The Impact of Religious Conservatism On Men's Work and Family Involvement
Nicole H.W. Civettini and Jennifer Glass
*Gender & Society* 2008 22: 172
DOI: 10.1177/0891243207310714

The online version of this article can be found at:
http://gas.sagepub.com/content/22/2/172

Published by:
SAGE
http://www.sagepublications.com

On behalf of:
Sociologists for Women in Society

Additional services and information for *Gender & Society* can be found at:

- Email Alerts: http://gas.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts
- Subscriptions: http://gas.sagepub.com/subscriptions
- Reprints: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav
- Permissions: http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
- Citations: http://gas.sagepub.com/content/22/2/172.refs.html
The social conservatism of evangelical and fundamentalist groups includes their support for premarital sexual restraint, husband leadership, and father involvement. The authors explore whether religious conservatism affects work–family outcomes of men using the National Survey of Families and Households, 1988 and 1993 waves. The authors hypothesize that men from conservative households will make earlier transitions to adulthood, work fewer hours, and earn less money. Moreover, the belief in strong paternal involvement should lead religiously conservative men to spend more time in housework and child care. Results show that conservative religious affiliation does not hasten the transition to adulthood among men. Current religious conservatism results in lower wages but not reduced work hours, and religious affiliation does not affect housework or child care.

**Keywords:** men; masculinity; religion; work; family; child care; housework; life course

For scholars interested in gender inequality in the United States, the sexual division of labor within families is a crucial topic. Conservative gender ideologies that assign the unpaid tasks of the household and the routine care of children to wives and mothers, while preserving the energies of men for the paid labor force, seem to preordain greater economic and social power for men. In recent decades, the most prominent defenders and promoters of this sexual division of labor have been leaders and members of conservative religious denominations that view this division as both natural (the result of biological predispositions) and divine (an expression of God’s wisdom). Conservative religious
denominations have been growing in both number and political influence in the United States during the past two decades (Brooks 2000; Brooks and Manza 1997; Ellison and Sherkat 1993; Hout, Greeley, and Wilde 2001; Sherkat 2001). We estimate that today nearly 74 million Americans identify as members of a conservative religious denomination or are currently being raised by a parent who so identifies. The growth in this group of Americans has raised the specter of a religious “brake” on movement toward gender equality in occupational achievement, earnings, and life chances.

Yet the impact of religious conservatism on behavioral choices regarding work and family remains an understudied phenomenon, despite the primacy of sexual restraint and gender-based family roles and responsibilities in conservative theology. What existing empirical work has shown is a pattern of earlier marriage and family formation, lower educational attainment, withdrawal from the labor force, increased housework, and lower earnings in adulthood among religiously conservative women compared to their counterparts in mainline denominations (Darnell and Sherkat 1997; Ellison and Bartkowski, 2002; Glass and Jacobs 2005; Lehrer 1995; Sherkat 2000). We know little about whether this pattern is the same or reversed for religiously conservative men.

Since early family formation is associated with negative labor force outcomes (Hofferth and Moore 1979; McElroy 1996; Nord et al. 1992), we attend first in this article to patterns of family formation to see if men raised in religiously conservative households marry and begin families at younger ages (Mosher, Williams, and Johnson 1992; Xu, Hudspeth, and Bartkowski 2005), as do women who grow up in such households (Glass and Jacobs 2005). Next, we explore effects of current religious affiliation on fathers’ work hours, wages, and contributions to household and family labor, net of the effects of early family formation, to uncover the extent to which religious affiliation structures the household contributions of men. Our study is unique in that it (1) utilizes a nationally representative sample, (2) emphasizes racial heterogeneity in the impact of religion on family behavior, (3) models multiple work and family outcomes, and (4) avoids problems of causal order in cross-sectional data by using childhood religious affiliation to model later life course transitions.

BACKGROUND

Although the simplistic notion that religiously conservative men work and earn more to allow their wives to specialize in homemaking is tempting,
contemporary conservative discourse on men’s sexual conduct and family obligations to wives and children is neither unambiguously anti-egalitarian nor uniformly supportive of men’s investments in market work and breadwinning. While breadwinning may have once defined the essential obligation of fatherhood, evangelical concerns over divorce, non-marital childbearing, and declining paternal investment in children have led to a renewed emphasis on the importance of fathers as role models, spiritual leaders in the family, servants to their wives, and active parents (Gallagher and Smith 1999; Wilcox 2004). If in fact the conservative discourse on familial involvement produces men who eschew material wealth and worldly gain in favor of deeper involvement with their families, rising religious conservatism may have no net effect on gender inequality at all, as both parents sacrifice upward mobility for more family time. Although the breadwinning imperative logically leads to delayed marriage, delayed childrearing, and more time spent engaging in market work, norms of sexual restraint outside marriage, service to one’s wife, and involved fatherhood encourage earlier family formation and limits on weekly hours of paid work.

