

The Effect of Parents' Fundamentalism on Children's Educational Attainment: Examining Differences by Gender and Children's Fundamentalism

DARREN E. SHERKAT[†]
ALFRED DARNELL[†]

Recent examinations of the influence of fundamentalist Protestant orientations on educational attainment have brought new life to debates over the material consequences of culture. In this paper we examine how parents' fundamentalist orientations influence their children's educational attainment. We use data from the Youth Parent Socialization Panel Study to demonstrate the influence of parents' fundamentalism on children's attainment. We divide the sample to show how the influence of parents' fundamentalism varies by gender of the child and by the youth's fundamentalism. We find that fundamentalist parents hinder the educational attainment of their nonfundamentalist children, while they actually are more supportive of male Fundamentalist children's educational attainment than are non-fundamentalist parents.

In spite of the longstanding interest in the relationship between religion and educational attainment, research in the area saw a marked decline in the 1970s and 1980s.¹ And though some of the later studies provided the most convincing evidence of some connection between religion and attainment processes (e.g., Duncan and Featherman 1973; Featherman 1971; Stryker 1981), a dearth of theory that could explain the findings hindered scholars from building on these efforts. Recently, however, the issue of religious influences on educational attainment has been renewed by focusing attention away from Catholic-Protestant differences and toward the distinctiveness of fundamentalist Protestants (Darnell and Sherkat 1997).

Erosion of sociological interest in the relationship between religion and educational attainment did not completely drive out cultural explanations. However, contemporary cultural theories tend to minimize the direct role of cultural influences on attainment processes. Instead, cultural indicators are seen as status markers influencing selection into opportunities to attain higher status, generally through educational attainment (Bourdieu 1973, 1990; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; DiMaggio 1982; DiMaggio and Mohr 1985). In contrast, we argue that culture can produce distinctive individual orientations that directly influence educational attainment. Specifically, cultural orientations may: (1) drive preferences for educational attainment among the options being considered (Elster 1983; Sherkat and Wilson 1995); (2) restrict or expand the feasible set of educational options considered by individuals (Darnell 1994; Kuran 1993; Wildavsky 1992, 1994; Elster 1983); and, (3) determine whether educational efforts will be rewarded or punished by peers, kin, and other associates (Ackerlof, 1997; MaCleod 1987; Sen 1973; Sherkat 1997; Willis 1977).

[†] Darren E. Sherkat is an associate professor in the Departments of Sociology and Religious Studies at Vanderbilt University, Box 1811-B, Nashville, TN 37235; sherkade@ctrvax.vanderbilt.edu.

[†] Alfred Darnell is Visiting Professor of Sociology at Linfield College, 900 S.E. Baker St., McMinnville, OR 97128.

In this paper we focus primarily on the third dimension of cultural influences on educational options — exploring how religiously motivated social constraints influence educational choices. However, we will also discuss how a lack of parental support for higher education can undermine preferences for educational attainment, and restrict the options young people might afford themselves. Indeed, parents' fundamentalism may create anti-intellectual preferences in children who do not follow their parents' faith. Parental support is particularly important for educational attainment, and assistance is not driven solely by parents' financial or status characteristics. We will show why Christian fundamentalist parents may avoid supporting or encouraging their children's educational pursuits. Indeed, parents may selectively assist their children's educational endeavors depending on the gender or cultural values of their adolescent children. First, we review the writings of popular conservative Protestant authors to demonstrate: (1) their antipathy to secular education; and, (2) the prescriptive and proscriptive appeals to parents regarding their children's education. Second, we analyze data from the Youth-Parent Socialization Panel Study (Jennings, Markus, and Niemi 1987), to examine differences in the effect of parents' fundamentalism on educational attainment by gender and children's religious orientation. Our results show that: (1) the educational attainment of nonfundamentalist women is significantly hampered by fundamentalist parents; (2) fundamentalist parents do not differ significantly from nonfundamentalist parents in their assistance of nonfundamentalist males or Bible-believing females; and, (3) Bible-believing parents significantly boost the educational attainment of male children who believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God.

