

Authoritarian Drift: The Fundamentalist Tendencies of Evangelicalism in the US – An Attitudinal Assessment from Trump to Biden

Diarra O. Robertson¹

Abstract

In 2018, several legal scholars published a work entitled *Can it happen here: Authoritarianism in America*. The conclusion of many of these scholars suggested that the possibility of authoritarianism in America was highly unlikely (Sunstein 2018). These assessments were published almost two years prior to the events of January 6, 2021, when some supporters of President Trump attempted to overrun the United States Capitol. Several participants in the failed January 6 insurrection held posters and signs with Christian signs and imagery that suggested God ordained a Trump presidency. Although much of the previous research focuses on the influence of party identification, republican in most instances, this study focuses on evangelical fundamentalism. Looking at the events of January 6, 2021, the people who stormed the US capital represent a potentially dangerous subset of evangelicals and the republican party. This study advances two arguments (1) Christian fundamentalists pose an even greater risk to democracy than republican supporters due to their openness to anti-democratic mechanisms, and (2) Christian fundamentalist views closely mirror republican party identification in public evaluations of racial/ethnic groups and presidential preferences. I employed a series of OLS models to evaluate these claims using the 2016 and 2020 ANES datasets.

Keywords: Fundamentalism, Authoritarianism, Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), Christian Nationalism

Introduction

In 2018, several legal scholars published a work entitled *Can it Happen Here: Authoritarianism in America*. The conclusion of many of the scholars suggested that the possibility of authoritarianism in America was improbable (Sunstein 2018). These assessments were published almost two years prior to the events of January 6, 2021, when some supporters of President Trump attempted to overrun the United States Capitol. The guardrails of the US democracy seemed dangerously close to being overturned or broken. What confronts the United States today is that many of the elements that make up the Republican Party are, at the bare minimum, sympathetic and open to authoritarian sympathies. Several participants in the failed January 6 insurrection held posters and signs with Christian signs and imagery that suggested God ordained a Trump presidency. In the 2016 presidential election, 56% of white evangelicals voted for Trump. The same pattern was observed with other white Christian groups supporting Trump (Pew 2018). Although some observers viewed the Trump presidency as a landmark for the religious conservatives, his presidency was built on decades of support from the “Christian or Religious Right”. In the past six presidential cycles, the majority of evangelical voters have voted for the Republican candidate (Presidential Exit Polls 2000-2020), and one has to go back to the Carter presidency for the last time a Democratic candidate received the support of this critical voting bloc (Dowland 2009). Looking at the events of January 6, 2021, the people who stormed the US capital represent a potentially dangerous subset of evangelicals and the republican party.

This study argues that Christian fundamentalists pose an even greater risk to democracy than republican supporters due to their openness to anti-democratic mechanisms. Much of the previous research focuses on evangelicalism in general. This study focuses on potential evangelical fundamentalism. It also supplements current research on the relationship between politics and religion by incorporating psychological RWA (Right Wing Authoritarianism) and sociological (Christian Nationalism) theories into the conceptual framework.

¹Bowie State University, United States. Email: dorobertson@bowiestate.edu

1.1. Evangelical Precepts and Fundamentalist Roots

Historian D. G. Hart posits that evangelicalism is simply a modified form of Protestantism that emerged in 18th-century colonial America among white settlers and grew in the centuries since. Although different strains of Protestantism have unique characteristics, the defining characteristic that any person who emphasizes the subjective and ethical aspects of Christianity, as opposed to than the institutional dictates, is an evangelical (Hart 2002, 9). From this perspective, the critical element of evangelicalism is the lived experiences of practitioners. Evangelicals emphasize literal interpretations of the Bible, the born-again movement, and a personal relationship with God. Miller notes that “it tends toward individuation and a pietistic emphasis on the correspondence between personal conversion and the transformation” (Miller 2009, 8). These dynamics represent some of the key conceptual components of evangelicalism.

