



Contemporary Approaches to Gender and Religion

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Jennifer McMorris and Jennifer Glass

Abstract

Religious messages, mores, and laws profoundly shape the gendered lives of men and women. Religious engagement has been found to influence sexual practices, family formation, workforce engagement, and a host of other life domains. The influence of institutional religion on these elements of lived experiences is often treated as detrimental to women and religious institutions regarded as inherently patriarchal. However, women are often substantially more engaged in religious institutions and invested in religious identities than men. In this chapter we begin by reviewing theories explaining women's high rates of religious engagement and belief. We then evaluate common religious ideologies about gendered behaviors and examine the effects of such ideologies on the political, societal, economic, and familial experiences of men and women. We conclude by

summarizing the state of current research into the intersection of religion and gender and providing recommendations for future approaches.

A seeming paradox lies at the heart of research into the intersection of religion and gender. While religions often impose restrictive gender ideologies on congregants and have been criticized as inherently patriarchal or anti-female by many feminist thinkers, they often simultaneously have more female than male congregants and women within religious communities are often the most active and engaged worshippers. Explaining this apparent contradiction lies at the heart of much of the theoretical research conducted into the relationship between gender and religion. We begin by discussing the research attempting to explain women's greater religiosity overall, then turn to the perplexing question of how they reconcile their spiritual needs with the often negative depictions of women or restrictive behavioral codes applied to them by religious authorities. We move next to contemporary trends in religious observance, which show increasing bifurcation of the population in industrialized countries into observant or fundamentalist believers on the one hand and those who have disaffiliated from any formal religion on the other. How this impacts men and women's lives, especially given the entanglement of religious conservatives in politics and law-making, is an understudied area within the sociology of religion.

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J. McMorris · J. Glass (✉)
University of Texas at Austin, Austin, USA
e-mail: jennifer-glass@utexas.edu

1 Gender Differences in Religious Affiliation and Participation

One major theory explaining the gendered gap in religious involvement relies in part on the philosophical concept of ‘Pascal’s Wager’ (Miller & Hoffmann, 1995). Pascal’s Wager contends that, given the unknowable existence of a God, individuals are presented with two possible choices: believe in God and risk having wasted some time, or chose not to believe in God and risk eternal consequences. Thus the safest choice appears to be belief in God. Supporters of this theory argue that women are, on average, more risk-averse men and thus more likely to ‘hedge’ their spiritual bets. Some theorists supporting this risk-aversion explanation have argued that socialization encourages risk-aversion in women. Collett and Lizardo (2009) suggest a renewed focus on power-control theory (PCT). They argue that the differential power structures of patriarchal households, with their strong impact on daughters, socialize girls to greater levels of risk aversion than boys and, consequently, greater levels of religiosity. Many have critiqued this usage of PCT to explain gender differences in religiosity, arguing that both PCT and the risk aversion hypothesis often conflate biological sex with gender characteristics (Cornwall, 2009; Freese & Montgomery, 2007; Hoffmann, 2009). These authors, among others, call for greater engagement with such issues as intersectionality and a more nuanced understanding of gender theory.

Some proponents of this theory suggest that women are biologically predisposed to be more averse to risk, saying that only sex-specific biology could explain the cross-cultural and historical prevalence of female piety (Miller & Stark, 2002; Stark, 2002). Stark (2002) specifically linked testosterone, a hormone present in greater concentration in men, to this proposed biological sex difference in religiosity. Ellison and Bradshaw (2009) suggest something of a middle ground, contending that, as is evidenced in many other areas of scholarship, biology and socialization likely interact to influence the complex association between gender and religious engagement. In

this way, they tie the phenomenon of high rates of female religiosity into a larger body of literature evaluating the interplay of environment and genetics.

Critics have pointed to limitations of this risk-aversion explanation for the gendered gap in religiosity. Carroll (2004) critiqued the premise that women were universally more religious than men across time and culture. He points to evidence of the “feminization of piety” beginning around the 19th century in both Catholic and Protestant European and American traditions. He cites multiple scholarly attempts to explain this process, including evidence that European and American women began to see churches as a place to address and challenge the gendered norms of the era. Some suggest not only that the claim that women have always been more religious than men contentious, but that women in the United States in the modern era are not uniformly more religious than men. Schnabel (2015), analyzing the GSS, found instead that female piety was neither dominant across all religious traditions nor all religious measures. Sullins (2006) used the World Values Survey to also question the universality of feminine piety, finding that women were no more religious than men in a third of surveyed countries. Likewise, Ellis, Hoskins, and Ratnasigam (2016), in a study of both American and Malaysian college students found that, while women in both nations did report higher rates of religiosity on many measures, these higher rates were not consistent or statistically significant in all cases.

