



A SURVEY OF ENVIRONMENTAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS WITHIN THE  
DEEP SOUTH BLACK PROTESTANT CHURCH

by

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## ABSTRACT

### A Survey of Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors within the Deep South Black Protestant Church

The environmental movement in the United States, along with the broader science community, has historically struggled to connect with African Americans and Protestants. In order to democratize and diversify the environmental movement, national organizations must reconsider their frameworks and listen to the values of minority and religious individuals. This study measured environmental attitudes and behaviors of a very specific intersection of race and religion: the black Protestant pastor in the Deep South region of the United States. Political orientation and biblical interpretation appear to have an effect on environmental attitudes and behaviors, support for government environmental policy, and climate change beliefs within the black Protestant church. Furthermore, this research finds evidence that the New Ecological Paradigm is an insufficient environmental measurement tool for understanding the degree of environmental orientation amongst Protestants. Recommendations for engaging both minorities and religious individuals are given.

*Keywords: environmental attitude, environmental behavior, black Protestant church, African Methodist Episcopal, apocalypticism, eschatology, anthropocentrism, human dominance, religious environmental organizations, environmental action*

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Definition of Terms.....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	8
Introduction.....	8
African American Environmentalism.....	9
Protestant Environmentalism.....	11
History of the Black Protestant Church.....	16
Biblical Interpretation: Apocalypticism and Eschatology.....	17
Political Orientation.....	19
Research on Public Environmental Views: The NEP Scale.....	19
Chapter 3: Methods.....	21
Study Area.....	21
Sampling Strategy.....	24
Data Collection.....	27
Measurement Procedure.....	28
Dependent Variables.....	28
The New Ecological Paradigm.....	28
Support for Government Environmental Action.....	29
Individual and Collective Actions Preferred for Creating Change.....	30
Independent Variables.....	30
Biblical Interpretation (Eschatology, Apocalypticism).....	30
Political Orientation.....	31

Demographic Variables.....	32
Analytical Procedure.....	32
Chapter 4: Results.....	34
Descriptive Statistics.....	35
Geographic Location.....	36
Demographics.....	36
Environmental Attitudes.....	38
New Ecological Paradigm.....	39
New Ecological Paradigm Dimensionality.....	39
Climate Change Beliefs.....	40
Biblical Interpretation.....	41
Environmental Behaviors and Preferred Methods of Action.....	43
Support for Government Environmental Action.....	43
Individual and Collective Actions Preferred for Creating Change.....	43
Analytical Statistics.....	45
Environmental Orientation by Individual Characteristics.....	46
Environmentalism by Apocalyptic and Human Dominance Beliefs.....	47
Chapter 5: Discussion & Implications.....	49
New Ecological Paradigm.....	50
Political Orientation.....	52
Apocalypticism.....	53
Anthropocentrism/Human Dominance.....	53
Limitations of Study.....	54

Chapter 6: Conclusion & Recommendations.....	57
Recommendations.....	58
Conclusion.....	63

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Black Belt region of the Southeastern U.S. (Census Bureau special tabulation, 2000). Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/ancestry.pdf>

Figure 2: Population density of Historically Black Protestants by state (Pew Research, 2014). Retrieved from: <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/religious-tradition/historically-black-protestant/>

Figure 3: General location of respondents based on church zip code. Created by author using ArcGIS software 2018.

Figure 4: Worldview of a black Protestant versus worldview of mainstream environmentalism. Created by author using Microsoft Word drawings.

Figure 5: Faith in Place logo (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.faithinplace.org/>

## List of Tables

Table 1: Christian Eco-Ethics Model as adapted from Kearns 1997

Table 2: Profile of Respondents

Table 3: Table 3: New Ecological Paradigm scale

Table 4: NEP Items and Scores by Dimensions

Table 5: Belief in Climate Change

Table 6: Biblical Interpretation

Table 7: Government Environmental Policy Support

Table 8: Environmental Behaviors and Preferred Methods of Action

Table 9: Environmentalism by Political Party, Education, Denomination and Church Role

Table 10: Environmentalism by Biblical Beliefs

## Author's Note

This research is meant to be a tiny pebble in a bridge between the faith and science communities. In today's American society, there seems to me an increasing apparent dichotomy between faith and science, as recent social and political events have lessened the ability for us to tolerate individuals with a different worldview. This "you're either with me or against me", "my way or the highway" mentality is a plague in the human mind, as I myself have been sickened by in the past.

Since moving to Washington State and enrolling in the MES program at The Evergreen State College, my worldview has shifted subtly but surely. The city of Olympia has a "hippie-ish" vibe, like a society stuck in a time-warp of the 1960's, and I have felt at home with fellow tree-huggers. With Bernie Sanders bumper stickers on every other vehicle, I felt that I had finally found my people, and embracing the "green" culture came easy to me.

As I slowly adjust my family's lifestyle by enforcing "green" or "environmental" practices, such as eating less meat, recycling or reusing product packaging, and walking the kids to school instead of driving, I happily welcomed the resistance from my family as a small price to pay for taking care of our earth. However, it was my husband who surprisingly gave me the strongest push-back.

Being brought up in an African Methodist Episcopal church in North Carolina, he proudly self-identifies as a "meat-and-potatoes" kind of guy, so eating less meat was not a welcomed change, but he eventually complied with my increasingly obsessive "green" habits. Feeling a bit overbearing, I realized that some "green" behaviors are not resisted so much for being an unwelcomed or inconvenient change, but have a direct tension with deep cultural identity. *Giving up too much meat is like giving up who he is.* After all, what is a Sunday without a slab of ribs on the grill? This cultural barrier was confirmed during a phone call with my husband's grandmother after I prodded for an honest answer, and she ever-so-politely replied in her sweet southern accent that yes, environmentalism is definitely seen in the black community as a "white people's thing".

This was the first step that led me on the path of this thesis and I have enjoyed becoming familiar with the history of the environmental movement, African American environmentalism, religious environmentalism, and the amazing things that religious and minority communities across the country are doing to ensure a better tomorrow for the generations to come. I pray for this paper to bring people together through understanding and shared values, for we are all brothers and sisters.

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*Proverbs 22:6*

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

As one of the top global polluters, America has a responsibility to switch to cleaner, more sustainable practices. However, the political and social will of the people must precede an effective environmental agenda. To be more effective, the environmental movement in the United States must improve its connection with people of color and people of faith, two groups disproportionately absent from mainstream environmentalism. Diversification is not only crucial for the environmental movement to be effective, but is crucial for the survival of the movement itself (Bonta & Jordan, 2007).

The mainstream movement is out of touch with minority environmental perspectives and has admitted to being inattentive to minority environmental concerns (Adams, 1992). Additionally, the mainstream environmental movement has through decades been racially discriminatory in their hiring practices, sparking action in the early 1990's as part of the environmental justice movement. As a result of the environmental justice campaign, mainstream environmental organizations committed to addressing environmental issues that disproportionately affect poor and minority communities and also promised to re-examine their hiring process, as their staff comprised a disproportionate number of white employees; however, *desire* for change doesn't necessarily reflect the *reality* of change (Gottlieb, 2005).

There still remains a major absence of minority presence in the mainstream environmental NGOs, foundations, and agencies (Taylor, 2014). Underrepresentation in any institution, including environmentalism, will further discourage participation of the marginalized group (Finney, 2014) and therefore continues the cycle as a positive

feedback loop for a lower rate of minority applicants in the workforce (Pandya, 2012; Bonta & Jordan, 2007).

Similarly, historical environmental contributions from minorities have gone largely unrecognized (Finney, 2014; Glave & Stoll, 2006) while middle to upper class white Americans dominate the movement's narrative and decision-making capacity (Gottlieb, 2005). Despite environmentalism being a "complex set of movements with diverse roots" (Gottlieb, 2005), the mainstream environmental movement is still seen as a "white" movement by the African American community which also discourages some African Americans from participating (Baugh, 2015; Finney, 2014). The "eco-divide" between blacks and whites has been compared to the digital divide, which separated African Americans and lower income individuals from employment opportunities in the early 2000's (Baugh, 2017).

In addition to the white-black disparity, the environmental movement remains largely a secular one (Dunlap, 2006). Many Christian ecologists have felt unable to voice their belief that the environmental crisis requires a deeper religious understanding of the values and ethics picture behind environmental problems (Dean, 2005; Kearns, 1997). Many leaders in the scientific community claim that belief in God is not only antagonistic to natural sciences, but dangerous to it, and consider theism a taboo subject among all scientific circles (Dean, 2005). Therefore, by maintaining an environment that is uncomfortable to people of faith, the atmosphere within environmental science communities may appear unwelcoming, especially to black Protestants of whom 80% report their religion to be "very important" in their lives (Pew Research Center, 2009). This dynamic is problematic to the environmental movement.

Furthermore, there is a growing need to amplify the faith-based voice in the movement because political will is imperative for creating legislative action; religious politicians do not listen or adhere to the voice of the traditional secular mainstream environmental movement nearly as closely as they do their more trusted faith-based constituents (Baron, 1996). The national environmental agenda is also heavily vulnerable to changes in administration (Smith & Pulver, 2009) and has been playing a game of back and forth, tug-of-war between political parties in recent decades. The environmental movement desperately needs to execute a plan which unites Americans under shared values, as opposed to pursuing the goal of capturing national legislative power and putting into practice an environmental agenda that a large number of Americans do not support. Taking proper care of the earth should not be a partisan issue.

To continue an environmental agenda without recognizing and actively attempting to understand environmental perspectives of a more diverse population is to deprive the country of a more holistic, equitable, representative movement. To continue an environmental agenda which does not serve the needs of a more diverse population continues the framework for environmental injustice. In competitive American culture where materialism and individualism have become the law of the land, it would seem that the environmental movement should reconsider its approach, remove itself from the echo chamber it operates in (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005), and strive to incorporate worldviews from both people of faith and people of color. However, before this can occur, the environmental values of African and Protestant Americans must be examined, and recent literature gives mixed results on the subject.

Studies on religious environmental attitudes tend to subgroup Christians into a

few smaller categories, such as Christian literalists and non-literalists (Morrison, et al., 2015) or Judeo- or non-Judeo Christian (Hand & Van Liere, 1984). Studies on how ethnicity and race affect environmental attitudes call for more in-depth research, as conflicting results suggest a more nuanced solution than previously expected. As was evident in the Presidential election of 2016, many Protestant Americans do not share environmentalists' sense of urgency of the ecological crisis, electing arguably the most anti-environmental president in recent history, Donald J. Trump. While many studies have examined both African American and Protestant environmental attitudes, there is a significant gap in understanding with regard to the black church community as a more specific sub-culture and an intersection of both realms. Current literature calls for a more in-depth look at African American (Finney, 2014) and Protestant (Sherkat & Ellison, 2007) environmental values and beliefs.

The black church has been a mobilizer for change in past movements (Finney, 2014; Arp, 1997; Harris, 1994; West, 1988; DuBois, 1969) and should be respected as a crucial ally. The goal of this research is to be a small building block in the bridge between the scientific and the faith communities by uncovering the middle ground where we can all stand. This topic is important because it can shed light on areas of shared values and lessen the distrust and misunderstanding between different groups who operate in seemingly-opposed axioms. This paper will examine the following research questions:

1. Do black Protestant pastors in the South hold an anti-, neutral, or pro-environmental attitude?
2. What environmental actions/behaviors are preferred by black Protestants in the

South to create change?

3. What factors appear to be related to black Protestants' environmental attitudes and behaviors within the black Protestant church?
4. How can this inform the environmental movement to create a more diverse constituency?

To answer these questions, this thesis uses a mail survey to measure environmental attitudes and identify preferred actions from within the black church community in the southeast region of the United States (the Deep South). In the chapters that follow, I first review current literature regarding African American and Protestant environmentalism, the history of the black Protestant church, and the common predictors of environmental worldviews. In chapter 3, I explain the exact methodology used to sample from the intended population, and how I structured the survey instrument to measure environmental predictors. Chapter 4 provides a report of study results, including a demographic profile of respondents and their responses to the survey instrument as well as the factors that appear to condition respondents' environmental attitudes. In chapter 5, I discuss the implications of the results and compare them to past studies. Finally, chapter 6 offers several strategies currently in place that can bring the mainstream environmental community together with African and Protestant Americans using the results of this survey.

