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Religion and attitudes toward the environment: a comparison of Mormons and the general U.S. population

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Abstract

Religion has been shown to influence attitudes toward an array of social issues. This manuscript focuses specifically on environmental issues, with empirical examination of the distinctiveness of contemporary Mormon environmental perspectives as contrasted with the general U.S. population. A belief in the importance of dominion over the environment is noted, by some, to be reflected in anti-environmental stance characterizing Mormon Culture Region political leaders and church members [[Foltz, R. C. \(2000\)](#)]. Mormon values and the Utah environment. *Worldviews: Environment, Culture, Religion*, 4, 1–19]. Yet, a set of highly regarded essays by a diverse group of Mormons, including some in church leadership positions, expresses strong personal commitments to environmental causes and point to Mormon teachings and doctrines promoting environmentalism ([Williams, Smith, and Gibbs, 1998](#)). We examine variation in environmental concern as expressed by Mormons in a local community survey undertaken in Logan, Utah, as contrasted with the nationally-representative General Social Survey (1993). We find substantial differences between Mormons and the national sample; While Mormons tended to express greater levels of environmental concern, they were less likely to have undertaken specific behaviors reflective of such concern.

Religion has been shown to influence attitudes toward an array of social issues ([Beck & Miller, 2000](#))

Although some research has reviewed sacred scriptures and teachings that might help shape attitudes toward the environment, little empirical work has been undertaken to contrast the environmental attitudes of members of different religious groups ([Kearns, 1996](#)). This research contributes to narrowing this gap by comparing environmental attitudes of Mormons in a northern rural setting with the “Mormon Culture Region,” with environmental attitudes of the U.S. population more generally. Mormons, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, are of increasing importance in the social science of religious groups since they represent the largest group to have emerged in the U.S., and their membership continues to rapidly grow.

As for interest in Mormon environmental perspectives, a belief in the importance of dominion over the environment is noted, by some, to be reflected in anti-environmental stance characterizing Mormon Culture Region political leaders and church members ([Foltz, 2000](#)). Yet, a set of highly regarded essays by a diverse group of Mormons, including some in church leadership positions, expresses strong personal commitments to environmental causes and point to Mormon teachings and doctrines promoting environmentalism ([Williams, Smith, & Gibbs, 1998](#)). In order to provide insight into this debate, the analyses presented here examine the distinctiveness of contemporary Mormon environmental perspectives through use of a local community survey undertaken in Logan, Utah, as contrasted with the nationally-representative General Social Survey.

1. Mormon settlement of Great Basin

The environmental context of the formation and growth of the Latter-Day Saints’ (LDS) church is unique—the Mormon’s organized settlement and “conquering” of the Great Basin provided them with an unusually harsh experience with the natural environment ([Jackson, 1972](#)). In an examination of early Mormon documents, [Kay and Brown \(1985\)](#) found Mormon leaders expressed beliefs that the Earth had been cursed with thorns and thistles and that humans were to redeem the Earth by changing barren environments into a productive Edenic state. They also note an early anthropocentric conservation ethic, based on the recognition of a need to develop land in ways that would sustain its agrarian productivity for future generations.¹ Such an outlook suggests a dominionistic ethic toward the natural environment, characterized by desire to master, control, and dominate nature (e.g., [Kellert, 1986](#)).

Indeed, the physical environment over which the Mormons numerically and politically dominate is a semi-arid area passed over by other white settlers on their way to more fertile and hospitable coastal lands. Brigham Young, a key early Church leader, sent followers into the most barren parts of the Great Basin on a religious-based charge to conquer the land through the successful establishment of Mormon communities ([Jackson, 1972](#)). Dramatic alterations in the physical environment were required to establish these early communities, particularly as related to irrigation of large tracts of the barren desert. Indeed, as argued by Norton (1977, p. 62) on the settling of the semi-arid Intermountain region “For the Mormon Church, it was a religious obligation to change the landscape: settling, building and producing were religious duties and not simply a means to subsist.” Given this historical environment context, the Mormon Culture Region is an especially interesting region to undertake a comparative study of contemporary environmental perspectives.

2. The contemporary Mormon Culture Region

Today, the state of Utah is the only state in which Mormons are the majority (71%) and is considered the core of the Mormon Culture Region ([Toney et al., 2003](#)). As comparison, less than 2% of the nation's population is Mormon, and Idaho, the state with the second highest proportion Mormon, stands at approximately 25% Mormon.

