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The Relationship between Religiousness and Intimate Partner Violence Risk and Protective Factors

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The relationship between religiousness and intimate partner violence risk and protective factors

by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my partner, Vittoria Anello, my mother, Diane Warren, my father, Peter Warren, Sr., my aunt, Brenda Watson, my sister, Jennifer Headrick, and to my niece, Hannah Wright.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my deepest gratitude and respect to my mentor, Dr. Suzanne Swan. She has provided me constant acceptance, support, guidance, and understanding over the last six years, and I feel incredibly privileged to be a part of her academic lineage. Thanks also to my committee, Dr. Bret Kloos, Dr. Mark Weist, and Dr. Terry Wolfer. I sincerely appreciate their time and effort throughout my dissertation work.

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I also thank my mother and father, Diane and Peter Warren, Sr., for having faith in me throughout my life. I hope I have made you proud. Thanks also my aunt, Brenda Watson, for always being there for me. I wish to thank my sister, Jennifer Headrick, for her encouragement and support. I would also like to thank my niece, Hannah Wright, for inspiring me to better myself and create the best future I can.

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ABSTRACT

This paper proposes an integrated model illustrating the mechanisms by which religiousness may serve to influence individual beliefs regarding intimate partner violence (IPV) and the potential for subsequent abusive behavior. Intimate partner violence is a serious public health issue in the US, affecting over 25% of women at some point in their lives (CDC, 2010; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Religion is a near ubiquitous aspect of American culture, with over 80% of Americans reporting some kind of belief in a higher power (Gallup, 2008). Overall, the literature shows that religiousness typically serves as a protective factor against IPV, but digging deeper, there is evidence to suggest that religiousness can serve as both a risk and a protective factor for IPV.

The present study proposed a model in which the relationships between religiousness, masculine power over women, and empathy would be mediated by endorsement of fundamentalist beliefs, as well as the potential for compassion towards close others to moderate those relationships. For this sample of 536 male college students, endorsement of fundamentalist beliefs partially mediated the relationship between religiousness and empathy. While religiousness by itself was positively associated with increased empathy, religiousness indirectly was associated with decreased empathy through fundamentalism. Conversely, religiousness had no direct relationship with masculine power over women, but was indirectly related to increased masculine power over women through

fundamentalism. Compassionate love had no significant moderating effects on these relationships. Implications for research and intervention are discussed.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV), or any form of abuse carried out between partners in a relationship, is an issue of great importance in the United States, affecting millions of individuals ever year in some way. National surveillance studies of Americans have found that 1 in 4 women report having been the victim of some form of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives (Tjaden & Theonnes, 2000). Over 80% of women victimized will have suffered that abuse at the hands of an intimate partner (CDC, 2010). Additionally, nearly one third of all female victims of homicide have been killed by a current or former partner (i.e. boyfriend or spouse) (Miller, 2004; Vigdor & Mercy, 2006). Beyond the proximal issues of personal danger and threat, victims of partner violence also tend to have increased rates of subsequent psychopathology, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorders, and depression (Nixon, Resick, & Nishith, 2004) as well as increased functional impairment such as loss of employment and increased health care needs (Trocki & Caetano, 2003). Taken together, these findings make it apparent that the phenomenon of partner violence constitutes a significant public health concern, in addition to the personal cost faced by every victim of IPV and their loved ones.

A number of risk factors for perpetration of intimate partner violence have been identified, but one of the most consistently predictive factors for IPV is the presence of

power differentials between partners (Imbrogno & Imbrogno, 2000; Robinson, 2003). Individuals with more relationship power than their partner tend to be at higher risk for endorsing less regard for the rights and well-being of the other person in the dyad (Schatzel-Murphy, Harris, Knight, & Milburn, 2009) than those with less relationship power. Furthermore, women who have been abused by their partners often report that their partners frequently engaged in behaviors they perceived to be explicitly controlling and served to maintain and reinforce the power differentials between them (Johnson, 1995; Simmons, Lehmann, & Collier-Tenison, 2008). This idea of male dominance and control over women in relationship is a key element of traditional views of Western hegemonic masculinity (Mahalik et al., 2003; Connell, 1987). Hegemonic masculinity itself refers to the promotion of the aforementioned male expectation of dominance over women (Smith & Kimmel, 2005), the adherence to which has been found to be related to male perpetrated violence towards women and attitudes conducive to partner violence in a number of contexts (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011; Greene & Davis, 2011; Moore & Stuart, 2005). Furthermore, perceived threats to belief systems supportive of masculine dominance and a man's internal sense of gender role, such as challenging a man's role as head of a relationship or endorsement of behaviors contrary to traditional gender roles, are also related to the tendency to carry out acts of violence and control against women (Jakupcak, 2003; Mahalik et al., 2005; McDermott & Lopez, 2013; Moore et al., 2008). As such, men who internalize the traditional expectations of male power in relationships tend to be at greater risk for perpetration of violence against their female partners.

Intersection of religion and IPV in the United States

Some of the earliest studies examining the intersection of religion and partner violence dealt primarily with the ways in which religious belief and involvement influenced marital relationship quality and the responses of clergy to victims of family violence (Alsdurf, 1985; Burris & Jaffe, 1984; Filsinger & Wilson, 1984; Pagelow & Johnson, 1988). In recent years, considerably more research has begun to examine the potential causal role(s) that religiousness may play in both the perpetration and prevention of relationship violence. Outside of the scientific context, this issue received early lay attention as well (Alsdurf & Alsdurf, 1989), primarily as a means to bring attention to the phenomenon of abuse within Christian families. One challenge for research into this area is that religiousness encompasses both beliefs and behaviors, and is in and of itself representative of the many ways in which individuals may outwardly profess their beliefs, cognitively internalize those beliefs, engage in actions related to those beliefs, justify their actions as a function of their belief systems and socially interact with others. As such, religiousness is best conceptualized as an amalgam of all of those factors (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999).

Overall, there is a growing literature base that suggests that religiousness (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999) is inversely related with intimate partner violence (Brinkerhoff, Grandin, & Lupri, 1992; Ellison & Anderson, 2001; Higginbotham, Ketring, Hibbert, Wright, & Guarino, 2007). There is also evidence that this relationship may be even stronger in cultures that tend to have a tradition of religiousness, such as African-Americans and Latinos (Ellison, Trinitapoli, Johnson, & Anderson, 2007) in the U.S. From a Christian framework of religiousness, the repeated teachings of the New

Testament extolling the virtues of love, understanding, and forgiveness are consistent with the above findings, since the act of abusing one's partner should be incompatible with those teachings (Elliott, Cunningham, Colangelo, & Gelles, 2011). While these teachings may vary from faith tradition to faith tradition, most major world religions tend to endorse ideal codes of conduct characterized by temperance, civility, and respect towards others. Indeed, increased religiousness also tends to be related to greater marital quality and stability (Dudley & Kosinski, 1990; Lambert & Dollahite, 2005).

However, there may also be aspects of religiousness that are not protective against partner violence, or at the very least can serve to create situations that increase the likelihood of relationship abuse. Most major religions in the United States have a history and tradition of male leadership and privilege (Neal, 2011). For example, in the Christian Bible, in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, it is written that wives should "submit yourselves to your husbands, as unto the Lord, for the husband is head of the wife. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Ephesians 5:22-24, NIV). These same sentiments are also echoed many times throughout the Bible (see also Genesis 3:16; 1 Peter, 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:12; Titus 2:4-5 as examples). However, in the next verse (Ephesians 5:25), Paul instructs for "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church, and gave himself up for her. Despite this instruction suggesting a complementary, mutually supportive and self-sacrificial role to be played by both men and women in relationships, the expectation of subservience of women to men creates an implicit power differential. In terms of relationship power, these teachings imply that men are to be the leader figures in relationships and thus granted more *de facto* power in the relationships as well as explicit authority over

women. Conversely, women tend to be expected to serve as complementary companions to men, fulfilling a submissive, supportive role in relationships.