By the end of the twentieth century, social concern over the “disappearing father” in American culture was well established. American children were most likely to have fathers who were absent or specialized in paid labor if living in the household, and mothers who combined paid work with the domestic labor of the household (Bianchi 2006). The social, material, and political changes in the American economy of the twentieth century were characterized by the increased employment of mothers, rising divorce rates, and non-marital childbearing. All these trends tended to shift responsibility for children from fathers to mothers, increase work–family conflict for women, and erode the financial stability of households with children. Cultural reactions to these trends split along existing cleavages in the American political landscape. Although feminists called for work–family reconciliation policies and men’s increased involvement in housework and child care, religious conservatives sought the reestablishment of traditional nuclear families in which fathers provided financial stability and leadership, mothers cared for husbands and children exclusively if possible, and both had strong incentives to enter and stay in marriages.

Against this backdrop of general cultural unease with changes in contemporary families, conservative Protestant theology on gender and family life has focused most heavily on mothers’ special obligations to create a home and care for husbands and children. But fathers are increasingly the subject of evangelical discourse as single-parent and dual-earner families proliferate and raise conservatives’ concerns about parental care
and supervision of children. While religious conservatives throughout the
1960s emphasized a gender-specialized “separate spheres” approach to
the family that minimized fathers’ duties to provide care, by the 1970s the
rhetoric of conservative religious leaders began to encourage greater
paternal responsibility for children and investment in marriage and family
(while still maintaining gender-specific behavioral prescriptions). The
particular role of fathers in child development (providing conditional sup-
port, discipline, and active play while encouraging achievement) was
highlighted, as was the importance of the married, heterosexual, two-parent
family for raising faithful, well-adjusted children. This focus on father-
hood culminated in the Christian men’s movement, which reached its full
momentum in the mid-1990s with the rise of organizations such as the
Promise Keepers. In their discourse, mothers are encouraged to specialize
in domestic care, but fathers are urged to fulfill both breadwinning and
familial responsibilities because of the special and irreplaceable role of
fathers in the family.

The theology of family life developed in conservative denominations
rests on twin pillars: sexual abstinence prior to marriage and family
involvement following marriage. These twin pillars are important for both
men and women, although the detailed expectations of each are strongly
gender differentiated. Both genders are admonished that sexual expression
should be limited to the confines of lifelong monogamous marriage and
that children are the natural expression of sexual love, both messages that
courage early marriage and parenthood as alternatives to premarital sexual
expression and rigorous contraception. Men and women learn that
family is second in importance only to God. As women are taught that
their duty to God includes submitting to their husbands’ will and placing
family care ahead of career goals, men are taught that they are ultimately
responsible for the well-being of their families (Frederick 2003; Gallagher
2003; Gallagher and Smith 1999).

This theology of family life warns fathers and mothers about the
dangers of excessive and self-serving career involvement, which would
weaken ties between family members. Being a Godly man requires
leading the wife and family in a kind and loving way (Gallagher 2003)
and preventing career ambition from detracting too much from family
obligations (Dobson 1980). In other words, men receive a muted version
of the directive given to women: Beyond providing for basic needs, fam-
ily is a higher priority than paid labor (Bloch 2000; Gallagher 2003;

The twin pillars of sexual restraint and family involvement are evident
in best-selling religious advice books targeting men, in the activities of the

Downloaded from gas.sagepub.com at WINONA STATE UNIV on July 15, 2011
“men’s movement,” as represented by organizations such as the Promise Keepers and the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI), and in scholarly writings on religious conservatism. All three venues focus attention on men’s responsibilities to practice sexual restraint, lead their families, and involve themselves in their children’s lives. Consider this from Kay Arthur (2002, 36) in Sex ... According to God,

If a man is burning with sexual desire, the answer is not to have sex outside of marriage, but to get married. It’s as simple as that! ... Marriage is God’s means for satisfying our sex drive, and sex is to be experienced only within the confines of marriage. According to God—and regardless of what society says or portrays—a man, just like a woman, is to remain a virgin until marriage.

Ethridge and Arterburn (2004, 21) reiterate this theme in Every Young Woman’s Battle, noting, “As much as God knows the pleasures of sex and the bonding that can take place when a couple engages in it, He also knows the painful consequences of sex outside of marriage—physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual consequences. ... The great sex you and your husband will enjoy someday will be free from the painful consequences or guilt—and well worth the wait!”