Although scholars and political analysts embrace the term evangelical today, historians note the notion of an evangelical that we use today is a result of the rebranding of fundamentalism in the mid-20th century. The rebranding was an attempt to move away from the negative perceptions associated with fundamentalism and new evangelicalism. It was advanced by the National Association of Evangelicals for United Action in the 1940s to recast the negative perceptions of fundamentalism (Sutton 2013, 32; Butler 2021). Noted religious historian George Marsden notes that “fundamentalists today are almost all strict millenarians who also insist on Biblical inerrancy” (Marsden 2006, 5). The author argues that the terms evangelical and fundamental have evolved since the nineteenth century. The terms share a common genealogy; however, the contemporary embrace of evangelical was more pragmatic than doctrinal in origin. How evangelicalism and fundamentalism is practiced differs significantly among different racial/ethnic groups and geographically (Emerson and Smith 2000; Bean 2014). Politically, evangelicalism, since the late seventies, has aligned with the republican party. As Wong avers “the majority of evangelicals” are conservative politically and represent a key GOP voting bloc (Wong 2018, 3). For this study, an evangelical is a person whom self identifies as Protestant as opposed to Catholic or Jewish. This definition is tied to the categories in the ANES dataset.

Operationally, fundamentalism in this study refers to those respondents who embrace biblical inerrancy or literal interpretations of the Bible.

1.2. Fundamentalism, RWA, and Christian Nationalism

Several scholars and schools of thought suggest a growing connection between Christian fundamentalism and far-right groups within the US and around the globe. In his examination of the intersection between Christianity and the Alt-Right, Berry notes that even though there are a large number of alt-right supporters who are not Christians, there are notable groups that have expressed “fondness” for what they label as traditional Christianity (Berry 2022). In their view, a traditional view of Christianity offers a shared sense of Pan-European identity. A similar observation is expressed by Far-Right scholar Cas Mudde who posits that: “many populists radical right parties have become more outwardly Christian,” particularly in response to their collective hostility toward Islam (Mudde 2019, 41; 2018). These authors highlight two shared grievances with some Christian enthusiasts: anti-Islam views and Pan-European identity.

In addition to the scholars investigating intersections between Christianity and the Far- Right, two theories have attempted to understand the behavioral and ideological dynamic associated with Christian fundamentalist: Right Wing Authoritarianism and Christian Nationalism. Right Wing authoritarianism (RWA) is a psychological attitudinal construct that evaluates respondents’ willingness to submit to perceived (legitimate) authority, maintenance of the social order (conventionalism), and engage in “high levels of aggression in the name of authorities (antidemocratic or authoritarian). (Dean and Altemeyer 2020, 122; Altemeyer 1996, 2006; Kerr and Wilson 2020; and Satherly et al. 2021). RWA researchers have found that it strongly predicts prejudice toward minority groups. In addition to a pattern of prejudice toward minority groups, RWA proponents have observed a close association between religious fundamentalism or orthodoxy. Operationally, RWA theory suggests that religious fundamentalists are prone to express discriminatory attitudes toward non-majority groups and LGBTQ+ communities (Laythe et al. 2001; Kirkpatrick 1993).

Some sociologists have theorized the concept of Christian Nationalism to capture a mix of secular and nonsecular ideas that promote a mythology that emphasizes American nativism (both anti-black and xenophobic), Christian, cis heterosexual, and individualistic in the Calvinistic tradition (Perry and Whitehead 2019; Whitehead and Perry 2020). Although Christian nationalism may be expressed across racial and ethnic groups, Gorski and Perry note that “the link that connects the deep story and political vision of Christian nationalism is whiteness” (Gorski and Perry 2022, 16). Unlike Whitehead and Perry’s conceptualization, Gorski and Perry’s articulation of Christian nationalism highlights the central role of race in the modern mobilization of Christianity as a political troupe. Key factors in their conceptualization of Christian nationalism include: “scapegoating minorities, distrust in science, the media, and establishment politicians, corresponding trust in strongman leaders, and conspiratorial

thinking"(28). Gorski's conceptualization captures more of the potential threat of anti-democratic of Christian Nationalism, whereas Whitehead's articulation is more benign in its political application. Additionally, race's role in addressing the history of Christianity in the US, particularly evangelicalism, cannot be understated.