### **Definition of terms**

For the purposes of this paper, the definition of *environmentalism* is borrowed from Parker and McDonough (1999) as a composite of environmental attitudes and behaviors: "Environmental attitude is defined as a person's general positive or negative

feeling toward the natural surroundings of humankind, including air, water, land, wildlife, and the systems existing between the natural environment and human society” (p. 156), and the behaviors are the actions stemming from such attitudes.

The *mainstream environmental movement* refers to the government environmental agencies and national environmental organizations and foundations, as opposed to smaller, local grassroots movements. The mainstream movement tends to be highly bureaucratic and located in Washington, D.C. and state capitals (Gottlieb, 2005).

*Afrocentrism* is one of the key concepts of this thesis. If an American institution has been established primarily by a white constituency, it is preferable for African Americans to establish their own version which examines the African American experience as the primary worldview and assert equitable representation (Baugh, 2015; Finney, 2014). The “mainstream environmental movement” is an American institution established, informed, and maintained by “white, Western European, or Euro-American voices” (Finney, 2014, p. 3; Taylor, 1997).

The *Deep South* is a specific sub-region of the southern United States largely characterized by its culture and geography and comprised of states most heavily dependent historically on slavery and the cotton industry. The Deep South generally includes Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Georgia (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2017).

*Protestant* refers to the member of the Protestant church, the second largest denomination of Christianity behind Catholicism. In this paper, I use the terms “Protestant” and “Christian” interchangeably, although Protestant does not technically include Catholicism as Christianity does.

The *historically black Protestant* church is a foundational subculture of America whose constituents unite by race, religion, and shared history. There are seven major denominations of the historically black Protestant church and this research will sample from two of the largest denominations, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (AMEZ) (pbs.org, 2010). While I acknowledge that not all individuals who identify as black are of African descent, I use the terms “black” and “African American” interchangeably. Furthermore, although the AME and AMEZ churches are openly inviting to members of all races and ethnicities, it is assumed that respondents are African American, as Pew Forum reports 96% black identification (2014).

As it pertains to Christianity, *apocalypticism* is the religious belief in an imminent, prophetic end of the world, creating a subcultural offset of individuals who believe, behave, and create social processes according to that belief (McNeish, 2017) and based mainly in the book of Revelations. The origin of the word “apocalypse” has Greek roots, translating as an ‘uncovering’ or ‘revelation’ (McNeish, 2017).

*Eschatology* is defined as the branch of theology concerned with the end times of the universe of humankind (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

*Anthropocentrism* is defined as the philosophical practice of seeing humans as the most important entities, regarding the world in terms of human values and experiences, or having a human-centered orientation (Merriam-Webster, 2018). This term is also used in this thesis interchangeably with the concept of human dominance and the belief that humans have the right to modify their surroundings.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

Over the years, studies have examined the interaction of both religion and race with environmentalism. However, inconsistent findings on both variables signal that the environmental perspectives of Protestants and African Americans are complex (Sherkat & Ellison, 2007; Sheppard, 1995). Some scholars propose black religion as a suppressant of political activism (Marx, 1967), while others propose it as a “mobilizer” of awareness and action (Harris, 1994). Some research highlights the lack of environmental concern in the African American community (Taylor, 1989), while additional studies refute the claim and assert that African Americans are more concerned for the environment than are individuals who identify as white (Jones & Carter, 1994; Mohai, 1990).

Research on individual versus communal approaches to environmentalism has suggested Protestants and African Americans prefer different approaches. While Protestants tend to view individual behavior as the most effective component for creating change (Smith & Pulver, 2009; Smith, 2006), African Americans tend to lean towards communal action, asserting power in numbers and taking action only after becoming affiliated with community groups (Taylor, 1989), such as a church community. A controversial essay suggested that the Western Christian worldview, which values human life above all, is to blame for the current ecological crisis (White, 1967), while other studies suggest that religion may be the source of a more pro-environmental stewardship effect (Smith & Pulver, 2009; Kanagy & Nelsen, 1995).

With such a conflicting body of literature on the subject of religion, race and environmentalism, further research on the black Protestant perspective can offer important insight on shared values and possible areas of increased engagement and collaboration. As the common saying goes, “*we fear what we don’t understand,*” and that fear leads to avoidance and the inability to engage with individuals and communities which are unlike our own. This research aims to decrease the amount of misunderstanding between the larger environmental science communities who engage in environmental action (environmentalists), and the larger faith communities.

### **African American Environmentalism**

African American environmental thought and action is complex, complicated by historical events. Literature suggests that one of the reasons why some African Americans may adopt a resentful view of environmentalism is that placing the emphasis of caring for endangered plants and animals over minorities living in inner cities is diversionary and elitist (Baugh, 2015; Baugh, 1991). Another leading explanation for the absence of minorities in the movement is subcultural values and collective memory. More specifically, the black community is reported to share transgenerational trauma that is engrained in the African American psyche which deters an incentive to develop a stronger connection to the land. For example, black female church members shared with an interviewer that caring for the land invokes a feeling of slavery, even going so far to say that African Americans should avoid outside environmental activities in the sun, such as farming, in fear of a stigma associated with their skin becoming too dark (Baugh, 2015). Older members expressed contempt for certain fruits and vegetables because of their association to sharecropping they experienced as children (Baugh, 2015). They also

suggested that the younger black generations moving further and further away from the land should be considered progress (Baugh, 2015).

Furthermore, African Americans have historically been unwelcomed in and segregated from public areas, affecting their motivation to protect those public areas. Similarly, violent hate crimes committed in natural wilderness areas have been suggested to prohibit African Americans from feeling safe to visit such areas (Finney, 2014; Johnson & Bowker, 2004; Taylor, 1989). This trauma affects the relationship to the land and an individual's environmental orientation can be strongly influenced by their identity as an African American (Finney, 2014).

If an ethnic group of people collectively experience hostile or fearful emotions towards the environment from centuries of hate crimes committed in wildland areas, slavery, and forced labor under the institutions of share-cropping, plantation agriculture, and forest labor, they would be less inclined to fight for environmental causes. However, some literature has recognized this deeply-rooted tension and urges African Americans to embrace nature while recognizing minority contributions to environmentalism. Glave & Stoll's *To Love the Wind and Rain* (2006) attempts to mend the brokenness between African Americans and the natural world by highlighting an almost romantic relationship and offering an Afrocentric environmental history. Nonetheless, there is a need for greater understanding of the environmental attitudes and belief of African Americans (Finney, 2014) because they have historically been marginalized and used in the environmental agenda without being given actual agency.

African Americans have also voiced feelings of being unwelcomed in the environmental movement. The underlying tensions between mainstream environmentalism and minorities was brought to light at the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, when participating minority groups soundly declared that they did not want a “paternalistic relationship” with environmental organizations, but instead a “relationship based on equity, mutual respect, mutual interest, and justice” as co-managers (Gottlieb, 2005). People of color accused the mainstream environmental organizations of racist hiring and employment practices, and although ethnic minority hiring has increased, it still remains largely disproportionate (Taylor, 2014). In a national study, minorities and bi-racial individuals were found to make up about 38% of the U.S. population but only account for less than 12% of paid positions among environmental organizations and less than 5% of African Americans hold leadership positions (Taylor, 2014).

This research will examine these alleged divisions between environmentalism and African Americans. I will also measure environmental attitudes of black Protestants as a function biblical interpretation and apocalypticism. The black Protestant is a unique individual whose voice is not equally recognized in the mainstream movement, and this research will help identify how members of the black Protestant church perceive the government’s role over environmental pollution, identify preferred behaviors and action, consider the role the bible plays in shaping environmental attitude, and the role that human beings play in relation to the environment.

### **Protestant Environmentalism**

There are several fundamental ideological differences which historically divide

Protestants from mainstream environmentalism, causing the movement to continually fail to collaborate with many religious-minded individuals. First, Protestants tend to have an anthropocentric, human-dominant orientation which has been found to be associated with a lower environmental concern (Hand & Van Liere, 1984). Furthermore, environmentalists tend to place the needs of the environment above the needs of human and economic development; therefore a strictly environmental agenda is not well-received within the Protestant religious right (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2004).

On the other hand, scholars have pointed the blame at Christianity. Historian Lynn White published a 1967 paper in entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis”, claiming Christianity single-handedly altered man’s worldview of our relationship with nature. Before the rise of Christianity, White suggested that the western world lived more in balance and harmony with nature and attributed a soul to all living and non-living things, including but not limited to plants, animals, mountains, rivers, weather systems, and natural phenomena. White claimed Christianity “established a dualism of man and nature” (p. 52), abolishing pagan animism and separating man from the natural world by giving mankind dominion and divine authority to rule over everything on the earth. One specific passage from the book of Genesis is seemingly evident of White’s claim:

*<sup>26</sup>Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” <sup>27</sup>So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup>God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” (Genesis 1:26-28, New International Version)*

Although critics of Christianity would argue this verse is proof the Christian has a destructive domination agenda for the earth, biblical interpretation varies greatly between different churches and denominations. Pastor Ed Gardner of a non-denominational Protestant church in Alaska interprets this particular verse non-literally and establishes its meaning in a completely different context. In a recent online post, Pastor Ed describes this verse as God telling you to “use the things He’s given you to make a difference in this world. In other words, you are here not to be irrelevant, not to be on the sidelines, not to sit back and watch life happen and someone else live it, you are here to exercise God’s creative rule over the earth, to be fruitful, to be a part of families, to make communities, to build cities, to lead societies, to shape cultures... You were made to be a success” (March 21, 2018). By this interpretation, this passage is meant for a Christian to become a good steward in their personal relationships and is unrelated to exploitation of natural resources. This interpretation reflects the potential for biblical scripture to vary greatly in its meaning between different denominations of Protestants.

However, in keeping with White’s thesis, Christian anti-environmentalism has increased in the last several decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pew Research, 2014; Wright, 1995) and despite claims that Christianity has experienced a ‘greening’ of attitudes (Wilkinson, 2010), a recent study found Christians still tend to show less concern for the environment (Konisky, 2017). Many Protestants believe environmentalism to be a version of nature-worship paganism, worshiping the *creation* over the *creator*, and therefore must be rejected as false idolatry (Kearns, 1997). Environmentalism has also been accused by Christian fundamentalists to be the mechanism which replaces Christianity and brings about the new global world order as prophesized in the Holy

Bible (Kearns, 1997). In a televised sermon by Christian Preacher John Hagey, he warns his audience of “The Environmentalist Agenda” by stating,

“I am for clean air and clean water and the preservation of our natural resources...But I have discovered from a great number of sources an environmental juggernaut that has come together and married the new world order crowd and the occultists who have the objective to control the United States economy through environmental concerns and laws that they have passed and will pass” –as quoted in Kearns 1997.

Despite these serious charges and the rise of Christian anti-environmentalism, religious environmental organizations have been on the rise since the 1990’s (Kearns, 1997). In response to the growing national sentiment that Christians are not environmentally friendly, several national environmental organizations have sprouted, including the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), and Interfaith Power and Light (IPL), all taking varying degrees of environmental attitudes and behavior.

An attempt to categorize Christian environmental attitudes, Kearns (1997) identifies three leading Christian eco-theological ethical models by which religious environmental organizations operate from. These are described in Table 1. The first is the *Christian stewardship* ethic, which are mainly characterized by anthropocentrism, belief in biblical mandate to care for God’s creation, and belief in a transcendent and authoritative God. The next model is *eco-justice*, characterized by anthropocentrism, driven by social justice, and belief in a transcendent and liberating God. The final model is *creation spirituality*, characterized by biocentrism, guided by cosmological physics, and belief in an immanent pantheistic God (Kearns, 1997). Based on the literature, the black Protestant church is expected to adhere to the *Christian stewardship* ethic, placing

humans as the key species on earth, created in God’s image, yet also bearing the responsibility of tending to God’s garden (the earth).

