

Symbolic Traditionalism & Pragmatic Egalitarianism (Gallagher & Smith)

Method: 265 in-depth interviews with evangelicals

Traditionally, evangelicalism has included a belief that women are subordinate to men (i.e., male “headship”)

However, this belief is in conflict with the “realities of a two-income family.”

The majority of evangelicals in the study agreed with “neotraditional rhetoric of gender and family responsibilities”

Only 5% were egalitarian (“mutual submission”) and 2% were traditionalists

Most (over 90%) combine elements of traditionalism & egalitarianism

Key beliefs:

Husbands are responsible for material needs (if only symbolically)

Husbands have spiritual responsibility for the family

Husbands have responsibility for making “final decisions” by casting a “tie-breaking vote” (but this is never done)

Wives get some benefits from men’s responsibility

Husbands are supposed to sacrifice for their wives and family

Husbands are supposed to provide security and stability

Husbands and wives are supposed to have mutual respect for each other: “Mutual respect figured as a powerful ideological tool that allowed women to accent male power in decision making while simultaneously disarming that power by requiring husbands to respect their wives.” (p. 223-224)

Evangelicals practice “pragmatic egalitarianism”: (1) wives are employed and (2) decision making is shared.