

A portrait of Prudence L. Carter, a Black woman with short, curly hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a black and white patterned sleeveless top and a gold necklace. The background is a warm, golden-yellow light, possibly from a window with curtains. To her left, the spines of several books are visible on a shelf.

**SOCIAL  
DIFFERENTIATION  
AND THE  
DISCOMFORT  
OF CHANGE  
IN EDUCATION  
AND SOCIETY**

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President of the American Sociological Association

## Ficha Técnica

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The presence of Prudence L. Carter, 114th President of the American Sociological Association, was a unique moment of rich and lively debate.

Prudence Carter's text is a good illustration of the current situation in the United States, marked by a new wave of conservatism that can be considered an actual regression on several levels. Firstly, by destroying the consensus established since the New Deal and the redistributive policies that followed Johnson's election, combined with a growing recognition of civil rights and the gradual institutionalisation of forms of affirmative action. But also by activating regressive dispositions of selfishness, competition, disbelief in deliberative consensus and, in short, a socially generalised tendency to dismantle the public sphere as we knew it.

Now, in the contemporary cycle, which began with Reagan and the glorification of neoliberalism, through the Tea Party, Trump's victory and now the spread of MAGA extremism, inequalities in their plurality (race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ...) and interaction are gaining ground.

On the other hand, Carter is concerned with multilevel observation because it's about more than just the great concentration/rarefaction of resources that occurs on a societal scale.

As she says, it is also essential to analyse "intangible social processes that occur at the meso and micro levels regarding social interactions that either mediate or impede the degree of distributional equality". "Relational inequality" translates into everyday life and the street level, the structural tendencies of racism, hostility towards immigrants and the closure of opportunities. As a public sociologist, Carter believes in the sociological imagination as a mechanism for redirecting the spotlight to see how power is enacted and potentially transformed for equitable purposes. We, too, have this hope.

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Invited Lecture (4 June 2023)

**“Social Differentiation and the Discomfort of Change  
in Education and Society”**

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It is no secret that the world, the nation, and our local communities are experiencing chaotic and tumultuous times, not only because of the multi-year coronavirus pandemic but also because of the hefty social, economic, and political issues that affront democracy and our lives daily. Today the United States and other nations are experiencing a regressive turning point. Arguably, it reflects a “tipping point” (see Grier-Reed et al. 2021; Godsil and Waldek 2020; Patashnik 2019) where those historically denied opportunities to full humanity, citizenship and access to societal resources have experienced some advancement since the mid-twentieth century; but after reaching a certain (modest) threshold of attained, distributional resources, that advancement has hit a wall.

In the twentieth century, the United States government implemented policies that led to more widely distributive economic, educational, and political resources for social groups previously denied access to opportunities and better well-being. Some examples include the Great Society programs, the 1964 passage of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Civil and Voting Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, respectively; Executive Order 11246, which ushered in the protections from discrimination via affirmative action; the Fair Housing Act; *Roe vs. Wade* (women’s reproductive freedom), *Obergefell vs. Hodges* (gay marriage equality); and more.

Yet despite some of the material gains for historically excluded and oppressed groups, political backlash and pushback against social, economic, and political gains have been significant (Sugue 2016; Patashnik 2019). For example, full participation in the polity and voting rights have been under assault. State legislatures have also outlawed explicit teaching of the nation’s history, about race and racism, anti-Semitism, and explicit references to certain books and ideas that highlight the racial hierarchy at the core of U.S. society and beyond (Stout and Wilburn 2022). Some have also passed laws that threaten the humanity and livelihood of transgender and non-binary persons. The state of Florida under the leadership of governor Ron DeSantis passed the “Don’t Say Gay” bill, and Tex-

as governor Greg Abbott ordered state agencies to investigate parents seeking gender-affirming care for their children as child abuse. More recently, the United States Supreme Court overturned the legal precedent set by *Roe vs. Wade* in 1973 and limited the reproductive freedoms and rights of child-bearing persons.