1.3. African American divergence

One of the most significant differences in US history is how African Americans have used this Christianity versus white Americans. Many of the first abolitionists and activists in the nineteenth century, like Maria Stewart, Alexander Crummell, and others, were trained (formally or not) ministers (Stewart 2020; Crummell 2022). Whereas many white Christian theologians attempted to articulate a narrative of Christianity that justified the subjugation of African- American, black theologians have long highlighted the liberatory elements of the text, such as the tales of Moses leading the slaves out of Egypt. For example, Rev. Sen. Dr. Raphael Warnock (Ga.) recounts how slaves recognized that "the faith of the black church is different from that of the white church" (Warnock 2014, 60).

Another critical component of this discussion is how Christianity was initially employed as a tool of enslavement. Colonial powers like England used Christianity to divide humans between civilized and uncivilized, heathens and no heathens. Allen posits: Once categorized as 'uncivilized', they were regarded by the ruling class as doubtful prospects . . . for admittance to the 'Christian' establishment. Resistance to conquest and the ways of colonial exploitation was interpreted in terms of an incapacity for civilization. And this exclusion from Christian civilization served to further oppression." (Allen 2021, 31).

This trend continued until the eighteenth century when the Church of England began allowing African Americans to become Christians via the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts" (Frazier 1974, 14). This divergence between white Christianity's trajectory and the Black church's development continues today in how the two groups view the church's role.

African Americans have utilized faith differently than Whites but exhibit more significant levels of religiosity by several metrics. Several scholars have noted that Blacks have long expressed higher levels of religiosity than whites. Using the 2016 ANES as a reference, a little over twenty-five percent of Black respondents indicated that they attended church every week. In contrast, approximately eighteen percent of White respondents said they attended that frequently. A similar pattern is evident in how literally the two groups interpret the Bible. On the ANES question that asks respondents "whether the Bible is the actual word of God," fifty percent (50.4) of Blacks responded yes, compared with almost twenty-five percent of whites. Despite a greater frequency of church attendance and an orthodox view of the Bible, African Americans are socially conservative but politically liberal (Shelton and Emerson 2012; Philpot 2020).

These factors also lead to a significant difference in how Black's view the government's role. In the context of the US political process, each of these theoretical schools centers on the role of race or, more specifically, white identity in calculating the far-right, evangelicalism, and potential Christian nationalism. Despite higher religiosity and literalist interpretations, most Black respondents align themselves with the Democratic party. Regarding these phenomena, Philpot notes that "significant percentage of Blacks self-identify as conservative. . . In the 2000s 55 percent of Whites and 43 percent of Blacks identified as conservative". However, "the percentage of Black Republicans never reaches beyond 10 percent, regardless of decade" (Philpot 2017, 5). This pattern is echoed in the 2016 ANES with 97.5 percent of Black respondent's self-identifying as Democrats. Both the literature and data confirm the presence of significant conservative views by Blacks, but these views do not translate to support for the Republican party.

1.4. White Identity

The role of white identity is at the core of many of these theoretical discussions. The recent threats to democracy, such as the January 6, 2021, attack on the Capital and several acts of domestic terrorism, have been carried out by groups and individuals who indicate a high level of anxiety with the prospects of the US becoming a majority-minority country in future years (Belew 2018). Scholars highlight the historical tendency of white backlash following significant advances by minorities, particularly African Americans. Eyerman posits that the Civil War, the Civil Rights Movement, and the election of a biracial President triggered a collective cultural trauma among some white Americans (Eyerman 2022). For example, the Tea party was formed in February 2009, less than a month after the inauguration of the country's first nonwhite President. Immigration fears have also amplified this sense of white identity and increased white allegiance to the republican party. Abrajano and Hajnal posit that immigration was the main driving force for this process since the 1990s (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015, 91). Collectively, these racial and ethnic forces have triggered a rise in white identity and making it politically relevant. Moreover, as Jardina notes, "whites bring their racial identity to bear on certain political preferences relevant to

protecting their group readily, automatically, and consistently” (Jardina 2019, 42). Although the topic of white identity is not the central focus of this study, it does intersect with some of the core issues of this investigation.

1.5. Data and Methods

Using survey data from the 2016 and 2020 ANES datasets, this study examines the support of traditional Republican voters versus evangelical fundamentalists as it relates to potential authoritarian sympathies and xenophobic and anti-Black prejudice. The 2016 ANES (American Election Time Series) probability sample includes 3,090 pre-election interviews and 2,590 post-election interviews. The 2020 ANES is a cross-sectional sample that includes 8,280 pre-election interviews and 7,449 post-election interviews. A series of five OLS models are used for each dataset to evaluate views on race, authoritarianism, Muslims, immigration, and presidential choice.

