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Does Protestant fundamentalism produce traditional views?: The impact of religious commitment affiliation on gender role beliefs and political ideology

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DOES PROTESTANT FUNDAMENTALISM PRODUCE TRADITIONAL VIEWS?
THE IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT/AFFILIATION ON GENDER ROLE BELIEFS AND POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of Sociology
and the
Faculty of the Graduate College
University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
University of Nebraska at Omaha

by
Melissa Myers
May 1997
THESIS ACCEPTANCE

Acceptance for the faculty of the Graduate College, University of Nebraska, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts, University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Committee

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Chairperson  Mark O. Rosser

Date  16 April 1997
Abstract

This research looks at the relationship between religious commitment/affiliation and traditional beliefs. Data from the 1993 General Social Survey is used to test hypotheses linking religious commitment and religious affiliation to traditional gender role beliefs and conservative political views. Findings show statistical significance but weak substantive support for the idea that fundamentalists hold more traditional gender role beliefs and political ideology. Future research linking these attitudes to the actual behaviors of men and women in fundamentalist religions is proposed.
Acknowledgments

First, I would like to thank the members of my committee. I am thankful to Mark Rousseau, my thesis advisor, for his instruction. He provided me with valuable suggestions and read my drafts quickly, helping me to complete my thesis. He also gave reassuring comments when I needed support. I would like to thank Mary Ann Lamanna for giving me useful sources on my topic, and also providing detailed suggestions which greatly improved my final thesis. Bill Blizek was also a committee member. I thank him for being so flexible with his time and supporting me in my project.

Dave Moore was a tremendous influence on my thesis project. The topic came from his Sociology of Religion course, and many discussions we had on fundamentalism and women. He also provided me with statistical guidance, not only through coursework but also working with me informally on my thesis. Most importantly, Dave was always able to boost my confidence in my statistical knowledge when I was in doubt. I am thankful for his guidance and for having faith in me.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their support. Mary Burbach was a wonderful friend during this project. She read drafts of the work, and provided moral support. Thanks for your help and friendship.
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References
Chapter 1
Statement of the Problem and Review of the Literature

Statement of the Problem

In 1961 Gerhard Lenski wrote *The Religious Factor*, a study of the consequences of religious belief and practice in the everyday life of society. Believing religion to be generally ignored by social scientists, Lenski developed a study to test the idea that religious belief is an important factor in people's lives. Lenski found religious belief and practice to be of crucial importance, from both a religious and a sociological perspective. The basic finding of Lenski's work is that contrary to the expectations of nineteenth-century positivists, religious organizations remain influential in contemporary society. The influence of religion operates at the social level as well as the personal level; it shapes the lives of people and institutions in society. While Lenski did not believe religion alone was enough to predict a person's position in society, he also argued no single variable exists which alone can predict the behavior of men and women.

In looking at religion's relationship to gender role beliefs and political ideology, I would like to determine if religion remains a factor in determining social inequality today. Thirty-five years after Lenski published his study on religious beliefs in society, does religion continue to play an integral part in people's lives? Lenski published his work on the subject of religious influence in society with the hope that it might stimulate further research. I hope to add to the work done in this field of sociology.

Lenski found the four major socio-religious groups he studied—White Protestants, Black Protestants, White Catholics, and Jews—to differ significantly from one another with respect to a wide range of phenomena affecting economic, political, kinship,
educational, and scientific institutions. These differences could not be accounted for in
terms of the economic position of the individuals involved. I would like to study the
differences among religious denominations with respect to gender role beliefs and
political ideology, asking if religious influence has greater significance among
participants in fundamentalist denominations.

The focus of my research will be Protestant fundamentalists in the United States.
The interaction of religious fundamentalism with gender role beliefs and political views
is an interesting relationship. The political context of such a study certainly has a place
in the contemporary politics of the family. Changing definitions of the family leave
people ambiguous about acceptable gender role behavior. Fundamentalist religions
provide clear-cut responses to any uncertainty people may feel. Fundamentalists often
romanticize the past with a view of the traditional family as an ideal to return to.
Fundamentalists do not merely wish to support the status quo, they hope to turn back the
clock to a time when family politics was straight-forward and designated by what they
believe to be Biblical roles.

Religious fundamentalism may also be viewed in the theoretical context of
modernization theories. Fundamentalists fight against modern criticism of the Bible and
faith in science as the answer to questions formerly explained by religion. This
confrontation of fundamentalism with modernity will provide a backdrop to the gender
role beliefs and political ideology of the group.

The methodology of this research is to analyze variables which influence people
to accept traditional gender role beliefs and conservative political ideology. Past
research has shown participation in fundamentalist religions leads people to follow a
more traditional division of labor between men and women; a relationship where the man
works outside the home and has the most authority, while the woman's primary duty is
taking care of the home and nurturing the husband and children. Involvement in conservative religious organizations also leads people to hold more conservative political beliefs.

For this study, the independent variables I will examine are religious commitment and religious fundamentalism. The dependent variables in the study include gender role beliefs and political views. Socioeconomic status will be studied as a control variable. While I believe there are other variables which influence gender role beliefs and political ideology, I am limiting my analysis to the impact of religion on these variables, and how religious influence may change when controlling for socioeconomic status.

The main questions I would like to study are:

• Does a person's religious commitment and affiliation influence him or her to accept traditional gender role beliefs?
• Does religious commitment and affiliation more strongly influence women to accept traditional gender role beliefs than an equal commitment and affiliation influence men?
• Are people with a strong religious commitment and a fundamentalist affiliation more conservative politically?
• Does religious commitment and affiliation more strongly influence women to accept a conservative political ideology than men?
• Will members of fundamentalist denominations be more likely to support traditional gender roles for men and women than members of other denominations when controlling for socioeconomic status?
• Will members of fundamentalist denominations be more likely to support a conservative political ideology than members of other denominations when controlling for socioeconomic status?
The sociological importance of these questions lies not only in the area of the sociology of religion but also within social inequality. If one ignores the religious factor in social inequality, one cannot answer many important questions about the status of men and women. Without locating all the variables influencing gender inequality, one cannot eliminate inequality and develop more egalitarian systems. I hope to illustrate the impact religion continues to play in creating unequal systems for men and women in the United States.

Review of the Literature

Christian Fundamentalism and Modernization Theories

Hawley (1994) defines the most basic use of the term fundamentalism: fundamentalists are American Protestants with a militant desire to defend their religion against the onslaughts of modern, secular culture; their principal weapon is their insistence on the inerrancy of the scripture. Hawley describes fundamentalism as anti-modernist in nature. While fundamentalists do not reject the technological advances of modern life, they do define themselves in opposition to certain aspects of modern culture. These include scientific naturalism, higher criticism of the Bible, and perceived changes in moral values. Fundamentalists do not merely detach themselves from certain trends in modern culture, they commit themselves to battle against those trends.

Hawley says for fundamentalists, personal experience and Biblical inerrancy prove the truth of the Christian doctrine in the face of modern doubt. Fundamentalism develops in the face of social and economic problems that exist in modern industrial society. Fundamentalism is rooted in nostalgia for an earlier way of life. Hawley states that the earlier way of life was not the life of Jesus and of early Christianity, as it is often
portrayed, but of an idealized version of home and community life in the small towns of rural, nineteenth century America.

Lechner (1993) argues fundamentalists view modernity as a corrosive force. Modern society places less significance on religious traditions, and makes a return to certainty difficult. Lechner sees fundamentalism as a form of antimodernism which aims to restore meaningful order on the basis of a sacred tradition. Fundamentalists use the Bible as a resource in their battle against modernity.