Additionally, the phenomenon of religious belief is one that is experienced by a majority of Americans (Gallup, 2008), with most (80.6%) individuals reporting Christian, Jewish, or Muslim affiliation (Pew, 2008). As such, the influence of religious belief on power dynamics of male-female relationships is one that cannot be ignored, especially given the powerful sense of group belonging that identifying with a particular religious group can offer (Krause & Wulff, 2005) and the potential for generational transmission of those beliefs (Simonič, Mandelj, & Novsak, 2013). However, it is important to note that the view of gendered power in relationships can vary by the faith traditions an individual professes. Furthermore, fundamentalist or literalist religious views, characterized by more literal and dogmatic interpretations of religious teachings, tend to be associated with more traditional expectations of gender roles in relationships (Hoover & Coats, 2011). As such, it becomes apparent that the relationship between religion and perpetration of partner violence is not straightforward. Referring back to Paul's letter to the Ephesians (5:28-29), men are commanded to “²⁸love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church.” This command, issued in the same decree as the previous one instructing women to submit to their husbands, implies that intentionally bringing harm to one's partner is completely incompatible with Christian beliefs. At the same time, the expected power relationship between men and women is one that can lend itself to abuse, due to the degree of authority granted to men over women. It is this seemingly paradoxical relationship that suggests that there may be ways

that some aspects of religion serve to protect against the perpetration of partner violence by men, while other aspects may act as risk factors, increasing the likelihood of abuse.

While the overall relationship between religiousness and intimate partner violence appears to be negative (i.e. religiousness tends to be related to less perpetration), there is also evidence to suggest that it is far more complicated. Some studies call into question the consistency (Todhunter & Deaton, 2010) and linearity (Jankowski, Johnson, & Holtz-Damron, & Smischney, 2011) of this general inverse religiousness/IPV relationship, especially when controlling for other factors (Cunradi, Caetano, & Schafer, 2002). The conceptual model proposed in this study is illustrated below:

The general conclusion that could be drawn is that religion potentially interacts with and has varying levels of influence on other variables that can predispose a man towards or against perpetration of relationship violence, serving as a protective factor or as a risk factor. Whether or not religiousness works as a risk factor or a protective factor may be a function of fundamentalism (i.e. an individual's internalization of different aspects of their religious belief system as essential and infallible and represent the literal expectations of their faith (Altemeyer & Huntsberger, 1992)). However, the effect of fundamentalism on risk and protective factors may be influenced by their internalization of their faith's teaching of love and compassion. To this end, the purpose of this study is to examine these relationships and shed light on the mechanisms through which religiousness may work to influence risk and protective factors related to the perpetration of intimate partner violence.

Religiousness

While there have been earlier examinations of the general protective effect of religiousness on the risk for perpetration of intimate partner violence (Brinkerhoff, Grandin, & Lupri, 1992; Ellison & Anderson, 2001), there is a relative scarcity of research on the mechanisms through which religion provides this protective effect. Ellison, Bartkowski, & Anderson (1999), while finding a general inverse relationship between religious attendance and perpetration of domestic violence for men, suggest a number of potential mechanisms of action. Regular religious attendance implies that an individual is typically more involved with their beliefs than one who does not regularly attend. Furthermore, incorporation of religious beliefs into the regular functioning of a relationship, (e.g. religious attendance, shared beliefs) has also been found to be related to lower rates of violence (Higginbotham, Ketring, Hibbert, Wright, & Guarino, 2007). Furthermore, increased religiousness provides access to social resources (e.g. pastoral counseling, workshops, support groups) that may offer support when faced with situations that might otherwise put a couple experiencing conflict at greater risk of violence. The increased social support network offered by affiliation with a religious organization could also be seen to function as an avenue for social comparison and positive social control, whereby men judge their behavior by the publicly-endorsed system of beliefs of male stewardship, sacrifice, and leadership (see again Ephesians 5:28-29) espoused by others in their microsystem of religious life. Furthermore, involvement in religious social activities typically entails participation in groups, making isolation of a potential IPV victim more difficult for less likely for a potential perpetrator. Dyadic couple relationships may also benefit from the shared religious belief system of

their larger faith communities, since those communities often value love, forgiveness, and mutual caring as virtues (Ellison, Bartkowski, & Anderson, 1999). As such, the normative effects of these beliefs can easily influence an individual's ideas of acceptable relationship behavior such that violence or abuse towards a partner is antithetical to an appropriate religious life.

Empathy as a Protective Factor

Given the communal nature of involvement in faith communities, and the mandates for men to love, protect, and sacrifice for their partners, it may be that religion's protective effect against partner violence comes from the internalization of teachings of protection, love, empathy and caring for one's partner. There is evidence to suggest that religiously involved individuals tend to report less aggression and more altruism and empathy (Saroglou et al., 2005), and that individuals engaging in prosocial behavior often report that their actions were at least in part grounded in their religious and moral belief systems (Colby & Damon, 1995). The perpetration of intimate partner violence, as a form of human aggression, is quite obviously not beneficial, and as such is inversely related to empathic concern for others (Covell, Huss, & Langhinrichsen-Rohling, 2007). Empathy, as an emotional construct, has been found to be negatively related to interpersonal violence (Richardson et al., 1994; Richardson, Green, & Lago, 1998), as well as indirect and relational aggression (Kaukiainen et al., 1999; Loudin, Loukas, & Robinson, 2003; Richardson & Green, 2003).

As previously stated, social norms regarding empathy and sacrifice can be powerful influences on an individual's tendency towards acts that benefit others

(Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Krupka & Weber, 2009). Religious norms can be associated with prosocial and altruistic behavior as well through priming effects (Ahmed & Salas, 2008; Pichon, Boccato, & Saraoglou, 2007), such that presenting positively themed religious stimuli (e.g. words or images that involve positive religious imagery) tends to inhibit morally questionable actions and increase intention to help others (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). It follows that religion can serve as a context within which priming mechanisms work to increase the likelihood of empathic intentions and behavior (Duriez, 2004). There is also evidence to suggest that the normative influence of religion on positive adult behavior can follow a developmental course, starting early as children become aware of and are exposed to their parents' beliefs and engagement in religious activities. As such, religiousness may help to establish norms encouraging empathy and selflessness at a very early age in children (Furrow, King, & White, 2004). Generally speaking, religiousness is related to greater prosociality and fewer psychosocial problems for youth (Donahue & Benson, 1995). Furthermore, starting in childhood and adolescence, there is a consistent inverse relationship between deviant behavior and religiosity. Following this developmental trajectory, this relationship extends into adulthood, with religiosity serving to reduce childhood deviance, which in itself is a predictive factor of adult perpetration of partner abuse (Goussinsky & Yassour-Borochowitz, 2007).

From this body of evidence, it follows that religion can protect against intimate partner violence via the mechanisms of enforcing related norms of empathy and kindness. These factors tend to decrease the acceptability and frequency of perpetration of partner violence, and represent some of the most essential content of the overall message of the

Christian faith. As such, this construct represents protective factor related to religiousness that can reduce the risk for a man to engage in intimate partner violence.