Utah's 84,916 square miles include varied ecoregions that provide a wide range of biodiversity, including habitat for a large number of threatened and sensitive species and plants. It is the second driest state in the U.S., typically receiving less than eight inches of annual precipitation. Utah contains some of the nation's most unusual and scenic landscapes and includes five national parks, national monuments, and a large quantity of natural resources. The state's deposits of coal and other hydrocarbons are among the largest in the world. Although the state is characterized by a highly concentrated urban population, it is one of the least dense states and has vast tracks of public, uninhabited, land.

3. Contemporary Mormon environmental perspectives

As for how history and geography influence environmental perspective, in a recent study specifically examining environmental perspectives among Mormons, [Foltz \(2000\)](#) laments that there is, indeed, a dearth of work in this area. In his review of formal LDS teachings and divine scriptures, Foltz emphasizes that most have been interpreted in ways that do *not* raise concern for environmental issues. For instance, he argues that the belief that a large number of souls are waiting to be born has led to high fertility rates and opposition to birth control among Mormons, and to an official position that overpopulation is not a social or environmental problem. Foltz also notes that voting records of Mormon politicians are rated as being among the nation's most anti-environmental. He contends that it is readily apparent that a large majority of Mormons support "maldevelopment, irresponsible use of land and resources and uncontrolled human population growth" ([Foltz, 2000](#), p. 15), although there are no empirical studies to document this point. Although Foltz emphasizes this far-reaching anti-environmentalist ideology among Mormon leaders, he also describes Mormon scriptures and teaching that could be a basis for pro-environmentalism and points to "lonely voices" within the group that align with environmentalists in calls for alleviation of environmental problems ([Foltz, 2000](#), p. 15).

In a disparaging response to Foltz's analysis of Mormon environmental values, [Handley and Alexander \(2001\)](#), p. 223) argue "the true story of Mormonism's relationship to environmentalism is yet to be told." They are particularly disturbed that Foltz's analysis creates a perception that Mormons are anti-environmentalists. They contend that Foltz's analyses are based too heavily on anecdotal newspaper reports and personal conversations, rather than on evidence more generalizable to the LDS church or to Utah's Mormon population more generally.

Nonetheless, also supporting Foltz's conclusions, [Wright \(1993\)](#) argues that Utah's environmental context has been influenced by "Mormon Millennialism," a set of beliefs that includes the notion that humans are to have dominance over the earth and that a paradise awaits them. Wright's conclusions were based upon a survey of land trusts in Utah and Colorado, the two states chosen since they are similar in ethnic makeup, economic base, and population growth rates. Wright found 27 trusts in Colorado in the early 1990s protecting 42,000 acres of natural habitat, as compared to one Utah land trust protecting a mere 220 acres. In addition, he found myriad Colorado city and county government

programs to protect open space and habitat, while the only Utah program was in a key non-Mormon elite communities, namely around Park City. The author concluded Mormon Millennialism accounts for much of the difference ([Wright, 1993](#)).

4. Research question

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the insights into Mormon environmentalism provided by the studies reviewed above. Studies of environmental attitudes are of increasing importance, themselves, in the context of heated local, national and global debates over a large number of environmental issues. Our research question becomes: *Are there differences between expressed environmental concern, commitment, and behaviors between Mormons and the U.S. population more generally?* Based upon the conflicting perspectives of past research, as reviewed above, we do not put forth a specific hypothesis.

5. Data and methods

Two data sources provide information for the following analysis. First, we make use of several questions reflecting environmental attitudes contained within a topical module of the 1993 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a longitudinal study conducted for the National Data Program for the Social Sciences at the National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago. Each year of the survey is conducted with an independently drawn sample of English-speaking persons 18 years of age or over, living in non-institutional arrangements within the United States. In 1993, data are reported for 1,606 respondents—these individuals represent the national population for purposes of this analysis.

Second, data representing environmental attitudes of a rural area within the Mormon Culture Region are taken from a social survey conducted during March 1998. The survey was conducted on behalf of the City of Logan, Utah's, Environmental Health Department. The target population represented residents of Cache County, Utah, located in the extreme northeastern portion of the state. According to recent estimates, Cache County is home to slightly over 86,000 residents ([DEA, 1999a](#)), representing the fifth most populated county in the state. The city of Logan, home to Utah State University, accounts for nearly half of Cache County's population (39,276 in 1996; [DEA, 1999b](#)). The remainder of the county has a predominantly rural atmosphere. The primary aim of the Environmental Health Department's countywide survey was to provide a mechanism for public input into impending change in the city's methods of solid waste collection, particularly with regard to recycling.