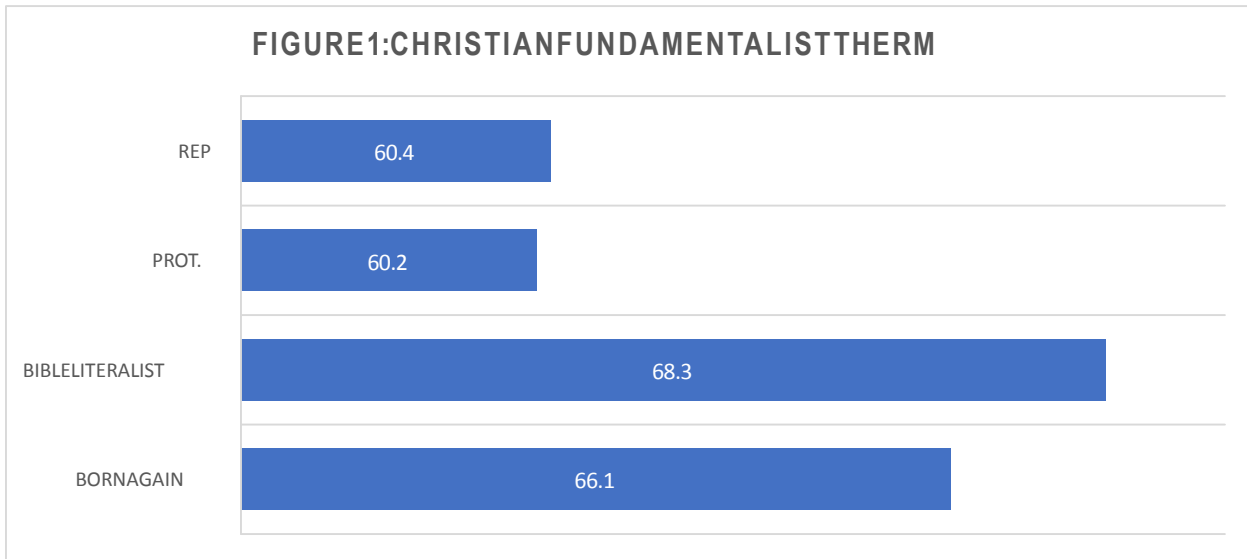
To evaluate fundamentalist views on race, a racial resentment index is employed. The index captures two factors germane to this study: conservative racial troupes and traditional evangelical views. Jardina notes that “resentment embodies the belief that blacks in the United States do not subscribe to traditional American values like hard work” (Jardina 2019, 87; 2021). Historically, conservatives have suggested the inequalities that Blacks face are not the result of structural biases but a lack of hard work. Two of the four questions that comprise the index inquire about work ethic by asserting “agree or disagree blacks should work their way up without special favors”, and “agree or disagree blacks must try harder to get ahead”. This index also captures the ontological lens through which white evangelicals interpret the world. Emerson and Smith conceptualize this worldview as the “white evangelical toolkit”, they posit: The racially important cultural tools in the white evangelical toolkit are ‘accountable freewill individualism’, relationalism (attaching central importance to interpersonal relationships), and anti-structuralism (inability to perceive or unwillingness to accept social structural influences (Emerson and Smith 2000, 76).

The hard work questions highlight the meritocracy component of the racial resentment index, it also includes two queries that inquire about potential institutional, or structural, mechanisms based on following questions: “agree or disagree past slavery make more difficult for blacks, agree or disagree blacks have gotten less than deserve”. The questions that highlight previous discrimination (“slavery makes it more difficult” and “blacks have gotten less than they deserve”) reflect institutional barriers or structural racism that many scholars suggest continuing prevent full equality for African Americans. In sum, the racial sentiment index captures biases associated with conservative and evangelical views.