Chalfant, Beckley, and Palmer (1994) also discuss the fundamentalist/modernist controversy. As the impact of science and the philosophy of skepticism began to permeate intellectual life, fundamentalists grew apart from more progressive Protestants. Higher criticism of the Bible by scholars inspired fundamentalists to organize against urbanization and the impact of science on Biblical truths.

Ammerman (1991) describes Protestant fundamentalists as involved in active opposition to liberalism, secularism, and communism. One of the principle components of their belief system is inerrancy. Their unwavering faith in an inerrant Bible allows fundamentalists to believe the Bible can be trusted to provide an accurate description of morality and religion, as well as science and history. This trust in the Bible leads them to attack modernity.

Writers in the age of modernity believed a final stage would come where reason and philosophy would replace religion. The growing sense among fundamentalists was that if they did not stand up for their principles, they would not only lose the place of religion in their lives, but the nation might be lost forever. If they did not stand up to writers critical of the Bible and a government who followed this intellectual pattern, they may not have another generation of believers. Fundamentalists believed they must become active in saving their belief system and in effect saving the country.
One of the main ideas fundamentalists associated with modernity was secular humanism. Secular humanism is a belief system which lacks a concept of a transcendent god. Instead, meaning is placed on human life. Secular humanists believe people possess within themselves the capacity for truth and goodness. While there is no one standard definition of secular humanism among fundamentalists, there are many characteristics they attribute to this enemy. One form of secular humanism is the Equal Rights Amendment. Fundamentalists felt the ERA would prevent women from fulfilling their Biblical role as submissive wives. Taking prayer out of schools was seen as another humanist action against fundamentalists. Finally, the decision in Roe v. Wade seemed to represent all the forces seeking to destroy the family and the morality of society (Ammerman, p.40). Secular humanism represents for fundamentalists the ideological and cultural core of the institutions that have come to dominate society. Families are the basic units of civilization; any attack on the family, or giving power once held by the family to other institutions, is seen as coming from the enemy secular humanism of the modern age.

Gender Role Socialization

In order to study the role religion plays in gender role socialization, it is first important to discuss some of the fundamental assumptions about gender role socialization. Brown (1994) believes gender roles are the most basic building blocks of social organization. Gender roles are among the social distinctions children learn first, and remain important throughout one's life. By creating boundaries and stressing the differences between men and women, children, as well as adults, feel secure and able to manage their roles in life. Brown says keeping women under the control of men makes
the world seem more orderly and comprehensible. It is not surprising then that so much
of the fundamentalist agenda focuses on defining the roles of men and women.

McGuire (1992) discusses some basic gender role beliefs in our society. The
definitions of masculinity and femininity are culturally established. On the basis of these
definitions, a group develops and encourages certain differences between men and
women. McGuire (p. 112) writes:

In socialization, males and females are taught their culturally assigned gender
roles-- the social group's expectations of behaviors, attitudes, and motivations
"appropriate" to males and females. Historically, religion has been one of the
most significant sources of these cultural definitions of gender roles; and religion
has been a potent legitimation of these distinctions.

Religion is seen as playing a major part in learning one's gender role behavior.

McMurry (1978) conducted a survey looking at the relationship between religion
and sex role orientations. Based on a 1964 NORC sample, the findings suggest a
substantial religious affect on sex role attitudes. Traditionalism in this study is defined as
an attitude favorable to the idea that women's lives should be principally home- and
family-centered. Religion promotes an ideology which sees the traditional family
structure as part of the natural and moral order and possibly divinely ordained.

Socioeconomic status does not explain the relationship between religious affiliation and
traditionalism in this study. McMurry states there is no reason to believe that the
religious factor has become irrelevant to sex role orientations. However, it should be
noted again that McMurry's research was based on data collected in 1964. What was true
of gender roles in 1964 may or may not apply in the 1990s.

Smith (1990) studied 106 college undergraduates on measures of conformity to
traditional gender role concepts, their gender identity, and their religious orientation.
Smith uses McMurry's 1978 study as a foundation for his study. General findings support socialization factors influencing gender identity. Religious socialization augments and reinforces other sources of gender socialization. Christian religious doctrine supports the retention of traditional roles and expresses this in the form of rules of conduct for men and women. Smith reports that for women, traditionalism increases with an increase in religious involvement. Those who are more religious can logically be expected to take their prescribed roles more seriously. A positive association connecting religiosity to traditionalism for both sexes was found. Smith's research provides support for McMurry's earlier findings of religious influence on sex role orientation continuing to apply today.

In looking at this literature, one could ask if religion impacts gender roles, or if gender role socialization influences one's choice of religion. The socialization into religion and the socialization into one's gender role contain mutual influences. The relationship could be studied either way. I believe it is important to study the impact of religious influence of gender roles not only because the literature shows support for a religious impact on traditional beliefs, but as a way of viewing factors influencing gender inequality. Fundamentalists socialize their children to follow their value system. Religious choice is not just a reactive process; it plays a role in socialization and impacts the unequal position of men and women.

Fundamentalist Views of Gender

Chalfant, Beckley, and Palmer (1994) state that religion as an institution has served to legitimate women's subordinate status within the larger society and its institutions, particularly the family. Traditional translations of the Bible, read literally, sanction the low status of women with both its language and symbolism, often portraying
men in leadership roles and women as servants or in a domestic role. Both the Bible and early Christian theology contain a strong bias toward a subordinate position for women, a sexist bias that is now deeply woven into the subcultural fabric of nearly all Christian groups.

Balmer (1994) writes about the ideal of femininity in American fundamentalism. For fundamentalist women, identity is tied almost exclusively to motherhood and female domesticity. Women need to follow a Biblical literalism in their roles with their husbands in order to be what God intended them to be. Paradoxically, women are then to find a kind of liberation in this submission, knowing they are following their Biblical roles.

Research on participation in the women's movement and involvement with the Equal Rights Amendment is another way of studying gender views among fundamentalists. Hargrove, Schmidt, and Davaney (1985) state that for some groups the women's movement is a direct violation of accepted religious norms. These predominantly fundamentalist religious groups consider the earliest form of the dominant wage-earning husband and the full-time homemaking, and church volunteering, wife and mother to be instituted by God. Patterns that would grant full equality to women are attacked as irreligious.

Brown (1984) studied the characteristics of women who opposed the Equal Rights Amendment. Religion played the predominant role in these women's lives. Brown's research shows that of all the anti-feminists in her study, 96% replied that religion is a very important part of their lives. People in the Anti-ERA movement attribute their activity to the belief that they are helping to save America from God's wrath. Their commitment is also based on a Biblical interpretation taught by their pastors and religious leaders. Fundamentalists distinguish themselves from more liberal
religious groups by believing in a literal interpretation of the Bible, a Bible they believe to be inerrant. Brown says this belief in Biblical inerrancy is the key to decision-making about relationships in the home, about church governance and the conduct of church services, and about everyday life.

Using data from the 1985 and 1988 General Social Surveys, Peek, Lowe, and Williams (1991) studied religious fundamentalism and sexism. These authors report that for women, sexism is related to fundamentalist personal beliefs rather than to fundamentalist affiliations. For men, the opposite occurs: sexism is related to fundamentalist affiliations rather than to personal beliefs in the literalness of the Bible.

Taking the definition of fundamentalism as an insistence that the Bible is literally true, Peek, Lowe, and Williams find that people associated with more fundamentalist denominations generally display more inegalitarian attitudes toward women than those in less fundamentalist groups. At the center of this cultural bias is the Bible, which portrays men as leaders but women as followers and in traditional family roles. Findings of this study show a strong connection between individual beliefs in Biblical literalism and opposition to women's equality. Among women, individual but not group fundamentalism is associated with sexism. Women who do not follow the word of God as the absolute truth are more egalitarian about their gender roles. Women's personal religious beliefs rather than the large religious groups with which they are affiliated are related to their gender role attitudes. The opposite occurs for men. These authors conclude their study with the statement that gender needs to be a basic category within theories of religion.