While the risk-aversion explanation for female religiosity has absorbed a great deal of academic attention and theoretical debate, many other explanations for high rates of female religiosity have also been proposed. Iannaccone (1990) proposed a structural explanation, arguing that women were often socialized to be religious in the same way that they were socialized to take on most responsibilities within the home. He tied religious engagement to this set of familial responsibilities and argued that, as consequence of this association, women are better at obtaining ‘religious rewards’ for themselves and the members of their household.

Many others have likewise focused on family roles as key forces shaping women's religious engagement (Becker & Hofmeister, 2001; Roozen, McKinney, & Thompson, 1990; Vaus & David, 1984). These theories are often explicitly or implicitly tied to Bahr's Family Life Cycle which argues that religious service attendance follows a distinctive life-cycle pattern, increasing after marriage and after parenthood of elementary school-aged children before declining when children leave home (Bahr, 1970; Chaves, 1991). This theory does not itself offer explanations for the gender gap in religious service attendance, but others have expanded upon it to argue that the primacy women place on roles as mothers may be a key force in shaping their heightened religious engagement (Becker & Hofmeister, 2001; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, & Waite, 1995).

Finally, a growing body of research suggests that gender characteristics, rather than biological sex may be a key force shaping differences in religious involvement. Many studies have found that men with personality traits or worldviews generally defined as 'feminine' were more likely to be religious than their counterparts and that similar within-gender effects held for women as well (Frances & Wilcox, 1998; Thompson, 1991; Thompson & Remmes, 2002). These studies use multiple different measures of gender identity including the Bem Sex Role Inventory to find correlations between such feminine characteristics and heightened religious engagement. Proponents of this theory often assume such characteristics to arise as a consequence of socialization rather than hormones or biology. However, such studies have generally been cross-sectional and incapable of speculating on causation.

Much of the research into the gendered gap in religiosity focuses on women or feminine characteristics as the drivers of higher participation; but in a sense this presupposes that women are 'more' religious rather than that men are 'less' religious. While some work, like Stark's testosterone theory, makes arguments which focus on both genders, the majority of theories, which appear to operate on the presupposition that women, rather than men, are the outliers, focus on various aspects of women's lives,

personalities, and experiences in order to explain the gendered gap in religiosity.

This plethora of contradictory theories coupled with a lack of standardization in the measurement of multiple variables, including risk-aversion and religiosity among others, points to the importance of conducting more empirical and theoretical work to explicate these complex relationships. The lack of attention to gender theory in this area is particularly noticeable, and could be remedied with a deeper elucidation of the role of biological (including hormonal), psychological, and social structural aspects of gender in women's greater religious participation. For example, smaller physical stature or strength (biological), bullying at school or home (social psychological), and responsibility for young children's care (social structural) may all predispose women to greater religious affiliation and participation. But these all represent different elements of a particular gender system common in many societies but not ubiquitous in all of them. Gender scholars have spent a great deal of time unpacking the distinctions between biological sex, psychological gender identity, and social structural position in a gendered division of labor, all of which could be fruitfully used to improve our understanding of the relationship between gender and religiosity. Moreover, scholars have done little to unpack the specific elements of religiosity that attract female congregants—is it social support for a shared moral order, practical help and support with childrearing or other tasks of daily life, psychological comfort and solace, or desire to identify with a larger purpose? Do women accept restrictive ideologies and social roles within their religious tradition because they believe in their virtue, or because they accept them in order to obtain other spiritual rewards?

2 Religious Ideologies About Gender

We turn now to the ideologies about gender, sexuality, and procreation within various religious traditions themselves, and their impact on

the women and men who affiliate with those traditions. Although social influences on individuals' gender ideology may come from a variety of sources, religious institutions serve as important transmitters of information about how to organize and conduct family life and child-rearing. Conservative religious groups, in particular, promote a family structure in which married women concentrate on homemaking rather than paid work, especially when their children are young (Bartkowski, 1999; Sherkat, 2001; Smith, 2000), and reify husbands' patriarchal "headship" and moral authority in the household. These groups have been growing in size and influence (Brooks, 2002; Hout, Greeley & Wilde, 2001), both in the U.S. and abroad (Chong 2008; Hawley, 1994; Jeffery & Basu, 2012; Mahmood, 2005). This emphasis on male authority extends to the religious organization itself, where women are denied access to religious leadership or the right to be ordained as religious leaders.