CONSERVATIVE PROTESTANTISM AND SECULAR EDUCATION

Protestant fundamentalists subscribe to a vividly otherworldly belief system that is often antagonistic toward secular education because of the beliefs and values it is viewed to promote. The transposability of these otherworldly religious schemata may serve to channel parents' investments in their children's education (Sewell 1992; Sherkat and Blocker 1997), and may help create a cultural climate within households that punishes secular educational attainment. In this section, we outline some popular conservative Protestant positions that tend to: (1) promote preferences opposed to secular education; (2) limit the feasible options children will consider given their parents' lack of support; and, (3) generate social pressures against continuing secular education.

Conservative Protestants have long been concerned about the focus and desirability of secular education. Evolutionary theories of human and animal origins are clearly oppositional to the literal interpretation of the creation myth preferred by fundamentalists, and controversies over the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution are ubiquitous (cf. Page and Clelland 1978; Provenzo 1990). Many conservative Christians are averse to the scientific method — which seeks to discover facts rather than proclaiming "the Truth." Scientific findings often seem to promote alternatives to, or questioning of, claims made in the Bible — and many fundamentalists find such inquiries improper (Eckberg and Nesterenko 1985; Ellison and Musick 1995). Indeed, conservative Christians have even opposed the "new math" arguing that it could relativize thinking (Hefley 1979: 42). Additionally, the humanistic values openly taught or implied in secular curricula are frequently in conflict with conservative Protestants' conceptions of authority and submission — particularly the authority of the Bible as the inerrant word of God, and the need for children to submit to the will of their parents (cf. B. LaHaye 1977; T. LaHaye 1983; Maddoux 1992; Miller 1977; Rushdoony 1977).

Fundamentalist Protestant opposition to secular schooling is based on their belief in the seductiveness and dire consequences of humanistic education for children. Conservative Protestants believe that if children come to accept humanistic values and lose faith in

conservative Christian commitments, they will be damned to hell. In a popular civics text used in fundamentalist high schools, produced by the Arthur M. DeMoss Foundation, a full-page spotlighted passage attributed to Martin Luther reads:

I am much afraid that schools will prove to be great gates of hell unless they diligently labor in explaining the Holy Scriptures, engraving them in the hearts of youth. I advise no one to place his child where the scriptures do not reign paramount. Every institution in which men are not increasingly occupied with the word of God must become corrupt (Rebirth of America 1986: 127).

Even though this particular passage is located in a high school text, it is notable that it is directed toward parents. Of course, this is less surprising when we consider that by the time young fundamentalists are in high school, they are likely already anticipating forming families of their own and having children. Studies of marital timing and fertility consistently show that conservative Protestants have earlier ages of first marriage and higher rates of fertility (Hammond et al. 1993; Lehrer 1996; Marcum 1986; Mosher et al. 1992). Indeed, Hammond and colleagues (1993) show that 43% of female fundamentalists and 18% of male fundamentalists are married by age 19.

Institutions of higher education are often singled out for criticism by fundamentalists. Beverly LaHaye (1977: 116–17), a best-selling conservative Christian writer and political leader explains,

One of the dangers of secular college education today is that the whole educational system has been taken over by an atheistic, humanist philosophy that is largely anti-God, anti-moral, and anti-American. . . . We have seen scores of fine Christian young people go down the drain or lose interest in spiritual things while attending such [secular] colleges.¹

Given this view, only Christian colleges and Bible schools will be acceptable destinations for young conservative Protestants. Indeed, conservative Christians argue that young members should attend only explicitly fundamentalist colleges and Bible schools. Further, conservative Christians understand that most opportunities for higher education are secular in nature, and that private fundamentalist schools that are supportive of their religious understandings are few and costly.² Fundamentalist authors argue that parents should opt not to send their children for further study if they cannot afford a “Christian” education. Beverly LaHaye (1977: 116–17) clearly states the fundamentalist Christian perspective,

I am convinced that all Christian young people should avoid the secular college as long as possible and trust God to provide them with a Christian college experience. . . . We have heard many parents say, “We can’t afford to send our young people to a Christian college. We will send them to a state school; it is much cheaper!” It actually turns out to be the most expensive thing they ever did.

We have briefly sketched a religious worldview in which dominant educational approaches are considered antagonistic to fundamental values. The cultural schemata associated with these beliefs restrict what individuals see as being desirable or even possible. When parents hold these cultural convictions they: (1) will pass on anti-intellectual orientations to their children, even if they do not transmit their religious values; (2) they may refuse to help their children finance educational pursuits; and, (3) they may generate other social pressures against attainment.