Masculine Relationship Power as a Risk Factor

Despite the evidence suggesting that religion serves to protect against intimate partner violence, there are ways in which religiousness also can both directly and indirectly serve as a risk factor for increased perpetration and victimization. Perhaps the most immediately evident influence towards increased risk is the potential for increased power differentials between men and women that are inherent in traditional male/female relationships. As previously stated, Biblical teachings on male/female relationships tend to encourage, if not expect male leadership and dominance over women (Teaster, Roberto, & Dugar, 2006). Even though aggressing against one's partner is denounced as sinful, the basic Biblical relationship between men and women is fundamentally paternalistic, with men instructed to protect and care for women, while women are expected to conform to complementarian roles lacking in real relationship power. As such, these types of gender roles enforce views of gender inequality in relationships (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Furthermore, when women are expected by their belief systems to adhere to traditional roles where they have less power in their relationships, they tend to hold less power and freedom in other contexts (Balmer, 1994), reflecting a general norm of decreased social capital on the part of women in those situations. Relationship abuse tends to occur most frequently in relationships where male partners hold greater control over their female counterparts (Bettman, 2009; Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2012), where traditional gender roles are internalized (Anacona, 2008; Sugarman & Frankel, 1996), and where women are discouraged from violating traditional marital expectations

(Wang, Horne, Levitt, & Klesges, 2009). As such, these types of relationships create environments that are more conducive to the perpetration of partner abuse than in relationships with more egalitarian gender norms (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2012).

In a related vein, the aforementioned beliefs regarding male and female roles can also lead to greater risk of partner violence perpetration through individual internalization of those beliefs (Finn, 1986; Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, & Bangdiwala, 2001). Religious dictates regarding male power, female submission, and integrity of the marital relationship at all costs can often create situations where the man is not only granted explicit power in relationships, but also where women are viewed negatively when they engage in behavior contrary to those expectations. In many fundamentalist communities, women who desire more egalitarian footing in relationships or even those who seek to extricate themselves from abusive or potentially abusive partners can be seen as selfish and sinful since their actions may be interpreted as willful violations of God's commands (Hawley, 1994). These women are often encouraged to forgive their abusers and work to "redeem" their partners through prayer and support, theoretically bringing them closer to God in the end (Nason-Clark, 2004) by carrying out the expected role of a faithful supportive wife and peacekeeper in the relationship (Bent-Goodley & Fowler, 2006; Copel, 2008; Teaster, Roberto, & Dugar, 2006). For women, the only situation where divorce can be granted according to Biblical teachings is when there is evidence of "sexual immorality" (i.e. adultery, prostitution, etc.; see Matthew 5:32 & Matthew 19:9), with no mention of violence as a justification for leaving (Levitt & Ware, 2006). Even in those rare cases, the power of granting the divorce still lay with the husband who can

choose not to honor the aggrieved wife's request to be released from marriage (see Romans 7:3). When women oppose their male partners or engage in violations of their Biblically expected gender roles of submission, some men may see partner abuse as a way of disciplining their female partners, using Biblical reasoning to justify their actions (Schupe, Stacey, & Hazelwood, 1987; Wendt, 2008). These types of situations can create behavioral feedback loops where simple disagreements between partners can quickly escalate into abuse, as one partner's beliefs conflict with those of the other and violence may be seen as an acceptable means of conflict resolution.

From the above findings, it follows that a mechanism of action whereby religion can increase the likelihood of partner violence is the clear message of masculine dominance over women. From this, both implicit and explicit power differentials between partners are established through church teachings on male/female relationships. Given the existing literature addressing the relationship between relationship power and potential for abuse, the norm of masculine dominance in relationships established by religious belief could lend itself to a greater risk of partner abuse.

The role of religious Fundamentalism and the influence of Compassion

It becomes clear that most Western religions, Christianity in particular being the most widely endorsed faith in the United States (Pew, 2008), involve teachings that denounce and discourage partner violence, but also convey messages that promote factors that lend themselves to the perpetration and in some cases justification of violence against women. Just as there is great variability within any group, individuals who profess a belief in God or a higher power may also differ in the relative importance they

place in the aspects of their faith that they find relevant. However, fundamentalist interpretations in an individual's faith implies an orthodox view of one's beliefs and expectations of behavior in accordance with religious teachings. However, as detailed above, there are teachings that appear to be in conflict with each other. Thus, a fundamentalist approach may lend itself to the internalization of extremes of belief and subsequent behavior, depending on which aspects of faith appear to be more salient to the individual.

There is evidence to suggest that more fundamental interpretations of religious teachings (e.g. the Bible is the literal word of God and should be followed as written) lend themselves to increased acceptance of greater power differentials between men and women in relationships (Peek, Lowe & Williams, 1991). These cultural norms can be established and maintained through fundamentalist beliefs of literal interpretation of scripture by religious leaders and passed on to their associated congregations. On a functional level, males who espouse more fundamentalist views of religious teachings (e.g. more literal interpretation of scripture; more orthodox expectations of behavior based on those teachings) tend to hold more sexist attitudes towards women than those who do not (Hertel & Hughes, 1987). Furthermore, fundamentalism is positively correlated with increased approval and perpetration of intimate partner violence (Koch & Ramirez, 2010), especially when men are indoctrinated to these types of patriarchal attitudes from an early age (Hindeland, 2000).

However, while fundamentalist and dogmatic beliefs regarding gender roles can create environments where conditions are conducive to the perpetration of partner violence, obviously not every man who is religious or even fundamentalist in their views

of their faith commits acts of abuse or control towards his partner. Rather, the social environments created by these communal beliefs serve to potentially create pressures and opportunities for men to carry out abuse, as well as increase the potential to seemingly legitimize abuse in a religious context. Men who are already at risk for perpetration due to abuse history or personality factors may tend to be influenced towards more acceptability and justification of abuse when they are in cultures that are patriarchal and supportive of male dominance (Dutton, 1995). Thus, existing attitudes related to IPV perpetration could be perpetuated and reinforced in the context of a highly patriarchal social structure that emphasizes masculine dominance and control over women (Greene & Davis, 2011). On the other hand, there are obviously religious teachings that stand in direct opposition to these abusive attitudes and behaviors. If a man's understanding of his faith focuses more on the teachings of compassion, love, and sacrifice for one's partners (e.g. living a Christ-like life), then the idea of aggressing against another, especially one whom he has sworn to love and honor in all things, should be completely abhorrent and incompatible with his beliefs.

As such, fundamentalism may serve to influence the strength and direction of the relationship between religiousness and both protective and risk factors described above. For Individuals who fail to internalize teachings of compassion for others, a fundamentalist approach may strengthen the relationship strengthening the relationship between religion and various IPV-supportive risk factors while weakening the potential protective effects against IPV. On the other hand, greater adherence to teachings of love and compassion may have the opposite effects on the relationships between fundamentalism and risk and protective factors. Through this connection,

Fundamentalism may amplify religious messages promoting masculine dominance over women or the messages of empathy for one's partner.

Hypotheses

The present study examines the relationships among religiousness, risk factors for IPV (masculine dominance in relationships), and protective factors against IPV (empathy). I propose the following hypotheses:

1. Consistent with previous literature, religiousness will be directly related to greater empathy and lower levels of masculine power over women.
2. An individual's fundamentalist interpretation of their faith's beliefs will serve as a mechanism of action for those relationships between religiousness and the aforementioned risk and protective factors.
3. Additionally, the relationships between fundamentalism and both masculine dominance and empathy will be moderated by one's internalization of compassionate love.