Importantly, while Christianity within the U.S. and Latin America has experienced a growing renaissance of conservative and evangelical Protestants, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and even Buddhism all have their particular fundamentalist versions expanding in other regions of the world as well (Almond, Appleby, & Sivan, 2003; Emerson & Hartman, 2006; Hawley, 1994; Lehman, 1998; Sen & Wagner, 2009). This rise in fundamentalisms often occurs as a rebellion against modernity and secular moral systems. Many scholars believe it flows from the economic and family upheavals wrought by global capitalist incorporation of nations into a world economy where entire groups (of mostly men) lose their traditional sources of security, support, and authority. As consequence, they focus particularly strongly on ideologies of gender and family behavior. Despite the many theological differences among these religious traditions, fundamentalism within each is often defined by a consistent set of characteristics (Almond et al., 2003; Bruce, 2000; Emerson & Hartman, 2006; Lawrence, 1989; Riesebrodt, 2000). Across the world's major religions, fundamentalist groups

emphasize heterosexuality, the procreative purpose of sex, sexual purity before marriage and modesty of dress and behavior (particularly for women), rigid gender differentiation of roles and responsibilities, and patriarchal household structures (Almond et al., 2003; Chong, 2008; Emerson & Hartman, 2006; Koopmans, 2015; Mahmood, 2005). Both the global spread of religious fundamentalisms and religious intolerance, as well as the similarity in gender ideologies across these otherwise disparate theological movements, suggest that their origins lie in similar processes of social dislocation and rest on similar fears of moral disorder that place unusually burdensome restrictions on women because of their role in procreation and family care.

Given this primacy of family obligations, fundamentalist groups often have higher fertility rates than other religious groups. Among fundamentalist Christians, this focus on fertility is best embodied in the Quiverfull Movement, with its rejection of all forms of birth control and emphasis on children as gifts from God. In practice, many fundamentalist groups, regardless of which broader religious traditions they adhere to, vocally reject various methods of birth control as interfering with divine plans. Women's fertility, in particular, thus becomes deeply bound to their religious devotion and sense of personal worth.

Given this focus on gendered household roles, male headship, and fertility, it is not surprising that many fundamentalist groups are particularly discouraging of and in some cases openly hostile toward the LGBT population (Barton, 2010; Emerson & Hartman, 2006; Fulton, Gorsuch, & Maynard, 1999; Lalic & McLaren, 2010; Ross & Anderson, 2014; Wong & Angela, 2013). Same-sex attraction is regarded as inherently sinful and to be overcome or ignored. In American Protestantism, this discouragement of homosexuality may be most visible in the rise of so called 'conversion therapy' programs designed to uncover and correct the psychological 'illness' of same-sex attraction (Erzen, 2006; Robinson & Spivey, 2007) Such programs often include an emphasis on rigid gender hierarchies

in which 'healthy' men must assert their authority over submissive 'healthy' women. This focus on heteronormative sexuality can have devastating consequences for both men and women. Those who participate in 'conversion' or 'reparative' therapy often experience bouts with depression and stress (Erzen, 2006). Gay Conservative Protestant men who chose to marry women, perhaps in response to pressure to conform to religious norms, can later experience family unrest when they act out their sexual preferences through extramarital affairs (Wolkomir, 2004). Conservative Protestant wives of gay men often report focusing on their own lack of 'femininity' or failures as wives as explanations for their husband's sexual preferences (Wolkomir, 2004). Many Conservative Protestants have held firm to this treatment of homosexuality as a psychological or spiritual disorder even as a growing number of western countries and states within the US have prohibited the practice of conversion or 'ex-gay' therapies. This legal rejection of conversion therapy is a reflection of consensus of mental health practitioners who have come to regard such treatments as unethical and ascientific. The American Psychological Association and the American Pediatric Association along with many other medical groups oppose conversion therapy and, in response, many insurance companies refuse to subsidize such religion-based treatment programs.

While fundamentalist traditions often encourage purity for both men and women, the emphasis on female sexual purity is stronger. In much fundamentalist theology, female desire is stigmatized as inappropriate, and opportunities for men and women to spend time alone together are carefully restricted to preserve this idealization of female virginity. Such focus on female sexuality often includes an implicit assumption about male sexuality, namely that men are vulnerable to sexual temptation, and unable to control their impulses, so the responsibility of regulating male desire falls heavily on women. As consequence, many fundamentalist organizations rely on either codified or implicit rules about appropriate female dress. Women are discouraged from displaying various parts of their

anatomy because doing so might bring on male desire and male attention, which should be restricted to a husband within marriage. Women who violate such dress codes are thus seen as inviting male sexual aggression. The Muslim hijab is often the focus of Western academic and popular discourse on religious dress codes for women, but it is far from anomalous. Multiple Protestant groups including the Mormons, Amish, and Mennonites dictate modest dress for women. Religious schools also institute strict dress codes for students in their halls. Other Orthodox, conservative or fundamentalist groups in a host of faith traditions impose similar restrictions. Such dress codes are often markedly similar, focusing on the length of skirts and sleeves and some form of head covering.