Admonitions to fathers to increase their family involvement appeared in popular conservative Protestant literature as early as 1970 in James Dobson’s Dare to Discipline, continued to grow in works such as Father Power (Biller and Meredith 1974), What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women (Dobson 1975), Tender Warrior: God’s Intention for a Man (Weber 1993), and, most recently, Warrior’s Heart (Jackson 2004). In Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives, Dobson (1980, 151–52) notes, “My observation is that women are merely waiting for their husbands to assume [family] leadership.” On the subject of parental involvement, Ethridge and Arterburn (2004, 205) write,

Guys want their kids to have enjoyable childhood experiences, and they want a wife who will nurture their children and take pride in being a good mom. Of course, most guys look forward to being the best daddy they can be and plan on helping out with the parenting, but children require an enormous amount of time and energy and so, by God’s perfect design, both mom and dad need to provide for their child’s many physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of a number of conservative religious organizations devoted to the promotion of involved fatherhood, including the Promise Keepers, an international organization of men devoted to
instructing and supporting men in their quest to fulfill their religious duties to God, family, and self. Other groups that emphasize involved fatherhood include St. Joseph’s Covenant Keepers, Family Life Center International (a conservative Catholic group), NFI, the American Family Association, and the National Center for Fathering. All are involved in outreach programs and have a broad public interface through their information-based websites for fathers. The president’s welcome to the NFI Web site proclaims, “Ensuring that more children grow up with involved and committed fathers is the best way to ensure that every child has what should be their birthright: a happy and secure childhood” (NFI 2007). The Promise Keepers teach that a man’s goal each day is to out serve his wife—to serve her more than she serves him (Bartkowski 2004).

The dual imperatives of sexual fidelity and family involvement are also reflected in the academic scholarship on conservative Protestants, including “The New and Improved Clint Eastwood” (Bloch 2000), “Soft-Boiled Masculinity” (Heath 2003), and Soft Patriarchs, New Men (Wilcox 2004). According to Wilcox (2002), concern over father absence has created substantial ambivalence about traditional conceptions of masculinity among conservative Protestants. In his 2004 book, Wilcox describes conservative Protestant men as taking “an active and expressive approach to family life that makes them, in some ways, more progressive than their nonconservative peers” (2004, 73). Compared to mainline Protestants, he writes, religious conservatives are more emotionally dedicated to their wives and children. Using the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH) and the Survey of Adults and Youth, Wilcox shows that the wives of these men report higher levels of appreciation and affection from their husbands, while their children report higher levels of support, control, and discipline from their fathers. In earlier work using data from the NSFH, Wilcox (1998) showed that religiously conservative parents, while taking a stricter approach to discipline than less conservative parents, were more likely to praise and hug their children as well. Other work has also shown that conservative Protestant fathers are more involved with their children than are other fathers (Bartkowski and Xu 2000; King 2003).

The rhetoric of service within conservative religious ideology that encourages men to daily lighten the load of their wives implies that married men need to participate in domestic labor, including cooking, cleaning, yard work, and laundry (Bartkowski 1999). The contradiction between conservative religious teachings on family involvement and gender difference creates a paradox for men. Hard work and successful breadwinning are still important functions of household headship—men are expected to be responsible for their families’ economic well-being to free their wives to concentrate on
caregiving. Yet men are also expected to place their wives and children above their own careers. This work–family balancing act is usually discussed as an issue for employed mothers (Bielby and Bielby 1988; Hochschild 1997; Milkie and Petola 1999) but may actually be quite pronounced in the lives of these evangelical fathers (Bartkowski 2004; Heath 2003).

In the ideal family typification for religious conservatives, women would not experience much work–family conflict because they would avoid or reduce paid work in favor of household labor and child care (Wilcox 2004). On the contrary, the expectations associated with the roles of financial provider and involved family member would conflict for conservative Protestant men, as they do for employed mothers more generally. For these neo-traditional breadwinner–housewife families, it is the husband and not the wife who must manage the demands of work and home life. In this article, we ask, Do religiously conservative men marry and become fathers earlier than other men? Do they therefore sacrifice career advancement, even in the face of expectations that they serve as primary financial providers for their families? Do they “out serve” their wives by performing more housework and child care than other men, or do they avoid domestic work to be in line with their religious beliefs about gender differentiation in family roles?