<b>Table 1: Christian Eco-Theological Ethic Models</b>			
<b>Christian Ethic</b>	<i>Christian Stewardship</i>	<i>Eco-Justice</i>	<i>Creation Spirituality</i>
<b>Theological appeal</b>	Evangelical	Mainline Christian; social justice	Liberal/Unchurched
<b>Human-Nature Relationship</b>	Gardener/Caretaker	Sustainable use of natural resources	Balance/harmony of humans in bio-system
<b>Roots of Environmental Crisis</b>	Human sinfulness and disobedience of God	Injustice/inequality; economic systems	Dualism of humans and nature; anthropocentrism
<b>Worldview</b>	Anthropocentric; pre-modern	Anthropocentric; modern	Biocentric; post-modern
<b>Central Environmental Issues</b>	Resource depletion; species extinction	Toxic/hazardous waste; human health; pollution	Wilderness preservation; species extinction
<b>Image of God</b>	Authoritative	Liberator	Panentheistic
<b>Social Change Orientation</b>	Homocentric (change individuals)	Sociocentric (change society)	Homocentric (change individuals)

Table 1: Christian Eco-Ethics Model as adapted from Kearns 1997.

Individuals of faith are said to exert a more holistic, “ethics-based” approach to issues, as opposed to the narrower, “issue-based” approach used by secularists (Smith & Pulver, 2009). For example, a faith-based individual may take ethics-based environmental action by teaching others that caring for the earth is an act of love which honors the creator and regards all the physical world as a manifestation of God’s creation; a secularist may take an issue-based approach by opposing an environmental permit be issued to build a specific dam. An ethics-based approach gives an answer to *why* action is

needed; an issue-based approach gives an answer to *what* action is needed. Although ethics-based action is not exclusive to faith-led individuals and issue-based action is not exclusive to secularists, faith-led environmentalism contains a larger principled framework that is missing from the mainstream environmental movement (Smith & Pulver, 2009).

### **History of the Black Protestant Church**

The historically black Protestant (HBP) church has been arguably the most powerful black institution in American history. The (HBP) churches led African Americans to independence, political liberation, and activism (West, 1988), such as in the fight for civil rights and the abolition of slavery. Black religiosity is also a predictor of communal activity, such as political and social activism (Arp & Boeckelman, 1997). This was apparent in the Civil Rights movement, as the black church mobilized the African American community effectively. However, for an environmental agenda, the HBP church is the least supportive of more strict environmental regulations out of all the other major religions in the U.S. (Pew Research, 2004). Studies show that African Americans are just as concerned about the environment as other races (Adeola, 2004; Parker & McDonough, 1999), but there is a larger gap between concern and action (Parker & McDonough, 1999; Taylor, 1989).

Despite the environmental movement's attempt to diversify its constituency and increase minority agency and presence, it remains largely white (Taylor, 2014; Bonta & Jordan, 2007). One national study examined the employee racial and ethnic composition of mainstream environmental NGOs, foundations, and government agencies, and found that racial and ethnic minorities remain "severely underrepresented in the environmental

workforce” (Taylor, 2014, p. 4). Empirical research has shown that African American representation is almost non-existent in environmental leisure and recreation publications (Finney, 2014).

Environmentalism has even been rejected by minorities as a term reserved for the national mainstream organizations (Gottlieb, 2005, p. 8). African Americans of the environmental justice movement in the 1980’s rejected the mainstream environmental organizations’ attempt at a paternalistic relationship and requested a relationship which resembled an equitable partnership, which did not occur (Gottlieb, 2005) and has not been fully realized (Taylor, 2014). During this time, the definition of environment was defined by not to refer to beautiful, pristine wildlands but where we “live, work, and play” (Gottlieb, 2005).

### **Biblical Interpretation: Apocalypticism and Eschatology**

*<sup>10</sup>The day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. (2 Peter 3:10, New International Version)*

Warning the public of impending doom is something the environmental movement and the religious community have in common. The science community is continually warning us of climate change: the potential catastrophic collapse of our global ecosystems, increasing wildfires, species extinction, increasing droughts, intensifying natural disasters, melting of polar ice, the rising of the sea. Similarly, sections of the Protestant community have long subscribed to apocalypticism, or a doctrine concerning an imminent end of the world and an ensuing resurrection and final judgement (Merriam-Webster, 2018). Protestantism has warned of the second coming of Jesus Christ, a future “reckoning for humanity, the collapse of civilization, and perhaps

even annihilation of all life” (McNeish, 2017, p. 1036; Weber, 1999). Eschatology, or a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind (Merriam-Webster, 2018), is a major component of Protestant thought. A common doctrine of Protestantism is the idea that humans need to get right with God before judgment day and offer guiding principles to live by.

Similarly, modern environmentalism has been described as a secular faith that acts much like a religion (Dunlap, 2006). By orienting humans to their place in the environment and providing them a purpose to their lives (to get right with the universe by living in harmony with nature), environmentalism shares more with Protestantism than has been realized. Belief in an ultimate reckoning, whether it is from ecological or divine intervention, guides members of both the environmental and religious communities. The impact of these similar beliefs is much more ambiguous.

Critics of the environmental doomsday thinking argue that fear-driven narratives, such as that used by the mainstream environmental movement to sound the alarm on climate change and environmental crises are ultimately self-defeating in a consumeristic society (McNeish, 2017; Giddens, 2015). Environmental apocalypticism is considered by some to be counterproductive to environmentalism because it creates an undesirable alarmist (Leiserowitz, 2005) or hysterical (Hoggert, 2011) perception of the person holding the apocalyptic worldview (McNeish, 2017). However, some argue that apocalyptic narratives are an important element in creating crucial action and sense of urgency (McNeish, 2017; Taylor, 1991). Veldman (2012) argues that environmental behaviors ‘occur not *despite* apocalypticism but *because* of it’. Apocalyptic predictions have shaped American culture and framed the paradigms we exist in. As such, this thesis

analyzes whether subscribing to those beliefs influences environmental attitudes, a precursor to environmental behavior, as previous studies suggest.

### **Political Orientation**

Political party and ideology have been shown to be indicators of environmental attitudes and behaviors, and conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats remain highly divided on this issue today. Shekat and Ellison found that conservative Protestants are significantly less likely to report environmental behaviors, such as recycling, and are significantly less likely to make personal sacrifices for nature, such as paying higher taxes to benefit the environment (2007). However, they also found that conservatives hold stronger stewardship beliefs (Sherkat & Ellison, 2007). Similarly, McCright et al. found that Republicans and conservatives are more divided than ever from Democrats and liberals when it comes to support for government spending on environmental protection (2014). This divide may indicate ideological differences and perceived role of the government rather than environmental orientation.

### **Research on Public Environmental Views: The New Ecological Paradigm Scale**

First introduced in 1978 as the New Environmental Paradigm, the New Ecological Paradigm scale (Dunlap 2000, 1978) is recognized as a reliable tool to measure individuals' environmental orientation. The scale was revised in 2000 to broaden the range of content, offer a better balance of pro- and anti- NEP items, and remove outdated terminology.

One study found that political party, occupational sector, income, and residence are all predictors of consistent NEP scores (Dunlap et al., 2000). The NEP scale has also

shown that specific groups, such as younger generations, more highly educated individuals, and political liberals, have consistently higher pro-environmental scores (Dunlap et al., 2000; Jones & Dunlap, 1992). Furthermore, individuals who experience environmental crises have also been shown to have an increased NEP score, and awareness of environmental issues have been shown to increase environmental concern (Eiser et al., 1994). One study found that residents of Kentucky adopted an increased pro-environmental attitude after experiencing a severe drought (Arcury & Christianson, 1990).

The NEP scale has been found to measure several dimensions of one's environmental worldview (Morrison et al., 2015; Dunlap et al., 2000). In its original form, the NEP scale was thought to be composed of three dimensions: human dominance over the earth, limitations to growth, and the balance of nature (Dunlap and Van Liere, 1978). However, later iterations and other studies have found that the new NEP scale contains four dimensions: eco-crisis, human ingenuity, human rule, and earth limits (Morrison et al., 2015; Dunlap et al. 2000). Some researchers have chosen to decrease the number of questions they ask depending on the specific dimension they are examining (Arcury, 1990).

## Chapter 3: Methods

### Study Area

This research focuses on the geographic area of the United States known as the “Deep South”. The Deep South region includes Texas, Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, South Carolina, and Alabama. These states were most dependent on plantation-style agriculture, cotton production, and slave societies before the Civil War (New World Encyclopedia, 2008). The Deep South region also contains an area of the U.S. known as the “Black Belt”, which refers to a stretch of fertile plain from eastern Texas to North Carolina that comprises of rich, dark-colored soil used for growing cotton (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018). Additional definitions of the Black Belt sub-region developed, eventually being described in 1901 by prominent African American scholar Booker T. Washington in his autobiography as "the part of the South where the slaves were most profitable, and consequently they were taken there in the largest numbers. Later and especially since the war, the term seems to be used wholly in a political sense—that is, to designate the counties where the black people outnumber the white”.

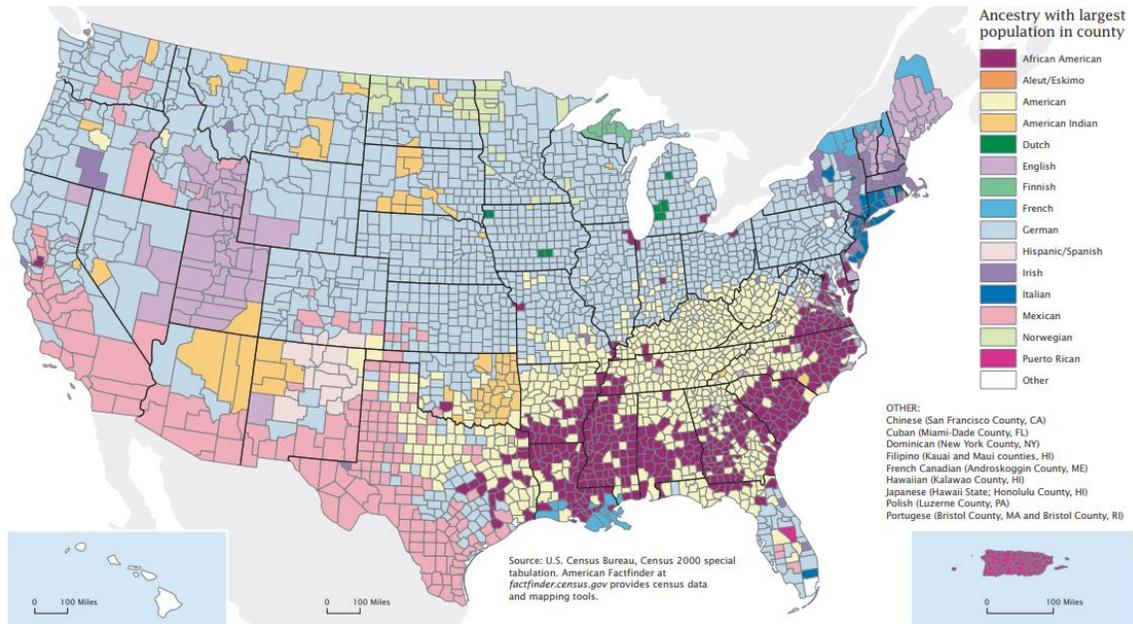


Figure 1: Black Belt region of the Deep South (Census Bureau special tabulation, 2004).