Another study examining the effects of religion on preference for a patriarchal family was conducted by Grasmick, Wilcox, and Bird (1990). This analysis revealed a strong positive direct effect of adherence to a fundamentalist doctrine on support for the
patriarchal family. The effect of religious fundamentalism was greater than the effects of education, gender, family income, head of household occupational prestige, subjective class identification, race and rural background. Grasmick, Wilcox, and Bird repeat support for the link between adherence to a fundamentalist religious doctrine, rooted in a literal interpretation of the Bible, and traditional views of gender roles.

Myths of the Traditional Family

One form of nostalgia among Christian fundamentalists is the belief in traditional family forms, with specific gender roles for men and women. Fundamentalists describe the family as if one stable and harmonious family type existed in the past, a form which was beneficial to all members of society. But many authors describe the image of the monolithic family form described as the traditional family as being a social construction.

Coontz (1992) writes about the idealized image of the family. Coontz says many of our memories of traditional family life are myths. The image of the 1950s traditional family with its deep roots in the past was not an accurate portrayal of family life. This family style was new, supported by the newfound prosperity of the nuclear family. Lacking roots in tradition, the 1950s family was also not as homogenous as many would have us believe. Not all families shared in the consumer expansion, and the media often ignored the views and family styles of minorities.

Another problem with the idealized picture of the traditional family is the idea that everyone benefited from clearly defined roles for men and women. Women often did not freely choose housewifery as an occupation. The problem with a return to the traditional family is that women would not merely maintain the status quo, they would lose ground. Coontz (p.40) writes:
The legitimacy of women's rights is so widely accepted today that only a tiny minority of Americans seriously propose that women should go back to being full-time housewives or should be denied educational and job opportunities because of their family responsibilities.

When people call for a return to the traditional family, then, what they are really calling for is a return to the Victorian notion of separate spheres for men and women. The rigid division of labor between men and women in the nineteenth-century middle class was unambiguous. Within this family there were no contradictory messages about what men and women were to do. Mothers were considered the moral guardians of civilization, and men were the protectors of their families. Men had the final authority in matters both within and outside the household. Fundamentalists find Biblical bases for their conviction to put men at the head of the household, for women to be confined to subservient roles, and for children to be taught conformity to moral standards.

Coontz (p.44) says gender roles and family ideals associated with the Victorian era are far from natural and have not always existed. Attempting to reimpose domesticity on women without rethinking the role of individualism in our economy and polity would only recreate the same tensions that undermined the Victorian family in the first place. Blaming society's ills on the family oversimplifies the issues and leads to a scapegoating mentality that is unfair and unhelpful.

In a qualitative study of women involved in fundamentalist religions, Stacey (1990) looks at views of the family and nostalgia for the modern family form. Stacey (p.251) says the "modern family" was an oxymoronic label for the family institution which dispensed modernity to white, middle class men only by withholding it from women. Men could enter the public realm because they had designated their wives to the newly privatized family realm. Ruled by an increasingly absent patriarchal landlord,
Stacey (p.252) says the modern, middle-class family, a woman's domain, was sentimentalized as "traditional". A main goal of Stacey's work is to shatter the image of modern American family life.

The social and material conditions that led to the rise of the modern family are long gone. It is an error to portray this form of family life as the Biblical family. What is often described as the traditional American family was the result of particular social and economic conditions in history. Stacey says there is little evidence to suggest that most families wish to return to the gender roles symbolized in the Ozzie and Harriet style traditional family. Most are working to create new family forms.

The contemporary, or postmodern, family is diverse and fluid. A wide range of gender and kinship relations exists in families today. Many people are uneasy about such an ambivalent family structure, and seek clarity about the family. In speaking to women involved in fundamentalist religions, Stacey talked with one pastor about the relationship of men and women espoused by the fundamentalist church. His answer was a traditional relationship, but one described not as the domination of one person over another, but of equality. The man is the head of the household, and therefore has more responsibility than the wife. But he is not to dominate her. The pastor stated that wives are to submit to their husbands as we submit to Jesus. She submits with love and trust, knowing the husband is to love his wife as his own body, and as Jesus loves us. These women do not feel they are doormats, but instead believe giving their husbands increased responsibility will lead to a better marriage. However, this pastor also believes that the Bible is the word of God, and must be followed. The pastor (p.74) said "the Bible is pretty clear-cut; it's not wishy-washy if you're a fundamentalist".

Another church leader in Stacey's study described gender roles by saying that submission is not subjection, but more an attitude of teachability. Authority is a
responsibility. An interesting finding was that this particular church leader read the Bible as selectively as do other religious faithfuls. The point is that fundamentalists do believe in the word of God stated in the Bible, but qualitative studies can bring out the ways in which these women find acceptable interpretations of these teachings. Fundamentalists believe in the authority of the Bible and in its usefulness as a practical guide to the conduct of everyday life. Yet the fundamentalist women Stacey interviewed recognized the conflicting influences in their lives.

Political Ideology

Dudley, Hernandez, and Terian (1992) studied conservative religious groups and politics. Historically, Protestants have been more likely to vote Republican, and Catholics and Jews to vote Democratic. Lenski (1961) also found white Protestants to be the strongest supporters of the Republican party. They were the only group with a Republican plurality. Although other factors are known to influence voting patterns, such as social class, religion does appear to have an impact.

Dudley, Hernandez, and Terian find a substantial relationship between religion and politics among conservative Christian groups. Support for Biblical literalism was shown to be related to political conservatism. Living in a world of rapid change in technology, social arrangements and values, many turn to the church as the one institution capable of preserving the order and stability in their lives. It is expected that those Christians that hold the most Orthodox beliefs, including a Biblical literalism, will be the most conservative politically.

Rose (1993) found similar results in a study of two religious communities. Evangelicals, often those associated with the Christian Right, tend to oppose any legislation that would undermine the traditional, patriarchal family. Members of the
Christian Right define men as the natural leaders of the family, church, and nation. Women are to submit to their husbands, and husbands are expected to love and provide for their wives. They believe that this hierarchical ordering of relationships reflects God's natural order. If this is disrupted, the family, and in turn society, will fall apart. Members of the Christian Right have lobbied against legislation in favor of women's and children's rights, shelters for battered women, mandatory child abuse reporting, and family planning clinics. They supported the Family Protection Acts of 1981 that sought to deny federal funding of educational materials that in any way diminished the traditional sex role norms as historically understood in the United States.

Hargrove (1989) discusses the interrelationship of religious and political institutions. Religion justifies and reinforces the values of society. These values are then translated into political behavior, such as voting and participating in political campaigns, as well as involvement in special interest groups. Religion serves more than one function for its adherents. The source of beliefs religion influences includes political beliefs.

Jost (1994) discusses the place the Christian Right will have in the future of American politics. Jost says religion has always been an important factor in American political life. Despite the separation of church and state, religion continues to play a role in politics. Discontent with religious indifference in society and discomfort over the impact of science and economic materialism on traditional faith, fundamentalists are often involved in certain issues and campaign for candidates they believe will support their stance.

As for political roles for women, Chalfant, Beckley, and Palmer find support for a less traditional role for women in the world of work and politics is higher among liberal Protestants, Jews, and nonaffiliated Americans than it is among Catholics and conservative Protestants. Fundamentalists who believe in a literal interpretation of the
Bible are especially likely to believe that a wife's submissiveness and obedience to her husband express the will of God. Conservative religious groups oppose gender-related issues they perceive as a threat to traditional family roles and stability. The religious political right, in conjunction with the secular political right, has molded this religiously based opposition into direct political action. These authors believe Protestant fundamentalism and evangelicalism remain a force in the religious, social, and political life of the United States.