The Cache County survey was administered to a randomly selected group of 400 households using a drop-off-pick-up method. The surveys were administered by the lead author and a group of volunteers from the community.² A 2-hour evening orientation and training session was held with the volunteers, during which Dr. Hunter discussed the survey topic, clearly stressed the importance of maintaining random selection of respondents, and thoroughly explained the drop-off-pick-up procedures.³ The research team also coordinated the return of the completed questionnaires. Any concerns or questions expressed by the volunteers were dealt with and phone numbers of both the Environmental Health Department and Dr. Hunter were provided in the case of future concerns. Prior to the meeting's end, each volunteer was assigned a group of the randomly chosen households, with the surveys to be returned within two weeks.

Each survey was individually dropped off at a randomly chosen residence with the purpose of the survey explained, face-to-face, to an adult in the household. These methods greatly increase response rates, as the respondent can be assured of the importance of the participation in the survey, as well as have the opportunity to ask questions or express concerns. The volunteer administrator and the respondent then agreed on an appropriate pickup time, usually one or two days later; the respondent was then offered a plastic bag in which to place the completed survey and hang outside their front door. A total of 301 completed surveys were picked up and returned, yielding a response rate of 75%. Of those returned, 222 respondents identified themselves as Mormon (LDS), and these respondents are used in the following analyses.

6. Environmental attitude/concern/behavior measurement

Most relevant to this research, the Logan community survey included twelve questions taken from the 1993 GSS. These questions were designed to reflect several aspects of respondent environmental attitudes, environmental concern, and individual behavior reflective of such attitudes and concern (e.g. giving money to environmental organization, signing environmental petition). For instance, in order to gain an impression of respondents' perceptions of economic/environment tradeoffs, they were asked to reply to the statement "We worry too much about the future of the environment, and not enough about prices and jobs today" [on a scale of strongly agree to strongly disagree]. As another example, respondents were asked how willing they would be to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment [on a scale of very willing to not at all willing]. The survey questions measuring environmental attitudes can be clustered at face value into three general categories: (1) those designed to reflect concern with economic progress versus environmental quality, (2) those designed to reflect respondent belief in the potential for individual contribution to environmental problems, and (3) those designed to reflect willingness to sacrifice and undertake activist behaviors in response to environmental concern. A complete list of the questions is presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

Survey questions measuring environmental concern

Economic progress vs. environmental quality

We worry too much about the future of the environment, and not enough about prices and jobs today
(strongly agree → strongly disagree)

Economic growth always harms the environment (strongly disagree → strongly agree)

The potential of individual contribution

It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment (strongly agree → strongly disagree)

I do what's right for the environment, even when it costs more money or takes up more time (strongly disagree → strongly agree)

Willingness to sacrifice

How willing would you be to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment? (very unwilling → very willing)

How willing would you be to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment? (very unwilling → very willing)

Are you a member of any group whose main goal is to preserve or protect the environment? (yes/no)

In the last five years, have you:

Signed a petition about an environmental issue? (yes/no)

Given money to an environmental group? (yes/no)

Taken part in a protest or demonstration about an environmental issue? (yes/no)

Key to interpretation, for the purposes of this research *each question is recoded such that low numbered responses represent lesser environmental concern, lower levels of behavioral adjustment, while higher numbered responses represent greater environmental concern and greater levels of behavioral adjustment.*

7. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics for both the GSS and Cache County LDS samples are presented in [Table 2](#) below. As can be seen, the LDS respondents among Cache County's population are substantially younger than the nationwide sample, no doubt due to the concentration of university students. Nearly 35% of the LDS respondents within the Cache County sample are in the 18–29 age group, as compared to approximately 19% of the nationwide sample. We also see the influence of the university on the Cache County sample's educational breakdown—a substantially higher proportion of the sample reports

“some college” as compared to the GSS respondents (46.1% vs. 6.1%, respectively). As for gender, we find similar breakdowns across the nationwide and Cache County samples, with women slightly over represented in each.