This rise of fundamentalism has not occurred without pushback from secular society. Legislation in many European countries has banned or restricted the wearing of burkas and niqabs in public venues. This legislation is often framed as a protection of women's rights and a symbolic rejection of the conservative gender ideologies associated with fundamentalist religions (Billaud & Castro, 2013; Burchardt, Grier, & García-Romero, 2015a, 2015b; Spohn, 2013). However, many feminist thinkers contend that such laws are themselves deeply problematic, hearkening back to the worst of colonialist racist arguments (Billaud & Castro, 2013; Spohn, 2013). Others argue that such laws, with their focus on female dress are just as problematic for their restriction of 'excessive' clothing as they would be if they required modest dress (Spohn, 2013). Men in fundamentalist groups often also have dress codes tied to their devotion, but failure to adhere to such requirements does not bring the same assumptions of sexual promiscuity or immorality.

Fundamentalist groups across multiple religious traditions often also adhere to codes regarding the physical separation of unmarried men and women. Such codes may apply only to worship services, or they may prohibit unmarried non-related men and women from interacting without chaperones in any environment. For example, as an evangelical Conservative Protestant. Vice President Mike Pence refuses to have

dinner alone with women who are not his wife, or to attend events where alcohol will be served without his wife. These sorts of behavioral codes, much like the dress-codes discussed above, are based on the notion that women are inherently a form of sexual temptation. Because women are an ever-present source of sexual temptation within the fundamentalist community, their bodies and behaviors must be regulated.

Conservative and fundamentalist religious groups are not representative of all religious groups' approach to modernity and reaction to changing social norms, however. Mainline and liberal groups across religious traditions often emphasize strong but more forgiving sexual ethics, accept family planning, reject patriarchal, authoritative households in favor of egalitarianism and an equitable division of household labor, and make space in religious organizations for women's and other disenfranchised groups' participation. The seminary for many mainline and liberal Protestant Christian traditions is often a socially engaged and politically liberal institution. This may be why in the last few decades, we have seen many prominent instances of Episcopalian, Presbyterian, and Methodist religious leaders defying official rules of their denominations in order to appoint gay leaders or officiate at same-sex marriage ceremonies, as well as anoint women leaders, until denominational rules themselves sometimes change towards greater inclusion. Similar processes have occurred in Reform Judaism and "liberation theology" within Catholicism.

Such liberal and mainline leaders do not have free rein in their efforts to reinterpret their faiths in a modern era. Western Protestant leaders in international denominations have had difficulty changing religious rules and teachings on issues of female leadership or homosexuality because they cannot reach consensus with the large proportion of Protestant leaders from more politically and socially conservative nations. Some denominational leaders have also been afraid to push liberal Western religious ethics too aggressively for fear of denominational fracturing both on the international and national levels. This desire to keep peace has led some

denominations to heavily control international organizational meetings in order to keep discussions over such controversial issues from happening. Such caution is likely exacerbated by the shifting demographics of religious adherents with mainline and liberal religious groups shrinking and greater proportions of worshipers globally being born in gender-conservative cultures (Hout et al., 2001; Norris & Inglehart, 2004).

In addition to demographic and organizational challenges, more socially liberal mainline and liberal Protestant leaders have expressed concerns about preaching to the political left of their congregations. There is often something of a political divide between religious leaders and the average congregation member, particularly in southern, rural, or low SES communities (Olson & Cadge, 2002; Cadge et al., 2007; Cadge, Olson, & Wildeman, 2008). For some mainline Protestant leaders this concern about within-congregation difference leads them to conceal not only their religio-political leanings but aspects of their identity as well. Gay and lesbian religious leaders in mainline or liberal churches likewise express deep concerns about discussing their sexuality with congregation members for fear that they will not be accepted (Comstock, 2002).