In my view, American (U.S.) sociology has not either adequately anticipated or addressed the cycles of social progress and regression. U.S. sociology has, however, expended a fair amount of scholarly energy on the questions of the material and economic drivers of inequality. We know what data show about the divergences by race, socioeconomic status, gender, and immigrant status, among other factors, when it pertains to economic, political, and academic outcomes. Distributive inequality, or disproportionate differences between group and individual in material resources based on a population characteristic such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion or other, has been the focus of many social science studies. In the United States, myriad research studies document highly significant race, class, and gender disparities in educational attainment, income and wealth, and poverty, for example (Chetty et al 2014; Duncan and Murnane 2011; Carter and readon 2011; Torche and Neckerman 2007). Notably, over time, the patterns of disparities in education have reversed their course in terms of representation in higher education, with female enrollments in colleges and universities having surpassed male enrollment in colleges and universities (DiPrete and Buchmann 2013).

Yet, cultural and organizational sociologists have drawn attention to some of the more intangible social processes that occur at the meso and micro levels in terms of social interactions that either mediate or impede the degree of distributive equality. Broadly speaking we might refer to these micro-social and cultural processes as forms of “relational inequality,” which includes the study of social exploitation, exclusion, and claims-making; group threat; and the inequitable nature of macro-cultural logics (Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019; Burton and Welsh 2015; Lamont et al 2014; Schwalbe et al 2000). In earlier work (Carter 2012), I distinguished between the “resource” and “sociocultural” contexts of schooling. The former refers to the material inputs of schools—for example, revenue, physical plants and capital, teacher quality, books and supplies, curriculum and more. The latter encompasses the “substance of relationships” and less tangible aspects of schooling embedded in interactions among students and teachers and other educators, among students, and with families beyond

schools. I also argued that the latter induces and reproduces racial and class inequality significantly and may even countervail the positive advantages of a resource-rich schooling.

In more recent work (Nalani, Yoshikawa, and Carter 2021), colleagues and I make a parallel argue at the societal level, examining the role of “relational inequality,” which captures social and cultural processes that support hierarchical relationships of power among groups and within organizations and institutions, which reproduce exclusion and distributional inequality (see also Tomaskovic-Devey and Avent-Holt 2019; Lamont et al 2014; Schwalbe et al 2000; Tilly 1999). Figure 1 shows this parallel relationship visually.

### Conceptual Framework



Research in cultural, organizational, and social inequality in schools, the workplace, and greater society (Ray 2019; Tomaskovic-Devey and Holt 2015; Berrey 2015; Lewis and Diamond 2015) have led me to four general observations about relational inequality from others and my research studies:

1. Racial diversity or representation is necessary but insufficient for significant organizational and institutional progress (Ray 2019; Berrey 2015).
2. Racial diversity talks and workshops will not solve the problem without substantial organizational change (Dobbin & Kalev 2022).

3. As racial diversity increases, often senses of group threat, privilege, and entitlement increase (Rucker & Richeson, 2018; Craig and Richeson 2014; Quillian 2006; Allport 1979; Blumer 1958).
4. There are significant limitations to cultural narratives about success and mobility that impede the balance of relational and distributional equality (Labaree 1997).

I contend that racial diversity and representation are essential yet insufficient (refer to Bell 2011; Berrey 2015; Dobbin and Kalev 2022), I emphasize the susceptibility of organizational and social changes that hinge primarily on the mere physical coexistence of individuals from historically oppressed and marginalized groups in a given domain. Such coexistence, however, may not necessarily result in meaningful alterations to the cultural and power dynamics entrenched within that domain. Therefore, I argue for the need of social scientists to address stratification forces within diverse organizations and institutions for genuine and impactful change.