Table 2

LDS respondents in Cache County sample^a

	Total sample		GSS		Cache County	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Sample	1907		1606		222	
Age (years)						
18–29	400	21.2	301	18.8	75	34.56
30–44	648	34.3	561	35.0	59	27.19
45–59	401	21.2	357	22.3	30	13.82
60–70	207	11.0	179	11.2	25	11.52
Over 70	233	12.3	203	12.7	28	12.90
Gender						
Male	800	42.4	685	42.7	86	40.76
Female	1085	57.6	921	57.3	125	59.24
Education						
Less than high school	307	16.2	294	18.4	7	3.23
High school graduate	910	48.0	840	52.4	52	23.96
Some college	211	11.1	97	6.1	100	46.08
College graduate	317	16.7	253	15.8	42	19.35
Post-graduate	149	7.9	118	7.4	16	7.37

^aDiffering sample sizes due to question nonresponse.

8. Analytical approach

Both bivariate and multivariate perspectives on variation across the two samples are provided. First, Analyses of Variance and crosstabulations present the variation across groups with regard to each of the ten questions. However, we must keep in mind the socioeconomic variation between the two

samples when interpreting these bivariate differences. In order to control for these variations, we present multivariate estimates of the responses to each of the survey measurements. For those questions offering scaled responses, we make use of Ordinary Least Squares, while those questions offering dichotomous responses necessitate the use of logistic regression. In each case, age, education, and gender are incorporated as control variables.⁴

9. Results

The bivariate results are presented in [Table 3](#) below. While the figures reveal some patterns, there are also several areas of inconsistency. For instance, while Cache County LDS residents express more concern with the future of the environment as opposed to jobs and prices as compared to GSS respondents (3.572 vs. 3.008, respectively), there is no significant difference in the belief that economic growth is environmentally harmful (2.676 vs. 2.649, respectively).⁵ The first of these associations reached statistically significant differences ($p < .00$). As such, variations in the belief of a necessary tradeoff between economics and the environment becomes somewhat unclear. While LDS respondents appear environmentally concerned, they also appear to believe that environmentally benign economic growth is feasible.

Table 3

Bivariate associations: environmental concern among nationwide sample and LDS respondents in Cache County sample

	GSS	Cache County	
	Mean	Mean	Prob > <i>F</i>
Economic progress vs. environmental quality			
We worry too much about the future of the environment, and not enough about prices and jobs today (strongly agree → strongly disagree)	3.008	3.572	0.000
Economic growth always harms the environment (strongly disagree → strongly agree)	2.649	2.676	0.699
The potential of individual contribution			
It is just too difficult for someone like me to do much about the environment (strongly agree → strongly disagree)	3.387	3.910	0.000
I do what's right for the environment, even when it costs more money or takes up more time (strongly disagree → strongly agree)	3.455	3.281	0.006
Willingness to sacrifice			
How willing would you be to pay much higher prices in order to protect the environment? (very unwilling → very willing)	3.304	2.976	0.000
How willing would you be to pay much higher taxes in order to protect the environment? (very unwilling → very willing)	2.946	2.560	0.000
	Percentage	"Yes"	Pr. Chi-square
Are you a member of any group whose main goal is to preserve or protect the environment?	10.3	4.1%	> 0.004
In the last five years, have you:			
Signed a petition about an environmental issue?	30.8	15.2%	> 0.000
Given money to an environmental group?	70.9	10.3%	> 0.000
Taken part in a protest or demonstration about an environmental issue?	2.8	1.83%	> 0.412

Note. For each dependent variable, higher values represent greater levels of concern with environmental issues, greater belief in individual contribution, or more participation in pro-environment behavior.

As for the potential of individual contribution to environmental decline, we find that LDS respondents are more likely to believe that individuals can do much about the environment (3.910 vs. 3.387, $p < .000$). However, GSS respondents appear slightly more likely to claim to actually do what's right for the environment, regardless of cost or time (3.455 vs. 3.281, $p < .006$).

Relatedly, results on the willingness to sacrifice for environmental causes consistently demonstrate that LDS respondents are less willing to sacrifice as compared to the GSS respondents. For instance, GSS respondents are significantly more willing to pay higher prices and higher taxes in order to protect the environment. In addition, a higher percentage of GSS respondents are members of environmental organizations (10.3% vs. 4.2%), have signed an environmental petition (30.8% vs. 15.2%), and have given money to an environmental organization (70.9% vs. 10.3%). Similar low levels of LDS respondents and GSS respondents have taken part in protests or demonstrations about environmental issues (2.8% vs. 1.8%).