**HYPOTHESES**

As a first step to understanding the role of religion in constructing men’s work and family lives, we delineate a set of hypotheses about men from conservative religious backgrounds compared to men raised in mainline religions. Given the importance of sexual abstinence before marriage in conservative discourse, we believe that men from religiously conservative backgrounds will

1. Marry earlier in life and
2. Become fathers earlier in life.

We also hypothesize, based on the possibility of early family formation and the literature on family involvement, that men who currently report a conservative religious identification will face pressures to avoid excessive careerism to allow greater family involvement. This means that, controlling for class background and human capital, religiously conservative men will

3. Spend fewer hours in paid employment per week,
4. Earn lower hourly wages,
5. Spend more hours engaged in housework, and
6. Spend more time caring for their children.
METHOD

Sample

The data come from the 1988 and 1993 waves of the NSFH. This survey includes all life history information pertinent to our study, including respondents’ religious upbringing, family history, employment history, gender ideology, marital and childbirth history, and current religious affiliation and relevant control variables such as age and region of residence. The data were first collected between March 1987 and May 1988 from 13,008 respondents aged 19 and older. The follow-up study collected data from 10,007 of the original respondents between 1992 and 1994. Because of the oversampling of several groups, we include individual sample weights recalibrated separately for the sample in each model, ensuring that the samples remain representative of their U.S. populations (Sweet, Bumpass, and Call 1988). Because the wave 2 data were collected during the rapid growth of the Christian men’s movement, the effects of childhood conservatism on early life course transitions among the men in these data may be muted. However, sufficient time had passed for the effects of family-centered teachings, which began in the early 1970s and were widespread by the early 1980s, to manifest themselves in men’s family involvement and paid labor choices in the early 1990s.

For our investigation of life course transitions, we limited the sample to non-retired men younger than 65 to avoid the confounding factor of selective mortality among older men. Of the 10,789 main respondents in the 1988 NSFH under age 65, 4,519 were men. After listwise deletion of missing data on crucial variables, the final sample size for life course transition models was 3,790. Among wave 2 respondents, 8,231 were younger than 65, and of these 3,276 were men. After eliminating retired men and cases with missing information on variables of primary interest, the final sample for labor force models was 3,016. Because of the smaller subset of men who responded to housework questions and child care, the final sample for housework models was 2,927, and the final sample for the child care model decreased to 732 after excluding fathers who did not reside with the focal child. Results on child care hours, therefore, should be considered with some caution.

Measurement of Variables

Dependent variables. Age at first marriage and age at first birth were calculated from life history information dating the year of these events in
wave 1 of the NSFH. To capture the experiences of respondents who became married or had a first child between survey waves, we created updated measures of these variables at wave 2. We measured weekly work hours at wave 2 by combining responses to two questions. All respondents were asked, “How many hours did you work last week at your main job?” For those who had not worked in the past week or who had worked an unusual number of hours in the past week, we used the response to the question, “How many hours a week do you usually work at your main job?” Respondents participating in the labor force reported job earnings in the prior year. We used this variable in addition to the number of hours per week and weeks in the previous year they had worked to construct an hourly wage rate for each employed respondent at wave 2. We used logged hourly wages in all analyses to control for the skewed distribution of wages.

We measured hours of weekly housework at wave 2 as the sum of responses to a nine-item scale. Respondents reported the number of hours per week they spent on each of the following tasks: cooking, dishes, cleaning, shopping, laundry, driving, outdoor tasks, auto maintenance, and paying bills. A few men indicated that they spent more than 18 hours per day, seven days per week engaged in housework. We assume that these men were double counting the hours spent doing two tasks simultaneously, and we therefore truncated the upper limit of the total weekly hours at 126. We also divided the household tasks into “female-typed” (cooking, dishes, cleaning, shopping, laundry, driving) and “male-typed” (outdoor tasks, auto maintenance) housework measures. Female-typed chores, sometimes referred to as “routine” housework (Coltrane 2000), differ from male-typed tasks in that they occur on a more regular, often daily, basis and must be completed in a timely matter when the need arises (Barnett and Shen 1997). Male-typed tasks, on the contrary, are performed sporadically and can often be put off for days or even weeks at one’s convenience (Barnett and Shen 1997). As with the universal housework measure, we summed reported hours within each category to obtain a weekly total. Because research suggests that bill paying is gender neutral (see Coltrane 2000), we did not include bill paying in either the female-typed or the male-typed housework measures.

