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Gender and God's Word: Another Look at Religious Fundamentalism and Sexism

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Abstract

Insensitivity to gender plagues the considerable research on religious fundamentalism and sexism. Most of this research neither examines whether

the fundamentalism/sexism association differs between genders, nor explores whether individual-level measures of fundamentalism more likely applicable to women (personal beliefs about the Bible as literally true) have different relationships to sexism than the more typically used group-level measure (denominational affiliation). Analysis of covariance of data from the 1985 and 1988 General Social Surveys reveals that both individual and group fundamentalism are connected with sexism in the entire sample, but mainly because of opposing tendencies by gender. For women, sexism is related to fundamentalist personal beliefs rather than to fundamentalist affiliations. For men, the opposite occurs: sexism is related to fundamentalist affiliations rather than to personal beliefs in the literalness of the Bible. These findings suggest the need for a healthy dose of gender sensitivity in research on this topic, as well as throughout the sociology of religion.

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