In general, the bivariate results suggest that LDS respondents appear environmentally concerned, with a belief that individuals can do something to protect the environment. However, they are significantly less willing to sacrifice on behalf of the environment, and are much less likely to have participated in organized environmental activities. It is important, however, to recall that the socioeconomic backgrounds between our two samples were substantially different. As an example of the potential impact of these differences, the striking difference in percentages of individuals who have donated to environmental organizations may be due, in part, to the much greater predominance of college student among LDS respondents. These individuals may simply not find themselves in the financial position to afford such donations. In order to account for these types of background variations, the multivariate results are presented in [Table 4](#) below.

Table 4

Multivariate estimations of environmental concern by socioeconomic characteristics and membership in nationwide or Cache County sample

[Open in a separate window](#)

NOTE: For each dependent variable, higher values represent greater levels of concern with environmental issues, greater belief in individual contribution, or participation in pro-environment behavior.

As for the control variables of age, gender, and education, we find that age presents a fairly consistent negative association with the various indicators of environmental concern. For instance, older individuals are anticipated to express lesser agreement with the statement “we worry too much about the future of the environment, and not enough about prices and jobs today.” Older individuals also appear less willing to pay higher taxes or prices on behalf of the environment. Nonetheless, they are more likely to believe they do what’s right for the environment as individuals, and relatedly, are more likely to have donated money to an environmental group. As such, while age appears negatively correlated with general environmental concern, it appears positively associated with specific indicator of “environmentally-friendly” behaviors. These findings concur with prior research suggesting that environmental concern continues to be negatively associated with age ([Fortmann & Kusel, 1990](#); [Kanagy, Humphrey, & Firebaugh, 1994](#)), although middle-aged groups are the most politically active with regard to environmental issues ([Mohai & Twight, 1987](#)).

As for gender, results from previous work in this area are mixed. Although some research suggests women are more environmentally concerned than men, especially regarding local issues ([Blocker & Eckberg, 1989](#); [Davidson & Freudenberg, 1996](#); [Fortmann & Kusel, 1990](#); [McStay & Dunlap, 1983](#)), other work suggests no difference in general environmental concern between men and women ([Blocker & Eckberg, 1989](#); [Kanagy et al., 1994](#)). Within our analyses, results suggests no statistically significant variation across genders in environmental concern, excepting one; We find that men are significantly less likely to have given money to an environmental organization as compared to women.

With regard to education, as would be anticipated based upon previous research (e.g., [Fortmann & Kusel, 1990](#); [Kanagy et al., 1994](#)), we find consistent positive associations between educational level and environmental concern. For instance, individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to express concern for the environment as opposed to jobs and prices, significantly more likely to be a member of an environmental organization and to have signed an environmental petition. The only negative association appears in the case of response to the question “economic growth always harms the environment.” As such, individuals with higher education tend to express greater belief in the potential for environmentally benign economic development.

10. Contrast between Mormon and general U.S. population

Moving to our primary variable of interest, the column representing coefficient estimates for LDS respondents suggest much the same relationships as presented in the bivariate results of [Table 3](#), even net of the effects of age, education, and gender. Specifically, the positive coefficient estimates for the two measurements of economic progress versus environmental quality suggest that LDS respondents are more likely to express concern with the environmental impacts of economic growth. Both of these coefficients are statistically significant. In addition, LDS respondents express stronger belief in the ability of an individual to do much for the environment as compared to the nationwide sample. Interestingly, however, as demonstrated in the bivariate associations, LDS respondents are significantl

less likely to be willing to sacrifice through higher prices or higher taxes in order to protect the environment. In addition, LDS respondents appear significantly less likely to belong to an environmental organization, to have signed an environmental petition or taken part in an environmental demonstration. Finally, the substantively strongest coefficient is estimated for the probability of having donated money to an environmental group—with LDS respondents significantly less likely to have done so as compared to those in the nationwide. An especially important conclusion comes in the fact that examination of the standardized coefficients (not shown) demonstrates that the coefficients estimated for the indicator of LDS respondents is consistently as strong in a substantive sense as age and gender, while education ranks as the most significant among the background factors.

11. Discussion

As with the larger society, environmental issues have emerged as important social problems in the Mormon Culture Region. Traffic congestion, air and water pollution, land use and waste disposal problems are some of the key problems faced by the region's residents. Still, some past analyses of Mormon environmentalism suggests that members of the LDS church generally tend to exhibit less favorable attitudes toward environmental issues (e.g., [Foltz, 2000](#)).