The next dependent variable is a composite index that attempts to gauge authoritarianism via a proxy of four ANES questions based on the respondent’s preference for a child’s behavior. The questions are: “Please tell me which one you think is more important for a child to have: (1) Independence or respect for elders; (2) curiosity or good manners; (3) obedience or self-reliance; (4) being considerate or well behaved”. Each question included a both option in addition to the two choices and each question was coded on a scale of 0-3. It must be noted that this metric to gauge authoritarian personalities is somewhat crude when compared to the in-depth scale that RWA researchers frequently employ (Altemeyer 1996).

The other dependent variables are based on single items questions. I used the feeling thermometer (0-100 rating) question to gauge attitudes toward Muslims. In an environment of post 9/11 and post-Obama presidency, hostility toward Muslims by both republicans and Christian groups has been a consistent theme. Moreover, one of the central themes advanced by Tea Party advocates was the idea that the former president was a secret Muslim (Parker and Barreto 2013). To evaluate views toward immigration, I used the question “what should immigration levels be”. The final dependent variable asks respondents who they voted for in the 2016 election.

In terms of independent variables, I include measures that attempted to gauge potential religious fundamentalism and white identity. Being a “born-again” Christian and having orthodox views are vital components of evangelical identity. The ANES asks respondents “would you call yourself a born-again Christian, that is, have you personally had a conversion experience related to Jesus Christ” and this included as an independent variable in the model. The other religious measure attempts to gauge the influence of orthodoxy by assessing included asked respondents “which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible: the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word; the Bible is the word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally; the Bible is a book written by men and is not the word of God.” Respondents that answered that the Bible should be taken literally are referred to as Bible literalist and were coded one, while the other options were coded zero (Perry and Whitehead 2021). The reason proxy indicators are included is the general hesitancy of respondents to characterize themselves as fundamentalists. For example, in the 2016 ANES, only 3.2 percent of the respondents self-identified as fundamentalists. However, when you ask specific denominations and subgroups about their feelings toward Christian fundamentalism a different picture emerges. The bar chart below (figure 1) lists how various groups rated Christian fundamentalists.



Both Born again and Bible literalist respondents rate Christian fundamentalism higher than general protestants and republican respondents. The other independent variables include republican party and protestant identification. Since white identity represents an essential aspect of recent research on modern evangelicalism and Christian nationalism, I also include a white identity variable to gauge its impact on the models. The ANES question asks: “How important is being white to R’s identity?” and the responses ranged from not important to extremely import (Jardina 2019). A critical component of recent scholarship on Christian nationalism and white nationalism has been the perceived sense of loss or grievance collectively shared by a small percentage of the white population who fear an oncoming loss of majority status. While some of this anxiety is based on demographic realities, some scholars argue that the media and politicians exaggerate this narrative (Abrajano and Hajnal 2015). As Feola avers, “in one multicultural nation after another, shifting demographic tides have been met with a reassertion of a distinctively white, native ethos (Feola 2021, 530).” Jardina argues that white people with higher feelings of in-group attachment will be more prone to out-group prejudice toward non-whites (Jardina 2020). Including a white identity variable that attempts to assess the potential impact of white identity on the dependent variables. The final variables are standard controls: age, income, and educationiv.

2.1. Analysis

This study advances two arguments (1) Christian fundamentalists pose an even greater risk to democracy than republican supporters due to their openness to anti-democratic mechanisms and (2) Christian fundamentalist views closely mirror republican party identification in public evaluations of racial/ethnic groups. This study employs OLS models to evaluate these claims using the 2016 and 2020 ANES datasets. The first issue evaluated is racial resentment. In general, republican officials have articulated higher levels of racial resentment than democrats over the years and frequently attribute the lack of equality to a lack of hard work on the part of Blacks. Moreover, evangelicals have argued that individual reasons are the reasons for any struggles African Americans may face. The results in table one confirms that both self-identified republicans, biblical literalist, and those who have a strong sense of white identity exhibit high levels of racial resentment. Each of these variables demonstrated a strong inverse relationship on the scale and the model explained twenty-four percent of variance. Republican party id was the strongest predictor at -3.345 , followed by biblical literalist at -1.694 . Respondents with a strong white identity were also significant at $-.372$. However, the two other evangelical variables, born- again, and Protestant were insignificant. Among the control variables only education yielded a significant result with $.515$.

