

ABSTRACT

Family Values: The Empirical Impact of Internet Use

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Family values are a set of ethical viewpoints pertaining to family matters that have the potential to have divisive effects for the private and public spheres. The formation of family values can be broken down into a spectrum ranging from two perspectives. Drawing from the perspectives highlighted in Hunter's *Culture Wars*, this paper examines what predicts whether progressive, more secular, or traditional, more religious, family values will be held (1991). This paper looks at the effects of Internet use to see what leads to more progressive or more traditional family values. Taken from Wave 1 of the Baylor Religion Survey's Moral Attitudes module, a scaled variable for family values is tested as a dependent variable in a variety of regressions. Internet use, educational attainment, religious beliefs, as well as sex of the respondent all emerge as important variables in predicting family values. Key findings of this study are that there is an association between family values and Internet use, and that males' family values are highly influenced by Internet use, while females' are more influenced by education.

Family Values: The Empirical Impact of Internet Use

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Family values are a set of moral attitudes concerning family issues that are often be debated. It is essential that sociologists study family values, because they have the potential to influence private and public social matters.

To study the Internet and family values, it is necessary to have a set of attitudes to examine. Attitudes concerning the family and morality issues are micro-level indicators with macro-level impacts. Social scientists have comprehensively studied family values to better understand what these mean for society as a whole, and to understand who believes what (Smith, 2001). In this study predictors of family values are examined using a summative attitudinal variable with several items concerning: premarital sex, abortion, cohabitation, and stem cell research. One of the benefits of looking at family values is that the topics are deeply personal decisions, as well as highly debated societal issues. This allows researchers to understand how these predictors impact privately and socially held attitudes.

Two perspectives, on opposite ends of the spectrum, are often employed in the forming of family values. A progressive perspective draws on modern society and popular culture in family value formation, and a traditional perspective relies on a deity or a religious teaching for the formation of family values (Hunter, 1991). Literature indicates that demographics, religious beliefs, and political beliefs all have the potential to influence whether a person is more progressive or more traditional in family values

formation (Bader & Froese, 2005; Krull & Trovato, 1994; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2005).

Progressivists and traditionalists often have very different viewpoints in terms of family values. Specifically within the abortion debate, progressivists are more likely to favor a pro-choice argument, while traditionalists are more likely to favor a pro-life argument (Burrell, 2010; Mattox & Bowman, 2010; Munson, 2008; Reiman, 2007). Also, when it comes to marital issues, progressivists are more likely to be supportive of cohabitation, safe pre-marital sex, and divorce; while, traditionalists are less likely to be supportive of these decisions (Abbott & Dalla, 2008; Cahn & Carbone, 2007; Coltrane, 2001; Mauldon & Luker, 1996; Stacey, 1996; Wallerstein, Lewis, & Blakeslee 2000). This study examines how progressive and traditional family values are influenced by Internet use, along with various other factors.

Previous research has shown that family values are influenced by a variety of factors. Aging, increased education, and increased income have all been previously associated with more progressive family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Czaja & Sharit, 1998; Danigelis et al., 2007; Krull & Trovato, 1994; Poortman & Van Tilburg, 2005; Visser & Krosnick, 1998). Conversely, research has shown that attending church more often, having more literal interpretations of the bible, and being from the Southern region of the United States, are associated with more traditional family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Lamanna and Reidmann, 2006; Xu, Hudspeth, and Bartkowski, 2005).

Internet use has rarely been examined as a predictor of family values, despite the fact that the Internet has the potential to re-shape modern communities (Bloch, 2007; Driskell and Lyon, 2002; Doring, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, and Wolak, 2003; Putnam,

2000; Rohlinger and Brown, 2009). Because progressivists form values based on contemporary ideas and pop culture (Hunter, 1991), it is crucial to include Internet use when examining predictors of family values. Because the Internet has the potential to change communities and expose people to alternative world views, it is important to study the impact of the Internet on family values.