In contrast to these earlier studies, the results presented here find Mormon respondents as compared with the U.S. population generally did, indeed, express *more* concern for maintenance of environment quality particularly in the face of economic growth, and *more* faith in the ability of individual's to make a difference in environmental quality. Consideration of the geographic context of these cultural variations maybe important here; The LDS sample members reside in rural northern Utah, an area facing high levels of development pressure that may influence concern with the environmental effects of economic growth.

Still, regardless of these high concern levels and willingness to contribute, the study Mormons were less likely to have actually undertaken actions on behalf of these environmental attitudes (e.g., donate money to environmental group); They typically expressed attitudes indicating less willingness to pay higher prices and they have not typically participated in environmental activism. As a possible means of explanation, perhaps other routes of behavioral adjustment are seen as more suitable to lifestyles within this context. For example, [Iannaccone, Olson, and Stark \(1995\)](#) report that Mormons contribute much more volunteer time to the LDS church than members of mainline churches and that Mormons contribute nearly three times as much of their income to their church as do members of other churches. The LDS church has a far-reaching welfare system that provides funds and financial support for a variety of charitable causes. It could be that Mormons consider their involvement in this system as meeting their obligation or that this level of time and money giving exhaust their ability to give. Also, they may look to the leadership to select causes that are most worthy thereby relieving them of any additional obligation.

As environmental issues have taken on increasing importance in social debates, leaders in many religions have begun to articulate positions on these issues. [Williams, Smart and Smith \(1998\)](#) refer to this as a 'new genesis' in which religions reassess their positions regarding the moral dimensions of what some call the environmental crisis. They note that some religious leaders are declaring that human degradation of the natural environment, including actions that destroy biological diversity or

pollute air and water, is a sin. These conditions point to the potential for religions to be a significant social force in shaping environmental attitudes and practices. More research is needed to examine that analyze the teachings and doctrines of various religions as well as the attitudes of their members to determine the overall role of religion in the mix of factors influencing environmental attitudes and behavior in modern societies.

Although considerable research has focused on Mormons, little work has specifically examined their attitudes toward the environment. Such work is called for given increasing Mormon political influence as church membership continues to grow, in addition to numerical size, the Mormon Culture Region geographically represents an area central to the contemporary debate over wilderness and conservation given the region's rich biodiversity, vast public lands, and valuable natural resources. As argued by [Foltz \(2000\)](#), a distinct worldview exists within the region and those engaging in regional environmental debate need be cognizant of such distinctions. This worldview has likely been shaped by both formal LDS teachings and historical struggles with the semi-arid Intermountain West. Although our work cannot distinguish the forces underlying Mormon distinctiveness, in the results presented here, substantial differences were revealed between LDS and the national sample, suggesting that some key environmental attitudes and behaviors among Mormons do, indeed, remain distinct as compared to the national culture more generally. Our Mormon respondents expressed relatively higher levels of environmental concern than the general U.S. population, but also expressed substantially less willingness to pay higher prices and/or taxes to protect the environment, and were substantially less likely to have engaged in environmentally-oriented behaviors (e.g., given money to environmental group).

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Footnotes

- ¹Kay and Brown's analysis ([1985](#)) is restricted to the Mormons' first three decades in Utah, a critical time for the forming a foundation for development of current environmental views.
- ²The volunteers were a central part of this endeavor, in that given the time and financial constraints of the project, it was not feasible to hire professional interviewers. In addition, the Environmental Health Department was very interested in involving community members concerned with solid waste issues in the survey endeavor. The volunteers did not administer the survey itself, but rather dropped off the surveys and coordinated pick-ups, with the respondents themselves self-administering the questionnaire.
- ³Two specific tasks were undertaken to explore any potential bias introduced through the use of volunteer survey administrators. First, we contrasted survey demographics (i.e., age, gender, education, and geographic

distribution) to those for the county as a whole, with results suggesting survey respondents provide reasonable representation of the county population more generally. Second, we examined response distributions to identify any questions that appeared unreasonably skewed. No such evidence arose.

⁴The measurement of income was not comparable across the nationwide and Cache County surveys, and as such, we rely solely upon education as an indicator of socioeconomic status.

⁵LDS respondents to the Cache County survey are presented as “LDS” throughout the remainder of the text.

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