

# RELIGION & ENVIRONMENT

Perspectives on environment,  
climate, and renewable energy in the  
Mormon culture region

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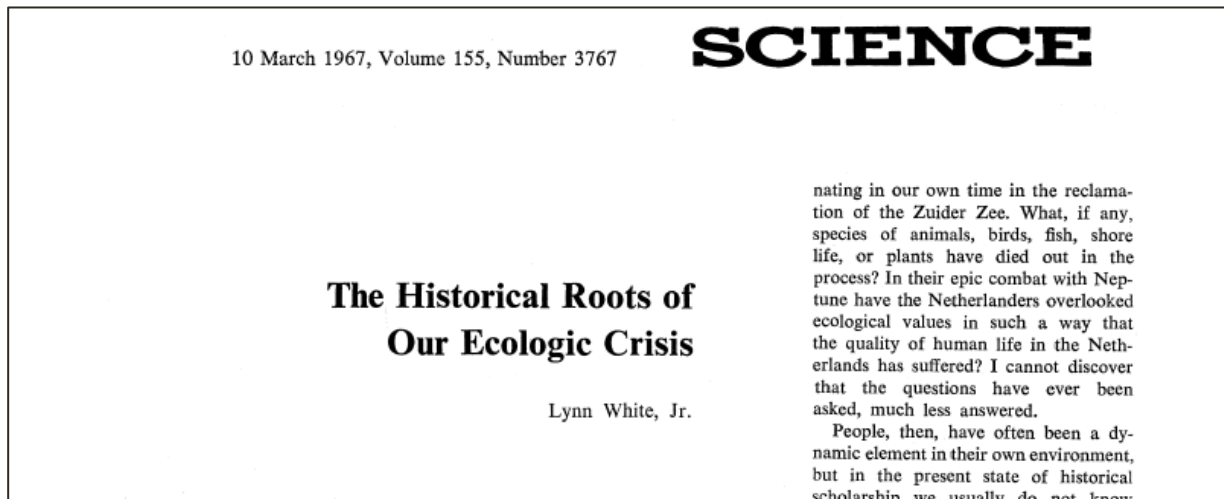
Environmental issues are increasingly polarized along political party lines. (McCrigh, Xiao, and Dunlap 2014)

Past research has suggested that environmental beliefs are also related to religious affiliation.

Faith-based arguments in favor of environmental actions are becoming more prominent.

# Religion & Environment

- Three 'waves' of research (Woodrum & Wolkomir 1997)
  1. 1<sup>st</sup> Wave: Casting blame on religion
    - Lynn White (1967): Judeo-Christianity at fault for ecological crisis
  2. 2<sup>nd</sup> Wave: Gathering empirical evidence
    - Simplistic measures, found evidence for White thesis
  3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Wave: Varied and contradictory results, alternate measures
    - Evidence in support for religious stewardship



# Research on Mormon environmental views

- **Very understudied**
- Brehm & Eisenhauer (2006)
  - Surveyed 4 communities inside Mormon Culture Region
  - **Mormonism negatively related to environmental concern**
- Peterson & Liu (2008)
  - Teton Valley of western Wyoming
  - **Mormons least environmentally oriented**
- Hunter & Toney (2005)
  - Compared Mormons in Logan, UT, with national non-Mormon public
  - **Mormons show higher environmental orientation**
  - ....but less likely to exhibit pro-environmental behavior

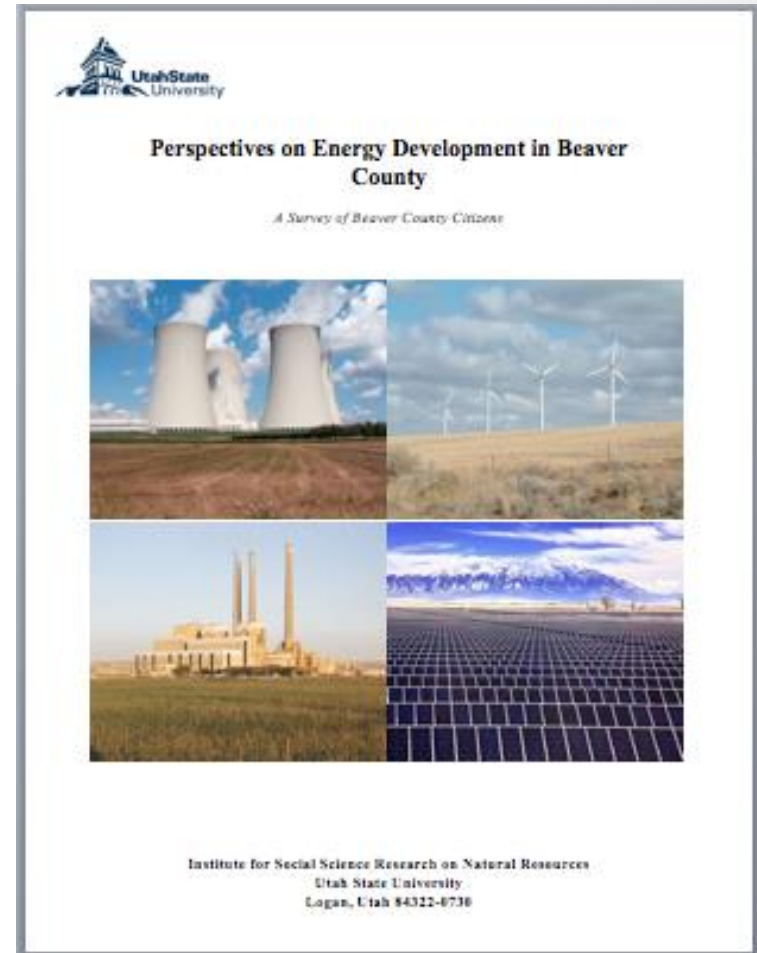
# Research Questions:

1. How is Mormonism, compared to other denominations, related to **general environmental attitudes** (using the New Environmental Paradigm scale), **views about global warming**, and **support for renewable energy** in the Intermountain West?
1. How much does religion account for these environmental views, compared with, socio-demographic variables, ***political ideology*** and ***local community context***?