Table 1: ANES 2016: Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Racial Resentment	Authoritarianism	FT_Muslims	Immigration Lev	Pres. Vote
White Identity	-.372** (.153)	.060 (.043)	-4.285*** (.927)	.070 (.042)	.005 (.015)
Republican	-3.345*** (.435)	.294** (.123)	-14.005*** (2.613)	.676*** (.120)	.629*** (.043)
Protestant	.654 (495)	-.540 (.141)	-2.979 (2.990)	-.057 (.137)	.022 (.049)
Born Again	.359 (.477)	.348 (.135)	4.466 (2.884)	-.142 (.132)	-.013 (.047)
Bibleliteralist	-1.694*** (.485)	.618*** (.138)	-10.654*** (2.957)	.499*** (.134)	.158*** (.049)
Age	-.293 (.178)	.112** (.051)	-1.583 (1.077)	.102** (.049)	.003 (.018)
Income	-.132 (531)	-.010 (.151)	-3.297 (3.215)	.042** (.147)	-.064 (.053)
Education	.515** (.213)	-.231 (.061)	2.422* (1.283)	-.187** (.059)	-.023 (.021)
Constant	8.449*** (.971)	2.178*** (.275)	74.494*** (5.779)	3.195*** (.267)	.271** (.097)
N	3612	3616	3578	3621	2609
R2	.239	.222	.218	.197	.476
p≤.05,*p≤.001, *p≤.01					
Variable notes: All models are unweighted, see appendix for coding details					

The next model I consider is the authoritarianism index to evaluate the influence of fundamentalism on authoritarianism. My hypothesis suggests that evangelicals with fundamentalist leanings will show a strong proclivity toward authoritarian or anti-democratic mechanisms. The model predicted almost twenty-two percent of variance and Bible literalist was the strongest predictor at .618 of authoritarian leaning followed by republican party identification. However, the two other evangelical variables, born again and protestant were not significant. Finally, among the control variables, only age was significant.

Since the 9/11 World Trade Center bombing, some Americans have stereotyped the Islamic community as terrorists and viewed it skeptically. Moreover, one of the central conspiracy claims advanced by the tea party wing of the republican party was that Barack Obama was a secret Muslim. The third model in the 2016 ANES analysis examines how biblical literalist, republicans, and strong white identifiers view Islam via a single item feeling thermometer. The model predicts almost twenty-two percent of the variance, and all the key indicators demonstrated a robust inverse relationship with the Muslim feeling thermometer.

Republican party id was the strongest indicator at -14.005, with biblical literalist also demonstrating a strong inverse relationship at -10.654. White identity also significant but not as strong as the republican or bible literalist. Finally, education was the only control that was significant with a positive relationship. These results verify the general pattern of hostility toward Islam by republicans, fundamentalists, and those who have a strong sense of white identity.

One of the central focal points of the Trump campaign prior to winning the presidency in 2016 was immigration, as the chant “build the wall” became a favorite rallying call during the campaign. The issue of immigration is at the core of xenophobic rhetoric by many republicans and the next dependent variable I examine. As expected, the republican party id was the strongest predictor among independent variables predicting .676 of covariance, followed by biblical literalist at .499. Unlike the previous policy issues, all three control variables were significant with education having the most robust inverse relationship at -.187. Age and income demonstrated a positive relationship. The final issue I consider is how these select variables impacted the 2016

presidential election. The model predicted almost 48 percent of variance (.476). Of the seven variables reviewed, only republican party id at .639 and biblical literalist at .158 were significant.

2.2. Discussion one

After considering how these models explain attitudes on five policy and electoral issues, I revisit the initial hypotheses to review the expectations considering the 2016 ANES assessment. This study argues that Christian fundamentalism, via the biblical literalist variable, mirrored republican identification on xenophobia, anti-black issues, and presidential candidate preferences. To gauge this argument, I evaluated attitudes on measures of racial resentment, views towards Muslims, immigration, and 2016 presidential choice. In each of these four models, republican identification was closely followed by biblical literalist in its robustness and was the second strongest predictor. The second argument advanced in this study is that Christian fundamentalism is the strongest predictor of potential authoritarian behavior. Although the authoritarian index I employ is somewhat limited compared to those employed by psychologists and RWA researchers, the model confirms that respondents with strong fundamentalist views are predisposed toward authoritarian tendencies.