In addition to being the densest HBP and African American populations, the Deep South also tends to have some of the highest rates of poverty in the U.S. (Driskell, 2006; Adelman & Jaret, 1999). The Black Belt specifically experiences high occupational segregation, lack of industrial growth, low quality of life, and continuously low household income for African Americans (Census Bureau, 2012; Rankin & Falk, 1991). These lower socioeconomic and minority areas have been targeted by industrial polluters; environmental injustices are a result of the imbalances in these systemic power structures, where communities with the least power are exploited by a more influential entity for their community's inability to politically, monetarily, or legally resist these powerful corporations (James et al., 2012; Brulle & Pellow, 2006).

For example, the petrochemical corridor in Louisiana, commonly known as “cancer alley”, is a 100-mile stretch of land containing more than 130 plants and refineries (James, Jia, & Kedia, 2012; Gottlieb, 2005). One study found that the highest

cumulative exposure risk for cancer is disproportionately located in the low-income tracts of cancer alley while the lower risk of cancer is among the higher income tracts (James et al., 2012). The same study found that the cancer risk similarly increases with percentage of black residents. In 1987, the landmark study *Toxic Wastes and Race* conducted by United Church in Christ Commission, found that race was the most significant variable in association with the location of a commercial hazardous waste facility. These areas are predicted to exhibit pro-environmental attitudes, since experiencing an environmental crisis has been shown to increase an individual's environmental worldview (Arcury & Christianson, 1990).

This study focuses on three states within the Deep South region: Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Mississippi was selected first, since 24% of the state's adult population identifies as historically black Protestants (HBP), which is the highest density of HBP in the U.S. Louisiana neighbors Mississippi to the west and is the next highest density at 22%. Alabama is the fourth highest density at 16% and despite the fact that Georgia is the third densest state, containing a 17% of adult population HBP, Alabama was selected due to its location since it borders Mississippi to the east.

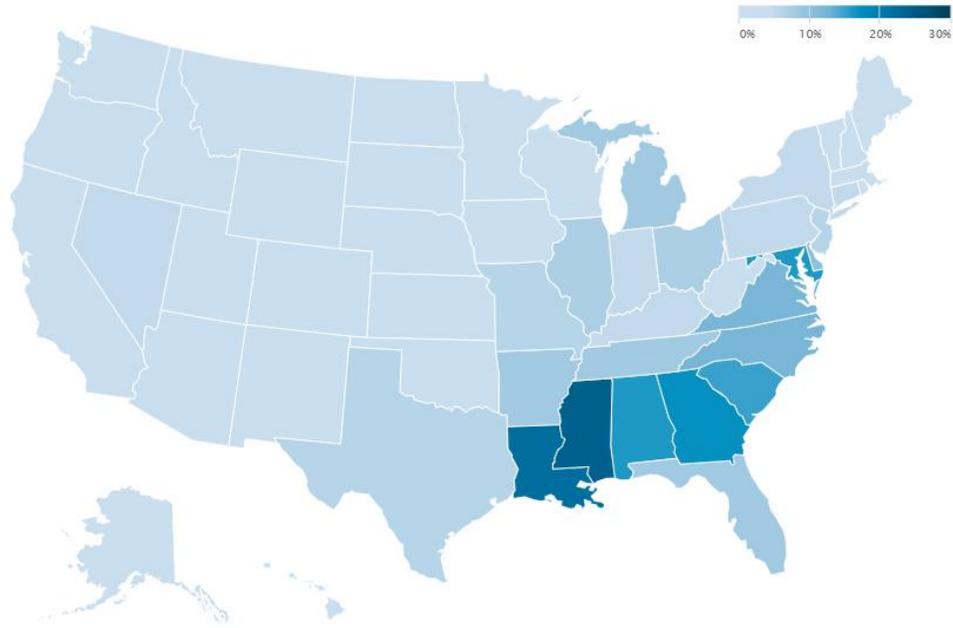


Figure 2: Population density of Historically Black Protestants by state (Pew Research, 2014).

Although this survey spanned a large geographic area covering three states, the HBP church maintains similar cultural beliefs. Among the various denominations, the HBP church members collectively display fewer differences on political and social issues than the general population (Pew Research Center, 2009).

### **Sampling Strategy**

There are seven major denominations of the historically black protestant church: National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive National Convention, African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion), Christian Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Church of God in Christ (pbs.org, 2010). This research project was narrowed down to the scope of two denominations for budgetary and time constraints. Although the National Baptist Convention is the largest of the HBP denominations (Pew Research

Center, 2018), it was excluded after internet searches resulted in a limited list of church locations.

The AME church is the most “historic” black Protestant denomination, as the first independent black church in U.S. history to separate from a larger denomination on the basis of race as opposed to theological differences (pbs.org, 2018) and remains the second largest black Protestant denomination today (Pew Research Center, 2018). The AME church was founded in 1816 by Richard Allen in opposition to racial discrimination of St. George’s Methodist church in Philadelphia, PA (ame-church.com, 2018). “African” is for foundations built by African Americans, “Methodist” is a reference to having roots in the Methodist church, and “Episcopal” refers to the type of church government operations (Williams, 2015).

The AME Zion church, whose members also self-identify as “Zion Methodist”, was founded in 1821 by James Varick in New York. The AME Zion church was also founded as a result of segregation imposed on the African American members of the Methodist church (Townsel, 1996). Although the two denominations have almost identical names and were founded around the same time, they are separate denominations. The term “Zion” is said to be chosen by the founders to represent the word most commonly used in the Bible to describe the church of God (Williams, 2015). The word “Zion” is also defined as a term used to describe heaven, a kingdom come, or a New Jerusalem (Merriam-Webster, 2018). The concept of a chosen people being led out of oppression to a promised land is reoccurring. On their webpage, the AME Zion church refer to their heritage as an oppressed people repeatedly being led out of bondage, and have been “chosen” to lift up the poor and oppressed until the second coming of Jesus

Christ (amez.org, 2018). They also feature a photo of Harriet Tubman who was known as the “Moses” of the Underground Railroad, smuggling slaves out of the South to the promised land of the free North (Wyels, 2013).

Both denominations were established separately around the same time in protest of racial discrimination from the larger Eurocentric Methodist churches; however, at the 2012 United Methodist Conference, the larger white Methodist church and the smaller African American denominations entered into full communion with each other, agreeing to recognize one another’s churches, share sacraments, and recognize mutual authority (Banks, 2012). The two denominations are similar, yet maintain a certain level of separation. They would be considered “sister” churches.

The sampling strategy was to include pastors of all AME and AME Zion churches in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi which returned complete addresses and phone numbers after repeated internet searches. AME and AME Zion churches were easily identifiable by their unique acronyms.

The black pastor has “traditionally been the oracles of retribution for the oppressor, the prophets of vindication for the oppressed” and is one of the most respected figures in the southern black church community (Burns, 1992). In his 1903 book *The Souls of Black Folk*, W.E.B. Du Bois described the African American preacher as the “most unique personality developed by the Negro on American soil” (p. 116) who “found his function as the healer of the sick, the interpreter of the Unknown, the comforter of the sorrowing, the supernatural avenger of wrong, and the one who rudely but picturesquely expressed the longing, disappointment, and resentment of a stolen and oppressed people”

(p. 119). The black pastor is the heart of the black church and represents its inner most values, and therefore was selected as the intended subject at each church sampled.

### **Data Collection**

The National Baptist denomination was excluded from the sampling strategy after it was determined that there was no plausible way to distinguish black Baptist churches from all other Baptist churches besides those specifically containing the word “African” in the title. A list of publicly available names, addresses, and phone numbers of AME and AME Zion churches in the three target states was compiled after repeated internet searches and entered into an excel spreadsheet. A survey booklet measuring environmental perspectives was mailed to each church address with an accompanying letter requesting that the lead pastor fill out and returns the survey (see appendices for the complete survey instrument). The addresses on the outgoing and incoming envelopes were hand-written and stamped individually in an attempt to maximize the return rate. Once a week for six weeks after sending out the survey materials, 5-10 random churches on the list were contacted by phone to gauge how well the survey was being received and returned. Increased follow-up calls were conducted after the six weeks.

A total of 178 envelopes containing survey materials were mailed and a total of 15 responses were received. After accounting for the 33 survey packets that were returned as undeliverable, the response rate was 10%, or 15 out of 145. Because of the low response rate, this study is presented as an exploratory pilot study and cannot generalize to the broader black Protestant community. Areas of improvement for future

studies will be covered in the discussion section, with specific attention to garnering a higher response rate.

### **Measurement Procedure**

The survey instrument consisted of a 14-page, half sheet survey booklet with 26 questions measuring environmental attitudes, support for environmental regulation, biblical interpretation, the New Ecological Paradigm scale, and various demographic factors. Survey questions were included in the survey to specifically measure several variables listed above (see appendices). Items were most often measured using a Likert scale, measuring different degrees of support or agreeance for environmental beliefs and actions.

### **Dependent variables**

#### *New Ecological Paradigm Scale*

The NEP scale was used to measure respondents' overall environmental orientation. As mentioned previously, the NEP scale can also be separated into several constructs; Dunlap et al. 2000 identifies five dimensions of the NEP as *limits to growth*, *balance of nature*, *eco-crisis*, *human exemption to laws of nature*, and *anthropocentrism*. *Balance* is the generally regarded as an agreeance with ecological harmony between man and nature, and is a key principle to Kearns' *creation spirituality ethic* (see table 1). *Limits to growth* are associated with the belief that the earth's resources are limited and therefore humans should limit the space they take up and the resources they consume. *Eco-crisis* is the belief that the earth is heading towards an ecological catastrophe that will result in disastrous consequences if things continue their present course. This can also be considered an apocalyptic orientation as a belief that humankind and/or the earth

are heading towards a catastrophic event resulting in a destructive end. *Human exemption* is the belief that humans are not susceptible to or are above the laws of nature. Finally, *anthropocentrism* is the regarded as a human-centered orientation that gives us dominance and the right to modify our surroundings (Dunlap et al., 2000). This study focused mostly on *anthropocentrism* and *limits to growth*, and evaluated the correlation of these NEP dimensions to other variables as well as the scale responses as a whole.

The full 15-item NEP scale was used in the survey instrument. Responses were coded on a Likert scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest pro-environmental score and 5 being the highest pro-environmental score. As is common practice, questions stated in an anti-environmental direction were reversely-coded to ensure uniform directionality measuring the extent of pro-environmental orientation. For example, “humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs” were coded from 5 to 1, with 1 being “strongly agree” and scoring the lowest pro-environmental answer. Each item on the NEP scale was summed for each respondent to produce an overall NEP score. Therefore, the lowest possible total NEP score was 15 (15 items times a score of 1 for each item) and the highest possible score was 75 (15 items times a score of 5 for each item).

#### *Support for Government Environmental Action*

Respondents were asked seven questions pertaining to the level of support for different government policies. Responses were coded on a Likert scale, ranging from 1 to 5, 1 being the least supportive and 5 being the most supportive. The total range was 7-35, with 7 being strongly opposed (scoring a 1 on each item) to government policy and 35 being strongly supportive (scoring a 5 on each item). Questions indicating an anti-

environmental orientation were reverse coded for consistency such each item could be analyzed as a measure of support for government environmental policies. For example, the item asking respondents how much they supported “opening up more land owned by the federal government for oil and gas exploration” was coded from 5 to 1, with a higher score of 5 corresponding to a “strongly oppose” response.

#### *Individual and Collective Actions Preferred for Creating Change*

Respondents were asked several questions regarding current environmental behaviors and preferred actions to influence change (activism). Respondents were asked to indicate what actions they prefer to take in order to create social, economic, or environmental change, and more than one answer could be selected. Additionally, two questions were asked in order to determine whether respondents prefer taking individual or collective group action, as environmental outcomes have been shown to be divided by the Christian denominations into individualistic and communal actions (Emerson & Smith, 2001). Finally, two questions were asked to examine whether respondents believe the black church community should take a separatist approach and engage in action apart from or together with the mainstream organizations.

