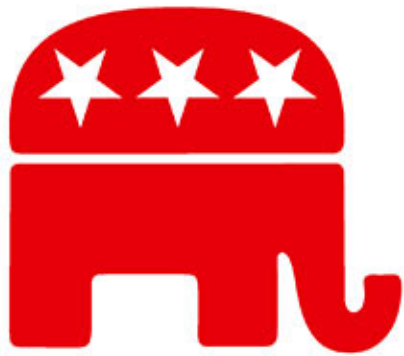


Religiosity diminishes conservative opposition to environmentally friendly consumer decisions

July 12 2016, by Amy Mccaig



Credit: Rice University

Some people have perceived that the combination of religion and political conservatism exacerbates environmental concerns in the United

States. But researchers from Rice University and Baruch College have found evidence that religious identification and belief in a god dampen the otherwise strong negative effect that political conservatism typically has on whether people make purchasing decisions with concern for the environment in mind.

At first glance, the researchers' data show that political liberals are 8 percentage points more likely to say they identify as pro-environment consumers when compared with political conservatives. However, a closer look across levels of religiosity shows that this political gap is larger among the nonreligious (a difference of 12 percentage points between extreme political conservatives and extreme political liberals) and smaller among the very religious (a difference of 3 percentage points). The researchers said this suggests that religion can mute political differences when someone is being identified as a pro-environment consumer.

"We suspect that a religious identity tends to diminish political conservatism's negative impact on environmental consumption because religious identification encourages people to seek out visible behaviors (such as environmentally friendly behaviors) that demonstrate the value of their faith," said Elaine Howard Ecklund, the study's principal investigator and the Herbert S. Autrey Chair in Social Sciences at Rice, and Jared Peifer, the study's lead author and an assistant professor of management at Baruch.

"Put more colorfully, Americans who are watching Fox News instead of attending church on Sunday morning appear to be particularly uninterested in buying with the environment in mind," said Ecklund, who is also director of Rice's Religion and Public Life Program. "It would stand to reason that those who participate in their houses of worship and who tend to be more engaged in civic life may have less time to be exposed to such media and therefore be less likely to follow

the politicized conservative 'line' with respect to the environment."

The study also found that 12 percent of blacks are pro-environment consumers, compared with 19 percent of white consumers. Peifer said that a possible explanation for this is that black Americans face more social and economic issues than their white counterparts and have limited ability to be environmental consumers.

Peifer and Ecklund said they hope the study will challenge stereotypes about how religion relates to environmental care.

Simranjit Khalsa, a graduate student at Rice, was also an author of "Political Conservatism, Religion and Environmental Consumption in the United States," which appeared in a recent edition of Environmental Politics. It is the first study known to measure various aspects of religiosity, politics, and their relationship to environmentally responsible consumer decisions, the authors said.

Provided by Rice University

Citation: Religiosity diminishes conservative opposition to environmentally friendly consumer decisions (2016, July 12) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-07-religiosity-diminishes-opposition-environmentally-friendly.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--