EXPLAINING HOW PARENTS' FUNDAMENTALISM LIMITS EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

Educational attainment is driven by both preferences and constraints. Individuals with strong preferences for educational pursuits will strive to attain as much education as possible, subject to cognitive, familial, and financial constraints. Individuals' educational choices are constrained by four factors: (1) the finances available or perceived to be available

for continuing education; (2) their assessment of the feasible options available to them; (3) their cognitive ability and academic preparation for higher educational pursuits; and, (4) social rewards and punishments associated with educational pursuits. Parents' fundamentalism could constrain educational options in each of these four ways. Parents' religious schemata not only direct their own interactions in religious markets, but they also influence decisions made in other social realms — religious schemata are transposable across a variety of arenas (Sewell 1992; Sherkat 1998; Sherkat and Ellison 1997; Sherkat and Blocker 1997). The intersection of religious, family, and educational structures can make parental religiosity consequential for children's educational attainment. The transposability of religious schemata into family structures supports particular parenting styles, and fundamentalist Protestants are known to value obedience in children and seek to ensure obedience through harsh parenting techniques (Ellison and Sherkat 1993a, 1993b; Ellison et al. 1995). Further, combining the antieducational schemata fostered in fundamentalist religious structures with their views on family life, it seems reasonable that parents will actively seek to hinder their children's interactions with secular educational resources.

In the United States, the most obvious parental influence on children's educational options operates through financial support. While some may assume that fundamentalist parents are simply unable to pay for their children's continued education, above we explained why parents may be *unwilling* to bankroll continuing education — even if they have the necessary finances. Since parents have limited finances, only children perceived to be most worthy of support will be assisted in attaining additional education. There is reason to believe that fundamentalist parents may treat children differently based on a child's gender and religious values. Conservative Christians tend to hold quite patriarchal view of family relations and activities (cf. Peek et al. 1991). Many conservative Christian writers advocate domestic careers for women (Hancock 1975; Horton 1982; Jepsen 1984), and some even argue that higher education may be contrary to God's plan for most women (e.g., Jepsen 1984: 51–52). Indeed, several recent studies have shown how fundamentalist affiliations or orientations limit women's labor force participation and overall socioeconomic attainment (Glass 1998; Lehrer 1998; Sherkat 1999).

Intergenerational value consensus may also play a role in parental support for youths' education (Roberts and Bengtson 1990). Fundamentalist parents may be more willing to support the educational pursuits of children who accept their parents' religious beliefs. This may be especially true since fundamentalist parents may demand that youths either attend expensive private fundamentalist colleges or receive no additional education (or at least none that will be financed by the parents). While many fundamentalist parents do send their children to secular public schools, conservative Christian parents may withhold support unless they feel that a child has been "inoculated" from the faith-shaking revelations of secular education. Of course, the preferences of the child cannot be ignored either. Since youths will only be supported in attempts to pursue fundamentalist education, nonfundamentalist children who prefer to avoid Christian schooling will have limited opportunity.

In any choice process, individuals must first consider the feasible set of options available (Elster 1983). Options that are not considered feasible cannot be chosen. The culture in which an individual is immersed provides the boundaries that define the composition of the feasible set, and cultural orientations will have a profound impact on the feasible set of options considered (Darnell 1994; Kuran 1993; Wildavsky 1992). Even when a youth from a fundamentalist household aspires to continue on to higher education, comprehension of their parents' opposition — and the lack of financial and motivational support this would entail — may alter the options the young person considers. In fact, even if parents are uncertain of their children's religious values, or have no intention of withholding resources if the child wanted to pursue higher learning, the anti-intellectual atmosphere of the household may nonetheless hinder attainment.

Without adequate preparation in secondary schools, going to college is either impossible or very difficult. Fundamentalist orientations have been found to have a significant negative impact on the likelihood that a youth will take college preparatory coursework in high school (Darnell and Sherkat 1997). Further, parents' fundamentalism has a significant negative impact on their children's *secondary* educational choices. Indeed, fundamentalists find college preparatory courses most harmful to children, because of their advocacy of humanism, evolution, cultural toleration, and variable-based approaches to mathematics. If parents consider education to be dangerous, rather than beneficial, they will dissuade their offspring from these more challenging courses. As a result, children with fundamentalist parents may be unlikely to be accepted to institutions of higher learning, less likely to qualify for merit-based aid, and unable to successfully complete their programs of study if they do go to college.