In summary, many studies support the idea that religious commitment, and a fundamentalist orientation, lead people to follow more traditional gender roles. Fundamentalist groups are mainly defined by their literal interpretation of the Bible. These groups are also shown to be more politically conservative and less supportive of women in politics or any role not perceived to be divinely ordered. Using the General Social Survey as a data base, I will examine whether these results remain true in contemporary American society.
Chapter 2
Research Design/Methodology

Hypotheses

The review of the literature illustrated that a strong religious commitment leads to a traditional ideology with respect to gender roles and political views. Religious affiliation was also important, with Protestant fundamentalists holding the most traditional gender role beliefs about appropriate behaviors for men and women. Fundamentalists were also shown to be more politically conservative in the literature cited. Some authors have also alluded to the importance of studying differences between the sexes in their formation of gender role attitudes and political ideology based on religious commitment and affiliation.

Based on and adding to the existing literature, I developed ten hypotheses; five relating to religion and gender roles, and five relating to religion and political ideology. Using the independent variables religious commitment, religious affiliation, and religious fundamentalism, and the dependent variables gender role beliefs and political ideology, I will study the following hypotheses:

Hypotheses Studying the Relationship Between Religion and Gender

H1: The stronger one's religious commitment, the greater one's belief in traditional gender roles for men and women.

H2: Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support traditional gender role beliefs than other religious affiliations.
H3: Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support traditional gender roles for men and women than other religious affiliations when controlling for socioeconomic status.

H4: Religious commitment has a greater impact on gender role beliefs for women than for men.

H5: Religious affiliation has a greater impact on gender role beliefs for women than for men.

*Hypotheses Studying the Relationship Between Religion and Political Ideology*

H6: The stronger one's religious commitment, the more conservative one's political ideology.

H7: Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support a conservative political ideology than other religious affiliations.

H8: Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support a conservative political ideology than other religious affiliations when controlling for socioeconomic status.

H9: Religious commitment has a greater impact on political ideology for women than for men.
H10: Religious affiliation has a greater impact on political ideology for women than for men.

Data

For this project I will use quantitative analysis of data derived from the 1993 edition of the annual General Social Survey. This data set was selected because it contains variables describing religious commitment and affiliation, religious fundamentalism, socioeconomic status, gender role attitudes, and political beliefs. Randomly selected adults are interviewed to compile the data set. Interviews for the General Social Survey are conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The 1993 sample contains 1606 completed interviews. These interviews have been compiled into an SPSS system file. The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the University of Connecticut distributes the SPSS system files.

Indicators

Many GSS indicators are available to measure the variables in my hypotheses. The variables I am studying include: religious commitment, religious affiliation, religious fundamentalism, political ideology, gender role beliefs, sex, and socioeconomic status. The indicators in the 1993 General Social Survey that are used to operationalize each of these concepts are listed below. The labels in bold refer to the indicator names in the GSS code book. I will use multiple indicators whenever possible to reduce error and increase reliability.
General Social Survey indicators:

*Religious Commitment*

**ATTEND** (religious service attendance):  
How often do you attend religious services?

- More than once a week
- Every week
- Nearly every week
- 2-3 times a month
- Once a month
- Several times a year
- Once a year
- Less than once a year

**RELITEN** (strength of religious commitment):  
Would you call yourself a strong ____ or a not very strong ____?

- Strong
- Somewhat strong
- Not very strong

**PRAY** (frequency of prayer):  
About how often do you pray?

- Several times a day
- Once a day
- Several times a week
- Once a week
- Less than once a week
Religious Affiliation

**RELIG** (religious affiliation):
What is your religious preference?

- Protestant
- Catholic
- Jewish

Fundamentalism

**FUND** (fundamentalism):
How fundamentalist is your religion?

- Fundamentalist
- Moderate
- Liberal

Gender Role Beliefs

**FECHLD** (working mother's bond with child):
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

**FEHELP** (wife help husband's career):
It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
FEPRESCH (condition of preschool child when mother works):
A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

FEFAM (man should work outside the home, woman inside the home):
It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Political Ideology

POLVIEW S (political ideology):
The following is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale?

- Extremely liberal
- Liberal
- Slightly liberal
- Moderate
- Slightly conservative
- Conservative
- Extremely conservative

Sex

Are you: Male
Female
Socioeconomic Status

CLASS (subjective social class identification):
If you were asked to use one of the four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in?

    Lower class
    Working class
    Middle class
    Upper class

EDUC (education completed):
Highest year of school completed.

    Scores range from 0-20

INCOME (total family income):
In which of these groups did your total family income fall for last year?

    Under $1,000
    $1,000 - 2,999
    $3,000 - 3,999
    $4,000 - 4,999
    $5,000 - 5,999
    $6,000 - 6,999
    $7,000 - 7,999
    $8,000 - 9,999
    $10,000 - 14,999
    $15,000 - 19,999
    $20,000 - 24,999
    $25,000 or over

In terms of relationships among the variables, I expect a strong religious commitment/affiliation will lead people to hold more traditional gender role and political beliefs. I anticipate religion to influence women's beliefs more strongly than men's. I also expect to find that socioeconomic status does not play as large a role in determining attitudes among fundamentalist respondents as religious commitment/affiliation.
**Independent Variables**

The independent variables in this regression analysis are religious commitment, religious affiliation, and religious fundamentalism. Religious commitment is measured by frequency of church attendance (General Social Survey indicator ATTEND), respondent's subjective identification on the strength of their religious commitment (RELITEN), and frequency of prayer (PRAY).

In order to measure religious affiliation and fundamentalism, dummy variables are created. The GSS indicator RELIG is used to measure religious affiliation, and the indicator FUND is used to measure fundamentalism. The responses to these indicators are as follows:

**Religious affiliation:**

- RELIG 1 = Protestant
- 2 = Catholic
- 3 = Jewish

**Fundamentalism:**

- FUND 1 = Fundamentalism
- 2 = Moderate
- 3 = Liberal
These indicators were used to create the following dummy variables:

- FUNDP (Fundamentalist Protestants)  
- MODP (Moderate Protestants)  
- LIBP (Liberal Protestants)  
- CATII (Catholics)  
- JEW (Jewish respondents)  

FUND1 and RELIG1  
FUND2 and RELIG1  
FUND3 and RELIG1  
RELIG2  
RELIG3  

Dummy variables for religious affiliation and fundamentalism are described as follows:

- FUNDP  
- MODP  
- LIBP  
- CATII  
- JEW  

Fundamentalist Protestants  
Moderate Protestants  
Liberal Protestants  
Catholics  
Jewish Respondents  

**Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables in this study are gender role beliefs and political ideology. The political ideology variable comes straight from the GSS indicator POLVIEWS, which consists of the following seven point scale of liberal to conservative responses.
POLVIEW (political ideology):
1 = Extremely liberal
2 = Liberal
3 = Slightly liberal
4 = Moderate
5 = Slightly conservative
6 = Conservative
7 = Extremely conservative

There are four indicators from the General Social Survey used to measure gender role beliefs. The variable GENDER1 was created as an additive index of responses to the four statements on gender roles. FECHLD (working mother's bond with child) was first recoded as follows:

FECHLD: A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.

Previous coding: Recoded:
1 = Strongly agree 1 = Strongly disagree
2 = Agree 2 = Disagree
3 = Disagree 3 = Agree
4 = Strongly disagree 4 = Strongly agree

Since the wording on this question made a response of 1 (strongly agree) the least traditional response on gender role beliefs, and the other three questions had a response of 1 representing the most traditional response, the responses were recoded to allow for
analysis of all four indicators together. GSS indicators FECHLD, FEHELP, FEPRESCH, and FEFAM are then added together to create the variable GENDER1. The responses for GENDER1 now range from four to sixteen, with the higher number the response, the least traditional gender role beliefs.