#### **Independent variables**

##### *Biblical Interpretation (Eschatology, Apocalypticism)*

Christianity has been blamed for shifting the western world into an anthropocentric worldview and creating the present ecological crisis (White, 1967). The New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) scale contains items to measure how strongly the subject adheres to human dominance over nature. The pastors were asked two questions pertaining to whether or not they believe climate change is a result of end-times biblical

translation, as well as three additional questions to measure what degree they agree/disagree with statements related to Christian environmental ethics derived from biblical translation (see Table 1 & 6). Respondents who believe in an inevitable end to the world may be less concerned with environmental stewardship and consider it pointless to spend time and money to save something that will eventually be destroyed anyways.

### *Political Orientation*

Since the mainstream environmental movement has experienced a major decline in support from conservative Republican individuals over the last few decades (McCright et al., 2014), political affiliation was also measured. Respondents were asked to best describe their political views using a five-point Conservative–Moderate–Liberal scale with response options ranging from very conservative to very liberal. Political orientation was examined to see if a conservative response appeared to be related to a lower pro-environmental NEP score, or a liberal response related to a higher pro-environmental NEP score.

The subject was also asked which political party they most closely align with, as Democrats are also shown to have a more pro-environmental orientation than Republicans (Jones & Dunlap, 1992) and more supportive of government environmental spending (McCright et al., 2014). It was examined if a pastor is more likely to have a more pro-environmental NEP score if they indicate they are a Democrat rather than affiliation with any other political party. Respondents were also asked several questions to measure the degree to which they support government environmental regulations (see

Appendix B), as it is presumed that Democrats would more strongly support environmental spending and regulation.

### *Demographic variables*

Respondents were asked to identify basic individual demographics, such as education level, religious denomination, and age. Respondents were asked to identify his/her highest level of education completed, as a higher education level has been found to be positively correlated to pro-environmental attitude (Dunlap, 2000; Jones & Dunlap, 1992). Additionally, denomination was measure as limited studies have shown more liberal, less biblically-literal denominations of Protestantism, such as Methodists, to have higher NEP scores than more conservative, biblically-literal denominations, such as Baptists (Morrison, Duncan, & Parton, 2015; Hand & Van Liere, 1984). Last, age was measured in years since it has been found in past studies to be predictors of a pro-environmental worldview, being negatively related as younger individuals tend to have a higher environmental orientation (Jones & Dunlap, 1992).

### **Analytical Procedure**

Tables 9 and 10 present total scores for several variables that were recorded and compared to the whole group average score to determine if differences in independent variables existed. Respondents were grouped according to denomination, level of education, church role, political party affiliation, adherence to apocalyptic beliefs, and human dominance beliefs. For example, when comparing differences found in political party affiliation, a respondent was first identified as having answered “Democrat”. Then responses to the NEP, support for government environmental policies, and climate

change were analyzed, categorizing by political party. This process was repeated for all respondents for political and independent variables.

## Chapter 4: Results

The next section presents the results of the survey instrument to offer a general environmental profile of the black Protestants who responded to the survey. As a review, the research goals of this thesis were to measure environmental orientation, identify preferred behaviors (courses of action) to influence change, identify factors that appear to be related to environmental attitudes and behaviors, and present strategies being used currently by environmental organizations that, based on survey results, could likely help diversify the movement. The following research questions were examined:

1. Do black Protestant pastors in the South hold an anti-, neutral, or pro- environmental attitude?
2. What environmental actions/behaviors are preferred by black Protestants in the South to create change?
3. What factors appear to be related to black Protestants' environmental attitudes and behaviors within the black Protestant church?
4. How can this inform the environmental movement to create a more diverse constituency?

Based on previous studies, environmental orientation is related to a number of factors. This study controlled for race, religion, and geographic region while examining factors such as political ideology, political party, and adherence to biblical beliefs of human dominance and apocalypticism. The following section presents the results of the responses received.

## Descriptive Statistics

### *Geographic Location*

Overall, there were 15 responses, for a total response rate of 10%. Responses were distributed over three states. As discussed in the methods section, three states were selected from the “Black Belt” region of the Deep South. Four of the respondents were located in Alabama, two in Mississippi, and nine in Louisiana. Figure 3 shows the geographic dispersion of respondents based on zip code location of church. Due to the close proximity of a few church locations and the scale of the map, a few markers overlap one another. The Deep South was analyzed as a region; therefore individual states were not separately analyzed.



Figure 3: General location of respondents based on church zip code. Created by author using ArcGIS software 2018.

### *Demographics*

Table 2 presents demographic characteristics of the respondents. All except one respondent identified themselves as a pastor or head pastor. Pastors were 80% male and 20% female compared to the broader black church community, who is reported to have a national average 41% male to 59% female (Pew Forum, 2014). The percentage of individuals who identify as Democrat within the black Protestant church was lower than national averages; Pew Research reports the AME church as one of the most reliably Democratic religious groups in the U.S., with 92% reporting as such in 2014. However, this specific sample only identified as 64% Democrat while reporting 21% Independent and 14% Republican.

<b>Table 2: Profile of Respondents</b>	
<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Descriptive Statistics</b>
<b>Sex (n=15)</b>	
Male	80% (n=12)
Female	20% (n=3)
<b>Church Position (n=15)</b>	
Senior Pastor	27% (n=4)
Pastor	67% (n=10)
Administrative Assistant	7% (n=1)
<b>Age (n=15)</b>	
	M: 58 years, (Min=32, Max=73)
31-40 years	6% (n=1)
41-50 years	20% (n=3)
51-60 years	26% (n=4)
61-70 years	33% (n=5)
71-80 years	13% (n=2)
<b>Denomination (n=15)</b>	
African Methodist Episcopal	73% (n=11)
African Methodist Episcopal Zion	27% (n=4)
<b>Education (n=15)</b>	
Some high school	0% (n=0)
High school graduate/GED	0% (n=0)
Some college or associate's degree	7% (n=1)
College graduate (Bachelor's degree)	27% (n=4)
Post graduate degree (Master/PhD)	67% (n=10)
<b>Political Ideology</b>	
<i>How would you best describe your political views? (n=13)</i>	
Very Liberal	8% (n=1)
Somewhat Liberal	15% (n=2)
Moderate	54% (n=7)
Somewhat Conservative	23% (n=3)
Very Conservative	0% (n=0)
<b>Political Party (n=14)</b>	
<i>What political party do you most closely align with?</i>	
Democrat	64% (n=9)
Independent	21% (n=3)
Republican	14% (n=2)

## Environmental Attitudes

### *New Ecological Paradigm*

Table 3 was constructed to show on average how respondents scored to each of the NEP questions. The average NEP score for the entire sample was 53 on a range between 15 (least pro-environmental) and 75 (most pro-environmental). This indicates an average score per question of 3.5, indicating a slightly pro-environmental attitude on average.

<b><u>To what extent do you agree/disagree that:</u></b>	<b>Total Respondents</b>
	<u>M</u> <sup>(sd)</sup>
1. We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support	2 (1.2)
2. Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs. <sup>a</sup>	3.5 (1.5)
3. When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.	4.3 (.9)
4. Human ingenuity will insure that we do NOT make the earth unlivable. <sup>a</sup>	3.3 (1.3)
5. The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrialization. <sup>a</sup>	3.4 (1.2)
6. Humans are severely abusing the environment.	4.3 (1.1)
7. The earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them. <sup>a</sup>	1.7 (1.4)
8. Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist.	4.8 (.4)
9. The earth is like a spaceship with very limited room and resources.	3 (1.4)
10. Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature.	4.5 (.8)
11. The so-called "ecological crisis" facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated. <sup>a</sup>	4.3 (1)
12. Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature. <sup>a</sup>	1.5 (1)
13. The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.	4 (1)
14. Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it. <sup>a</sup>	4.3 (1)
15. If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.	3.9 (.9)

<sup>a</sup> Item is listed with original wording, but was reverse coded so that a high score indicates a more pro-environmental attitude (opposite of question wording).

### *New Ecological Paradigm Dimensionality*

Table 4 divides the NEP item score responses according to the five dimensions identified by Dunlap et al. 2000. As discussed in the methods section, the five dimensions are *balance*, *limits to growth*, *human exemption*, *anthropocentrism*, and *eco-crisis*, with *balance*, *limits to growth*, and *eco-crisis* being pro-environmental dimensions, and *human exemption* and *anthropocentrism* being anti-environmental dimensions.

The lowest pro-environmental score was within the *limits to growth* dimension, with an average score amongst respondents of 2.2. The three NEP items that measured *limits to growth* were numbers 1, 7, and 9. Item #1 which states that we are approaching a limit to the number of people earth can support scored an average of 2. This reflects a fairly strong disagreement with the statement that earth has a pre-determined limit or maximum capacity. Item #7 states that the earth has plenty of resources if we just learn how to develop them and resulted in an average of 1.7, with respondents being in fairly strong agreement with this statement. Item # 9 states that the earth is like a spaceship with limited room and resources and resulted in a neutral score of 3.

*Anthropocentrism*, or human dominance, was the next weakest pro-environmental dimension after *limits of growth*. Overall results for the anthropocentric, human dominance dimension of the NEP were mixed, with a generally neutral score of 3.25. Among the total sample, item #2 of the NEP, which asserts that humans have the right to modify the environment to their needs, averaged a score of 3.5, which is a slightly higher than a neutral stance of 3 in the range of 1-5. Item #8 which states that plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist averaged a score of 4.8, which is a high agreement with the statement and strong anti-anthropocentric response. However, item #12 that

states humans were meant to rule over nature scored an average of 1.5, which indicates a strong anthropocentric, human dominance attitude.

*Eco-crisis* was the highest pro-environmental dimension, scoring an average of 4.1. This indicates a moderate agreeance that humans are misusing the environment and the continued misuse will result in “major ecological catastrophe”. This attitude is also supported by the results listed in table 5, where 86% of respondents answered that climate change is a very serious problem requiring action, and nearly 70% agree that human greenhouse gas emissions are causing climate change.

**Table 4: NEP Items and Scores by Dimensions**

<b>Factor</b>	<i>Limits to Growth</i>	<i>Human Exemption</i>	<i>Anthropocentrism</i>	<i>Balance</i>	<i>Eco-Crisis</i>
<b>NEP item numbers</b>	1, 7, 9	4, 10, 14	2, 8, 12	3, 5, 13	6, 11, 15
<b>Total average dimension score</b>	2.2	4.0	3.25	3.9	4.2

#### *Climate Change Beliefs*

Table 5 measures the perceived threat of climate change as well as what level of government action respondents believe is appropriate. Respondents were also asked what they believe is causing climate change; more than one answer could be selected. Only one respondent believed climate change is not serious and can be addressed years from now, and only one believed it is serious but doesn’t need to be high priority right now. The other 12 respondents believed that climate change is very serious and that government should consider it an immediate priority.

There was a slightly lower consensus in the cause of climate change. The answers were not mutually exclusive so respondents could choose more than one answer. Almost 70% stated that they that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emission is a cause, and about

half believe that climate change is an indicator of end times as prophetically described in the bible. Only 27% of respondents believe that climate change is a result of normal patterns in earth’s cycles.

<b>Table 5: Belief in Climate Change</b>	
<b>“Climate Change...”</b> (select one, n=14)	<b>Pastors</b>
“... is a very serious problem and should be one of the highest priorities for government action”	86% (n=12)
“... is serious but does not need to be a high priority for action right now”	7% (n=1)
“... is not a serious problem and can be addressed years from now if and when it becomes necessary”	7% (n=1)
... does not exist at all	0% (n=0)
<b>What do you believe is causing Climate Change?</b> (select all that apply, n=15)	
End times as described in the Holy Bible	47% (n=7)
Normal patterns in earth's natural, historical cycles	27% (n=4)
Human greenhouse gas emissions	67% (n=10)
Unsure	7% (n=1)

### *Biblical Interpretation*

Table 6 examines biblical interpretation and related environmental beliefs.