Fundamentalist orientations may lead parents to punish scholarly pursuits, creating a hostile environment for maintaining educational aspirations and making choices conducive to educational attainment. Not only may parents refuse to finance educational pursuits, they may also discourage them in more informal ways, leading their children to drop out of school or reconsider additional attainment (Akerlof 1997; Bernheim 1994; Heckathorn 1993). In a different cultural context, this was certainly the case with Willis's "lads," whose parents and friends were known to valorize reprimands from school or derogatorily accuse them of being "ear'oles" (intellectually inclined) when they studied (Willis 1977). As in the case of financing education, we expect that young women and children who do not accept their parent's fundamentalist values will suffer most from informal sanctions against educational attainment.

Our analysis of insider documents and theoretical synthesis leaves us with three hypotheses:

1. *Fundamentalist parents will hinder their daughters' educational pursuits more than they obstruct their sons' educational attainment.*
2. *Parents' fundamentalism will have a more negative impact on nonfundamentalist children's educational attainment.*
3. *We expect that the negative effect of parents' fundamentalism on attainment will be strongest for female nonfundamentalist children, and will be least negative for male fundamentalist children.*

DATA

We analyze data from the Youth Parent Socialization Panel Study (YPSPS), collected by the Survey Research Center of the University of Michigan (Jennings, Markus, and Niemi 1987). The first wave of the study was completed in spring of 1965 and yielded interviews with 1669 high school seniors, 99% of those targeted by the study. A randomly selected parent of each child was also interviewed, resulting in 1,562 interviews with parents (93% of those contacted). The second wave was completed in 1973, and retained 1,348 (80.8%) of the students from the original panel. The third wave was conducted in 1982, when the students were about 34 years old, and 1,135 interviews were completed. This represents a 68% retention rate over the 17 years of the study — 70% adjusting for known deaths (Jennings and Markus 1984). The retention rate is very good, and when combined with the extraordinarily high response rate of the initial study it yields data over 17 years that are more complete than many cross-sectional surveys which typically suffer from low response rates.

MEASURES

College-track Curriculum and Educational Attainment

Students were asked to indicate the type of curriculum they were pursuing in high school: college preparatory, vocational, general, business, agricultural, or other. We examine a dummy indicator for taking college preparatory course work.

Educational attainment in both 1973 and 1982 ranges from (1) high school, (2) some college (3) college graduate, to (4) graduate degree. The YSPSP is biased against high school dropouts, who constituted approximately 26% of the birth cohort, hence the distribution on educational attainment is somewhat limited. In 1973 36.5% of the respondents had only a high school degree, 31.6% reported some college education, 27.3% had earned a college degree, and 4.6% attained a graduate degree. By 1982, 11.9% reported earning graduate degrees, 24.4% had a baccalaureate degree, and 41% had attended some college. In 1982, the percentage of respondents with only a high school degree was 22.7%.

Fundamentalism of Respondent and Parent

We operationalize fundamentalism using an indicator of biblical inerrancy. In the 1965 panel both youths and their parents were asked: "I'd like you to tell me which is closest to your own view: (1) The Bible is God's word and all it says is true; (2) the Bible was written by men inspired by God, but it contains some human error; (3) the Bible is a good book because it was written by wise men, but God had nothing to do with it; and (4) the Bible was written by men who lived so long ago that it is worth very little today." Since otherworldly cultural orientations that would restrict educational choices are most likely linked to beliefs in the Bible as the literal and inerrant word of God, we construct a dummy variable identifying those who chose the first response — 39.8% of the youths and 34.2% for the parents.