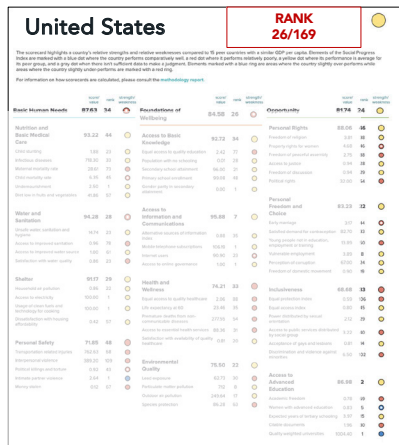
Such an examination of change requires, I suggest, that we seek to understand and offer insights to how the levels of social connections and attachment may be addressed to complement increased access to material opportunities. We must pose the question: *How does the extent of (collective) social connection to another group or individual, characterized by social and cultural differences and historical social conflicts, impact the attainment of equality and integration in society?* In a recent study, Grier-Reed, Houseworth, Moody, and Quiñones (2021) found that “when people of color reach 40–60% of the population, a tipping point (emphasis mine) occurs in which [W]hite individuals experience a collective existential threat and threat to their status and resources, resulting in more negative attitudes toward diversity” (p. 11). Further, they found that “[W]hite students at the more diverse school reported a lower sense of belonging than their Black counterparts. This was not the case at the school with more [W]hite students” (ibid.). These findings correspond to some survey results from my study of high school students in the United States. Both Black and White students felt lower senses of belonging when attending schools predominated by the opposite race (Carter 2012). These observations reveal signs of relational inequality.

Other possible effects of relational inequality are found in studies by social psychologists who reveal how white racial attitudes become less tolerant the more Whites are aware of increasing demographic change and the idea of a minority-majority in U.S. society. In an experimental study, White respondents felt less favorably toward both African Americans and Latinos when exposed to the idea of an increasingly more diverse society, feeling even more disconnected from the Latinos than African Americans (Craig and Richeson 2014). The disconnect and alienation to other ethno-racial and other groups corresponds to political behaviors, which influence critical voting and judicial outcomes, in addition to protest movements (Sugrue 2016; Patashnik 2019).

Further, studies in both higher education and the workplace have found evidence of the inability of diversity practices to both broaden and deepen access to resources within those spheres and to enhance a sense of belonging, power sharing and participation in them (Berrey 2015; Walton and Cohen 2007; Bell 2004). For example, in examining the practices of 708 private sector establishments, sociologists Alexandra Kalev, Frank Dobbin, and Erin Kelley have found that rather than change mindsets and build relational capital, diversity workshops and trainings do the reverse and breed resentment. Instead, they found that deeper structural and organizational work—what they call “organizational responsibility structures-- need to be implemented (Kalev, Dobbin, and Kelly 2006).

Figure 2 suggests the enduring power of racism, anti-blackness, and anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States. Out of 163 societies where information about social progress was gathered—both distributional and relational—the United States ranks 103 on its (lack) of inclusiveness and discrimination and violence against racialized minorities. Such findings and knowledge, along with lessons learned from the failures of Brown vs. Board of Education (in the face of strong resistance and weak implementation) and an awareness of tumultuous racial and political division, have brought me to new directions for the study of both organizational and institutional change. Note the comparison in Figure 3, which reveals that Portugal ranks 24 out of 103 countries on its balance between distributional and relational inequality. Indicators reveal less violence and discrimination against racialized minorities than in the United States, though more against LGBTQ+ individuals—-which, arguably, could be attributable to a confluence of forces related to patriarchy, heteronormativity, and religion—about which, I will say more below.