Respondents with co-residential dependent children at wave 2 reported the number of hours per week they spent alone with the focal child in their household playing, working on a project, enjoying leisure activities outside the house, or just talking. The total weekly hours spent in these parent–child activities served as our measure of child care.
Independent variables. Religious background was obtained by recoding answers to the wave 1 question, “In what denomination were you raised?” The literature provides diverse schemes for the categorization of denominations into those that are religiously conservative versus some other designation (Roof and McKinney 1987; Smith 2000; Steensland et al. 2000). We chose to use a modified version of Roof and McKinney’s (1987) coding scheme for conservative denominations because (1) it uses as its principle criteria the belief in Biblical inerrancy in the theological doctrine of each denomination and (2) all denominations, whether traditionally Black or white, are coded according to the same criteria, avoiding the confounding of conservatism with racial concentration. Biblical inerrancy is the belief that the Bible is literally true and can provide guidance for all of life’s decisions, and scholars believe it is a strong undercurrent in religious denominations that promote conservative views on gender (Hawley 1994). Following Steensland et al. (2000), we combined Roof and McKinney’s (1987) moderate and liberal denominations, creating a single category representing “mainline” denominations, which was then contrasted with conservative denominations. Those who reported no religious affiliation or preference were coded into a third category. Two dummy variables represented conservative denominational preference and no religious affiliation; mainline (moderate–liberal) religious denomination served as the omitted category. The wave 2 measure of current religious affiliation (as opposed to childhood affiliation) was in the same manner, using responses to the question, “What is your [current] religious preference?”

We used four indicators of class background to control for any preexisting association between social class and religious affiliation: mother’s highest level of education, father’s highest level of education, mother’s occupational prestige when respondent was 16, and father’s occupational prestige when respondent was 16, all obtained at wave 1. We included dummy variables for respondents who did not live with their father and for respondents whose mothers were not employed when the respondent was 16. A dummy variable for having parents who were not consistently co-residential was coded 1 for respondents who reported that their parents had never cohabited or were separated or divorced by the time they were 16.

The following additional control variables are often associated with membership in a conservative religious denomination and have thus been included in certain of our models to avoid misspecification: age, race (coded as Hispanic white, non-Hispanic white, and Black), years of education, gender traditionalism (the mean of responses to two 5-point Likert-type scales: “It is better for everyone involved if the father works while the mother stays at home with the children” and “Preschool children are likely to suffer if their
mother is employed”), South versus non-South residence in childhood, current South versus non-South residence of the respondent, current rural versus urban residence (measured at waves 1 and 2), and occupational gender segregation (as 11 percent of the sample was missing this value, missing cases were set to 0, and we included a dummy variable indicating missing cases).

**Plan of Analysis**

We employed a two-step modeling process, looking first at life course transitions and current employment outcomes and second at housework and child care hours. The two life course transitions investigated were age at first marriage and age at first birth. We used data from wave 1 to test these models of early life course transitions, as wave 1 provided a larger sample and these transitions would have been more affected by the religious climate of respondents’ upbringing than their current affiliation, should the two differ. These two dependent variables were regressed on childhood religious affiliation along with relevant control variables and interactions of childhood religious conservatism with non-co-residential parents and parents’ education. The interactions represent possible variation in the effect of childhood religious conservatism by family structure or class background.

We used the same procedure for labor force outcomes, consisting of hours of work and logged hourly wage. This set of analyses was conducted with the sample from wave 2, as these data provided the most recent information available. We first regressed the dependent measures on current religious affiliation and then added control variables and interactions of religious conservatism with parents’ education and family structure where significant. Finally, we repeated this process for housework and child care hours at wave 2.

**RESULTS**

The results of the analyses for life course transitions and labor force outcomes are presented in Table 1. The results for the housework and child care analyses appear in Table 2. In each model presented, column 1 shows the total effect of religious conservatism on the dependent measure and column 2 shows the religious conservatism effect net of family and personal background controls.

At first glance, the uncontrolled models suggest that religious conservatism does in fact curtail men’s occupational achievement while boosting
their child care contribution. Affiliation with a conservative religious denomination was associated with lower hourly wages and more weekly hours of child care. These uncontrolled findings support past research suggesting that religiously conservative men make more involved fathers (Wilcox 1998, 2002, 2004) and that perhaps they make career sacrifices to do so. The controlled models, however, provide incongruent findings, which we describe below.

The first results come from the wave 1 truncated regression analyses of age at first marriage and age at first birth. As column 2 in each of the models indicates, being raised in a conservative religious denomination did not have any significant main effect on transitions to marriage or fatherhood. Thus, hypotheses 1 and 2 are not supported. The second set of results in Table 1 speaks to how labor force outcomes (weekly work hours and logged hourly wage) were affected by religious affiliation at wave 2. Men who expressed no religious affiliation worked about two fewer hours per week than did men in mainline denominations. Men in conservative denominations, however, were not significantly different from their mainline counterparts, providing no support for hypothesis 3. The conservative group did have lower logged hourly wages compared to men from mainline denominations \( b = -0.16 \), supporting hypothesis 4. However, as the previous result indicates, their diminished wage was not the result of sacrificing time at work in favor of time with the family. Furthermore, for Hispanic men in conservative denominations, the negative impact on wages was cancelled out and reversed \( b = 0.56 \), with religiously conservative Hispanics earning more than other men.