Control Variables

Denominational affiliation. We construct dummy variables tapping respondents' and parents' affiliation with conservative Protestant denominations (Baptist, Assembly of God, Pentecostal, Holiness, Church of Christ, Church of God, etc.). *High school grades.* We assess students' grade-point averages in high school (on a four-point scale). *College preparation.* The dummy indicator for taking college track courses in high school is used as a control variable in the models for educational attainment. *Educational intentions.* In the educational attainment models, we control for whether respondents intended to continue their education past high school, ranging from 6 (very sure that they would) to 1 (plan to stop). *Social origins.* We control for the effects of parents' education. The average education level of the parents is used in the analysis (children from single-parent families are given the value for the existing parent). This measure runs from (1) neither parent having more than primary school education, to (7) both parents having graduate degrees. Second, we control for parents' income in 1965, measured from (1) under \$1,000 to (9) over \$15,000. Third, we control for fathers' occupational status using Duncan's SES scale. *Demographic factors.* African Americans, residents of nonmetropolitan areas, and Southerners are distinguished from other respondents using dummy variables. In models that are not gender-specific, we control for gender.

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF LOGISTIC REGRESSION ESTIMATES FOR THE EFFECT OF PARENTS' FUNDAMENTALISM ON CHILDREN'S COLLEGE PREPARATORY TRACKING

Equation 1 vs. Equation 2	1985	
	Coefficient 1	Coefficient 2
	(difference <i>t</i> -statistic)	
Nonfund. Child vs. Fund. Child ^b	-.158	-.276*
Female Child vs. Male Child ^c	-.547***	(.409)
Female Nonfund. Child vs. Female Fund. Child ^a	-.990***	(-2.270)
Male Nonfund. Child vs. Male Fund. Child ^a	.523*	(-2.044)
Female Nonfund. Child vs. Male Fund. Child ^a	-.990***	(2.001)
Female Nonfund. Child vs. Male Nonfund. Child ^a	-.990***	(-1.461)
Female Fund. Child vs. Male Fund. Child ^a	-.133	(-3.620)
Female Fund. Child vs. Male Nonfund. Child ^a	-.133	(.479)
		.523*
		(-1.621)

NOTE: + $p < .05$ one-tailed; * $p < .05$ two-tailed; ** $p < .01$ two-tailed; *** $p < .001$ two-tailed.

^a Controlling for parents' education, parents' income, father's occupational prestige, Southern origins, rural origins, race.

^b Controlling for A plus gender.

^c Controlling for A plus youth's Bible beliefs.

RESULTS

In Table 1, we present logistic regression coefficients for the estimated effect of parents' fundamentalism on the log of the odds of taking college preparatory course work in high school. It should be noted that college preparatory curriculum is the strongest predictor of educational attainment in the YSPSP data (Darnell and Sherkat 1997). Table 1 presents estimates from eight separate logistic regression models. For brevity, estimates of the effects of control variables are not presented. Each row of the table displays the effect of parents' fundamentalism in two subsamples — divided by gender, youth's fundamentalism, or a combination of the two. Underneath the two coefficients is a *t*-statistic testing the significance of the difference in the effect of parents' biblical inerrancy across the two subsamples.³

Looking first at the effects by the religious orientation of the child, we find that fundamentalist parents have a significant negative effect on the likelihood that a fundamentalist child will take college preparatory work in high school. However, the effect of parents' biblical inerrancy is not significant for nonfundamentalist children (though it is negative). The difference between estimates from the two groups is not significant. While the difference in these effects is inconclusive, it suggests that fundamentalist parents are better able to influence the curricular choices of like-minded children.

Second, we analyze gender differences in the effects of parent's fundamentalism on educational track. We find that fundamentalist parents have a significant negative impact on the likelihood that their female children will take college preparatory course work. Controlling for other factors, having a parent who is a fundamentalist reduces the odds that a young woman will take college preparatory coursework by an estimated 42% ($\exp(-.547) = .578$). In contrast, the effect of parents' fundamentalism on male children's college tracking

is insubstantial and insignificant. The *t*-test reveals that we can be confident that parents' fundamentalism has a significantly more negative impact on the likelihood that female children take college prep courses.

Breaking the models down by gender *and* the religious orientation of the child generates even more interesting discoveries. First, we find that for females who are not fundamentalists the effect of parents' fundamentalism on college preparation is negative, significant, and substantial. Having a parent who is fundamentalist reduces the odds that a nonfundamentalist woman will take college preparatory course work by an estimated 63% ($\exp(-.990) = .372$). In contrast, the corresponding effect in the model for young fundamentalist women is modestly negative and insignificant. The *t*-test of the difference between these coefficients is significant, meaning that we can safely conclude that parents' fundamentalism has a stronger negative impact on college preparation for young women who disagree with their parents' religious beliefs. Hence, parents seem to exert more control over the curricular choices of female nonbelievers than female believers.