In open and affirming mainline and liberal denominations where religious leaders and congregants are in concordance in their acceptance of LGBT congregants, religious mores and expectations about gender and relationships are still often both visible and 'traditional' (Adler, 2012; Anderson, 1997; Buzzell, 2001; McQueeney, 2009; Rodriguez and Ouellette, 2000; Scheitle, Merino, & Moore, 2010; Whitehead, 2013). Congregations often implicitly and explicitly discourage sex outside of committed relationships, emphasize the importance of religiously sanctioned marriage, and encourage child-rearing.

Discomfort with the perceived restrictions of life in open and affirming congregations and the rise of the internet as a medium to connect previously isolated individuals or communities has led to the rise of specifically gay and lesbian churches and congregations (Luckenbill, 1998; Anderson, 1997). Because such groups do not

adhere to one particular denominational affiliation and because little research has been done specifically examining such congregations it is difficult to make affirmative statements about their structures, doctrines, or sexual ethics and mores. Greater, perhaps qualitative, research into these groups might produce a rich literature on how stigmatized individuals within a community seek to simultaneously reject such stigma and embrace the broader ideology of the community itself.

3 Contemporary Trends in Religious Observance: Bifurcation and Its Consequences for Gender Systems

While the global rise of religious fundamentalisms has been the most important contemporary religious trend, a simultaneously decline in religious observance in most Western industrialized countries has tempered the impact of resurgent fundamentalism in modernized societies. Indeed, some evidence suggests the growth of secularism in developed countries may be in part a reaction to the rightward movement in the world's major religions (Lugo et al., 2012). Young adults, who are on average more political and socially liberal, are also substantially less likely to affiliate with evangelical Christianity than older generations (Lugo et al., 2012). Whether a cause or an effect of religious fundamentalism, secularism has clearly been ascendant in Western Europe for several generations (Norris & Inglehart, 2004). More noteworthy is the recent spread of secularism in the United States, an environment in which religiosity has traditionally been strong and linked with national identity. Perhaps as a result, secularism in the U. S. has taken the form of identification with a generic "spiritual" label rather than a complete rejection of religious belief (Lugo et al., 2012). But these disaffiliators nevertheless reject the theology and behavioral dictates of organized religion in favor of a more personal and diffuse relationship with the divine that comports more closely with their personal morality.

This group of unaffiliated, many of whom identify as "spiritual but not religious" now represent almost 20% of all Americans and an astounding 32% of Millennials and younger adults (Lugo et al., 2012). The majority of the unaffiliated report objections to religious institutions, including the belief that religious institutions are corrupt or hypocritical as their primary reason for disaffiliation. The unaffiliated are also significantly more politically liberal than their counterparts, suggesting that this rejection of religion in the United States may partially be driven by a symbolic rejection of the conservative values of the Religious Right (Hout & Fischer, 2002). Recent immigration trends have also encouraged the spread of secularism and religious pluralism, with streams increasingly coming from non-Judeo-Christian countries such as China, Korea, and India.

While many secularists will remain so over the life course, the concentration of the "spiritual but not religious" among young people suggests that at least some may return to the religion of their youth as they form their own families (Glass, Sutton, & Fitzgerald, 2015). Additionally, those who remain irreligious throughout their lives tend to have lower fertility rates than fundamentalists or others, suggesting a theoretical peak of unaffiliation (Skirbekk, Kaufmann, & Goujon, 2010). None of this suggests a resurgence of the religious marketplace however, as all western faith traditions find themselves facing increasing obstacles in transmitting religious affiliation across generations (Smith & Sikkink, 2003). Instead, fertility and migration patterns have become key forces shaping a religious landscape that is increasingly bifurcated in religious belief with religious conservatives on one side and the disaffiliated "spiritual but not religious" on the other.

We turn now to the impact of this religious bifurcation on gendered family and labor market behavior, remembering that religious fundamentalisms promote particularly tight linkages between sexuality, reproduction, and marriage. Evidence suggests this bifurcation in religious affiliation closely corresponds to differences in family formation behavior that impact overall

gender equality and women's empowerment. Cahn and Carbone (2010) label this religiously-based coupling of sexual morality and family obligation a "red family" system in contrast to the "blue family" system promoted by the disaffiliated "spiritual but not religious." These models structure the transition to adulthood for young people, especially young women, by shutting off or opening up avenues of achievement and the development of human capital.