The results for domestic labor and child care hours among men are presented in Table 2. Models indicate that current religious affiliation was not a significant predictor of the total number of hours that men spent in any type of housework, refuting hypothesis 5. Black men performed about five more hours of both total housework and female-typed housework per week than did white men, but the interaction of being Black with conservative religion was not significant. There was also no significant effect of conservative religious affiliation on time spent caring for the focal child. Thus, hypothesis 6 was not supported.

**DISCUSSION**

Overall, the pattern of results provides little support for the notion that conservative religious affiliation in either childhood or adulthood altered men’s work–family decisions toward early family formation and involved
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unadjusted Effect</td>
<td>Controlled Effect</td>
<td>Unadjusted Effect</td>
<td>Controlled Effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>14.85*** (0.29)</td>
<td>-11.24** (1.41)</td>
<td>11.00** (0.39)</td>
<td>-16.81** (1.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No childhood religion</td>
<td>-4.11*** (1.05)</td>
<td>-1.22 (0.86)</td>
<td>-3.18* (1.39)</td>
<td>0.30 (1.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative childhood Religion</td>
<td>1.61* (0.66)</td>
<td>-2.10 (1.69)</td>
<td>2.44** (0.88)</td>
<td>-1.11 (2.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-1.07 (0.78)</td>
<td>-1.10 (1.06)</td>
<td>-2.14 (1.20)</td>
<td>0.18 (1.03)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-3.72** (1.00)</td>
<td>-0.98 (1.36)</td>
<td>-3.91** (1.03)</td>
<td>-0.10 (0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work hours</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R² (OLS)</td>
<td>.003* (0.22)</td>
<td>.13** (0.18)</td>
<td>.02** (0.32)</td>
<td>.37** (0.26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** OLS = ordinary least squares. Standard errors are in parentheses. All models control for age, education, mother's education, father's education, father's occupational prestige, mother's occupational prestige, father not in the home, mother not employed, parents not co-residential, parents' education × conservative religion, and Black × conservative religion. Models 1 and 2 also control for raised in South and parents not co-residential × conservative religion. Models 3 and 4 also control for age at first marriage, age at first birth, presence of children younger than 6, urban residence, Southern residence, gender traditionalism, and wife not employed. Model 4 also controls for age squared, weekly work hours, occupational percent female, and a dummy variable for missing occupational percentage female. *p < .05. **p < .01.
TABLE 2: Wave 2 Analyses of Total Housework, Female-Typed Housework, Male-Typed Housework, and Child Care Hours for Non-Retired Men Ages 18 to 64

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent variable</th>
<th>Total Housework&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Female Typed&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Male Typed&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Child Care&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unadjusted Effect&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Controlled Effect&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Unadjusted Effect&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Controlled Effect&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>18.38&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.34)</td>
<td>24.34&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (2.79)</td>
<td>10.58&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.29)</td>
<td>13.34&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (2.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>0.69 (0.87)</td>
<td>0.72 (0.92)</td>
<td>1.74&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt; (0.70)</td>
<td>1.29 (0.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservative religion</td>
<td>0.28 (0.76)</td>
<td>0.14 (1.52)</td>
<td>-0.16 (0.61)</td>
<td>0.68 (1.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>0.17 (1.36)</td>
<td>0.99 (1.08)</td>
<td>1.13 (0.94)</td>
<td>-1.13 (0.76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>4.79&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (1.18)</td>
<td>5.21&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.94)</td>
<td>-0.50 (0.76)</td>
<td>-4.92&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-2.59&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (1.00)</td>
<td>-3.39&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.79)</td>
<td>1.35&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt; (0.55)</td>
<td>-4.92&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife not employed</td>
<td>0.85 (0.77)</td>
<td>-0.26 (0.61)</td>
<td>0.89&lt;sup&gt;*&lt;/sup&gt; (0.43)</td>
<td>-0.07&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job hours</td>
<td>-0.04 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.04&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt; (0.02)</td>
<td>0.02 (0.02)</td>
<td>-0.07&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt; (0.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>.000&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.02&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.002&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.04&lt;sup&gt;**&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2,927</td>
<td>2,927</td>
<td>2,927</td>
<td>2,927</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Standard errors are in parentheses. The analysis of child care hours is limited to those respondents with a co-residential dependent child. All models control for age, education, age at first marriage, age at first birth, non-marital first birth, presence of children younger than 6, urban residence, Southern residence, father's occupational prestige, mother's occupational prestige, father's education, mother's education, parents not co-residential, mother not employed, father not in the home, gender traditionalism, married × conservative religion, Hispanic × conservative religion, and Black × conservative religion.