Respondents were identified as having an *apocalyptic* orientation if they indicated they believe climate change is caused by “end times as described in the Holy Bible” (question 13) or was “prophesized in the bible” (question 18). The *human dominance* interpretation was indicated if the respondents agree or strongly agree that “humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature” (NEP item 12). Additionally, some respondents exhibited a *Christian stewardship* ethic (Kearns, 1997) as described in Table 1 if they indicated they agree or strongly agree that “the Holy Bible says that God has given mankind dominion over the earth but commands humans to be good stewards and take care of God’s creation, like a gardener tending his garden”. Similarly, the *eco-justice* ethic was

recorded if respondent agreed or strongly agreed that if our fellow human beings are subjected to polluted air and/or water, we should take action. Last, respondents were identified as holding a *creation spirituality* ethic if they indicated they agree or strongly agree that “the entire physical world is part of God’s creation and should all be maintained in harmony and balance.”

The overall measurements of these three environmental ethics categories had the highest consensus for the entire survey, with every respondent in agreeance to the key framework of each Christian stewardship ethic. These results suggest that adherence to one of the three Christian ethics (*Christian stewardship, eco-justice, or creation spirituality*) is not mutually exclusive from another; the data show that respondents subscribe to several Christian eco-ethics at the same time (see table 1).

<b>Table 6: Biblical Interpretation</b>	
<b>Apocalyptic</b> ( <i>n=14</i> )	
<i>Pro-</i>	86% ( <i>n=12</i> )
<i>Anti-</i>	14% ( <i>n=2</i> )
<b>Human dominance</b> ( <i>n=15</i> )	
<i>Pro-</i>	93% ( <i>n=14</i> )
<i>Anti-</i>	7% ( <i>n=1</i> )
<b>Christian Stewardship Ethic</b> ( <i>n=15</i> )	
<i>Pro-</i>	100% ( <i>n=15</i> )
<i>Anti-</i>	0% ( <i>n=0</i> )
<b>Eco-Justice Ethic</b> ( <i>n=15</i> )	
<i>Pro-</i>	100% ( <i>n=15</i> )
<i>Anti-</i>	0% ( <i>n=0</i> )
<b>Creation Spirituality Ethic</b> ( <i>n=15</i> )	
<i>Pro-</i>	100% ( <i>n=15</i> )
<i>Anti-</i>	0% ( <i>n=0</i> )

## Environmental Behaviors and Preferred Methods of Action

### *Support for Government Environmental Action*

Table 7 presents results for the seven questions pertaining to respondents' support for government policies. Average support was fairly high amongst respondents, with an average response across items of 4.2 (range of 1-5) and an average total score of 29 (range of 7-35).

<b>Table 7: Government Environmental Policy Support</b>	
<b><u>To what degree do you support/oppose the following proposals:</u></b>	<b>Pastors</b>
	<u>M</u> <sup>(sd)</sup>
<b>Support for government environmental policies (n=15)</b>	
Setting higher emissions and pollution standards for business and industry	4.3 <sup>(.1)</sup>
Spending more government money on developing solar and wind power	4.4 <sup>(.9)</sup>
Spending government money to develop alternate sources of fuel for automobiles	4.5 <sup>(.8)</sup>
Imposing mandatory controls on carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases	4.2 <sup>(.1)</sup>
Opening up more land owned by the federal government for oil and gas exploration	3.1 <sup>(1.2)</sup>
More strongly enforcing existing federal environmental regulations	4.5 <sup>(.7)</sup>
Setting higher emissions standards for automobiles	4.3 <sup>(.9)</sup>

### *Individual and Collective Actions Preferred for Creating Change*

Table 8 identifies respondents' current environmental behaviors and preferred actions to influence change (activism). All but one respondent stated that their church includes environmental issues into sermons, and all but one respondent indicated the frequency of environmental sermons to be a few times per year. The three responses selected by 100% of respondents were *pray, vote, encourage to others personal*

*transformation through relationship with Jesus Christ.* Results did not indicate a preference of either taking individual or collective group action; those who responded that they would engage in individual action also reported that they would engage in community action.

The responses did not indicate a preference for taking separatist approach and engage in action apart from or together with the mainstream organizations; those who believed that the black church community should take action on its own also believed that the black church community should work in collaboration with mainstream organizations.

<b>Table 8: Environmental Behaviors and Preferred Methods of Action</b>	
<b>Question:</b>	<b>Pastors</b>
<b>Does your church include environmental issues into its sermons? (n=14)</b>	
<i>Yes</i>	93%
<i>No</i>	7%
<b>If so, how often? (n=14)</b>	
<i>Never</i>	0%
<i>Once per year</i>	7%
<i>Few times per year</i>	93%
<i>Once per month</i>	0%
<i>Every other week</i>	0%
<i>Every week</i>	0%
<b>Collectively, what general actions do you and members of your church take to influence social, economic, or environmental change? (select all that apply, n=15)</b>	
<i>Vote</i>	100%
<i>Peaceful protest/march</i>	53%
<i>Sign petition</i>	47%
<i>Encourage to others personal transformation through relationship with Jesus Christ</i>	100%
<i>Telephone government representatives</i>	53%
<i>Pray</i>	100%
<i>Discuss at church</i>	87%
<i>Help raise funds</i>	47%
<i>Write letters to government representatives</i>	47%
<i>Attend public hearings</i>	73%
<i>Use purchasing power at businesses who best reflect similar values (buy local or from black-owned businesses)</i>	53%
<i>Inform younger generations of current issues</i>	87%
<b>% of respondents who agree/strongly agree that: (n=15)</b>	
<i>The black church community should engage in environmental action on their own terms and separate from national mainstream organizations</i>	40%
<i>The black church community should engage in environmental action in partnership and collaboration with national mainstream organizations</i>	87%
<i>They would engage in social, economic, or environmental action alone if they felt the cause was important enough</i>	80%
<i>They prefer to engage in social, economic, or environmental action while accompanied by members of their community</i>	80%

### Analytical Statistics

Respondents' environmental attitudes (NEP score, support for government environmental policies, and climate change beliefs) were analyzed based on political

party, political views, level of education, denomination, church role, and adherence to biblical beliefs of apocalypticism and human dominance (*anthropocentrism*) to see if any of these factors appear to be related to a pro- or anti-environmental worldview.

#### *Environmental Orientation by Individual Characteristics*

Table 9 analyzes responses to three environmental attitudinal variables based on five individual characteristics: political party, political views, level of education, religious denomination, and church role. The three attitudinal variables are: the average total NEP score (with a range of 15-75, 15 indicating the most anti-environmental worldview and 75 indicating the most pro-environmental worldview), support for government environmental policy (with a range of 1-5, 1 indicating the lowest support, 5 indicating the highest), and belief in severity of climate change (with a range of 0-3, 0 if respondent answered they don't believe climate change exists at all, 3 if respondent answered climate change is very serious problem requiring immediate government action).

On average, respondents who identified as Republican and/or conservative scored lower on the NEP, support for environmental policy, and climate change variables. This supports earlier research showing that political conservatism and Republicanism is associated with a less pro-environmental orientation, including less environmental behaviors (Sherkat & Ellison, 2007) and support for environmental protection and policy (McCright et al., 2014). No obvious differences were found between respondents with different levels of education, denominations, or church role.

<b>Table 9: Environmentalism by Political Party, Education, Denomination and Church Role</b>			
	<b>Average total NEP Score (Range: 15-75)</b>	<b>Average Support for Government Policies (Range: 1-5)</b>	<b>Climate Change Belief (Range: 0-3)</b>
<b>Total Respondents</b> (n=15)	53	4.2	2.8
<b>Political Party (n=14)</b>			
Republicans	39	3.2	1.5
Democrats	54	4.3	3
Independent	57	4.5	3
<b>Political Views (n=13)</b>			
Very Conservative	*	*	*
Somewhat Conservative	42	3.2	2
Moderate	54	4.5	3
Somewhat Liberal	56	4.3	3
Very Liberal	54	4.9	3
<b>Education (n=15)</b>			
Less than Bachelor's	48	3.1	3
Bachelor's	56.7	4.3	3
Graduate degree	52	4.2	2.7
<b>Denomination (n=15)</b>			
AME	52.5	4.2	2.7
AMEZ	52	4.0	3.0
<b>Church Role (n=15)</b>			
Senior Pastor	51	4.0	2.8
Pastor	52.7	4.3	2.8
Admin. Assistant	55	4.1	3.0

\* the number of respondents identifying as very conservative was zero.

#### *Environmentalism by Apocalyptic and Human Dominance Beliefs*

Table 10 compares the average total NEP score, average support of government environmental policies, and climate change beliefs based on respondents who were identified as having apocalyptic and human dominant beliefs. On average, respondents

who hold apocalyptic beliefs scored lower on the NEP, support for government policy, and climate change variables compared to respondents who do not hold apocalyptic beliefs. However, average scores on all three variables remained generally high. For example, the average NEP score for respondents holding apocalyptic beliefs was 51.7, which is higher than a neutral attitude score of 45. From a range of 7-35, the total average support for government policy was 29. From a range of 1-5, 1 being the least supportive of government policies, respondents who subscribe to apocalyptic beliefs scored a high 4.2. Lastly, for the climate change questions, respondents who do believe in apocalypticism scored a high 2.8, indicating that even though they held apocalyptic beliefs they were still very concerned about climate change.

Respondents who believe humans are meant to rule over nature scored lower on all three attitudinal variables compared to those who regard other species as more equal to humans. However, similar to apocalypticism, they still maintained high scores for all measures. See table 10 below.

	<b>Average total NEP Score (15-75)</b>	<b>Average Support for Government Policies (1-5)</b>	<b>Climate Change Belief (0-3)</b>
<b>Total Respondents (n=15)</b>	53	4.2	2.8
<b>Apocalyptic (n=14)</b>			
<i>Pro-</i>	51.7	4.2	2.8
<i>Anti-</i>	61	4.7	3.0
<b>Human Dominance (n=15)</b>			
<i>Pro-</i>	51.4	4.1	2.8
<i>Anti-</i>	65	4.6	*

\* indicates a non-response to the human dominant item.

## Chapter 5: Discussion & Implications

Despite past literature which claims that African and Protestant Americans are apathetic to environmental concerns, this research joins the existing body of literature that challenges such assertions. The results suggest that these two groups hold a pro-environmental orientation, a strong belief in climate change, are supportive of government environmental regulations, and are committed to Christian eco-theological ethics (Kearns, 1997). These findings bring insight to black Protestant environmental attitude as a unique perspective within the realms of race and religion.

Although differences were found when analyzing for political orientation, apocalypticism, and anthropocentrism/human dominance beliefs, results were overall constant among respondents in terms of an overall high level of environmental concern, ethics, and preferred actions. For example, 100% of respondents indicated that they preferred the same three actions to influence social, economic, or environmental change: to *pray*, to encourage others a *personal transformation* through a relationship with Jesus Christ, and to *vote*. This indicates that both individual as well as collective actions are preferred, with emphasis on *prayer* and *personal transformation* as individual action, and *voting* as a collective action. Respondents also feel strongly that the black church community should take action in partnership and collaboration with mainstream environmental organizations, indicating a willingness and opportunity to work together under common values. Individual and collective action proved not to be mutually exclusive; 80% of respondents agreed they would engage in action alone if the cause was important enough and 80% also agreed they would engage in action accompanied by members of their community.

Furthermore, there were no consistent differences between the AME and AMEZ churches; this supports earlier research that found positions on political and social issues are much more consistent within the black Protestant community than they are among the general population (Pew Research, 2009). Differences in levels of education and church role are also not discussed, as these variables indicated no measureable impact of environmentalism. Disparities emerged when evaluating for political orientation, apocalyptic beliefs, and anthropocentrism/human dominance beliefs, and the possible implications on environmental orientation is examined.