# Methods

## 2014 community survey

- (n=906)
- 5 communities across Utah, Idaho, and Wyoming
- Drop-off, pick-up method
- Random sample, 250 households per community
- **Response rates: 67% - 80%**
- **Analytic methods**
  - 1. Test of difference: ANOVA
  - 2. Multivariate regression



# Measurement

## Dependent variables

1. **Environmental orientation (NEP)**
  - Latent construct: 10 items of New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) scale (Cronbach's=0.843)
2. **Views on the seriousness of global warming**
  - Single-item ordinal variable (0-3)
3. **Support for Renewable Energy**
  - Latent construct: 3 survey questions indicating support (Cronbach's=0.847)
  - Transformed into ordinal variable

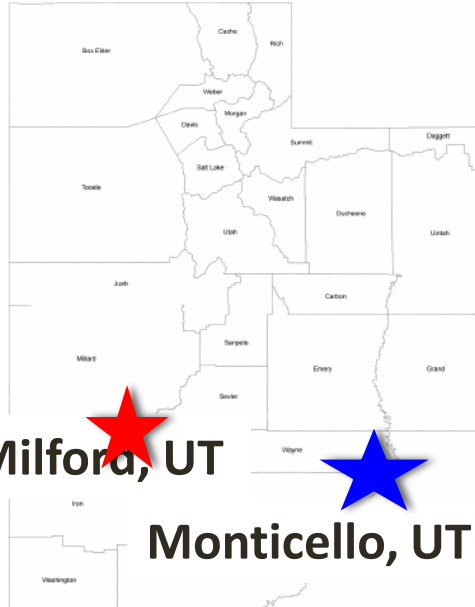
# Measurement

## Predictors

- Religious affiliation
  - Mormon, Protestant, Catholic, None (reference)
- Political orientation
- Sociodemographics
  - Age
  - Education
  - Gender
- Communities
  - Milford, UT (reference)
  - Monticello, UT
  - Eastern Idaho Falls, ID
  - Rawlins, WY
  - Saratoga, WY



# Five study Communities



# 1<sup>st</sup> test: Analysis of variance;

*\*two lowest groups circled*

	Range	Mormon		Catholic		Protestant		No affiliation		ANOVA		Scheffe Post Hoc Test**
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	F	p	
NEP	10 - 50	25.33	7.22	31.48	6.58	31.02	8.03	33.91	7.97	53.50	0.000	1<2, 1<3, 1<4, 3<4
Seriousness of global warming	0 - 3	1.45	1.08	2.10	1.02	1.61	1.16	2.12	1.06	18.07	0.000	1<2, 1<4, 3<2, 3<4
Support renewable energy	1-3	2.19	0.66	2.09	0.65	2.08	0.71	2.31	0.66	4.00	0.008	3<4
Political orientation*	1 - 5	2.2	0.85	2.74	0.82	2.33	0.93	3.04	1.02	34.51	0.000	1<2, 1<4, 3<2, 3<4

# Comparison: 3 regression models

	<u>NEP</u>	<u>Views on seriousness of global warming</u>	<u>Support for Renewable Energy</u>	<u>Support for Renewable Energy with NEP &amp; climate</u>
Mormon	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Catholic	(-)		(-)	(-)
Protestant	(-)	(-)		
Political orientation	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)
Male	(-)	(-)	(-)	(-)
Saratoga, WY	(+)		(-)	(-)
Idaho Falls, ID			(-)	(-)
NEP	N/A	N/A	N/A	
Views on seriousness of global warming	N/A	N/A	N/A	(+)
<i>Variance explained</i>	<i>28.70%</i>	<i>11.50%</i>	<i>9.10%</i>	<i>11.90%</i>

# Discussion

## 1. How is Mormonism, compared to other denominations, related to environmental attitudes?

- Mormons have lowest overall environmental orientation, BUT
- Mormons have higher support for renewable energy than other religions!!
- Mormons are not that different from Protestants: general environmental orientation & climate change beliefs
- Catholics and those of no religious affiliation are similar

## 2. How much does religion account for these environmental views?

- It depends
  - NEP: strong association for all three religious groups, even when political orientation is controlled
- Most consistent predictors are
  - Political orientation (liberal = +)
  - Gender (male = -)
- Local community context matters in some cases

# In conclusion, this research:

- Demonstrates that the religion-environment relationship is complex and additional 'third wave' research is needed to understand the varied and evolving environmental beliefs of religious individuals.
- Provides *some* support for Lynn White thesis.
- Shows that support for renewable energy is not related to environmental attitudes.
- Indicates potential areas where political environmental divisions may be bypassed if issues are framed carefully.

# Thank you!

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