<sup>a</sup> Hours per week.

<sup>*p < .05.  **p < .01.</sup>
fatherhood. Prior to controlling for family and class background and other factors, being raised in a religiously conservative household actually increased both the age at first marriage (by about 1.5 years) and the age at first birth (by about 2.5 years), indicating a pattern opposite to our predictions. We found no significant effects of conservative childhood religion on respondents' age at marriage or age at first birth, once controls for region, family, and class background were included in the models. These results provide no evidence that men from conservative religious backgrounds responded to the religious promotion of abstinence before marriage or the prohibition of various forms of birth control by entering into marriage or parenthood earlier in the life course. These results are puzzling, especially when contrasted to the findings for women raised in conservative religious denominations (Glass and Jacobs, 2005). Sociologists of religion, however, have long noted the feminization of religion, including church attendance and other forms of religious participation (Roth and Kroll 2007; Yinger 1970). Perhaps young men are simply more resistant to the messages of abstinence and natural fertility control or find the cultural expectation that they provide family support too difficult to enact early in the life course.

With respect to labor force outcomes, conservative religious affiliation had a negative effect on men’s hourly wages, but not on their weekly work hours. Although conservative men were somewhat less successful wage earners than their counterparts in mainline denominations, as hypothesized, it was not because they traded hours at work for hours at home. That is, the wage penalty among religious conservatives did not appear to be the result of shorter work hours. The origin of this wage disparity may lie in the occupational careers of religious conservatives; certainly this is an avenue for future exploration.

The results for housework and child care indicate that conservative religious affiliation did not affect the total number of hours of housework men performed, reaffirming similar results found by Ellison and Bartkowski (2002), nor did conservative religious affiliation affect the number of hours fathers spent one-on-one with their children, differing slightly from the result found by Wilcox (2002). When broken down into male-typed and female-typed housework, conservative men still did not perform more male-typed housework than their mainline counterparts, perhaps because religious admonitions to be involved husbands were tempered by religious imperatives to maintain gender differentiated household responsibilities.

As Wilcox (2004) suggests, conservative teaching on family involvement encourages the support, control, monitoring, and disciplining of children. It may be that religious conservatives considered the specific
forms of involvement to be appropriate for fathers, while actual family care work remains the responsibility of mothers. Because our child care measure was based on attending to the physical needs of children younger than five and spending time one-on-one with children ages five and older, it is possible that our measure did not adequately capture the family contributions that are most likely to vary by current religious conservatism. Academic discourse asserts a pattern of somewhat egalitarian and shared caregiving in practice among conservative Protestant couples despite their family ideology of strong gender differentiation in roles and responsibilities (Bartkowski 1999; Denton 2004; Gallagher 2003), but this process did not result in greater domestic labor among religious conservatives compared to those in mainline denominations in the NSFH. A less sanguine interpretation would be that religiously conservative men do little housework and child care because they believe in gender differentiation within the home and see their role as helpers only, whereas mainline men do little housework despite their stronger beliefs in gender egalitarianism.

Another possible explanation for the paucity of significant effects of conservative religion on work–family outcomes is that effects of religious conservatism are predicated on high levels of religiosity. Wilcox (2004) describes a polarity between “active” and “nominal” conservative Protestants, in which men who are active participants in their religion successfully live out the message of family involvement, while men who are conservative Protestants but only irregularly attend services are actually less involved fathers and husbands or exhibit more problematic family behavior. To test this possibility, we repeated our analyses of current religious affiliation including an interaction of conservative religion with frequent religious attendance. Our findings indicated that being an active religious conservative affected only one finding. The significant negative effect of religious conservatism on logged hourly wages was mitigated for those who were active in their church attendance. It seems that it is actually the nominal members of conservative denominations who are driving down wages for religious conservatives, relative to those in mainline religions. Active members of conservative denominations are no more likely to reduce their time investment at work or participate in family care than are other men.