Control Variables

Socioeconomic status will be used as a control variable in this study. In looking at previous research and indicators available from the General Social Survey, I included the variables subjective social class identification, educational level of respondent, and income. The GSS indicators CLASS, EDUC, and INCOME are each studied separately as a measure of socioeconomic status.

Interaction Terms

To test the hypotheses of religious commitment and affiliation having a greater impact on women than men for both gender role beliefs and political ideology, I created interaction terms. SEX was used as the indicator, and the dummy variable FEMALE was first created to differentiate males from females:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>FEMALE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEX = 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FEMALE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For religious commitment, the following interaction terms were created:

FATTEND (religious service attendance among females) = FEMALE * ATTEND

FPRAY (frequency of prayer among females) = FEMALE * PRAY

FRELITEN (religious commitment among females) = FEMALE * RELITEN

For religious affiliation, the interaction terms are:

MFEMALE (Moderate Protestant females) = MODP * FEMALE

LFEMALE (Liberal Protestant females) = LIBP * FEMALE

CFEMALE (Catholic females) = CATH * FEMALE

JFEMALE (Jewish females) = JEW * FEMALE

The above variables will be used in multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses I have proposed. I will begin with a factor analysis of the variables measuring religious commitment and the variables measuring gender role beliefs to ensure each indicator chosen is measuring the concept I plan to study. I will follow the factor analyses with a regression equation for each of the hypotheses.
Scale Validation

Before setting up equations for multivariate regression models, I first ran factor analyses to ensure the indicators I was using for the concepts religious commitment and gender role beliefs were appropriate. First, I ran a factor analysis on the indicators chosen to measure religious commitment. This factor analysis had the following results:

Religious Commitment
Factor Loadings:

Factor 1
ATTEND  .84279
RELITEN .82729
PRAY    .78565

The factor analysis for the gender role belief indicators resulted in the following:

Gender Role Beliefs
Factor Loadings:

Factor 1
FEFAM  .81440
FEPRESCH .79414
FEHELP .75797
FECHLD .74843
The results of these factor analyses show the variables loading strongly onto one factor. These variables are shown to measure the concepts of religious commitment and gender role beliefs I wish to study. I also feel confident that creating the additive dependent variable GENDER1 is an appropriate way to measure gender role beliefs.

Findings

The next step of my data analysis involved running appropriate regression equations to test the hypotheses constructed for this study. In this section, I will list each hypothesis separately, and show the results of multivariate regression analysis for each.

The first five hypotheses examine the influence of religious commitment and affiliation on gender role beliefs. In the first hypothesis, I want to test if a strong religious commitment leads to more traditional gender role beliefs. H1 reads: The stronger one's religious commitment, the greater one's belief in traditional gender roles for men and women. The first regression equation uses GENDER1 as the dependent variable, with the independent variables ATTEND, PRAY, and RELITEN. This regression equation resulted in the following data:

Religious Commitment and Gender Role Beliefs

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ATTEND</td>
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<td>RELITEN</td>
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<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>9.642695</td>
<td>.0000</td>
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</table>

Full Model R2 .06830
Sig F .0000
In looking at this regression equation, the full model is significant. Each of the individual indicators measuring religious commitment are statistically significant. We can conclude that religious commitment does lead to more traditional gender role beliefs, though it is not a strong relationship. Since the regression coefficients are positive, as the score for religious commitment gets larger, the score for gender role beliefs also gets larger. Due to the coding of these variables, this supports the relationship proposed in the hypothesis that a strong religious commitment leads to more traditional gender role beliefs.

The second hypothesis (H2) says Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support traditional gender role beliefs than other religious affiliations. This regression equation was set up with GENDER 1 as the dependent variable, and the dummy variables for religious affiliation-MODP, LIBP, CATH, JEW-as independent variables. Fundamentalist Protestants are the constant in the regression equation. This equation provided the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation/Fundamentalism and Gender Role Beliefs</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.3169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIBP</td>
<td>.450649</td>
<td>.0601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATH</td>
<td>.597159</td>
<td>.0050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEW</td>
<td>1.060474</td>
<td>.0454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
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<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Model R2</td>
<td></td>
<td>.01264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sig F</td>
<td></td>
<td>.0264</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Again, the full model in this regression equation is significant. The individual independent variables CATH and JEW are also significant. This says that Catholics and Jews are significantly different from Protestant fundamentalists in their gender role beliefs. In looking at the scores on gender role beliefs (B), we see that fundamentalists are the most traditional in their gender role beliefs. The other affiliations have a positive score that, when added to the score of Protestant fundamentalists (the constant), has a higher score on the gender role beliefs response. A higher score represents less traditional beliefs. The hypothesis stating religious affiliation/fundamentalism leads to more traditional gender role beliefs is supported.

In the above equation measuring the support for traditional gender roles among various religious affiliations, Catholic responses are not identical, or even closest to, the responses of moderate Protestants. Many studies of religious variables group Catholics in with moderate Protestants, which these findings indicate may be problematic. This is a topic I will bring up again in the discussion section.

Next, hypothesis three (H3) says Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support traditional gender roles for men and women than other religious affiliations when controlling for socioeconomic status. This hypothesis will be tested using block variable regression. The dependent variable in the full model is GENDER1. Independent variables include MODP, LIBP, CATH, JEW, CLASS, EDUC, and INCOME.
Full Model:

Religious Affiliation/Fundamentalism, Socioeconomic Status and Gender Role Beliefs

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</table>

Full Model R2 .06769
Sig F .0000

In the reduced model, the variables measuring socioeconomic status-CLASS, EDUC, INCOME-are taken out as a block to test their impact on the regression equation.

Reduced Model:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODP</td>
<td>.248463</td>
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<td>LIBP</td>
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<td>CATH</td>
<td>.597159</td>
<td>.0050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEW</td>
<td>1.060474</td>
<td>.0454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
<td>10.809091</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reduced model R2 .01264
Sig F .0264
The following equation was used to compare the two models and test whether the socioeconomic status variables were valuable in the equation:

$$ F = \frac{(R^2 \text{ full} - R^2 \text{ reduced})}{\text{change in degrees of freedom}} $$

$$ \frac{(1 - R^2 \text{ full})}{(N - k - 1)} $$

The F-test ratio equals 15.47 (df = 3, 787). This is significant at the .05 level. This result tells us that including the variables measuring socioeconomic status is important in assessing how one comes to hold traditional gender role beliefs.

In looking at the full model, Protestant fundamentalists continue to be more traditional in their gender role beliefs compared to other religious affiliations. No individual variables measuring religious affiliation, however, are significant in this model. Education is the only significant individual independent variable. Education is something one may want to study further in looking at influences on the formation of gender role beliefs.

Fourth, H4: Religious commitment has a greater impact on gender role beliefs for women than for men. This is also tested using block variable regression. The full model has GENDER1 as the dependent variable, with the variables measuring religious commitment-ATTEND, PRAY, RELITEN- and also the interaction terms created to measure women's religious commitment-FATTEND, FPRAY, and FRELITEN-as the independent variables.
Computing the F test ratio equals 2.92 (df = 3, 736). This is significant at an alpha level of .05. The variables measuring religious commitment among women are important. In looking at how religious commitment impacts gender role beliefs, one must keep in mind the differences religious commitment has for women and men.

The next hypothesis (H5) says: Religious affiliation has a greater impact on gender role beliefs for women than for men. The full model here has GENDER1 as the
dependent variable, with MODP, LIBP, CATH, JEW, as well as the interaction terms measuring female affiliation MFEMALE, LFEMALE, CFEMALE, and JFEMALE as the independent variables.