### **New Ecological Paradigm**

Additionally, the findings of this study suggest that several of the NEP scale items as presented in Dunlap et al. (2000) may not be an adequate survey instrument for Protestant individuals. This is due to the fact that several NEP items implicitly conflict with biblical teachings. Respondents averaged pro-environmental NEP scores for all dimensions except *limits to growth*. This particular dimension seems to have a more deeply-rooted tension with Protestants. African Americans have also been shown to be supportive of no *limits to growth* (Sheppard, 1995) so it is not unexpected for respondents to score low in this dimension. Item #1 suggests the earth is reaching maximum human capacity and item #9 suggests there is limited room for humans on the earth. These two items resulted in an anti-environmental score for the *limits to growth* dimension, but the disagreement may be rooted in inherent religious beliefs based in scripture, as opposed to anti-environmentalism. If the earth is reaching its limit to how many humans it can support, then the *implied* solution may be interpreted by Protestants as to limit or control

future birth rates, an idea that was discussed in the literature review as being strongly rejected by many of those of Christian faith (Kearns, 1997).

This opposition to procreation interference is rooted in several verses. For example, Jeremiah 1:5 says that God creates a person even before they begin to form in their mother's womb, before conception or birth. "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart*" (NIV). This particular passage gives an intrinsic value to an unborn child by suggesting that God assigns individual characteristics and personalities, or soul, to humans before they take their first breath. Similarly, in Genesis 1: 28 God tells humans to "*Be fruitful and increase in number*" (NIV) which is in direct conflict with an agenda that seeks to limit human population. Therefore, a Christian may feel inclined to disagree with limits to growth on the basis of beliefs rooted in their faith instead of environmental beliefs.

In addition to human procreation, limitations to natural resources may also be rejected as a result of biblical beliefs. Item #7 states that the earth has plenty of natural resources to provide for everyone if only humans learn how to develop them. This item is used in the NEP scale as a way of measuring a low or anti-environmental orientation. Respondents generally agreed with this statement, earning them a low pro-environmental score of 1.7. However, the data from this study suggest a low score on this item does not necessarily measure low environmental orientation as the NEP theory suggests. Agreeance with this statement may stem from bible verses which state that God will provide necessary resources to those who follow Him.

Matthew 6:31-33 says, "<sup>31</sup>*So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ...<sup>32</sup>your heavenly Father knows that you need*

them...<sup>33</sup> *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you*” (New International Version). This verse implies that basic needs will be provided to those who need it, but only after God’s kingdom and righteousness is sought. Furthermore, Luke 17:21 states *“the kingdom of God is within you”* (American Standard Version). Accordingly, these two verses can be interpreted to mean that heaven is here on earth, inside every single human being, and that we have the capability to provide for those in need, but it first must be realized. Therefore, the suggestion that the earth can provide for everyone when we expand our capabilities may coincide more with biblical beliefs and less related to environmental beliefs.

### **Political Orientation**

Political orientation appeared to be strongly related to environmental orientation as measured by NEP scores, as well as support for government environmental regulation and belief in climate change, with all variables being consistently lower on average for respondents identifying as conservatives and Republicans. Political Independents, Democrats, and political liberals consistently scored higher on all variables. These findings are in keeping with past research (McCright et al., 2014; Sherkat & Ellison, 2007; Kanagy & Nelsen, 1995).

However, these results may suggest more of a problem with inherent beliefs about government role as opposed to an individual’s environmental beliefs. Opposition to government environmental spending may reflect the overall Southern conservative’s belief that government intervention is not the correct means to solving an issue, and not so much reflect environmental attitude (Kanagy & Nelsen, 1995). It may indicate belief that it’s not the government’s job to impose a top-down solution on behaviors that would

be better handled on a smaller scale. They may believe the responsibility lies more on individuals at a more local level than on a large scale governmental level. It's not a disagreement of *should* the environment be protected, but more of a question to *who* should be doing the protecting?

### **Apocalypticism**

Respondents who adhere to an apocalyptic worldview also scored consistently lower on the NEP, support for environmental policy, and climate change belief; however, they still maintained an overall pro-environmental orientation. This supports the notion that subscribing to “end-times” thinking has some level of negative affect on environmentalism. An individual who believes the world will eventually be destroyed may be less inclined to support an environmental agenda that seeks to preserve natural areas and may consider it more wasteful to leave wild natural areas untouched. This represents an ideological barrier between the environmental movement and the black Protestant community based in eschatology.

### **Anthropocentrism/Human Dominance**

Similarly, individuals who were identified as holding a human dominance ideology consistently scored lower on the NEP, the support for environmental policy, and climate change belief than those who do not believe humans should dominate other species. This supports earlier studies that link human dominance to lower pro-environmentalism relative to those who do not subscribe to a human dominance orientation (Morrison et al., 2015; Hand & Liere, 1984). Climate change belief was the least affected by anthropocentrism, with a high average score of 2.8 out of 3.

Furthermore, although members of the black Protestant church may believe humans have power or command over other species, that doesn't necessarily suggest an anti-environmental attitude. In fact, the opposite argument could be made that *because* a Christian believes mankind has been given authority over the earth, this actually *increases* a feeling of responsibility and environmental stewardship. Every single respondent agreed that since God has given mankind dominion over the earth, humans should be good stewards and tend to God's creation, like a "gardener tending his garden".

### **Limitations of Study**

One of the main limitations of this study has to do with how representative the sample was of the target population. For one thing, the response rate on the survey was 10%. Furthermore, not all AME and AME Zion churches in the Deep South were included in the sampling frame, only ones that could be easily located online in the three study states. Additionally, not all historically black Protestant denominations were sampled, only AME and AME Zion. Future research should include other denominations, such as the National Baptist Convention or the United Church in Christ, in the study. Considering all this, this research cannot claim to generalize results to the broader black Protestant community of the Deep South.

There are several likely reasons why the response rate was so low. Each is described below, as is followed with possible solutions for future research on this topic and population.

The first explanation for the low response rate likely had to do with budgetary and time constraints, which meant that only one round of surveys was sent out. For future studies, it is suggested to distribute at least one additional round of surveys to the

churches. Another suggestion that could help boost the response rate would be advance phone calls to make the pastor/admin assistant aware they will be receiving a survey in the mail, instead of only issuing follow-up calls *after* the surveys are received.

Additionally, during this advanced call, surveyor should also check that the correct mailing address matches the address found online; in this research, 33 of the 178 survey envelopes were returned by the post office labeled as “undeliverable” because many churches use a post office box for their mail and don’t keep a mailbox at the physical church address found on the internet.

The low response rate may also have had to do with the reception of respondents to the survey instrument itself. During a few follow-up calls, two church members expressed discontent about terminology of the survey. One individual who answered the phone at the church continuously rejected the term “black” as the project was explained. Although the AME official website uses “black” in their church history and both AME and AMEZ denominations are considered to be “Historically Black Protestant”, limiting the terminology to “African” may be a more desirable term to avoid tension.

Another individual claimed to have received the survey, but during a follow-up call reported that they would not complete the survey instrument because they only identified as “Christian” and not “Protestant”. As discussed in the definition of terms section, Christian is technically Protestant. The language barriers between scientific, technical terms and layman’s terms represent a potential for misunderstanding. Future research may avoid the formal title of “Protestant” and use a more familiar term such as “Christian”.

Lastly, the survey *may* have been perceived with skepticism when I conducted the first round of follow-up calls, after it became evident by my dialect that I am a white female. White researchers have not been initially well-received by African American Protestants (Baugh, 2015; Finney, 2014), but trust can be established through closer interaction and when the research is better understood. However, this study was designed as a mail-survey and involved minimal contact with respondents, therefore it was limited in its ability to connect with respondents. Future research should include engaging in service to the churches or participation in community activities if possible. Observation from *within* the community would be better received than observation from afar as an outsider.

Aside from these barriers, the rest of respondents and individuals were overwhelmingly friendly and receptive to the research. A blank space at the end of the survey booklet asked for additional comments and the handwritten responses reflect appreciation for the study and an acknowledgment that environmentalism needs to be made a priority within the black church community. A few comments included:

*“A wonderful study. Be blessed”*

*“I commend you for this study and I think it will greatly benefit the Black church regarding the stewardship of our environment. Blessings”*

*“This survey and subsequent action is most needed. It reflects God’s admonition to tend His creation”*

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion & Recommendations**

Mainstream environmentalism is a primarily white-cultured (Baugh, 2015; Finney, 2014; Taylor, 2014), secular (Dunlap, 2006) institution whose agenda has been historically rejected by minority and religious communities in the past (Gottlieb, 2005). Although the environmental justice movement has raised awareness to the needs of marginalized individuals and religious organizations have asserted their presence on national and local environmental platforms, the movement still remains disproportionately white and features an unwelcoming atmosphere to people of faith whose religion is the foundation to their lives. Central to building a stronger, diverse, and more collaborative movement is to understand the conflicts that exist between environmentalism and individuals from these minority and religious communities, and promptly taking action to remedy these conflicts. The black Protestant in the Deep South region of the U.S. offers a unique perspective and worldview largely missing from environmentalism.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the major findings of this study suggest that black Protestants have a slightly pro-environmental orientation (as measured by the NEP), exhibit a desire for individual and collective action, with environmental attitudes and behaviors guided by their religious principles. Although they are divided by political ideology, anthropocentric and apocalyptic beliefs, they remain overall consistent on environmental issues. Based on the survey results and the literature review, this final section offers suggestions to the mainstream environmental community that may more effectively diversify the environmental movement and build partnerships between organizations and religious and minority groups.

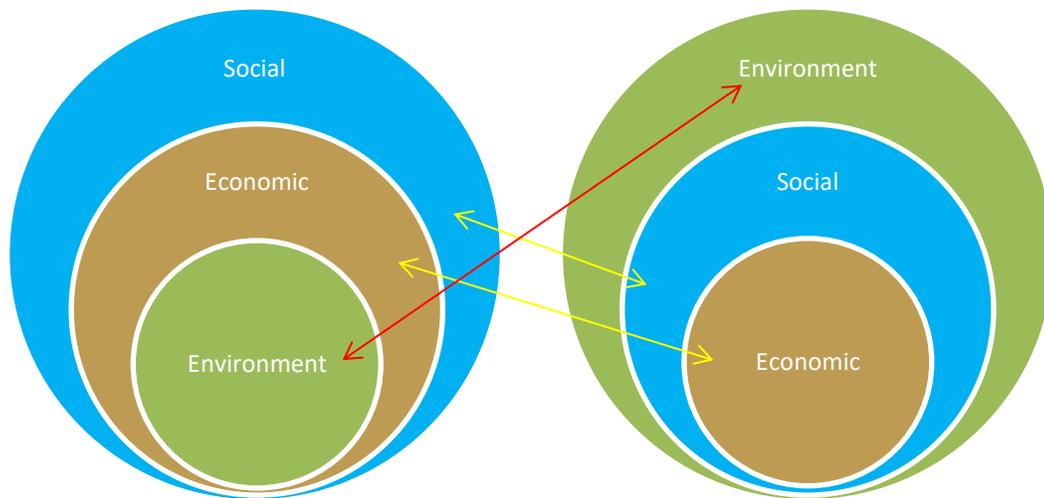
## Recommendations

*“I can’t talk about solar panels. I needed to talk about something more relevant, like health and green jobs”*  
-Veronica Kyle, Outreach Director of Faith in Place, when discussing environmental program recruitment for African Americans (Baugh, 2017)

*“It’s about People, not Polar Bears”*  
-Faith in Place spokesperson (Baugh, 2017)

As previously discussed, a reoccurring conflict between African and Protestant Americans and environmental groups is the lack of relevancy that the mainstream environmental agenda has to humans, and has even been perceived as threatening to minorities (Baugh, 2015) and the economy (Shellenberger & Nordhaus, 2005). Saving the whales and preserving pristine wildland are important goals, but they may not be of high importance to individuals with an anthropocentric, human dominant orientation. The black Protestant pastors who completed the survey instrument had a very strong anthropocentric worldview, repeatedly agreeing that humans have the right to rule over and modify the earth to suit their needs. These beliefs are intrinsic to biblical teachings, and don’t appear to directly conflict with holding a pro-environmental worldview. However, in the way the NEP scale measures environmental attitudes, agreeance to these principles decreases respondents pro-environmental orientation scores.