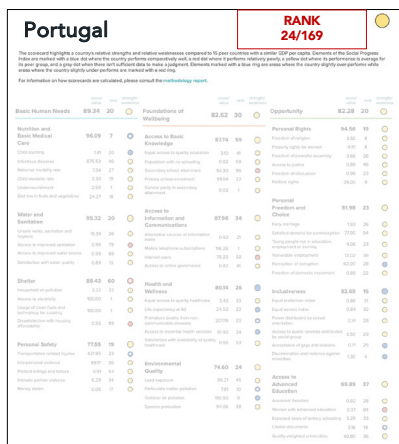
Figure 2. Social Progress and Indicators



Source: <https://www.socialprogress.org>

	score/ value	rank	strength/ weakness
<b>Inclusiveness</b>	<b>68.68</b>	<b>33</b>	●
Equal protection index	0.59	106	●
Equal access index	0.80	45	●
Power distributed by sexual orientation	2.12	29	●
Access to public services distributed by social group	3.22	40	●
Acceptance of gays and lesbians	0.81	14	●
Discrimination and violence against minorities	6.50	102	●

- Overperforming by ≥1 point
- Overperforming by <1 point
- Performing within expected range
- Underperforming by <1 point
- Underperforming by ≥1 point
- No data available



Source: <https://www.socialprogress.org>

	score/ value	rank	strength/ weakness
<b>Inclusiveness</b>	<b>82.69</b>	<b>16</b>	●
Equal protection index	0.86	31	●
Equal access index	0.84	32	●
Power distributed by sexual orientation	2.14	28	●
Access to public services distributed by social group	3.50	29	●
Acceptance of gays and lesbians	0.71	25	●
Discrimination and violence against minorities	1.30	4	●

- Overperforming by ≥1 point
- Overperforming by <1 point
- Performing within expected range
- Underperforming by <1 point
- Underperforming by ≥1 point
- No data available

### Limitations of Cultural Narratives for Merit and Success

As the U.S. democracy matured, it evolved into a more fair and open system following the Civil Rights era. During this period, historically excluded groups attained not only basic civil rights but also access to educational and economic opportunities. Still, scholars and researchers find that the reduction of historical educational disadvantages for Asian, African, Indigenous, and Latinx communities across the United States has moved at a snail's pace (Sugrue 2016; Anderson 2015; Chetty et al 2014; Bell 2004). First, we must acknowledge that the right to a high-quality, equal education is not a federal right, which has its own material consequences for group-level disparities. Second, we have to examine how education—as a social and cultural institution—has had limited ability to hold society together or cohere individuals and groups across social boundaries or differences.

Dominant achievement ideology in U.S. society embraces select markers, including standardized test scores that are highly correlated to socioeconomic status (Chetty, Deming and Friedman 2023), to allocate academic resources and opportunities. State governments and local communities assign grades and rankings to schools, largely influenced by the performance of their students. In turn, families with economic means often base their decisions about housing and school enrollment on test scores (Lareau and Goyette 2014). This system has subjected historically oppressed and marginalized youth, especially some Asian and African American, Latinx, and Indigenous students, to unfair stereotypes about their intelligence and competence, all perpetuated by the ideology of test scores (e.g., Steele and Aronson 1995).

High stakes testing practices reinforce rationales that embolden many vociferous White and affluent parents to mobilize and exclude other students and families from selective schools and neighborhoods (Roda and Wells 2013). They often cite concerns about preserving high-quality education, maintaining high expectations, and upholding shared values and beliefs in academic excellence as reasons for opposing integrated schooling. The conflict of *education-as-a-private good* and *education-for-public good* is both political and social. We can see it clearly in a 2019 Pew Research Center poll (Horowitz 2019). Slightly more than a third of Whites favor racially mixed schools as opposed to local ones in their communities, which are marked heavily by racial and socioeconomic segregation. The opposite is true for Black Americans among whom 68% prefer racially

and ethnically diverse schools. Latinos and Asians are split down the middle with half of each group favoring diverse schools. Political identity drives a good deal of this: less than 25% of Republicans prefer diverse schools to local ones, while nearly 60% of Democrats do.