Full Model:

Religious Affiliation/Fundamentalism, Sex, and Gender Role Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
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Full Model R2 .03537
Sig F .0001

Reduced Model:

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODP</td>
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<td>(constant)</td>
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</table>

Reduced Model R2 .01264
Sig F .0264
In this model, the F test ratio is .006 (df = 4, 861). This is not significant at the .05 level. This says that religious affiliation does not influence women's gender role beliefs more than it influences men's gender role beliefs. Hypothesis H5 is not supported.

The next five hypotheses deal with the influence of religious commitment and affiliation on political ideology. First is H6: The stronger one's religious commitment, the more conservative one's political ideology. This regression equation has POLVIEWS as the dependent variable, with ATTEND, PRAY, and RELITEN as the independent variables.

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R2 = .04255

Here, the regression model is significant. Church attendance as an independent variable is also significant with respect to political views. We can conclude from this equation that religious commitment does lead to a more conservative political ideology. Since the regression coefficients are negative, as the score for religious commitment gets larger, the score for political views gets smaller. A larger score for religious commitment means weak religious commitment, where a smaller number response for political views means more liberal beliefs. The inverse relationship corresponds to the coding of these
variables, which leads to the conclusion that the hypothesis of stronger religious commitment leading to more conservative political ideology is supported.

The next hypothesis (H7) says: Protestant fundamentalists are more likely to support a conservative political ideology than other religious affiliations. This is tested using GENDER1 as the dependent variable, and MÖDP, LIBP, CATH, JEW as the independent variables.

Religious Affiliation/Fundamentalism and Political Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Sig T</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MÖDP</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIBP</td>
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<tr>
<td>CATH</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>(constant)</td>
<td>4.480545</td>
<td>.0000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R2 .02437
Sig F .0000

The full model in this regression equation is significant. All the independent variables are significant. This tells us that all other religious affiliations are significantly different from Protestant fundamentalists with respect to political views. Also, the fact that fundamentalists, as represented by the constant, are positive, and the other affiliations are negative, tells us that fundamentalists are more conservative in their political views. The hypothesis proposing Protestant fundamentalists are more conservative in their political ideology is supported.

Now I want to test if fundamentalists continue to be more politically conservative with the addition of control variables for socioeconomic status. H8 reads: Protestant
fundamentalists are more likely to support a conservative political ideology than other religious affiliations when controlling for socioeconomic status. This is tested using block variable regression. In the full model, the dependent variable is POLVIEWS, with the independent variables MODP, LIBP, CATH, JEW, CLASS, EDUC, and INCOME.

Full Model:

Religious Affiliation/Fundamentalism, Socioeconomic Status and Political Ideology

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Full model R2: .03122
Sig F: .0000

Reduced Model:

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<th>Sig T</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODP</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reduced Model R2: .02437
Sig F: .0000
The F test ratio equals 2.89 (df = 3, 1229). This result says that the variables measuring socioeconomic status, taken as a block, do impact political views. Socioeconomic status is important in studying the relationship between religious affiliation and political ideology.

In the full model, all the individual variables measuring religious affiliation continue to be significant individually when you add the socioeconomic control variables. Protestant fundamentalists continue to be more politically conservative than other religious affiliations when controlling for socioeconomic status.

Hypothesis nine (H9) says: Religious commitment has a greater impact on political ideology for women than for men. Block variable regression is used in this model. The dependent variable in this equation is POLVIEWS. Independent variables include ATTEND, PRAY, RELTIEN, and the interaction terms FATTEND, FPRAY, and FRELITEN.

Full Model:
Religious Commitment, Sex, and Political Ideology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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Full Model R2 .04939
Sig F .0000
Reduced Model:

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<tbody>
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Reduced Model R2   .04255
Sig F .0000

F test ratio equals 1.83 (df = 3, 766). The variables measuring female religious commitment are not significant when taken as a block in this analysis. Women do not differ from men with respect to the impact religious commitment has on their political views.

Finally, H10 reads: Religious affiliation has a greater impact on political ideology for women than for men. The full model here has POLVIEWS as the dependent variable, with MODP, LIBP, CATH, JEW, and the interaction terms MFEMALE, LFEMALE, CFEMALE, JFEMALE as the independent variables.
Full Model:

Religious Affiliation/Fundamentalism, Sex, and Political Ideology

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Full Model R2  .02764
Sig F  .0000

Reduced Model:

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Reduced Model R2  .02437
Sig F  .0000

The F test ratio is 1.13 (df = 4, 1342). This is not significant at the .05 level.

Women do not differ from men with respect to their religious affiliation's influence on their political views.
The data analysis revealed support for all hypotheses except for those regarding differences among men and women. The unsupported hypotheses were:

H5: Religious affiliation has a greater impact on gender role beliefs for men than for women.

H9: Religious commitment has a greater impact on political ideology for women than for men.

H10: Religious affiliation has a greater impact on political ideology for women than for men.

The remaining hypotheses were supported. Religious commitment and affiliation/fundamentalism influence more traditional gender role beliefs. Fundamentalists continue to be the most traditional religious affiliation when controlling for socioeconomic status. Religious commitment does influence women more strongly than men in the formation of gender roles, but religious affiliation does not have a differential impact on men and women with respect to gender role beliefs.

As for political ideology, religious commitment and affiliation/fundamentalism lead to more conservative political views. Fundamentalists continue to hold the most conservative political views when controlling for socioeconomic status. Religious commitment and affiliation do not influence women more than men in their political ideologies. I will discuss each of these hypotheses in greater detail in the next section, along with any limitations of this study, and proposals for future research in the area of religious influence on traditional views.
Chapter 4
Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The initial interest in this study was to discover if religious commitment and affiliation have an impact on traditional views of gender and politics. To study this relationship, I first asked the question if a strong religious commitment led people to accept more traditional gender role beliefs. Data from the 1993 General Social Survey support this hypothesis. A strong religious commitment—as measured by church attendance, frequency of prayer, and self-described strength of religious commitment—does influence people to follow more traditional gender role beliefs.

The next question asked if a fundamentalist religious affiliation would lead people to accept more traditional gender role beliefs. The literature stating that fundamentalist Protestants are the most traditional with respect to gender roles was supported. The interesting result from this hypothesis was the denominations that were significantly different from Protestant fundamentalists. Catholics and Jews were significantly different from fundamentalists in their attitudes toward gender roles.

While, based on the existing literature, I expected Jewish respondents would differ the most from Protestant fundamentalists and would hold the least traditional gender views, I did not anticipate Catholics to be the next least traditional denomination. Catholics are less traditional with respect to gender roles than are both the moderate and the liberal Protestants. This research indicates it may be problematic to group moderate Protestants and Catholics together in studying gender role beliefs. Grouping moderate Protestants and Catholics together may overestimate the amount of support for equal
roles for men and women among moderate Protestants. Future research in the area of religion would want to use caution in comparing denominations more generally, and should realize denominations may hold similar views on one issue and opposing views on another.

This study also focused on the influence of religious commitment and affiliation on the development of conservative political ideology. Religious commitment was also shown to influence people to hold more traditional political views. Protestant fundamentalists were again the most traditional on attitudes toward politics, with all other religious denominations differing significantly. Jewish respondents hold the least traditional views on political ideology as well. In studying the relationship between religious affiliation and political ideology, moderate Protestants and Catholics responded much more closely to one another than in their views on appropriate gender roles. This suggests it may be appropriate on certain issues to group Catholics with moderate Protestants, but one must study their relationship on attitudes before grouping them together in any analysis of religious influence.