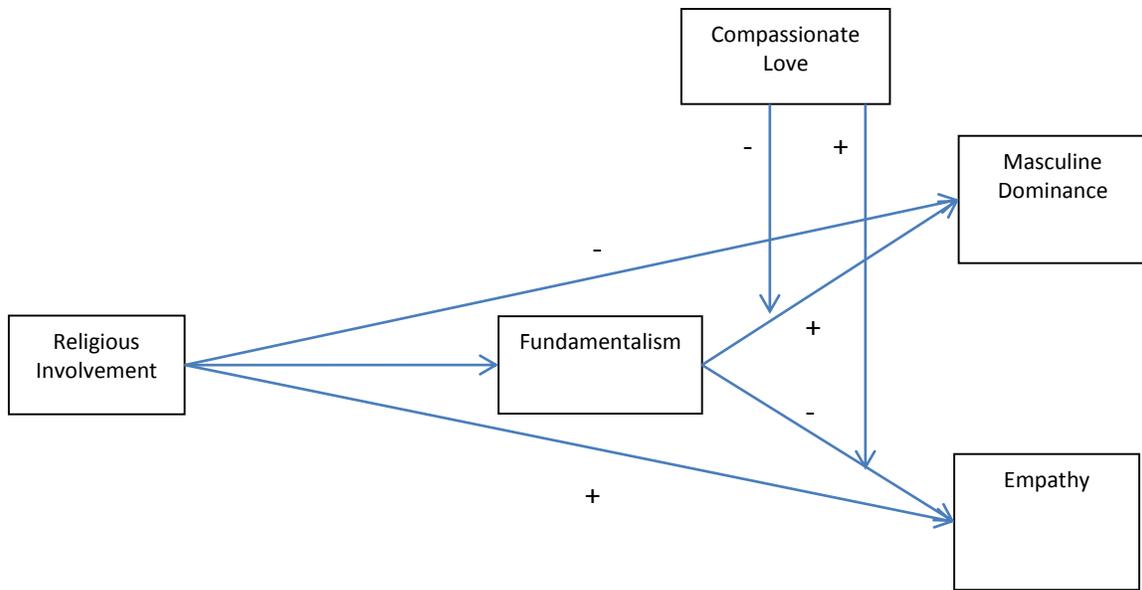


Figure 1.1: Hypothesized model.

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

Study Procedures

Prior to beginning any research activity, this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of the University of South Carolina. Participants were recruited from the student body of the University of South Carolina at Columbia. The survey was hosted online using the SurveyMonkey online survey administration website www.surveymonkey.com. This online survey employed 128-bit encryption in order to provide the highest degree of security for participant responses, and all data was downloaded to secure university servers and password protected. Project staff requested email addresses for every male undergraduate student at USC from the USC Office of Institutional Assessment and Compliance and sent an email invitation to all 10324 students on that list to participate in the online survey. After the initial mailout of invitations to participate, data collection remained open from April 13 2014 until May 17, 2014, with reminder emails sent out to invitees who had not yet participated on April 20, April 25, and May 12, after which point the survey was closed to participants. Informed consent was obtained at the beginning of the online survey, with individuals not wishing to participate being given the option to opt out. Participants were provided contact information for study personnel in the event they had further questions. They were also provided with contact information for the USC Counseling Center in the event they

experienced any distress or discomfort and wish to discuss the experience further. Participants were entered into a drawing for one of two \$50 gift cards to be randomly selected after the end of data collection. Some participants received extra credit at their instructor's discretion for participation. After the data collection period ended, 1136 students had responded and at least completed the informed consent form (11% response rate). In order to minimize potential English language literacy effects, participants were excluded from analyses if they reported having "some trouble" reading English or worse. Participants were also excluded if they chose not to answer any questions, answered only the demographics questions, or reported a non-heterosexual sexual orientation. Finally, despite our selection of a male participant population, 2 female and 1 transgender students responded to the survey and were excluded from the final sample. In total, 600 of the 1136 survey respondents were excluded from inclusion in the final data set due to the above criteria.

Participants

Participants were 536 self-identified heterosexual males recruited from the undergraduate population at the University of South Carolina. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 24 years old ($M = 20.4$ years, $SD = 1.44$ years). Four hundred forty-five (83.0%) participants identified themselves as Caucasian, 36 (6.7%) identified as African-American or Black, and 55 (10.2%) were of another racial background, mixed, or did not report. One hundred twenty-five (23.3%) reported their year in school as freshman, 143 (26.7%) as sophomore, 127 (23.7%) as junior, 140 (26.1%) as senior or recent graduates, and 1 (0.2%) as non-degree-seeking undergraduate. The mean reported grade point average for all participants was 3.4 (min = 1.0, max = 4.0, $SD = .58$). Two hundred

seventy-five (51.3%) of participants reported being single or not dating, 56 (10.4%) dating but not in a romantic relationship, 181 (33.8%) in a romantic relationship, 7 (1.3%) engaged, 8 (1.5%) were partnered or married, and 9 (1.7%) did not report.

Measures

Religiousness

Information regarding subject religious religiousness was assessed using the Brief Multidimensional Assessment of Religion/Spirituality (BMMRS; Fetzer/NIA, 1999). The BMMRS was the result of a workgroup created in 1997 by the National Institute on Aging and the Fetzer Institute. The goal of this workgroup was to create a measure religiousness and spirituality that was brief and easy to administer, yet still comprehensively assessed the various ways in which individuals experience religious belief and engage in related behaviors that may be associated with health outcomes. Items for this measure were selected by experts with experience in religious and health research from previously validated instruments assessing constructs representative of those beliefs and behaviors (Idler, et al., 2003). For example, items measuring religious coping were drawn from Pargament's (1997) Religious Coping Scale, and items assessing forgiveness were drawn from the Forgiveness of Self and Forgiveness of Others scales (Mauger, et al., 1992). The BMMRS was validated on a national sample of English-speaking adults over the age of 18, and found to be have appropriately concurrent and discriminate validity with items assessing religiousness and spirituality from the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey (NORC, 1998). This measure includes eleven sections assessing various aspects of religion and spirituality. The 11 sections are: Daily Spiritual Experiences, Values/Beliefs, Forgiveness, Private Religious Practice,

Religious/Spiritual Coping (Positive and Negative), Religious Support (Positive and Negative), Religious/Spiritual History, Commitment, Religious Affiliation, Organizational Religiousness, an Overall Self-Ranking of Religiousness and/or Spirituality. This measure is a collection of short form versions of 11 measures assessing various aspects of religious involvement. As such, many items as written have different response sets, although the Likert-style items are unidirectional, with higher responses indicating a greater degree of endorsement for the construct being measured.