Comparing male nonfundamentalists and male fundamentalists reveals a surprising result — fundamentalist parents actually have a positive effect on the odds that male nonfundamentalists will take college-track course work. In contrast, parents' fundamentalism has a modest negative (and not conventionally significant) effect on fundamentalist males' college tracking. The difference between these effects is significant, so we can safely say that our estimates show that fundamentalist parents have a more negative effect on fundamentalist males' secondary educational choices when compared with the effect on nonfundamentalist males. These disparate results by gender could be interpreted in several ways: (1) fundamentalist parents may view education differently for female children, and exert harsher control on deviant young women; (2) even when neither agrees with a parent's religious commitments, young women's reactions to their parents anti-intellectual orientations may differ from those of males; (3) young male nonbelievers may actually rebel against their parents' anti-intellectual orientations, while fundamentalist male progeny accept their parents' preferences and make choices accordingly; (4) it is even possible that fundamentalist parents use secular education as punishment for deviant male children — they may be articulating that if a male child is not going to demonstrate piety he is not going to be allowed to take auto shop, carpentry, or some other vocational program (the "preferred" educational option when contrasted with chemistry, biology, or trigonometry); (5) these results may suggest gender differences in why children deviate from the strict religious faith of their parents. Males may be more likely to be drawn from the faith by intellectual pursuits while females may deviate for other unknown reasons.

Table 2 presents OLS regression coefficient estimates for the effect of parents fundamentalism on educational attainment in 1973 and 1982 for the different subgroups. First, we see that the overall effect of fundamentalist parents on nonfundamentalist children is negative but nonsignificant, while fundamentalist parents have a significant positive influence on the educational attainment of their fundamentalist children. The difference between these effects is also significant. Further, the difference in the effect of parents' fundamentalism becomes even stronger when we look at education attained by 1982. Clearly, either fundamentalist parents are relatively unsupportive of their nonfundamentalist children's attainment or nonfundamentalist parents penalize their Bible-believing children. We have no reason to suspect that nonfundamentalist parents would hinder the educational pursuits of fundamentalist children, yet we have strong evidence that fundamentalist parents regard education with enmity, and would only support religiously motivated education.⁴ Indeed, even if fundamentalist parents are unaware of their children's religious deviance, they may generate a household climate that is hostile to educational pursuits and thereby influence the educational options their children consider.

TABLE 2
COMPARISON OF OLS REGRESSION ESTIMATES FOR THE EFFECT OF PARENTS'
FUNDAMENTALISM ON CHILDREN'S EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Equation 1 vs. Equation 2	1973		1982	
	Coefficient 1 (difference <i>t</i> -statistic.)	Coefficient 2	Coefficient 1 (difference <i>t</i> -statistic)	Coefficient 2
Nonfund. Child vs. Fund. Child ^b	-.048 (-1.976)	.108 *	-.085 (-2.335)	.133 **
Female Child vs. Male Child ^c	-.030 (-1.510)	.091 +	-.020 (-1.065)	.081
Female Nonfund. Child vs. Female Fund. Child ^a	-.132 ⁺ (-1.535)	.042	-.190 * (-2.290)	.108
Male Nonfund. Child vs. Male Fund. Child ^a	.040 (-1.080)	.165 *	.031 (-1.086)	.183 *
Female Nonfund. Child vs. Male Fund. Child ^a	-.132 ⁺ (-2.457)	.165 *	-.190 * (-2.550)	.183 *
Female Nonfund. Child vs. Male Nonfund. Child ^a	-.132 ⁺ (-1.490)	.040	-.190 * (-1.669)	.031
Female Fund. Child vs. Male Fund. Child ^a	.042 (-1.081)	.165 *	.107 (-.549)	.183 *
Female Fund. Child vs. Male Nonfund. Child ^a	.042 (.185)	.040	.107 (.614)	.031

NOTE: + $p < .05$ one-tailed; * $p < .05$ two-tailed; ** $p < .01$ two-tailed; *** $p < .001$ two-tailed.