For models of both gender role beliefs and political ideology, controlling for socioeconomic status— as measured by subjective class identification, education, and income— was shown to be an important part of the equation. In the models controlling for socioeconomic status, fundamentalists continued to hold the most traditional beliefs with respect to both gender roles and political ideology. One interesting aspect of these models was that the variable representing socioeconomic status that was individually significant in the regression equation changed. In the model looking at gender role beliefs, education was significant; and in the model for political ideology, class was significant. Different aspects of socioeconomic status influence traditional views in various ways. This demonstrates the importance of using a variety of measures to
represent socioeconomic status. If one were to use a scaled variable to measure socioeconomic status, the different aspects influencing traditional views would not have been apparent. One must keep in mind what measures are used to represent socioeconomic status, and how to interpret them separately.

One study that illustrates the importance of focusing on socioeconomic status was conducted by Rich and Golan (1992). This study compared girls in secular and religious high schools in Israel. The study found girls in secular high schools were more oriented toward careers and expressed more interest in and preference for male-dominated occupations than the girls in religious schools. Socioeconomic status played an interesting role in their study. Findings show the parents of religious school students had somewhat more prestigious occupations than the parents of secular school students. Rich and Golan say if religiosity then has a negative effect on plans for male-dominated occupations, it cannot be attributed to the lower socioeconomic status level of religious women. Some explanations of religion's impact on gender behavior have been attributed to the lower socioeconomic status of individuals in fundamentalist religions. This research would suggest that since the religious students had higher socioeconomic status and yet more traditional gender role attitudes, religion is the important variable in the relationship. These results coincide with the findings of the present research that religion remains significant when controlling for socioeconomic status. Rich and Golan's study also suggests the importance of looking at socioeconomic status in studying the development of gender role attitudes and behaviors.

The hypotheses dealing with the differences of religious commitment and affiliation among men and women had interesting results. Religious commitment in general does influence traditional gender role beliefs among women differently than among men. Religious affiliation or the fundamentalism of one's belief system, however,
does not influence men and women's gender role beliefs differently. As for political ideology, women do not differ from men with respect to the impact religious commitment or affiliation has on their political views. Protestant fundamentalists have more traditional gender role beliefs and political ideology than members of other religious affiliations. This is equally true for the women involved in fundamentalist religions as it is for the men. The fact that you are a fundamentalist appears to be what is important. There is a debate in the literature on whether it is religious commitment which is the influential variable leading to traditional views, or if it is religious denomination. In the next section, I will cite literature in support of both of these conflicting positions, and illustrate the importance for future research in separating out the effects of religious commitment and affiliation.

To conclude the discussion, support for the hypotheses proposed was found, except for those regarding the differences religious commitment and affiliation has on traditional views for men and women. Religious affiliation does not impact men and women differently in their gender role development. Religious commitment or affiliation does not impact men and women differently with respect to their political views. People who preserve a strong place for religion in their lives, and members of Protestant fundamentalist religions do hold more traditional beliefs about gender roles and political ideology.

Limitations

The major limitation of this research is the finding of statistical significance, but weak substantive significance. This problem often occurs in studies using a large sample. Spirer and Jaffe (1984) state that often statistical significance is taken as
practical significance, when all that is needed to get statistical significance is a large enough sample.

Deal and Anderson (1995) also discuss issues of reporting and interpreting results within the social sciences, particularly within family research. Deal and Anderson also say there is a tendency to interpret findings on a statistical rather than a substantive basis. They wish to remind researchers of the importance of avoiding equating statistical significance with substantive significance, as well as to frame the results of studies in ways which are able to reach a wide audience. They also state that the use of large samples involves the problem of correctly interpreting results, since a large enough sample can make even a trivial relationship statistically significant. What is important is to evaluate how meaningful results are in a way that is theoretically useful.

All but three of the models studied were found to be statistically significant. However, all models displayed low R2 values. For example, the values for R2 ranged from .013 to .079. None of the models were able to explain a large percentage of variance. It would be difficult to argue that these findings are substantively strong. However, acknowledging this limitation is not to say that there are no valuable results of this study. Religious commitment and affiliation, while not substantively strong, were shown to influence gender role beliefs and political views. While there are certainly stronger predictors of traditional ideology, religion should not be completely discounted.

This research has also illustrated that Protestant fundamentalists are the most traditional with respect to gender role attitudes and political views. It was shown how different measures of socioeconomic status influence results in different equations. Findings describe how moderate Protestants are not identical to Catholics in their gender role attitudes, with Catholics being less traditional. Results also show how all
denominations studied—moderate Protestants, liberal Protestants, Catholics, and Jews—significantly differed from fundamentalist Protestants on political ideology.

Acknowledging the weak substantive significance displays the importance of future work in the area of religion. Perhaps linking religious commitment and affiliation to behavior would more definitively answer the question of the continued importance of religion. Qualitative studies may also be of value in this area. I will discuss both links to behavior and the use of qualitative studies in more detail later in this section.

Other limitations of this research include the more general limitations involved in performing a quantitative analysis of secondary data. Quantitative analysis of the General Social Survey was chosen mainly because this methodology provides valuable information in studying the relationship between the variables in this research project. This research design was also chosen because of time and monetary constraints of a Master's thesis. The methods chosen are consistent with survey research designs in the social sciences, and are appropriate in gaining an understanding of how religious commitment and affiliation impact traditional beliefs.

There are, however, some nuances and subtleties that quantitative data analysis cannot uncover. For example, Stacey's (1990) qualitative research on women in fundamentalist religions revealed interpretations women use to accept the traditional doctrine of fundamentalist churches into their lives. The problem with this study, however, is the small sample size; Stacey's research is based on interviews with two women and members of their families.

Pevey, Williams, and Ellison (1996) also conduct a qualitative study. These authors look at male God imagery and female submission in a Southern Baptist ladies' Bible class. Again, the problem with this study is the small sample size; twelve
interviews were conducted of conservative Protestant women in the Bible class. In addition, all of the women were white, with higher than average incomes.

Interviews reveal considerable contradictions between views and reported practices. As with the women Stacey interviewed, these women reported methods of negotiating and reinterpreting the doctrine of female submission. One such method of interpreting behavior is explaining their actions which contradict church doctrine as the result of exceptional personal characteristics. Women who do not strictly adhere to fundamentalist doctrine describe themselves as unusually strong-willed. Most women interviewed redefined the doctrine of wifely submission in a manner that enabled them to maintain a sense of personal autonomy. In conclusion, the authors say in practice, conservative Protestant gender role ideologies are more complex and nuanced than popular stereotypes acknowledge.

Whether fundamentalist women follow the doctrine of their church and this ideology influences their behavior, or if they reinterpret doctrine to make their family roles more acceptable to them remains open to debate. More qualitative studies with a larger number of women interviewed would be a valuable compliment to the work on religious influence on gender roles. Questions for future research could include: What behavior are these women enacting? Can qualitative studies of a larger number of women, and men, reveal the negotiation practices people in fundamentalist religions perform? How many people do not actually follow the literal word of the Bible? If most people reinterpret doctrine, is denominational affiliation important? Research focusing on these questions would enhance the literature on religious influences of gender.

The above articles also bring out the issue of denominational influence versus religious commitment. The studies done by Stacey and Pevey, Williams, and Ellison describe women as reinterpreting the roles their conservative churches set up for them.
Both studies suggest it may not be denominational affiliation which is important, but religious devoutness. Other studies state being fundamentalist is more importance. As noted in the literature review, Grasmick, Wilcox, and Bird (1990) found religious fundamentalism, not personal religiosity, has a substantial direct effect on support for the patriarchal family. Another possibility is that there is an interaction effect between religious commitment and denomination. For example, when both religious commitment is high and one is involved in a fundamentalist denomination, the effects on gendered behaviors may be more pronounced. The study by Grasmick, et al., however, found no evidence of an interaction effect of fundamentalism and religious identity salience. More research on the debate over religious commitment versus religious denomination would be beneficial.