Additionally, the Religious Affiliation and Religious History subscales were excluded from use in this study as they assessed qualitative information regarding an individual's experience with religion and spirituality and thus were not appropriate for inclusion in a continuous measure. For all Likert-style items, response values were transformed to a standard range of 1 to 8 in order to facilitate analyses. For example, if a subscale had a response set from 1 to 4, each response choice was multiplied by 2 in order to conform to an 8 point scale. The Religious/Spiritual Coping subscale consists of subsections that measure both positive and negative aspects of religious coping (i.e. the Positive Religious Coping and Negative Religious Coping subscales). Similarly, the Religious Support subscale assesses an individual's positive and negative interactions with their associated religious congregation (i.e. Positive Religious Support and Negative Religious Support subscales) As such, these subsections may reduce internal consistency within each subscale as well as for the overall combined scale, since positive and negative constructs being measured may be inversely related to each other. Finally, as the Commitment Subscale included a single continuous item and 2 free-form items assessing amount of money tithed, it was decided to only use the continuous item. Previous reported internal

consistency values for each subscale in the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religion/Spirituality range from .54 (Negative Religious Coping) to .91 (Daily Spiritual Experiences), with an average Cronbach's α = .74. In the present study, Cronbach's α for each subscale and the overall scale were as follows: Daily Spiritual Experiences = .94, Values/Beliefs = .48, Forgiveness = .84, Private Religious Practices = .75, Religious Coping (Positive) = .88, Religious Coping (Negative) = .42, Religious Support (Positive) = .96, Religious Support (Negative) = .82, Organizational Religiousness = .82, Overall Self-Ranking of Religiousness/Spirituality = .74.

Mediator

Fundamentalism

Fundamentalism was measured using the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004), a 12-item instrument designed to measure individuals' beliefs in the religious teachings of their faith as the fundamental truths of life to be understood in an orthodox manner. This scale consists of 12 Likert-style items (6 reverse scored) to which respondents indicate their agreement on a scale of 1 (Very Strongly Disagree) to 9 (Very Strongly Agree). A mean score for all items was computed, with greater mean scores indicating greater endorsement of fundamentalist beliefs. This instrument is based on the 20-item Religious Fundamentalism Scale (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992), and was revised to in 2004 in order to address issues of survey length and improve construct validity by expanding the applicability of scale items to address more diverse expressions of fundamentalist thought. The resulting 12-item measure has a reported Cronbach's α of .91 in both college and older adult populations (Altemeyer &

Hunsberger, 2004). In Altemeyer's 2004 revision, the 12-item scale was found to have comparable concurrent validity to the 20-item measure, being similarly correlated with related constructs used to assess validity. In the present study, Cronbach's α for this scale was .96. Example items from the Revised Religious Fundamentalism Scale include "God has given humanity a complete, unending guide to happiness and salvation which must be totally followed" and "No single book of religious teachings contains all the intrinsic, fundamental truths about life" (reverse scored).

Moderator

Compassionate Love

Compassionate love was assessed using the Compassionate Love Scale towards Close Others scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). This instrument is composed of 21 Likert-style items designed to assess an individual's motivation for love and kindness towards others. For each item, the respondent indicates how accurately the item represents their feelings expressed on a scale of 1 (Not At All True of Me) to 7 (Very True of Me). The construct of compassionate love assessed by this instrument is based on Lazarus's (1991) idea of compassion as an orientation towards caring for and desiring to help others. In the context of close others (e.g. a relationship partner) compassionate love is conceptually similar to Hendrick & Hendrick's (1986) *Agape* style of love, characterized by altruistic love toward a partner and willingness to sacrifice for that person. This measure can be administered in three versions: one in which the participant responds to questions about their feelings toward others, towards close others (e.g. family), and one in which the participant responds to questions about their partner specifically. For the purposes of this

study, the Compassionate Love towards Specific Close Other version was administered. The Specific Close Other version of the Compassionate Love scale (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005) was validated for a college population, with a reported Cronbach's α of .94. In the present study, Cronbach's α for this scale was .96. Examples of items from this scale include "I tend to feel compassion for ____" and "If ____ is troubled, I usually feel extreme tenderness and caring."

Risk Factor

Masculine Relationship Power

Endorsement of masculine dominance and gendered power differentials was measured using the Power over Women subscale of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (CMNI; Mahalik et al., 2003). Power over Women is measured with 9 items designed to assess an individual's agreement with stereotypical male gender role beliefs about masculine dominance and control of women. For each Likert-style item, the respondent indicates their level of agreement with the statement presented to them on a scale of 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). A mean score for the Power over Women scale was computed, with higher scores indicating more endorsement of male dominance over women. This measure was developed and validated on the population of college men. Reported Cronbach's α for the Power over Women scale was found to be .87 in Mahalik's (2003) validation study of the Conformity of Masculine Norms Inventory. In the present study, Chronbach's α for this scale was .87. Example items from the Power over Women measure include: "Things tend to be better when men are in charge" and "I will only be satisfied when women are equal to men" (reverse scored).

Protective Factor

Empathy/Perspective Taking

Empathy/Perspective Taking was assessed using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1983). This 28-item instrument consists of four subscales (perspective taking, empathic concern, personal distress, and fantasy). The present study considered only the perspective taking (PT) and empathic concern (EC) subscales. These two subscales assess the respondents' cognitive ability to understand another's viewpoint (perspective taking) and to experience sympathy and concern for others (empathic concern). Each subscale consists of 7 items, with responses on a scale of 0 (not at all like me) to 4 (very much like me). Items measuring perspective taking include, "I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision," and "I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both." Items measuring empathic concern include, "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me," and "I am often quite touched by things that I see happen." A mean score for all items from the Perspective Taking and Empathic Concern subscales were calculated such that higher scores indicate higher levels of empathy/perspective taking. An examination of the structure of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Pulos, Elison, & Lennon, 2004) in an undergraduate population found the measure to be structurally consistent, and also found the empathic concern and perspective taking subscale to be substantially correlated ($r=.46, p<.05$). In this validation study, reported Cronbach's α for the empathic concern and perspective-taking subscales were .80 and .79, respectively. In the present study, Cronbach's α for the Empathic Concern, Perspective Taking, and combined EC/PT scales were .77, .78, and .83, respectively.

Social Desirability

In order to control for potential effects of desirable responding, the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1991) was administered. This measure consists of 40 Likert items designed to assess self-deceptive positivity and impression management in respondents. For each item, respondents indicate their degree of agreement with the statement presented on a scale of 1 (Not True) to 7 (Very True). Fifteen items are reverse-scored. A mean score for social desirability was computed, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of social desirability in the participant's responses. Example items from this measure include "I have never dropped litter in the street" and "I sometimes tell lies if I have to" (reverse scored). This instrument was originally normed on a college population (Paulhus & Reid, 1991) and has been found to be concurrently valid with other measures of social desirability bias (Musch, Ostapczuk, Klaiber, 2012), and correlated with religiosity (Gillings & Joseph, 1996). Reported Cronbach's α for this measure is .83 and was found to be .78 in the present study.

Analytical Procedures

The proposed moderated mediation model (see Figure 2.1) was tested using M-Plus v.6.1 statistical software (Muthén & Muthén, 2007). All paths in the model were estimated simultaneously using maximum likelihood estimation (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Use of simultaneous evaluation of all potential relationships provides more power to detect indirect effects (Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998; MacKinnon, Krull & Lockwood, 2000) than the traditional multistep method (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Model description

The hypothesized model was evaluated to determine the effect of religious involvement on both masculine dominance and empathy, as well as the degree to which fundamentalism potentially mediated those relationships. Furthermore, this model simultaneously evaluated the degree to which compassion moderated the relationships between fundamentalism and masculine dominance and empathy. As per Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes (2007), this model of moderated mediation is appropriate for testing the moderating effects of a variable on the b paths between a mediator and outcome variables. Thus, religious involvement was hypothesized to be linked to fundamentalism, which in turn was hypothesized to serve as a mechanism of action on both masculine dominance and empathy. Furthermore, the relationships between fundamentalism and outcome variables was hypothesized to be influenced by the degree to which an individual endorsed beliefs of compassion towards relationship partners. The existing literature referencing the variables of interest in this study suggest that there is sufficient evidence to assume that there is a significant relationship between religious involvement and compassion, as well as between those variables and each of the risk and protective factors (masculine dominance and empathy). Given these assumed conceptual relationships, mediation analysis is an appropriate method of testing for indirect effects in the proposed model (Baron & Kenny, 1986). As per Fritz & MacKinnon (2007), the sample of 536 males in this study was sufficient to provide a power of .80 given small to medium expected effect sizes, especially given maximum likelihood estimation used to approximate missing data. Given this sample size, a post-hoc power analysis was not performed.

