

LYNN WHITE RECONSIDERED: RELIGIOSITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN IN THE UNITED STATES

Lukas Szrot
University of Kansas

A view of humans as radically divorced from nature has been historically linked to Christianity via the work of historian Lynn White, Jr. Given the political and sociocultural tensions surrounding environmental concern in the United States, White's work predicts a negative correlation between Christian belief and environmental concern. The present article uses data from the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS) to test White's contention. Linear probability regression models indicate a negative correlation between religiosity and environmental concern across multiple measures. Protestants, Biblical literalists, and those who attend religious services at least weekly, express lower levels of environmental concern. This analysis provides some support for White's thesis, but negative correlations between religiosity and environmental concern are not found across all groups. Positive correlations are found among women and African-Americans, two groups known to report higher levels of religiosity. These findings suggest that the religion-environment connection is more nuanced than White's work predicted.