Another important aspect of the relationship between religion and traditional beliefs that quantitative analysis of the General Social Survey cannot address deals with conversion into a fundamentalist religion. Does conversion later in life lead one to hold different views than growing up a fundamentalist? Time ordered data would allow the study of differences between people who convert to fundamentalist religions later in life versus people who have grown up with this traditional ideology since childhood.

Knowing whether a person converted into a fundamentalist religion or grew up with the religious background could be important for many reasons. For example, if one converts later in life, one may have already accepted traditional gender roles if choosing a fundamentalist religion. Or, some people may convert as a result of life experience. Women may find they cannot succeed in the labor market; they want to validate their experiences as a wife and mother; or women may choose a strict fundamentalist religion which requires the husband to take more responsibility. These attitudes may or may not
be similar to those who are born into the religion. Stacey (1990) discusses some of these issues, but as mentioned earlier her sample is small. Further research would be helpful.

As noted in the introduction, the relationship between socialization into one's religion and into one's gender role contains mutual influences. Longitudinal studies would allow the identification of which comes first, religious involvement or gender role beliefs and political ideology. A fuller empirical test of these considerations would be important in future work on the topic of gender inequality within religion and the society at large.

**Future Research**

I have already mentioned several directions for future research, including testing the impact of religious commitment versus denomination, looking at the conversion process, and complimenting current research with additional qualitative studies. Other possibilities for future research include empirically studying in greater detail the relationship of socioeconomic status in developing gender roles and political views. Education and class were both significant variables in the different equations where the socioeconomic status control variables were added. The role of education in determining traditional gender roles is one area of interest. For example, one direction this research could take would be to study secular versus religious schooling. As discussed above, Rich and Golan looked at the effects of religious schooling on girls' career expectations. One could also study whether or not the educational system promotes traditional gender roles, and how this enters the relationship between religion and gender role beliefs. In studying the relationship of socioeconomic status further, it would be important to look at how socioeconomic status is measured, what individual variables are important in
determining one's gender role beliefs and political ideology, and how these socioeconomic status variables relate to religious variables.

Another area of future research in this field would be to study religion itself as an institution, and look at the structures within fundamentalist churches, the roles women play in the church, and different organizational-level processes. Chaves (1996) discusses the role of women in the church by studying the ordination of women. Chaves focuses on religion as an organization. His study finds neither experiencing a clergy shortage, nor having a rural constituency, nor having an African American constituency influences the rate of adopting female ordination. Denominations with Southern constituencies are less likely to ordain women than are denominations with non-Southern constituencies. Chaves also found that denominations that are Biblically inerrant are much slower to ordain women. The diffusion of gender equality across denominations is strongly influenced both by structural and by cultural divides within the denominational world.

The absence of women as recognized official leaders of the church influences how children, as well as men and women, view women. This absence indicates the subordinate role of women in our society and in the church. Chalfant, Beckley, and Palmer (1994) look at women and the ministry and report that even denominations which now ordain women often assign them to an inferior kind of ministry. Women often serve smaller congregations, have a lower salary, and in general have less prestige than male clergy. The authors do say that recent research suggests female clergy have been well accepted once they have obtained an initial appointment. Studying religion as an organization or institution is another valuable area for future research.

Finally, it is important to study not only the attitudes on traditional roles, but also behaviors. Much of the literature I reviewed dealt strictly with the attitudes of people on gender roles and politics. The next step would be to link these attitudes to actual
behaviors. Do members of fundamentalist denominations live by the views espoused by their churches? Stacey's work suggests women in these religions find ways to justify the traditional doctrine of their churches. It would interesting to see what division of labor in the household actually exists for fundamentalist followers, the placement of fundamentalist women in the labor market, voting frequency and patterns, and other behaviors related to gender and political ideology. The question in my mind is how the doctrine of separate spheres for men and women is translated into actual behaviors of Protestant fundamentalist men and women.

A brief review of the research linking religious attitudes to women's actual behavior in the labor market suggests religious affiliation is an important determinant of behavior. Lehrer (1995) found gender role attitudes vary systematically by religious denomination, with what she termed exclusivist Protestants (fundamentalist groups) at the least egalitarian end of the continuum, and individuals who had no religion at the most egalitarian end. Lehrer's findings illustrate that women affiliated with exclusivist Protestant denominations have the lowest levels of attachment to the labor force.

An indirect link between religion and labor force participation was also found by Morgan and Scanzoni (1987). These authors found that women who are more devout tend to choose female-dominated college majors, which in turn offer limited achievements once in the labor market. The indirect link of religion works primarily through gender role attitudes. Women who are more devout hold more traditional gender role beliefs, and this influences their ideas of appropriate behaviors for women. This attitude then impacts their choice of college major, which in turn influences their participation and pay in the labor market.

Morgan and Scanzoni found that religious devoutness depresses future work expectations. Irrespective of denominational label, being more devout--as measured by
how frequently one engages in religious activities and experiences religious feelings—apparently tends to reduce college women's expected continuity in the labor force. Again, this illustrates the debate over denomination or devoutness. Future research should specifically compare the importance of commitment and affiliation, as well as link religious attitudes to actual behaviors of men and women.

Conclusion

This study began with a discussion of Lenski's work on the importance of religion in society. Lenski wrote *The Religious Factor* in 1961 as a study of the consequences of religious belief and practice in the everyday life of society. Data from the 1993 General Social Survey support his idea that religion continues to play an important role in determining attitudes today. Religious commitment and fundamentalist affiliation influences people to accept more traditional views.

Fundamentalists disagree with the more secular ideas of modern society on increasing gender equality. They continue to uphold traditional belief systems rooted in rural, nineteenth century American life. Fundamentalists believe decisions about morality should remain within the family, and more specifically, with the male head of the household. By narrowly defining appropriate roles for men and women, the world seems a more orderly place. However, the traditional family fundamentalists support is a social construction. Nonetheless, fundamentalists view this family form as instituted by God. It is therefore irreligious to propose granting full equality to women.

Studying the role of religion is important in the field of social inequality. Religion, particularly belonging to a fundamentalist religion, was shown to be important in the development of traditional gender roles. In order to create more equality—as
defined by non-traditionalists—between men and women in the family, as well as in the labor market and in the political structures of our society, one must know all the variables influencing gender role attitudes. While I do not suggest to have exhaustively studied every influence determining how one comes to hold a traditional view of gender, this research has shown that religion continues to play a role in that process. To ignore religion would be detrimental to eliminating social inequality between men and women.

Traditional religious views of women's roles compromise gender equality. If women are indeed renegotiating within their own lives, this should be more openly discussed within fundamentalist religious groups. Holding up one model of what it means to be a woman is detrimental to those women who would not freely choose this lifestyle. While it is acceptable for women to choose to stay in the home and care for their husband and children, religious doctrine which forces women into this place reinforces a subordinate position for all women. More studies of the actual behaviors of women in fundamentalist religions may illustrate their reinterpretation of doctrine, and enable other women to have a wider range of acceptable behavior in their lives.

One interesting aspect of Lenski's work that remains true today is the relative lack of research done in the area of religion within sociology. In a study of the effects of religious denomination on sex differences in occupational expectations, Rhodes (1983) notes that the effects of institutional arrangements which restrict the life chances of women in our society have been gaining greater attention in research. Yet, the study of religious restrictions has received limited attention. The effects of religious orientation on sex differences in life goals have not yet been studied in great detail. The influence of religion in social inequality and stratification is an area in sociology where more work is needed.
In reviewing the literature, much of the work done is on attitudes, and not behaviors or practices. This may be an important clue as to why religion is overlooked. Studies linking ideology to material aspects of life, such as labor force participation of fundamentalist women or voting behavior of Protestant fundamentalists, may increase interest in religion's role in determining one's place in the social hierarchy. Religion should hold a place in the study of social inequality if egalitarian systems are to be realized for men and women.
References