Since the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, school districts have grappled with accountability mandates aimed at raising test scores in marginalized communities. Concurrently, admission practices at selective colleges and universities, as well as beliefs about the long-term economic benefits of degrees from these institutions, shape the behavior of privileged students and their families (Warikoo 2022). Anxiety about selective college admissions and test scores has led many well-off parents to seek advantages very early in their children's lives (Warikoo 2022; Dhingra 2019). The values of equality that many are often discarded in favor of private consumption of educational opportunities, driven by self-interest rather than a commitment to the public good (Labaree, 1997), which could lead us closer to educational equity. Paradoxically, as we attempt to address the opportunity gaps that lead to achievement disparities (see Carter & Welner, 2013), we rely on tools that discriminate and exclude.

### ***Christian Nationalist Beliefs, Political Ideology and Race***

As I contemplate the significance of social and cultural structures in shaping the dynamics of relational inequality and its equilibrium with distributional equality, my sociological imagination (Mills 1959) leads me to consider the role of religion. Like education, institutionalized religion and its organizational forms—for example, churches synagogues, mosques, and sanghas—comprise a social institution that has the potential to shape the meaning-making and social connections collectively and effectively among historically divided social groups. It also encapsulates an area where we can observe empirically how relational and distributional processes that influence perceptions and behaviors about (in) equality. In prior work, my co-authors and I argued that given U.S. cultural history and the prevalence of religious groups in American community life, religion may be one important means for re-weaving the fraying fabric of social and associational life” (Lichterman, Carter, and Lamont 2009). An impediment to that reweaving, however, is racial segregation in the U.S. society. Throughout the 20th century in the United States, race and religion have been entwined. In the 1960s, evangelical religious identity began to converge with partisan political identity,

specifically with the conservatism of the Republican Party (Butler 2021). Though it branched out into various streams across communities, evangelical Christianity, like other denominations and strands of Christianity, had a tenor that forced racialized forms to emerge. Anti-blackness, Jim Crow codes, and white supremacy compelled the development of the Pentecostal church and other evangelical denominations, especially within African American communities because of their exclusion from their white counterparts.

In my view, U.S. sociology has paid too little attention to this particular, highly influential social institution, replete with meaning-making and a powerful shaper of values and behavior. However, a growing number of sociologists propose that scholars take seriously the profound connectedness of American religion with race and class, among other forms of inequality (Wilde 2018, Yukich & Edgell 2020). They call it “complex religion.” These scholars argue that religion intersects so deeply with ethno-racial identity and social class background in the United States that a straightforward variable approach will often miss critical patterns of divergence between different ethno-religious groups (Wilde 2018). Hence, any analysis of religion in American politics and polarization must start with the understanding that religious communities are highly segregated by race, and in some instances, by class too.

Since the presidential election of Donald J. Trump in 2016, and the unfortunate climate of social division and polarization that has ensued and played out visibly in the public sphere and national media, a treasure trove of scholarship has emerged to explain these political phenomena. In the process, Christian nationalism (CN) and the behaviors of its adherents have received increased attention. Christian nationalism—tacitly understood to be white, politically conservative, and separatist—is a political and social ideology that seeks to fuse Christianity with nationalism, or beliefs about how the national government and society should operate. Specifically, Christian nationalism in the United States asserts that the country is a Christian nation and that the government and laws of the United States should reflect Christian values. Christian nationalists believe that American identity and destiny are tied to a Christian heritage. Christian nationalists are known to profess a belief that there should not be a separation between church and state. Whitehead and Perry (2020) characterized Christian nationalism as a cultural framework that idealizes and advocates a fusion of American national identity with a particular understanding of Christianity, characterized by

a belief in the nation’s divine mission, a strong preference for conservative social and political values, and a hostile attitude towards perceived threats to national and religious identity.