In the red family system of religious conservatives, premarital sexual relations, cohabitation, and nonmarital childbearing are eschewed (as are all homoerotic attachments). This strong moral code governing sexual activity and the reification of childbearing as the goal of sexual partnering also lead to strong ideological views about birth control and abortion. Planning for sexual relations when unmarried by visiting doctors or purchasing contraceptives is inappropriate because it suggests that any subsequent sin of promiscuity was both premeditated and intentional (Regnerus, 2007). In addition, some highly effective contraceptives (certain pills and IUD's, for example) are avoided among religious conservatives even after marriage because they are believed to be abortifacents. Abortion is viewed as an attempt to escape the natural consequences of sexual activity through the killing of human life. Not surprisingly given these constraints and the powerful lure of adolescent sexual attraction, red family logic produces either an incredibly strict system of sexual segregation and surveillance as seen in some Middle Eastern societies or a substantial number of nonmarital pregnancies that result in live birth as seen in the U.S. and Latin America, though many are subsequently "legitimated" by engagement or marriage (Pearce & Davis, 2006). Avoiding children in the pursuit of material gain is viewed as both selfish and ungodly, as is the general acquisitiveness of contemporary life.

The blue family system more widely espoused by the disaffiliated "spiritual but not religious", by contrast, does not vilify early sexual involvements and treats adolescent sexual behavior as something to monitor and control for reasons of personal well-being and public health.

Marriage is seen as unsuitable for young people until they have acquired the maturity, life experience, and financial stability to sustain a lifelong commitment and the costs of parenthood. Childbearing and rearing are viewed as serious tasks better eschewed by young people still learning about intimate relationships and still developing their human capital and marketable skills. Within blue family logic, nonmarital coupling is unremarkable as long as protection is used, and nonmarital childbearing is nonproblematic unless it is unplanned by youth who are not yet capable of becoming good parents. The pursuit of human capital and the development of solid interpersonal and relational skills are considered the major tasks of young adulthood, while early family formation is considered a tragedy for both parents and children, leading to more tolerant views of both birth control and abortion to control the timing and spacing of children. Abstinence is neither praised nor condemned, and sexual learning is presumed to occur through early experiences before adult commitments are formed.

It is easy enough to see how the red family system encourages early transitions to adulthood while the blue family system discourages them. If sexual expression is limited to marriage, and educational attainment and the pursuit of material wealth are not to stand in the way of moral commitments to self and others through marriage, then early school leaving, marriage, and parenthood are not only permissible but perhaps preferred. If sexual impulses and attractions are dangerous and sinful outside of the context of marriage, early marriage can be the most parsimonious solution to the threat of promiscuity, nonmarital childbearing, and sexually transmitted diseases. Moral failure is defined most strongly as the refusal to accept children as the natural consequence of sexual partnering—nonmarital births are far less shameful than abortion and can always be neutralized through marriage. Within blue family logic, however, the most important criteria for marriage and parenthood are emotional maturity and financial stability, which are very difficult to develop early in the life course in a modern postindustrial economy. Many,

especially young men, will not achieve these milestones until their late 20's or even early 30's. Within blue family logic, it is unreasonable to expect abstinence from sexual activity for so many years following puberty, and thus sexual partnering and cohabitation before marriage must be tolerated, if not actively encouraged, as the means to keep young people engaged in higher education and early career investments. Moral responsibility is instead lodged in protecting oneself and one's partner from sexual disease and pregnancy through effective contraception, including abortion when necessary. Moral failure includes bringing a child into the world without two functioning parents in a stable middle-class environment.

But religious fundamentalism does more than structure early school leaving and family formation; it also supports a particular household division of labor after children arrive. The idea that men and women have different intrinsic natures and sensibilities that lead to separate but complementary roles in family life comes directly from scriptural authority believed to be inerrant on the subject. This impacts gender inequality in powerful ways. Not only are women discouraged from acquiring human capital in their own right, they are actively encouraged to prioritize family care and avoid labor force participation when children are young, leaving them with few resources to bargain for autonomy or respectful treatment within their household.

How powerful are these ideological forces in women's lives? Empirical research on youth raised in conservative Protestant households in the U.S. suggests that these forces are significant and impactful, even after controlling for region and class background. Conservative religious affiliation accelerates childbearing by several years and shortens schooling by over a year among young white and Hispanic women, and subsequently hinders their capacity to maximize their income and their children's development (Chandler, Kamo, & Werbel, 1994; Glass & Jacobs, 2005). The large and significant effects of childhood religious conservatism on later gender role ideology and paid work also indicate that

religious conservatism helps produce a familial division of labor that discourages women's labor market attainment (Glass & Kanellakos, 2006).