The purpose of this study is to open the door for more research on Internet impact on family values and other attitudes. Through the use of the data analysis program SPSS and the 2005 Baylor Religion Survey, these effects are examined; thus, catalyzing the academic discussion of how the Internet can influence attitudes.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The study of family values must begin with a discussion of the issues that have shaped the family values debate. Basic demographic characteristics and beliefs are key indicators for why a person could choose to align themselves with a specific side of these issues, and such indicators are critical in understanding the importance of family values. The first section of this chapter will focus on the literature of family values, specifically the topics associated with sexual values. Next, literature concerning demographics and religious beliefs are examined in the context of value attitude prediction. The section concludes with a discussion of the growing body of literature on Internet use as it relates to family values.

Values and the Family

Presently, family values is a dichotomous topic that has caught the attention of social scientists. It is a personal and private matter that, at the same time, is discussed publically and has the potential to influence policy and legislation. The values of the family is a multifaceted subject. In addition to general promotion of healthy family relationships, “family values” is a term that is often associated with several controversial topics. Attitudes toward premarital sex, cohabitation, contraceptive use, and abortion are all issues that have come to form the current family values debate.

To study family values it’s necessary to define family values. In recent media use, family values have been associated with the religious right. Generally, family values

are the moral and ethical principles upheld and transmitted within a family, which become the ideals, customs, institutions of a society toward which the people of the group have an affective regard. In the case of this examination, family values will be conceptualized as a set of moral attitudes concerning highly debated family issues, such as premarital sex, cohabitation, contraceptive use, and abortion.

In James Hunter's *Culture Wars*, he highlights two main contemporary perspectives that shape our culture and split the family values debate. Progressivists have a tendency to form values based on the "prevailing assumptions of contemporary life." While traditionalists tend to form values based on "an external, definable, and transcendent authority" (1991). An example of this dichotomy is the different ways people form perspectives about homosexuality. A progressive person might be inclined to say homosexuality is not sinful, because of the person's exposure to many cultural messages that condone homosexuality. A traditional person may be more likely to say homosexuality is sinful, because the person's religious beliefs indicate that it is. In other words, progressivists are more likely to value ideas that stem from modern culture, and traditionalists are more likely to value ideas that stem from religious teachings. In this study I will examine family values from both of these perspectives.

Why is it important to study family values? It's important for social scientists to give attention to family values because family values influence society from the micro to the macro level. Often, children's identity and core beliefs are shaped by the teachings and beliefs of their families. Later in life, the adults based their decisions on these core beliefs that shaped them in childhood. Such decisions can have far-reaching, global impacts. While these are attitudes that will determine norms and rules for behavior, they

are also potential predictors of formal policy change. When legislative decisions about each specific topic are made, the attitudes held by the majority concerning each issue and the democratic process will impact the result for each particular item. Family values play a major role in personal lives and the public sphere. Understanding the underlying theme within the family values debate is one way to determine predictors of individual family values. One theme that is often present with all of the issues related to family values is the topic of sexual values.

Sexual Values

A key theme within the family values concept is sexual values, the attitudes one associates with the ethics and the propriety of various sexual behaviors. Premarital sex, cohabitation, divorce, and abortion are interrelated issues that deal with the values sexual activity. These issues make up family values share the common thread of sexual values that divides modern culture into traditionalists and progressivists.

Whether or not premarital sex is anticipated and prepared for, or discouraged and ignored is a huge issue involved with sexual values and family values. Much of the research on premarital sex focuses on adolescents. In this research premarital sex is most often studied by looking at the average age of first intercourse. Recent research has found that this age of first intercourse, for both male and female adolescents, is approximately 17 (The Guttmacher Institute, 2002). With that in mind, it is important to understand what teenagers are being taught about sexual intercourse and the values associated with it.