CONCLUSION

To summarize, we found no evidence that religiously conservative men, compared to men in mainline denominations, respond to the dual imperatives of breadwinning and involved fatherhood by decreasing their investment
in paid labor to increase their familial investment. The importance of conventional family formation and limited sexual expression before marriage in conservative denominations did not result in earlier transitions into marriage or parenthood. White men exhibited a wage penalty for belonging to a conservative denomination, but the reduction in wages was not associated with increased family involvement. In fact, religion had no effect on housework or child care contributions.

Our conclusions stand in contrast to the work–family outcomes for women raised in religiously conservative households (Ellison and Bartkowski 2002; Glass and Jacobs 2005). Employing similar models, Ellison and Bartkowski (2002) found that married women in conservative denominations did more hours of housework but men did not. Glass and Jacobs (2005) found that white women who came from conservative religious backgrounds had lower educational attainment, married and had children earlier, and were less likely to participate in the paid labor force. When the religiously conservative women in the NSFH were employed, they earned less than women from mainline backgrounds. These effects were indicative of greater investment in family and family building at the expense of career development. We expected similar, if perhaps muted, findings for the men in our sample because of the religious imperative these men face to place family above career, but we found little to substantiate our expectations.

That conservative women heed the message of family involvement, but conservative men do not, has implications for gender inequality in families and in occupational attainment. A separate spheres ideology in which the husband has substantial authority over wife and family has but one safeguard against male domination—that the man give freely of himself to his family and place their well-being above his own career attainment. The system hinges on the decision of each individual man to use his power benevolently and engage in tasks he is not compelled by an external locus to perform. When this self-regulation is unsuccessful, the disadvantaged position of women is not overridden by the magnanimity of their husbands. Our findings demonstrate that, among men in perhaps the only religious group that specifically instructs men to sacrifice excessive career involvement in favor of family responsibilities, such sacrifices were not evident in a large, nationally representative sample.

In the labor force, this pattern of religious influence among women but not men strongly implicates the rise of conservative religious denominations in the continued gender gap in labor force participation, earnings, and occupational achievement. To the extent that religiously conservative women, but not men, truncate their educational attainment, begin families
earlier, and invest more in child care, we should expect stubbornly persistent gender gaps in labor force participation and earnings despite the proliferation of occupational opportunities for women and declines in overt gender discrimination. Far from being gender neutral or facilitating a “pragmatic egalitarianism” through the injunction to men to out serve their wives and lead their families, our findings suggest that conservative religious ideologies may have a direct role to play in transmitting gender inequality in earnings.

NOTES

1. We estimate this number using the data summarized by the U.S. Census Bureau (2001). These data provide a sample of approximately 208,000 Americans, of whom 196,734 provided information on religious identification. We used the same coding scheme used in this article to code denominations to obtain a percentage. We then used this percentage and the current population estimate for March 28, 2007, at 17:15 GMT (see U.S. Census Bureau, 2007) to arrive at our estimate of 73,862,577.

2. Responses included in the conservative religion category were Southern Baptist, Latter Day Saints, Assembly of God, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God, Church of God in Christ, Brethren, Church of Christ, all Evangelical denominations, Jehovah’s Witness, Pentecostal, Reorganized Latter Day Saints, Seventh Day Adventist, Wesleyan, Holiness, Independence Fundamentalist, Born Again Christian, and Charismatic.

3. To create an interaction between religious conservatism and class background, we used a composite of father’s and mother’s education since parental income in the respondent’s family of origin was not available. If the respondent resided with both parents, father’s highest level of education was used; otherwise, mother’s education was used.

4. Wave 3 of the National Survey of Families and Households, though available at the time of our analyses, yielded small sample sizes because of the large number of retired respondents and the small number of respondents who still had children residing in their households.

5. Wilcox’s (2002) model of men’s one-on-one time with children found that Protestant men were significantly different from mainline Protestant men. A similar result was not reported as significant in his 2004 book, however, suggesting that the earlier result was not robust.

6. We also conducted an ANOVA comparing married men in the three religious groups on the proportion (of household totals) of housework they performed. We did the same with a proportional measure of child care for married men with children. Religiously conservative husbands performed a smaller share of total housework and female-typed tasks in particular. Results for male-typed housework and child care were not significant.
7. Like Wilcox, we classified respondents as “frequent” attendees if they attended religious services three or more times per month.

REFERENCES


Nicole H. W. Civettini is a graduate student at the University of Iowa. Her research interests include work and family, marriage, group processes, and identity. Her dissertation research is on the applicability of theories of marriage to same-sex married and partnered couples.

Jennifer Glass is professor of sociology and women’s studies at the University of Iowa. She researches the impact of motherhood on women’s earnings and career attainment and the impact of work–family policies on wage attainment.