2.3. 2020 ANES Analysis

I use the same models in this next section to evaluate the 2020 ANES data set. Although this 2020 data has a larger number of respondents, my goal is to examine if the patterns and relationships demonstrated in the previous analysis are reflected in the 2020 dataset.

Looking at the racial resentment model, the republican party id (-4.723) and biblical literalist (-1.231) variables demonstrated robust inverse effects on the racial resentment index. The white identity variable had a marginal inverse impact on the dependent variable at -.227, and the model predicted thirty-five percent of the variance. These results confirm my first hypothesis that fundamentalist mirror party id and the indicate a predictable correlation between white identity and potential racism. The results also mirror the key independent variables in the 2016 data analysis.

One of the critical assertions advanced by RWA scholars is that religious fundamentalists have a strong predisposition toward authoritarian leaders because they are more willing to follow the directives of traditionalist leaders. The second model examines this argument by examining the impact of fundamentalist agreement with the authoritarian index. Looking at the authoritarian model, the fundamentalist measure (biblical literalist) was the most robust predictor of authoritarian views (.632). The overall model predicts almost twenty percent of the variance.

Unlike the other issues considered in this paper, the republican party id was a less effective predictor at .312. The white identity variable was also significant at .097. However, two of the control variables have the most substantial inverse relationships. Both education and income impacted the model, with education having the strongest inverse effect at -.259, followed by income at -.237. These results reinforce the consistency of republican respondents' apparent support for anti-democratic mechanisms and the general claim that fundamentalists are open to authoritarian measures if it will maintain the orthodox worldview that they condone. Conversely, people with higher levels of education and income embrace democratic choice.

Despite the historic anti-black trope that republican party supporters have articulated over the years, over the past twenty years, the ethnic group that has been constantly stereotyped is Muslims. The narrative of the Islam terrorist has created an environment where some people who are not Muslims have been the target of hate crimes, such as the attack on the Oak Creek

Sikh Temple in 2012. The Muslim feeling thermometer seeks to assess the impact of republican party id, biblical literalist, and other independent variables. Among the independent variables, republican party id had the most robust impact with a strong -.15454 relationship ($p \leq .001$). The overall model predicted twenty-one percent of variance, and the biblical literalist variable also had a strong inverse relationship of -.8.663. White identity was also significant at the 95% confidence level with -.2.019 predicted. Two of the control variables, age and education, also had an impact on respondents' views of Muslims. Age demonstrates an inverse relationship at -1.727, and education reflects a positive relationship at 2.187.

The opposite side of the xenophobia views exhibited by a large number of republican and fundamentalist supporters is hostility toward non-European immigrants. The next model evaluates views on immigration border spending. Republican party id was the most robust predictor among my independent variables at -.306, and the model predicted fifteen percent of variance. The biblical literalist was the only non-control independent variable significant at -.076 with a 95% confidence interval.

Table 2: ANES 2020	Dependent Variables				
Independent Variables	Racial Resentment	Authoritarianism	FT._Muslims	Immigration	Pres. Vote
White Identity	-.227** (.095)	.097*** (.029)	-2.019*** (.565)	-.010 (.010)	.002 (.009)
Republican	-4.723*** (.257)	.312*** (.079)	-15.454*** (1.520)	-.306*** (.027)	.652*** (.024)
Protestant	.329 (.281)	-.296*** (.086)	-2.757* (1.661)	-.027 (.029)	.012 (.026)
BornAgain	-.252 (.318)	.174* (.098)	-1.823 (1.888)	.032 (.033)	.037 (.030)
Biblicalliteralist	-1.231*** (.324)	.632*** (.100)	-8.663*** (1.925)	-.076** (.034)	.171*** (.021)
Age	-.113 (.114)	-.10 (.035)	-1.727** (.672)	-.014 (.012)	-.011 (.011)
Income	.459 (.318)	-.237** (.098)	2.055 (1.880)	.016 (.033)	-.033 (.030)
Education	.874 (.121)	-.259*** (.037)	2.187** (.715)	.030** (.0130)	-.036*** (.011)
Constant	9.338*** (.473)	2.157*** (.145)	71.387*** (2.789)	.543*** (.049)	.237*** (.044)
N	7339	7337	7291	8239	6775
R ²	.359	.196	.210	.153	.529
p≤.05,*p≤.001, *p≤.01,					
Variable notes:All models are unweighted, see appendix for coding details					

The final model using the 2020 ANES considers the impact of our select independent variables on presidential candidate selection. Like the other non-authoritarian models, party id was the most robust predictor at .652. Overall, the model predicted almost fifty-three percent of variance. The biblical indicator was the only select variable significant at .171. Education was the only significant variable among the control variables with an-.036 inverse relationship.