Missing Data

Missing data was accounted for in *Mplus* v. 6.1 using maximum likelihood estimation (MLR), which generates accurate parameter estimates and standard errors when data are missing at random (MAR). Although it is preferred that data be MAR, MLR parameter estimates are less biased than other missing data strategies when MAR cannot be assumed (Shafer & Graham, 2002). Although data was assumed to be MAR, use of maximum likelihood estimation should account for any unforeseen potential effects of missing data.

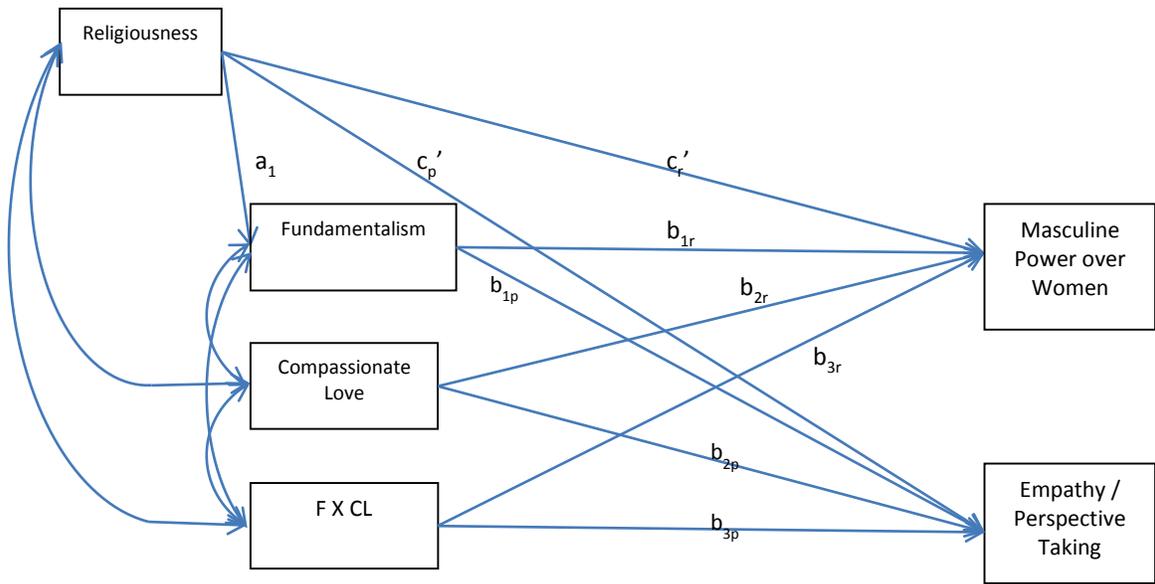


Figure 2.1. Moderated mediation model

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Data cleaning and descriptive statistics were conducted using SPSS v. 21. Descriptive data for all study variables are detailed in Table 3.1. Skew and Kurtosis for all variables of interest were found to be within acceptable limits (West, Finch, & Curran, 1996). Pearson correlations for all study variables can be found in Table 3.2. Consistent with previous literature, Religiousness was positively correlated with Empathy/Perspective Taking, Compassionate Love, Masculine Power over Women, and Fundamentalism. Similarly, Compassionate Love was positively related to Empathy/Perspective Taking and negatively related to Masculine Power over Women. Fundamentalism was positively related to Masculine Power over Women. Desirable Responding was negatively related to Masculine Power over Women and positively related to Fundamentalism.

Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness/Spirituality: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Given that the BMMRS has not to date been used to assess a unitary construct of religiousness, a brief assessment of its psychometric properties was conducted to determine whether or not it would be appropriate for use in the proposed model. As

discussed in the Method section above, the response sets for all items were standardized to conform to an 8-point scale in order to facilitate calculation of mean scores. Next, mean scores were computed for each subscale. Finally, exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the above scale scores using principal axis factoring with Promax rotation in order to best approximate simple structure of the scales comprising the measure. This analysis revealed two factors, each with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (Kaiser criterion; Kaiser, 1958), beyond which the scree plot showed a marked break (Cattell, 1978). Together, these findings suggested two higher order factors comprising the measure: general religiousness/positive religious experiences, and negative religious experiences. See Table 3.3 for a complete description of the scale score factor loadings for the BMMRS. The first factor was retained for use as a measure of religiousness in the proposed model, as it accounted for the greatest amount of variance and best conceptually represented a unitary idea of religiousness. A mean score for all items in the subscales composing the General Religiousness factor was used to represent Religiousness in the hypothesized model. A mean scale score was used instead of a computed regression factor score because while the exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the BMMRS subscales scores, use of the items composing those subscales preserved more variance in the final measure than if a general regression factor score was used. Furthermore, since the use of exploratory factor analysis in the present study was to briefly examine the potential use of the BMMRS as a measure of general religiousness, there was no effort made to confirm a theorized latent construct representative of general religiousness based on a theoretical model. As such, the use of regression factor scores would have been less appropriate than computation of mean scores in this context and would have lent itself to

biased estimates for the value of each factor (Hoshino & Bentler, 2011; Lastovicka & Thamodaran, 1991; Skrondal & Laake, 2001). Cronbach's α for this factor was .97, suggesting excellent internal consistency for this sample.

Hypotheses: Moderated Mediation Results

The potential effect of Desirable Responding in participant responses was controlled for as a covariate to all variables of analytic interest in our model. Model fit was assessed and found to be excellent (RMSEA = .037, CFI = .996, TLI = .987), suggesting that the hypothesized model adequately represented the phenomena of interest relative to the data in the sample collected.

1. The first hypothesis that Religiousness would have a significant direct effect on Empathy/Perspective Taking and Masculine Power over Women was only partially supported. The direct effect of Religiousness on Empathy was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.34$, $SE=0.08$, $p=0.000$). The direct effect of Religiousness on Masculine Power over Women was not significant.
2. The second hypothesis that Fundamentalism would mediate the relationship between Religiousness and both Empathy/Perspective Taking and Masculine Power over Women was supported. Fundamentalism partially mediated the relationship between Religiousness and Empathy/Perspective Taking. The indirect effect of Religiousness on Empathy/Perspective Taking through Fundamentalism was significant and negative ($\beta = -0.69$, $SE=0.25$, $p=0.005$). The indirect effect of Religiousness on Masculine Power over Women through Fundamentalism was significant and positive ($\beta = 0.62$, $SE=0.32$, $p=0.050$). However, when taking into account combined direct and indirect effects, the total effect of Religiousness on

Empathy/Perspective Taking was nonsignificant. Additionally, Fundamentalism was found to completely mediate the relationship between Religiousness and Masculine Power over Women. The total effect of Religiousness on Masculine Power over Women was only marginally significant.