Conversely, this thesis proposes that the environmental agenda and the current practices of measuring environmental attitudes emphasize the needs of plants, animals, and habitats over the needs of the social and economic needs of humans, and this is subsequently rejected by many black Protestants. The distance in values is conceptualized below (see fig. 4).



**Proposed Black Protestant Worldview**

**Proposed Environmental Agenda Worldview**

Figure 4: Conceptual comparison of Social, Economic, and Environment models between black Protestants and the environmental agenda (created by author using Microsoft Word). The danger of generalizing black Protestants and environmental agendas into singular worldviews is acknowledged and is used only for the purposes of synthesizing results of the study and the literature review.

Social and economic salience is only one level away in difference between black Protestants and the environmental agenda, and is represented by the yellow lines. The environmental salience is two levels away in difference and is represented by the red line. The biggest difference in values occurs in the environmental realms and is the source for some of the disconnection between the two groups. However, some of the tension may be a result of how individuals interpret the word “environment”.

The “environment” in this model represents the word as defined in chapter 1 as the “*natural* surroundings of humankind, including air, water, land, wildlife, and the systems existing between the *natural* environment and human society”. This thesis suggests that the environmental community more assertively adopt a holistic definition of the word consistent with how minority and religious individuals may better understand it to be. Dana Alston, a key organizer of the first national People of Color Environmental

Leadership summit defined the “environment” as “where we live, where we work, and where we play” (Gottlieb, 2005). By this definition, the social and economic realms are included as part of the concept of “environment”. Where we live is the social component, where we work is the economic component, and where we play is the environmental component, and they all combine to envision a new understanding of the environment.

In addition to redefining the word “environment”, the movement could also do a better job at emphasizing the interconnectedness of the social, economic, and environmental realms. To individuals without a background in environmental sciences, it may not be immediately apparent how reducing the amount of water you use per day could affect a local fisherman’s paycheck. Or how choosing one brand over another can affect air quality to a child overseas. The environment is about everything, everywhere, all the time, and a movement that restricts its definition will also restrict its constituency. It needs to be redefined and reframed as more relevant to people, and one religious environmental organization has done just that.



Figure 5: Faith in Place logo (2018).

*Faith in Place*, an interfaith environmental organization based out of Chicago, tackles racial and religious tension in a unique way. Their staff brings fried chicken and homemade pie to environmental lobbying events at the state capital, as opposed to gourmet food, vegan cuisine, and wine provided by other non-profit environmental

organizations as a way to break down cultural barriers. They proclaim a respect for theological and social diversity and focus on “love, care, and faith”, as opposed to normal mainstream environmental organizations whose mission centers on conservation of pristine wilderness areas which many African American and low-income communities don’t have equal access to (Baugh, 2017). They create a space that is comfortable for theists, agnostics, and atheists to unite in a common goal of holistic earth care. And they make it about people.

*Faith in Place* sponsors projects that are framed as a way to bridge the “eco-divide”, which is defined as the lost job opportunities in the African American community resulting from a lack of knowledge about the environment (Baugh, 2017). They carry out projects which would not be traditionally thought of as being an environmental action to mainstream environmentalism, such as weatherizing windows and doors in the elderly neighborhoods with a goal of improving energy efficiency. This particular activity is framed as a way to give minority youth experience with green practices and translate into opportunity in the green economy (Baugh, 2017). In addition to weatherization projects, they also emphasize fair trade, planting community gardens, and lobbying for environmental policies as ways to love your neighbor. This approach can be particularly appealing to individuals led by their religious beliefs, and especially members of the black Protestant community who hold a strong commitment to *Christian stewardship* and *eco-justice* ethics (see table 1). *Faith in Place* encourages individual and collective action, which is also preferred behavior by respondents. *Faith in Place* also recruits youth minority by framing environmental participation as an opportunity to gain “affluence, education, respectability, and positive civic identity” (Baugh, 2017, p. 4). To

the black Protestant in the Deep South who holds an anthropocentric orientation and measures life in terms of value towards humans, this is an ideal strategy. *Faith in Place* represents shared values between environmental, religious, and minority communities, and in return receives overwhelming support.

In addition to making the environmental agenda relevant to religious and minority communities by focusing more on people, the movement may also benefit by dampening the *limits to growth* narrative. This study found the *limits to growth* narrative to be in direct conflict with Protestant beliefs, as the proposal of limiting human and economic growth represents an ideological barrier not easily reconciled with the black Protestant respondents. Instead of framing growth as a matter concerning *quantity* of collective action, environmental organizations could frame environmental concerns as a matter of *quality* of individual action. For example, if the problem is concerning over-consumption of material goods, then instead of promoting birth control to limit birth rates (less humans=less consumed goods), encourage small, incremental individual behavior changes that decrease materialism. A family of four who switches to multi-use packaging and begins to buy clothes from a used goods store can possibly reduce their material goods consumption by 25% each, resulting in a 100% (25%\*4 people) net reduction, or the same amount of consumption that having another child would introduce. In this approach, the same goal can be reached using two different methods. A simple reframing of environmental narratives could eliminate some of the tensions and ease collaborations on hot topics associated with *limits to growth*, such as abortion and birth control.

## **Conclusion**

Environmental organizations have expressed the desire for diversification and have taken several steps to integrate people of color and although improvements have been made, they still remain largely white. The desire for change doesn't reflect a reality of change (Gottlieb, 2005). Environmental organizations also create an atmosphere that makes religious individuals uncomfortable and unwilling to participate, resulting in a less-democratic and less-diverse movement. The black Protestant community in the Deep South is part of a growing demographic in the U.S, comprises of almost a quarter of the population in many states, and dependably votes. They are an important ally who can contribute as powerful agents of change, but the mainstream movement must first address the root causes of tension between mainstream environmentalism, people of faith, and people of color. Diversification of the mainstream environmental community is not an option; it is a moral obligation and is necessary for the longevity of the movement.

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**Appendix A**  
New Ecological Paradigm

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Humans have the right to modify the natural environment to suit their needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Human ingenuity will insure that we do NOT make the earth unlivable.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrialization.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Humans are severely abusing the environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The earth has plenty of natural resources if we just learn how to develop them.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Plants and animals have as much right as humans to exist.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The earth is like a spaceship with very limited room and resources.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Despite our special abilities humans are still subject to the laws of nature.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

The so-called “ecological crisis” facing humankind has been greatly exaggerated.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The balance of nature is very delicate and easily upset.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Humans will eventually learn enough about how nature works to be able to control it.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## Appendix B

### Support for government environmental regulations

	Strongly Support	Moderately Support	Neutral	Moderately Oppose	Strongly Oppose
Setting higher emissions and pollution standards for business and industry	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Spending more government money on developing solar and wind power	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Spending government money to develop alternate sources of fuel for automobiles	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Imposing mandatory controls on carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Opening up more land owned by the federal government for oil and gas exploration	<input type="checkbox"/>				
More strongly enforcing existing federal environmental regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Setting higher emissions standards for automobiles	<input type="checkbox"/>				

## Appendix C

**1. Please state your official church position/title.**

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**2. In what year was your church established?**

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**3. What is your church's denomination?**

- African Methodist Episcopal
- African Methodist Episcopal Zion
- Other (please list) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Does your church include environmental issues or messages into its sermons?** If no, skip to question 6.

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/Don't know

**5. About how often does your church include environmental issues or messages into its sermons? (Check one)**

- Never
- Once per year
- A few times per year
- Once per month
- Every other week
- Every week

**6. If you answered no to question 4, please answer the following question: Are environmental issues something you have considered implementing in the future?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/Don't know

**7. Are you aware of any organizations that assist churches with developing and implementing environmental messaging into its sermons?**

- Yes
- No
- Unsure/Don't know

**8. Collectively, what general actions do you and members of your church take to influence social, economic, or environmental change?** *(Please check all that apply)*

- Vote
  - Peaceful protest/march
  - Sign petition
  - Encourage to others personal transformation through relationship with Jesus Christ
  - Telephone government representatives
  - Pray
  - Discuss at church
  - Help raise funds
  - Write letters to government officials
  - Attend public hearings
  - Use purchasing power at businesses who best reflect similar values (buy local or from black-owned businesses)
  - Inform younger generations of current issues
- Please list any activities not mentioned:
- 

**The following are questions about your general perspectives concerning environmental laws and the role of our government.** *Please place an 'x' in the box corresponding to your answer.*

**9. Many government policies are designed to protect the environment, but some of these policies can be costly to corporations and other businesses. Which of the following best represents your general opinion? “Environmental regulations in the U.S...”**

- |                              |   |                          |                                 |                                    |
|------------------------------|---|--------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>     | <input type="checkbox"/>                | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>        | <input type="checkbox"/>           |
| Are<br>Excessively<br>Strong | Are Too<br>Strong, but Not<br>Excessive | Are About<br>Right       | Need to be<br>Somewhat Stronger | Need to be<br>a<br>Lot<br>Stronger |

**Item number 10: See appendix B.**

**Item number 11: See appendix A.**

**12. Which of the following statements best represent your general view about climate change? (Please check one)**

- Climate change is a very serious problem and should be one of the highest priorities for government action
- Climate change is serious but does not need to be a high priority for action right now
- Climate change is not a serious problem and can be addressed years from now if and when it becomes necessary
- Climate change does not exist at all

**If you responded to the previous question that you believe climate change does exist at some level, what do you primarily believe is causing it? (Please check all that apply)**

- End times as described in the Holy Bible
  - Normal patterns of extreme climate that follows the earth's natural historical cycles
  - Human greenhouse gas emissions
  - Unsure/Don't know
  - Something else, please describe:
- 

**13. The following are questions about general participation preferences. To what extent do you agree or disagree? Please place an 'x' in the box corresponding to your answer.**

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The black church community should engage in environmental action on our own terms and separate from national mainstream organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I would engage in social, economic or environmental action alone if I felt the cause was important enough.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

The black church community should engage in environmental action in partnership and collaboration with national mainstream organizations.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I prefer to engage in social, economic, or environmental action while accompanied by members of my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

**Items 14-16 omitted.**

**The following questions pertain to biblical interpretation. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statements? Please place an 'x' in the box corresponding to your answer.**

**17. “Global climate change, including increasing drought, wildfire, and flooding, is prophesized in the bible.”**

Strongly Disagree      Somewhat Disagree      Unsure      Somewhat Agree      Strongly Agree

**18. “The Holy Bible says that God has given mankind dominion over the earth but commands humans to be good stewards and take care of God’s creation, like a gardener tending his garden.”**

Strongly Disagree      Somewhat Disagree      Unsure      Somewhat Agree      Strongly Agree

**19. “If our fellow humans are being subjected to polluted air and water, we should take action to remedy this problem because Jesus commands us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves and therefore take care of each other”.**

Strongly Disagree      Somewhat Disagree      Unsure      Somewhat Agree      Strongly Agree

**20. “The entire physical world is part of God’s creation and should all be maintained in harmony and balance.”**

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
<input type="checkbox"/>				

**In this final section, we ask you to provide some demographic information about yourself. Your responses will enable us to compare similar or different statistical characteristics with other preachers. As with all your answers, the information that you provide will remain completely confidential.**

**21. What is your gender?**

Male  Female

**22. What year were you born? Please enter your 4 digit birth year. (e.g. 1970)**

\_\_\_\_\_

**23. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

- Some high school  College graduate (Bachelor’s degree)  
 High school graduate/GED  Post graduate degree (Master’s/PhD)  
 Some college or associate’s degree

**24. How would you best describe your political views?**

- Very Conservative  
 Somewhat Conservative  
 Moderate  
 Somewhat Liberal  
 Very Liberal

**25. What political party do you most closely identify with?**

- Democratic  
 Republican  
 Libertarian  
 Independent  
 Other: \_\_\_\_\_