^a Controlling for parents' education, parents' income, father's occupational prestige, college preparatory track, grade point average, educational aspirations, Southern origins, rural origins, race.

^b Controlling for A plus gender.

^c Controlling for A plus youth's Bible beliefs.

Gender differences in the effect of parents' fundamentalism on educational attainment are not as evident. Parents' biblical inerrancy has a slight and insignificant negative estimated effect on female children's attainment. Fundamentalist parents have a small positive estimated effect on males' educational attainment, and while the effect is marginally significant in 1973, it is not significant in 1982. The *t*-statistics show that the gender difference in the effects of parents fundamentalism approaches conventional significance for 1973 attainment, but not for 1982 attainment.

Separating the sample by gender and religious beliefs of the child provides a more complete picture of what is going on. First, fundamentalist parents have a significant negative impact on their nonfundamentalist daughter's educational attainment. Note also that these models control for high school curriculum, and that nonfundamentalist young women suffered in their college tracking at the hands of fundamentalist parents. In contrast, Bible-believing parents were somewhat supportive of their fundamentalist daughters' educational pursuits and the positive estimated effect approaches conventional significance levels in 1982. Indeed, in the 1982 panel, we can conclude that fundamentalist parents have a significantly different effect on their nonfundamentalist daughter's attainment compared to their effect on fundamentalist daughter's educational accomplishments. When they are compared to their more "pious" peers, nonfundamentalist young women's educational attainment suffers at the hands of fundamentalist parents.⁵

Differences in the effects of parents' fundamentalism among males are less pronounced. Our estimates show that parents' fundamentalism gives a significant boost to the educational attainment of male fundamentalist children. The corresponding effect for nonfundamentalist males is positive but insubstantial. We cannot conclude that fundamentalist parents have significantly different influences on educational attainment according to their

male children's religious beliefs. However, while these findings are less dramatic, the estimates parallel our findings among young women.

It is interesting to note that among fundamentalist children we cannot conclude that parents' fundamentalism has a significantly greater impact on males--and remember that the effect of parents' fundamentalism is positive among both male and female fundamentalist children. To conclude, female non-fundamentalists are clearly the group most negatively impacted by having fundamentalist parents. Female fundamentalists and non-fundamentalist males are unscathed by their parents' fundamentalism, while male Bible believers are promoted in their educational pursuits.

DISCUSSION

Parents influence their children's educational attainment not only through their status characteristics and resources, but also by passing on values and providing a social environment conducive to attainment. What we have shown in this paper is that the influence of parental values is not restricted to the cultural schemata passed on to children — parental support is important for educational attainment, and when parents are opposed to education for cultural reasons they will hinder their children's opportunities for attainment. Importantly, we also demonstrate how and why the effect of parents' fundamentalism on children's educational attainment varies by the gender and religious beliefs of the youth.

Direct parental influences on children's attainment through the withdrawal of tangible resources are only one explanation for our findings. Parents' religiously motivated opposition to secular education will influence the set of options a child considers even if the parents is unaware of the child's religious beliefs. While parents may not directly constrain their children's choices by withholding support, they may cause their children to ignore the possibility of attaining higher education. Additionally, even if children can find alternative financial support for educational pursuits, parents may create a hostile climate for studies. They may magnify young people's educational difficulties, and reserve parental esteem for siblings, relatives, or peers who pursue more "Christian" activities.

Conservative Protestants are not averse to all worldly pursuits, however they are admonished to avoid choices that would endanger their souls. Fundamentalist minister Kenneth Copeland (1992: 29) aptly conveys the tension between worldly attainment and otherworldly concerns: "Christians have avoided prosperity like the plague because they have been taught that it would defile them. But the end result of prosperity is destruction only to the one who seeks it without fear of the Lord and without the Wisdom of God." Such schemata could help direct parents' support of their children's educational attainment according to whether or not they are confident that their offspring has "the Wisdom of God." Our findings suggest that Bible-believing parents see their fundamentalist children — and especially their like-minded male offspring — as being either: (1) more able to fend off the temptations of secular education, thereby capable of maximizing both religious and secular value; or, (2) more worthy of scarce resources necessary for attending private Christian institutions of higher learning. Indeed, we find that controlling for other factors, Bible-believing children with fundamentalist parents receive significantly more education over the life course than nonfundamentalist children with biblical inerrantist parents.⁶