3. The third hypothesis that Compassionate Love would moderate the relationships between Fundamentalism and both Empathy/Perspective Taking and Masculine Power over Women was not supported. While Compassionate Love was positively and significantly related to Empathy ($\beta = .28, SE=0.11, p=0.011$), it did not significantly moderate the relationship between Fundamentalism and Empathy. Similarly, Compassionate Love did not significantly moderate the relationship between Fundamentalism and Masculine Power over Women.

See Figure 3.1 for complete model results.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std.Dev.	Skew	Kurtosis
Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religiousness and Spirituality							
- Daily Spiritual Experiences	393	1.33	8.00	4.38	2.02	0.22	-1.13
- Values/Beliefs	400	2.00	8.00	5.63	1.69	-0.49	-0.53
- Forgiveness	394	2.00	8.00	5.41	1.86	-0.47	-0.71
- Private Religious Practices	397	1.00	8.00	3.00	1.72	0.71	-0.28
- Religious and Spiritual Coping (Positive)	395	2.00	8.00	4.29	1.93	0.45	-0.96
- Religious and Spiritual Coping (Negative)	390	2.00	8.00	3.51	1.23	0.86	1.18
- Religious and Spiritual Coping (Importance of Religion in Coping)	394	2.00	8.00	4.70	2.31	0.14	-1.45
- Religious Support (Positive)	385	2.00	8.00	5.06	2.36	-0.11	-1.51
- Religious Support (Negative)	383	2.00	8.00	3.01	1.37	1.46	1.88
- Commitment	392	2.00	8.00	3.34	2.12	0.12	-1.27
- Organizational Religiousness	395	1.33	8.00	4.60	1.85	0.63	-0.79
- Overall Self Ranking	395	2.00	8.00	4.14	1.89	0.20	-1.00
- Combined Religiousness Score	339	1.74	8.00	4.14	1.44	0.59	-1.12
Compassionate Love	490	1.00	7.00	5.62	1.00	-1.12	2.54
Conformity to Masculine Norms - Power over Women	460	1.00	4.00	2.02	0.48	0.53	1.58
Interpersonal Reactivity Index							
- Empathic Concern	440	1.00	5.00	3.47	0.65	-0.37	0.78
- Perspective Taking	439	1.00	5.00	3.48	0.66	-0.26	0.36
- Combined Empathic Concern/Perspective Taking	426	1.00	5.00	3.47	0.56	-0.32	1.13
Fundamentalism	358	1.00	9.00	4.21	2.22	0.11	-1.10
Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding	353	2.43	5.50	4.04	0.54	-0.02	0.26

Table 3.2. Pearson Correlations

	Combined Relig.	Comp. Love	Power Over Women	Emp./ Persp. Taking	Funda- mental-ism	Desirable Responding
Combined Relig.	1					
Comp. Love	0.17**	1				
Power Over Women	0.18**	-0.32**	1			
Emp./ Persp. Taking	0.16**	0.44**	-0.40**	1		
Fundamentalism	0.80**	0.41	0.31**	-0.57	1	
Desirable Responding	0.09	0.05	-0.13*	0.11*	0.13*	1

* - Correlation is significant at the $p < .05$ level.

** - Correlation is significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Table 3.3. BMMRS Exploratory Factor Analysis

Variables	Factor 1	Factor 2
	General Religiousness	Negative Religious Experiences
Daily Religious Experiences	.95	-.06
Positive Religious Coping	.91	-.01
Importance of Religion in Coping	.90	-.09
Overall Importance of Religion	.86	-.04
Private Religious Practices	.85	-.01
Forgiveness	.80	-.07
Values	.78	.10
Organizational Religiousness	.77	.09
Positive Religious Support	.71	.03
Negative Religious Coping	-.11	.63
Negative Religious Support	.17	.50

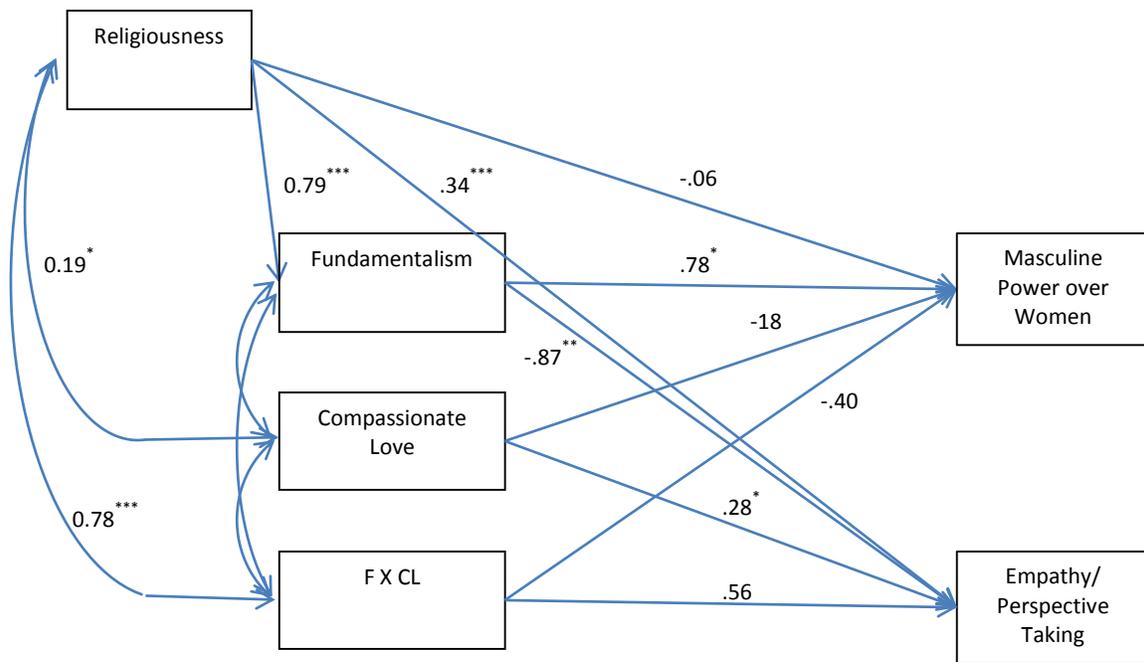


Figure 3.1. Model Results

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The hypotheses for the present study were partially supported. In addition to examining the overall relationships among Religiousness, Masculine Power over Women, and Empathy/Perspective Taking, religious Fundamentalism was found to be a mediator through which Religiousness was related to those risk and protective factors, respectively. However, the final hypotheses that Compassionate Love would serve as a moderator for the relationships between Fundamentalism and Masculine Power over Women and Empathy/Perspective Taking was unsupported. This finding suggests that while Compassionate Love may be related to various aspects of this phenomenon, it does not significantly modify the relationships between Fundamentalism and the specified IPV-related factors measured in this study.

Although the general relationships among the variables of interest in this study are consistent with previous literature, the effect of religiousness on IPV risk and protective factors remains complex. Consistent with our predictions, Fundamentalism tends to play an important role in the way in which Religiousness is related to factors that reduce or increase risk of IPV perpetration. Religiousness and Fundamentalism are highly correlated, although this relationship is not totally collinear ($r=.79$). Despite this strong relationship, the two concepts are not the same. Most importantly, while a person can be religious without being fundamentalist, in order to be a fundamentalist a person must on

some level espouse some degree of religious belief. As such, while Fundamentalism and Religiousness are similar and related, they may evoke different reactions to others and to life situations due to the ways in which those religious beliefs are interpreted.