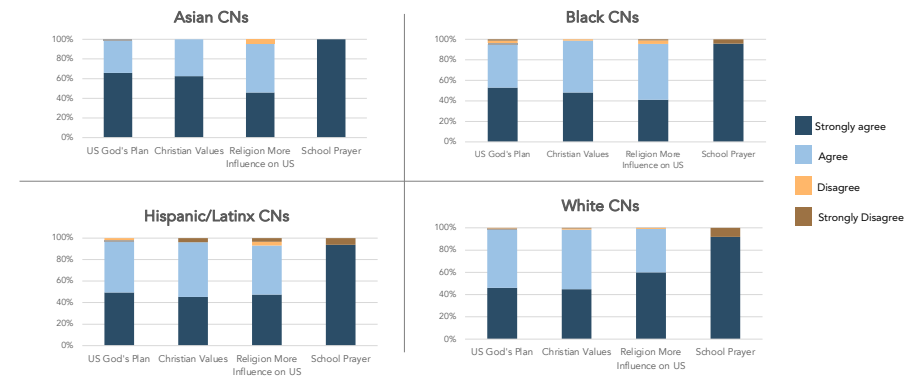
We argue that the conflation of these descriptions with Christian nationalism produces a fallacious conceptual understanding of the multifaceted nature of identities and further ignores the complexity of religion and its meaning to different ethno-racial groups, especially African Americans (Carter and Sinha n.d). Commonly, Christian nationalists are perceived as advocates for policies that promote a conservative Christian agenda, such as opposing same-sex marriage, promoting prayer in public schools, and restricting abortion rights. Some Christian nationalists may also use their religious beliefs to justify xenophobic or anti-immigrant policies. Indeed, history tells us that early movements of Christian evangelism and nationalism among Whites corresponded to political conservatism among them (Butler 2021; Whitehead and Perry 2020).

To explore variations in social and political attitudes among Christian Nationalists, we used data from the 2021 US General Social Survey (GSS), a bi-annual survey of adults aged 18 and over in the United States, offering an overview of individual values and political attitudes. Our analyses reveal that Christian nationalism is not necessarily a white separatist phenomenon that corresponds wholly to political conservatism. Instead, we find that African Americans can be highly Christian nationalist, if not more than Whites, but simultaneously hold liberal political ideas about various aspects of society and the economy. In constructing a measure for Christian nationalism, we drew from existing quantitative Christian nationalism (QCN) literature.<sup>1</sup> In quantitative research, Christian nationalism is typically measured using a six-item scale, with questions that discuss the role of religion in public life (Smith and Adler 2022). In the 2021 national sample of the General Social Science Survey, we were able to utilize four of these indicators of Christian nationalist beliefs.

1 - For more details on this study, see Carter and Sinha (n.d., in preparation).

### Race and Christian Nationalism in the U.S.

2021 General Social Science Survey



As Figure 4 shows, there are slight differences among Asian, Black, Latinx, and White Americans about the four perspectives associated with Christian nationalism, including the beliefs that <sup>2</sup>: 1) the U.S. is a part of God’s plan; 2) the federal government should be based on Christian values; 3) religion should have more influence in U.S. society; and 4) the Lord’s Prayer and Bible verses should be read in school. Black Americans score significantly higher than Whites or any other group on the 4-item scale measuring Christian nationalism (alpha=.83), even after controlling for age, education, and region. However, Black Christian nationalists significantly diverge from White Christian nationalists in terms of their political affiliation: 50 percent identify as Democrats, while 87 percent of White Christian nationalists in the study self-identified as Republicans. In addition, Black Christian nationalists were overwhelmingly more likely to vote for Democrat Hilary Clinton for U.S. President—89%, while 84% of White Christian nationalists voted for Donald Trump in the 2016 election. In comparison, 71% Asian American and 61% of Latinx Christian nationalists voted more closely to Whites for Trump, although still significantly lower percentages. In sum, Christian nationalist orientation and political ideology intersected differently for people of color than Whites in the United States.

2 - Black Americans score significantly higher than Whites or any other group on the scale measuring Christian nationalism, controlling for age, education, and region.