Conservative Christians are known to support traditional gender roles because of their interpretations of scripture, arguing that women should restrict their activities to the home if at all possible (Jepsen 1984; Schlafly 1977; Hancock 1975; Horton 1982). Given this orientation toward women's life options, we expected to find strong gender differences in the effects of parents' fundamentalism on children's educational attainment. We do find gender differences, but these differences vary according to the children's fundamentalism. Our

results clearly show: (1) that the educational attainment of nonfundamentalist women is significantly hampered by fundamentalist parents; (2) that fundamentalist parents do not differ significantly from nonfundamentalist parents in their support of nonfundamentalist males or Bible-believing females; and, (3) male inerrantist children receive a significant boost in their educational attainment from fundamentalist parents.

Sewell's (1992) notion of structure as comprised of schemata and resources furnishes a template for our understanding of how cultural orientations come to have material consequences. Since schemata may be transposed across social realms, this theoretical construct provides us with a way of explaining how choices are influenced by preferences in other realms of life. In our case, choices related to investments in family members' educational careers are directed by religious preferences. The religious schemata sustained in fundamentalist Protestantism are transposed into beliefs and preferences regarding child rearing. Further, these schemata direct investments in their children's education in different ways. Children can be seen as family resources, and the qualities children exhibit through ascription or affectation allow for differential interpretations of child resources — evidencing the polysemic character of family resources (Sewell 1992: 18–19). Children who embody the cultural schemata of fundamentalism are dealt with in a different fashion from those who embrace other cultural values. Further, gender can be seen to embody distinctive cultural schemata, thereby leading fundamentalist parents to direct family resources — both the child, and financial and other resources available in the household — according to the gender of the child.

NOTES

Data from the Youth Parent Socialization Panel Study were made available through the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research. A version of this paper was presented at the 1996 annual meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Nashville, TN. Comments from Larry Iannaccone and the anonymous reviewers were helpful.

¹ The number of studies on the relationship between religion and social mobility appearing in major American sociology journals in the 1960s is remarkable. Fourteen publications on religion and attainment appeared in the *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, or *Social Forces* between 1962 and 1971, yet only one was published between 1982 and 1997.

² There are several "large" fundamentalist colleges such as Liberty, Oral Roberts, and Bob Jones, and a rapidly growing Christian schooling movement that provides students for these colleges (see Peshkin 1986; Rose 1988; Wagner 1990). Yet, even the largest of the fundamentalist colleges would be considered very small by public university or even community college standards. The vast majority of opportunities for higher education come from the state university systems and secular, or nonfundamentalist, private universities. Also, many of the "acceptable" Bible colleges do not grant four-year degrees, offer few majors, and only a handful offer any opportunity for graduate study.

³ Since both the logistic and OLS coefficients have normal sampling distributions, a conservative test of the significance of the difference between coefficients can be performed using the following *t*-statistic:

$$t = \text{Coeff}_1 - \text{Coeff}_2 / (\text{se}_1^2 + \text{se}_2^2)^{1/2}$$

⁴ In ancillary analyses, available on request, we examined the effect of perceived intergenerational solidarity on attainment. We found that feelings of closeness to the parent and/or child did not influence educational attainment, and did not alter the findings we present here. Hence, the differences we find by children's fundamentalism are likely not simply reducible to homophilic effects on support. Also, variance inflation factors from the models indicate that multicollinearity does not significantly influence the estimates.

⁵ Additional analyses reveal that removing the control for college preparatory curricula does not significantly change the results. The only substantial alteration is that the effect of parents' fundamentalism on attainment becomes more negative for nonfundamentalist females, and the negative effects of parents' fundamentalism on nonbelieving males weakens.

⁶ This finding could be interpreted in another way — fundamentalist children with nonfundamentalist parents may be penalized. However, given that Christian religious expressions in the United States are seen as nondeviant, this explanation is far less plausible. The high school class of 1965 was beset with political and social turmoil that increased tensions between generations. Children of nonfundamentalist parents who gravitated toward conservative religion rather than countercultural activities seem unlikely targets for the type of parental sanctions that would influence educational attainment.

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