2.4. Overview 2016 and 2020 comparison

This study has sought to evaluate two overlapping claims. Evangelical fundamentalism is open to authoritarian measures if it maintains their views on the status quo, and (2) fundamentalist views mirror republicans in their xenophobic and anti-Black views. Using the 2016 and 2020 ANES, both hypotheses were proven accurate. Biblical literalist, used here as a proxy for fundamentalism was the most robust predictor of authoritarian preferences in both datasets. Regarding the anti-African American and other Xenophobic measures, republican party id was the strongest indicator. At the same time, biblical literalists exhibited a similar directional and level of significance with the other dependent variables. In terms of the influence of white identity, it had limited impact across the two datasets. In the 2016 dataset, it was only significant in the racial and Muslim feeling thermometer models. In the 2020 dataset, the white identity variable was significant in three of the models: race, authoritarianism, the Muslim feeling thermometer. Given the significant difference in sample sizes, one cannot make a conclusive claim about the role of white identity in this study.

Conclusion

In recent years, there has been a steady rise in the number of far-right parties globally. Italy elected the first far-right prime minister since World War II. Heading into the 2022 midterms in the US many republican candidates openly deny the results of the 2020 presidential election. This trend is an alarming pattern to those seeking to ensure the integrity of democratic institutions around the world. This study has attempted to highlight how a portion of the population in the US may be inclined to embrace authoritarian measures if it will ensure their preferred party and policy preferences. A second goal of this study was to demonstrate that Christian

fundamentalism matches the hostile views of some Republican supporters in their xenophobic and Anti-Black attitudes. This study validates these arguments by using the 2016 and 2020 ANES.

Postscript. When I initially began working on this manuscript, the events of January 6, 2021, were fresh in the background. At that time, with the election of Joe Biden, it seemed unimaginable that the 45th president, Donald Trump, would be in office again. Four years later, that assumption was proven to be utterly false. Not only was Donald Trump elected the 47th president, but for the first time since George H.W. Bush, the Republican Party (2004) won the majority vote. He handily defeated Vice President Kamala Harris. While there are many plausible explanations for this outcome, the racial and gender dynamics cannot be ignored in a post-Obama environment. One of the most notable sound bites during the electoral campaign was the claim that Haitian immigrants in Springfield, Ohio, were eating dogs and cats in the neighborhood. Although city officials quickly refuted these claims, candidate Trump and his vice presidential candidate, JD Vance, continued to articulate this racially biased undertone. Regarding religious affiliations and voters, the most notable gap amongst religiously affiliated voters was not amongst the nominations but rather racial or ethnic. The post-election survey data indicates that white evangelicals and white non-evangelical Protestants gave the majority of their support to Donald Trump. All other denominations, particularly black Protestants, voted for Vice President Harris.

Although this study highlights the topic of Christian nationalism, one can make a valid argument that a deeper discussion of whether the Republican Party and, in particular, president-elect Trump are referencing generic white nationalist themes. It is important to note that some of the most heightened periods of white grievance or nationalism have been associated with perceptions of black advancement. After reconstruction, historian Darrell Scott notes that "it was the struggle against Negro Rule' or 'Black supremacy, . . . That gave birth to white supremacy as the ideology of Southerner's resistance (Scott 2013,227). This perception overlaps with one of the core principles of nationalism. One of the core principles of nationalism is that the country, or political unit, should be ruled by the majority, and any violation of this clause constitutes, in the words of nationalist theorist Gellner, "a quite outstandingly intolerable breach of political propriety" (Gellner 2006,1). Unfortunately, the perception of African American advancement, coupled with an increase in the non-white population, has triggered hostile reactions by the majority population and sparked mythical narratives of what America once was when Blacks and other minorities were restricted from full participation in the political process. Future research should explore whether these sentiments are rooted in the secular or non-secular legacies of the US.

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