### Political and Social Attitudes Among Christian Nationalists

Source: 2021 General Social Science Survey

	The Government is Spending "Too Much" on Assistance to Blacks		Opposed to Giving Preference to Blacks in Hiring and Promotion		The Government is Spending "Too Little" on Reducing Crime		America Should Limit Immigration to Protect Our Natural Way of Life	
	$\beta$	$\sigma$	$\beta$	$\sigma$	$\beta$	$\sigma$	$\beta$	$\sigma$
Age	—	—	—	—	-0.01**	—	0.01*	0.00
Female	-0.08	0.10	-0.20**	0.09	-0.04	0.10	0.04	0.13
Married	-0.06	0.10	0.00	0.09	-0.19*	0.1	-0.08	0.14
Black	-1.12***	0.13	-0.46***	0.14	0.26*	0.16	-0.54***	0.18
Hispanic	-0.33	0.22	-0.47**	0.18	.07	0.17	-0.41	0.27
Asian	-0.46	0.39	-0.25	0.29	.11	0.24	-0.57	0.67
South	-0.01	0.10	-0.22**	0.09	-0.10	0.10	0.04	0.14
Degree	-0.04	0.04	-.02	0.04	-0.01	0.04	-0.06	0.06
Political conservatism	0.10**	0.04	0.06*	0.04	-0.04	0.04	0.12**	0.05
Bible as inspired word	0.18	0.34	.33	0.23	.24	0.31	0.03	0.32
Bible as literal	0.22	0.33	.26	.24	.25	0.31	—	0.31
Intercept	1.91	0.43	3.40	0.30	1.98	0.40	2.93	0.44
R <sup>2</sup>	0.34		0.18		0.13		0.14	
N	297		385		276		296	

\*\*\*p=.00 \*\*; p<.05; \*p<=.10

	Homosexual Sexual Relations are "Always Wrong"		Consider Themselves Pro-Choice		Opposed to a Close Relative Marrying a Black Person		The Government Spending "Too Much" on Protecting the Environment	
	$\beta$	$\sigma$	$\beta$	$\sigma$	$\beta$	$\sigma$	$\beta$	$\sigma$
Age	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Female	-.37**	0.14	.18	.12	-.05	.11	-.08	.07
Married	.39**	.14	-.21*	.13	-.16	.12	.10	.07
Black	.33	.21	.65***	.19	-.81***	.17	-.07	.09
Hispanic	.24	.22	.10	.21	-.21	.20	-.17	.11
Asian	.54	.41	.62	.39	-.04	.31	-.11	.20
South	.19	.14	.14	.12	-.07	.12	-.01	.07
Degree	-.11**	.05	—	.05	-.01	.04	—	.03
Political conservatism	.15**	.06	-.33***	.05	.02	.05	.23***	.03
Bible as inspired word	-.12	.46	-.54	.37	-.65*	.34	.08	.19
Bible as literal	.31	.45	-.80**	.37	-.69**	.34	.18	.18
Intercept	2.12	.59	4.41	.55	3.20	.46	.25	.25
R <sup>2</sup>	.13		.22		.14		.22	
N	383		570		391		577	

\*\*\*p=.00 \*\*; p<.05; \*p<=.10

To further assess the association of political attitudes, we examined how respondents answered questions on four signature theme questions associated with conservatism: government spending, affirmative action, crime, and immigration (Gross et al 2011). Christian nationalists (CNs) were more likely to hold

more conservative political attitudes about each of these political attitudes than non-Christian nationalists. For all four political attitude questions, Black Americans significantly differed from Whites: less likely to believe that the government should: spend less on the economic welfare of Black Americans; do away with racial preferences or affirmative action; spend more on crime, and limit immigration. Asian Americans were also significantly less likely than Whites to believe that the government should spend less on Black Americans, while Hispanic/Latinx respondents were less likely than Whites to hold beliefs that the government is spending too little on crime and that it should limit immigration.