While women bear the brunt of these negative effects on the transition to adulthood, young men raised in conservative Protestant households also find themselves with about a year's less education and lower wages controlling for their human capital (though not the earlier age at reported first birth). Young people who experience accelerated transitions to adulthood, especially women, find themselves with higher total fertility and fewer resources for caring for those children through their own diminished earnings and their inability to stably partner with high-earning spouses. They are limited to job opportunities available to workers with low levels of education and job experience, rely more on kin and extended family for support, have less geographic mobility to take advantage of opportunities outside their immediate county or state of residence, and develop "accumulated disadvantage" over the life course in both financial and physical well-being. While religious participation can and often does help ameliorate some of the disadvantages of early transitions to adulthood, conservative churches themselves do little to support the young families created through "red family logic" (Regnerus, 2007). Not surprisingly, the divorce rate is paradoxically higher in areas of concentrated religious conservatism (Glass & Levchak, 2014).

Perhaps the most visible symbol of 'red state' logic within the United States has been the recent rise of hyperfertility movements among fundamentalist Protestants. These movements, begun in the 1980s, are often broadly referred to as "Quiverfull" though not all practitioners of hyperfertility explicitly associate with the label. The Quiverfull movement, taking its name from a biblical verse likening children to arrows within a quiver, regards hyperfertility as a religious obligation. Movement practitioners explicitly reject the ideologies of feminism as an evil inversion of godly order and instead glorify male household headship (Harrison & Rowley, 2011). This emphasis on patriarchal leadership, with husbands making all final decisions and taking responsibility for earning all funds to support

large families, can be tremendously stressful for both partners.

Members of hyperfertility movements eschew not only abortion or birth control but any form of ‘interference’ with the power of god to determine life, including fertility treatments (Harrison & Rowley, 2011). Adherents to hyperfertility movements often engage in homeschooling and build tightly knit communities of believers through online media and in-person meetings (Kunzman, 2010). It is not clear, despite the stated goals of practitioners of hyperfertility and public fascination with adherents, that such groups are destined to become a large proportion of the western religious landscape. They have not thus far demonstrated high degrees of success in recruiting outsiders into their belief communities, and not all children born into such movements will have either the interest or ability to find spouses interested in participating in such practices.

If this particular form of religious fundamentalism is often treated as both benign and entertaining, the sexual mores preached by fundamentalists more broadly can often erupt into serious violence. Among a subset of American fundamentalist Protestants and Catholics, adherence to a sexual and religious ethic which regards life as inherently sacred (and the provision of abortion as an act of murder) has been used to justify the bombing of abortion-providing clinics, and the murder of clinic staff and doctors on numerous occasions (Jacobson and Royer, Jacobsen & Royer, 2011; Juergensmeyer, 1998). These attacks have led to widespread fear among health professionals and caused many medical practitioners to refuse to train in or offer abortion services, reducing access across the board.

Religious violence justified through restrictive sexual mores is not limited to attacks on medical personnel, of course, but often targets individual men and women themselves accused of violating these restrictive codes. This violence often takes the form of homicide against women accused of having lost their virginity outside of wedlock or having engaged in adultery, and of men accused of homosexuality (Awwad, 2001; Chesler, 2009; Yurdakul & Korteweg, 2013). These men and

women are often regarded as having acted in a ‘modern’ or ‘western’ fashion and having brought shame to their entire families. Male heads of household are then frequently pressured by the community at large and other family members to commit violence against perceived offenders to restore familial honor and reaffirm sexual mores (Awwad, 2001; Odeh, 2010).

While honor killings have some legal protection in parts of the Middle East and North Africa, it would be a mistake to assume they occur only within that region. Honor killings of men and women accused of sexual misconduct occur throughout the world, though many western nations have failed to recognize the existence of such acts within their own communities or engaged in any form of tracking instances of such violence (Chesler, 2009). While honor killing is often tied to fundamentalist Islam and is generally supported via religious arguments, it is also a cultural phenomenon, an implicit rejection of the perceived attack of Western secular values and practices on local cultural norms. But honor killings are not restricted to Islam or the Middle East—violent acts against gays and lesbians within the United States are often motivated by religiously based intolerance and justified by scriptural authority, as well as lesser acts of discrimination and exclusion (such as refusals of service for gay weddings).

4 Conclusions and Recommendations for Research

More and better research on gender and religion is necessary to understand the overlooked role of religious institutions and religious ideologies in two crucial arenas: (1) the role of personal religious belief in the life choices and family behaviors of women and men that may advantage or disadvantage them and their children, and (2) the shaping of social institutions (schools, governments, health care organizations, and workplaces) in ways that support and extend patriarchal control of women’s lives. Some of our recommendations benefit research in both

areas. For instance, it's time to cast off religious typologies that center on denominational label or irrelevant religious dogma, rather than the measurable characteristics of religious belief such as the level of religious embeddedness in everyday life, social conservatism, and gender/ethnic exclusionary beliefs or practices. These are likely to be the characteristics that directly affect behavioral choices. Precise theological differences in dogma may matter less than the ways in which those differences are embedded or not into everyday practices and social institutions.