From our findings, it appears that Religiousness, in and of itself, tends to be a factor that is related to greater Empathy/Perspective Taking for college males. However, for males reporting greater endorsement of fundamentalist interpretations of religious beliefs, their experience with religion tended to be associated with lower Empathy/Perspective Taking. Furthermore, given that Empathy/Perspective Taking tends to be a protective factor related to lower risk of IPV perpetration, it is possible that males with higher fundamentalist beliefs tend to be at greater relative risk for perpetration of intimate partner violence. On the other hand, for males who do not espouse fundamentalist beliefs religiousness tends to be associated with greater Empathy/Perspective Taking, which may reduce their risk of IPV perpetration. From a statistical standpoint, the overall relationship between religiousness and empathy when taking into account the direct effect of religiousness and the mediating effect of fundamentalism suggests that no significant relationship exists. However, it is most likely that the lack of a significant overall effect is an artifact of the opposed directionality of those direct ($\beta=.34$) and indirect ($\beta =-.69$) effects, and not representative of the true relationships among those constructs (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Conversely, when evaluating the total effect of religiousness on Masculine Power over Women, religiousness appears to be related to greater endorsement of male dominance, which in turn has been found to be a risk factor for IPV perpetration. However, our findings suggest that this apparent relationship is almost entirely associated

with a man's endorsement of fundamentalist beliefs, rather than his general Religiousness. Thus, while on the surface Religiousness seems to have no association with beliefs regarding Masculine Power over Women, males endorsing greater fundamentalist beliefs tend to be the ones who also state that they believe in man's dominant position over women.

The findings of the present study are important to note given previous literature suggesting a seemingly contradictory findings regarding the relationship between Religiousness and intimate partner violence. Religiousness, in and of itself, appears to be a positive force associated with lowered risk for IPV perpetration in college males. The measure of Religiousness used in this study incorporated many aspects of the religious experience, including frequency of religious activities, relationships with other members of one's faith, the value one places on faith when faced with adversity, among others. Thus, the combined experience of religious belief, incorporating behavioral, cognitive, and social elements of faith, can be seen as a protective factor against IPV. However, numerous studies have suggested that not only are there aspects of religion that influence IPV-supportive beliefs, but that also in some cases perpetrators have attempted to justify their abuse of their partners based on literal, fundamentalist interpretations of their faith's teachings. The findings of this study suggest that those same fundamentalist beliefs may be one potential source of the conflicting findings regarding religion and IPV. Religious beliefs tend to provide a general reduction in risk to perpetration IPV, but if a man interprets those beliefs in a literal way, an environment is created wherein his potential for abuse increases, most likely as a factor of the implicit male/female power differentials inherent in most religious belief systems.

Implications

The findings from this study contribute greatly to the effort to better understand how religiousness can be a protective factor against the perpetration of intimate partner violence for some men and represent a risk factor in others. In the present study, fundamentalism was revealed to play a significant part in the relationship between religiousness and IPV risk and protective factors. Specifically, fundamentalism was found to not only negate but completely reverse the protective effects that religiousness imparted against IPV perpetration. Similarly, endorsement of fundamentalist beliefs was also found to be the primary factor contributing to the relationship between religiousness and an increased risk for IPV perpetration. Based on these findings, efforts to engage individuals who are related to religious organizations, such as clergy, lay ministers, and volunteers, in the discussion about intimate partner violence would be a powerful step in attempting to ameliorate the potential harmful effects that religiousness may pose while enhancing its protective effects against IPV. Unfortunately, given the sometimes polarizing nature of attitudes regarding faith and belief, it may be very difficult to engage those who maintain fundamental beliefs regarding their faith, as some may believe such conversations may constitute a challenge to their belief system. That is why these conversations need to begin with those already involved in a religious life. Given the overall prevalence of intimate partner violence in the United States, it is a phenomenon that touches everyone on some level. As previously stated, there are numerous proscriptions against bringing harming to one's partner inherent in the Christian faith. Similarly, there are also commands to honor and sacrifice for one's partner, giving oneself completely to her wellbeing. Engaging the religious community in these

discussions with an eye for collaboratively designing interventions aimed at offering different perspectives on male/female romantic relationships and roles can serve as a powerful starting point in helping to reduce the prevalence as well as the impact of IPV in church congregations.

Limitations

To date, the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religion/Spirituality has not been formally validated as a unitary measure of religiousness. It may be that individual aspects or subscales of the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religion/Spirituality that may serve as better representatives for religiousness than the overall scale used for this study. Additionally, while the exploratory factor analysis of the BMMRS subscales revealed two factors, only the General Religiousness factor, which excluded the subscales representing negative religious experiences found in the second factor, was used as the final measure of religiousness. As such, those negative aspects of religiousness may also have some effect the relationships revealed in our model. As an example, Positive and Negative Religious Coping beliefs may be seen to represent equal levels of faith focused on supportive versus punitive aspects of an individual's belief system. As such, it may be that positive and negative experiences with religion may not discriminate between those with fervent and more casual attitudes towards their faith. Additionally, while the final scale used to assess religiousness in the tested model was psychometrically sound, it is also important to note that the procedures carried out in the present study are not sufficient to claim that the Brief Multidimensional Measure of Religion/Spirituality is suitable as a unitary measure of religiousness. Future research to further explore the

validity and reliability of the BMMRS and its various subscales in this context would be necessary to evaluate such a claim.

Another limitation of this study is that it is cross-sectional in nature, and all data for each participant was collected for a single time point. As such, these findings cannot be used to imply causation in any way for any of the relationships represented in the hypothesized model, as there is no way to establish temporal precedence. Rather, these findings are intended to describe the overall pattern of relationships among Religiousness, Fundamentalism, Compassionate Love, Empathy/Perspective taking, and Masculine Power over Women. By its very nature, this is a consistent limitation of descriptive research, and it is inappropriate to interpret casual relationships from these findings. Similarly, it may be that there are other models incorporating these constructs that may better represent the relationships among the above constructs of interest. Further exploration of these relationships, including longitudinal and quasi-experimental designs to assess causality is called for in order to ultimately determine the mechanisms through which religiousness may effect changes in IPV-related risk and protective factors.

Given that this study examined attitudinal and belief-related factors associated with religiousness and intimate partner violence, we did not evaluate the impact of more person-level factors, such as temperament, personality dysfunction, or history of previous abuse. Since these types of factors have the potential to be related to behaviors such as aggression, sociopathic tendencies, and other variables related to IPV, future research should consider these concepts with regard to their contribution to the religiousness/IPV phenomenon.

Finally, it should be noted that the demographic constraints on the sample collected (i.e. male, heterosexual undergraduate students between the ages of 18 and 24), limit the generalizability of these findings to other populations. In particular, the dynamics of marital relationships may be substantially different given the greater degree of subjective attachment and commitment they entail than in dating relationships. As such, the experiences and beliefs of married men may be different than those of the average college student. Given the relative dearth of married men in the study sample, meaningful comparisons were unable to be made.

Epilogue

The findings of this study offer a valuable insight into one way that the experience of religiousness may be related to intimate partner violence. The bulk of the previous literature to date on these potential relationships has uncovered pieces of this puzzle; relationships that in some cases appear to be contradictory and counterintuitive. The aim of this study was to draw upon these previous works, and hopefully put those pieces together in a way that a part of the greater picture becomes at least a little clearer. However, this study focused on a small part of this phenomenon, and certainly there is a great deal more work to be done.

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