On the issues of government spending, affirmative action, and immigration – which social scientists view as signature themes of U.S.-based conservatism (Hochschild 2018; Gross, Medvetz, and Russell 2011), Black Christian nationalists, even after controlling for other factors, were significantly less likely than all other groups of Christian nationalists to hold more conservative views about government spending for Blacks, affirmative action, and immigration (see Figure 5). Asian Americans and Latinx Christian nationalists appear to converge more in political beliefs with Whites than Black Americans. Part of that might be explained by different relational patterns that emerge from residential, schooling, and community factors (reardon 2016; Logan 2011). Even as conservative, interracial churches have proliferated in U.S. society, the ubiquitous black-white divide engendered by housing and community segregation, arguably, has led to varied patterns of relational connection across the races.

To note, cultural issues where Black, Asian, and Latinx Christian nationalists converge significantly in a more conservative direction with White Christian nationalists relate sexual freedom and choice where all CNs are equally as likely to oppose gay and lesbian relationships (see Figure 6). Meanwhile Black CNs are more likely to consider themselves pro-choice than the other groups. Our analyses suggest that in general, political conservatism is a more significant correlate to White Americans' economic, political, and cultural beliefs (with the exception of those that pertain to sexuality) than for other racial-ethnic groups. Still, these findings challenge the tacit understanding of Christian nationalism as essentially "white" and "politically conservative." Both converges and diverges in social and political values, beliefs, and behaviors exist among conservative Christian (nationalists) by race in the United States.

### ***Where Do We Go from Here? Towards Systemic Change for Equity***

Education (from pre-kindergarten through postgraduate studies) and religion have exposed themselves repeatedly throughout American history as the turfs of culture wars, and importantly for socialization, inculcating hidden curricula, expanding critically thinking, civic action, and/or political ideology (Yukich and Edgell 2020; Hochschild 2018; Hess 2009). A large body social science research spotlights the most vulnerable, the marginalized, and the historically oppressed. Some of us have called for redirecting the spotlight some to see how power is enacted, and potentially transformed for equitable purposes. Educational and religious organizations with the power to shape mindsets and behavioral responses to the social forces that perpetuate inequities do not build themselves, however. In preparation for the presidential address for the 2023 annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, I continue to meditate on the question—what social, political, organizational, and institutional factors are needed to promote a nation’s ability to embrace an equitable, multiracial, multicultural democracy?

I suggest that one area for examination is on the development and influence of “transformative equity-minded leadership” (Shields 2010) in education, religion, and other domains of society where significant socialization occurs. I argue that in U.S. society, we must attend to myriad forms of relational inequality and balance that with practices and policies that support reductions in distributional inequality. To do that, however, requires that we have in place more “transformative equity-minded leaders” and change agents. Shields and other educational researchers have conceptualized transformative equity-minded leadership (e.g., Harper 2017; Bensimon 1989). Conceptually, transformative equity-minded leadership encompasses 1) strong awareness of society’s inequitable material and power contexts; 2) depth of understanding of the social forces that engender inequality, power, and privilege; 3) commitment to progressive change; 4) and possession of moral courage and activist orientation to make that change.

Elsewhere colleagues and I have argued that to attain more just and fair societies, we should study and seek to effect change in the behaviors of institutional gatekeepers and elites, as well as contribute social science research to legal cases and actions aiming to reduce distributional and relational inequality (Nalani, Yoshikawa, and Carter 2021). In addition, we might support various social movements that seek to influence institutional leaders via advocacy and policy with strong evidentiary sup-

port (Ibid.). No doubt, the future for sociology as a discipline remains strong. Let’s hope that we can increase sociology’s educative power through our abilities as social scientists to not only generate knowledge and empirical investigations but also locate mechanisms and ways to attain more vibrant, inclusive, democratic societies. These are the motivations that guide my new research directions, and they emerge from over two decades of inquiries into the intersectional relationships among race and racism; poverty and economic inequality in a capitalist system; and gender and patriarchy in society.

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