For this reason, we urge researchers to stop the balkanized study of religious groups (i.e. isolated studies of Islam, Christianity, or any other faith tradition), and pay more attention to the varieties of religious experience within each major faith group. One could easily argue, for example, that faith traditions based on literalist interpretations of ancient texts (fundamentalisms) are more similar to each other across major religions (Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.) than they are to the moderate or liberal branches of their own faith, for reasons like those underlined above. Indeed, it is the striking theological similarities in the treatment of women and religious/ethnic minorities across the fundamentalist branches of major world religions that requires explanation, not their differences with respect to worship and sources of divine power. By closely theorizing the dimensions of religious experience or participation that affect individual and institutional behavior, we will be better poised to understand when and why religion matters in the explanation of social behaviors, inequalities, and life chances. It may not be holy texts that impact behavior as much as the different implications for the organization of the social world that flow from those texts.

We are not arguing that theological differences do not impact gender attitudes and behaviors; indeed, religious beliefs directly dictate courses of action in some cases. But it behooves researchers to carefully clarify which beliefs matter and why, and to explore similarities of belief across major religions rather than assuming that religious typologies capture these similarities and differences accurately. Thus we

urge greater precision in theorizing and measuring linkages between religious affiliation and gendered behaviors, by directly specifying and measuring the beliefs (e.g. "women require moral guidance from men") that lead to behavioral choices no matter which religion they come from.

With respect to research on personal affiliation, demographers and social psychologists would benefit from a better theorized connection between affiliation and individual agency that focuses on the dimensions of religiosity that matter—level of theological liberalism (especially around gender and sexuality), salience of religion in personal identity formation, and ability to enact or resist religious dictates within household structures. In particular, we lack strong theories explaining how religious affiliations become integrated into gender and personal identities that motivate personal and political behavior. A crucial first step is to create a more useful theoretical frame to explain why women overall are more religious than men; one that explains both the intensity and selectivity of women's religious behavior (e.g. fewer women than men are prone to religious violence or religious repression). Too often, women are treated as a biological category rather than a socially disempowered group whose recourse to the divine might be motivated by that powerlessness. Like African-Americans in the United States, women have used religion as a tool to organize, get practical help and support, articulate legitimate grievances, and seek redress for moral wrongs.

With regard to the religious shaping of social institutions, we advocate greater attention to the rise of religious fundamentalisms during periods of rapid social change and dislocation. In particular, the appropriation of religion in dictatorial regimes whose goals are to preserve an otherwise changing social order needs better articulation, since the repression of women and sexual minorities is often central to this goal. What purpose does the suppression of women's rights serve, and which social groups' allegiance will be solidified by supporting extreme gender differentiation in rights and responsibilities?

How do women (and men) respond to these radical reinterpretations of scripture, especially when they identify as religious themselves? In addition, we recommend scholars recognize the central role of religious fundamentalism in political polarizations both in the U.S. and abroad. These political polarizations, and the policies promoted by fundamentalist ideologies, can result in the radical transformation of existing institutions.

We conclude by advocating for more attention to the central issue of *how* religious ideologies become embedded in the operation of social institutions (schools, governments, health care organizations, workplaces, etc.). Are there differences in the ways that fundamentalist versus moderate or “symbolic” theologies get incorporated into social institutions? What community and political processes lead to the incorporation of religious rules into institutional operations, especially in ways that solidify women’s disempowerment and loss of control over their lives? And finally, what happens to those women and men who do not themselves adhere to any particular religious philosophy, but live in a community whose institutions are strongly oriented around a religious paradigm? We hope that renewed emphasis on these questions will help us understand both the repressive and liberatory potential of religious belief systems and institutions on gendered inequalities.

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Jennifer McMorris received her doctorate in Sociology from the University of Texas at Austin in 2016. Her areas of interest include the intersection of religion, gender, and education. She currently works as an instructor for the University of Texas extension office.

Jennifer Glass is the Barbara Bush Professor of Liberal Arts in the Department of Sociology and the Population Research Center of the University of Texas, Austin. She has published over 50 articles and books on work and family issues, gender stratification in the labor force, and the impact of religious conservatism on women’s economic attainment. She is currently the Executive Director of the Council on Contemporary Families.