, it will be good for my racial group.



The decrease of religious influence is undermining American culture.



The values and beliefs of atheists regarding moral issues are not compatible with the values and beliefs of my religious group.



Perceived Existential Threat Findings

1. Threat to American Culture and Belonging
2. Partisan Threat
3. Xenophobia
4. Racial Threat
5. Religious Threat

Medium-High Levels of Perceived Existential Threat

Fear of being replaced/loss of power

Political Participation Findings

Lack of Supportive Evidence for Hypotheses

Unengaged in Politics?

Social Forms of Political Participation are Popular among Evangelicals—Driven by Social Interaction and Proselytization, Even in Politics!

Implications

1. Evangelicals want to tell themselves stories of fear and persecution
2. Stories about American exceptionalism, threat, and power are potent within evangelical populations and are intertwined with religious narratives about belonging, place, and personhood
3. Correlation between perceived existential threat and white Christian nationalism
4. Fear of losing power to the 'other'
5. Endemic to evangelical populations?