Traditionalists discourage the engagement of sex outside the bonds of marriage. This message is spread through the personal teachings of mentors and parents, and

through public forums such as abstinence based sexual education. Recently it seems that this message has been received by some high school students, as the percentage of adolescents who report having had sexual intercourse decreased by 8 percent from 1991 to 2009 (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2010). One study interviewed teens about their decision to abstain from sex and three of the top four reasons were associated with family values attitudes, including: religious, personal and parental beliefs (Abbott and Dalla, 2008).

On the opposite side, progressivists tend to be more accepting of sex before marriage. The progressive perspective does not encourage adolescents and young adults to pursue sexual relationships with reckless abandon, but progressivists do tout the benefits of accepting premarital sex as normal behavior. By accepting premarital sex and promoting sex education that teaches protective and contraceptive methods, such as condom use, progressivists believe they are endorsing a safe-sex message (Mauldon and Luker, 1996).

The relationship between sexual values and marriage is another important component of family values attitudes. In recent decades later age at first marriage has been linked with increased rates of cohabitation (Bumpass et al., 1991). According to Bumpass et al. (1991), cohabitation serves as a slightly, less certain marriage substitute and needs to be included in study of the family. It is a crucial relationship and family structure to study because the percentage of people who have ever cohabitated is approximately 50 percent (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). Similarly, attitudes toward cohabitation are fairly flexible, with approximately 50 percent of men and women claiming that they disagree with the notion that living together before

marriage is always wrong (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). Although, cohabitation rates and acceptance have risen over recent decades, the numbers account for only half of the adult population. Strong progressive and traditional family values average out to form the moderate opinion. While progressivists are accepting of cohabitation and sometimes even endorse it as an intelligent step to make before marriage, traditionalists discourage the act (Cahn and Carbone, 2007).

Divorce is another central aspect of the family values discourse. Despite the fact that divorce rates have decreased or remained stable for two decades, people are still anxious about the state of marriage in the United State (Coltrane and Adams, 2003). Traditionalists are especially less accepting of divorce, than progressivists are. In terms of the traditional perspective, a considerable body of knowledge focusing on anti-divorce campaigns in promotion of conservative family values has gained national recognition (Coltrane, 2001; Stacey, 1996; Wallerstein et al., 2000). Such campaigns tend to highlight the pitfalls of divorce, and tout traditional marriages as the solution to the family values “problem” in America (Coltrane and Adams, 2003). This argument to restore the traditional family structure as the ideal is most strongly promoted by religious, politically active traditionalists (Brooks, 2002; Coltrane, 2001). Progressivists do not actively promote divorce or cite it as a problem; instead, there is evidence of an “ambivalent acceptance” of divorce for progressivists (Cherlin, 2009).

Abortion is another component of the family-sexuality value aspect. Due to the complex nature of the abortion debate, this issue has been comprehensively studied with mixed results. Links between abortion attitudes and demographic indicators such as race and sex have been reported (Granberg & Granberg, 1985; Hall & Ferree, 1986;

Lynxwiler & Gay, 1996). Other studies have found that attitudes associated with education, income, and religion can predict of an individual will view abortion (Granberg & Granberg, 1985; Wilcox, 2000).

The progressive family values perspective favors the pro-choice argument, which contends that it is the right of the woman to choose whether or not she wishes to see a pregnancy to term (Burrell, 2010; Munson, 2008; Reiman, 2007). The pro-life abortion argument is favored by the traditional perspective. This argument holds that life begins in the womb, so the act of abortion is wrong because it is the act of ending a life (Burrell, 2010; Mattox & Bowman, 2010; Reiman, 2007). Out of all of the issues affecting family values, abortion is possibly the most politically charged topic.

Premarital sex, cohabitation, divorce and abortion are all major components of family values. Separately, each item is an important public issue; however, it is difficult to isolate any one piece from the larger puzzle when discussing the complexities of family values. Family values are an interconnected set of attitudes, and each issue is associated with whole value set.

Family Value Predictors

Family values are currently an item of great interest in the social and social scientific worlds. Previous literature points to various demographic controls and beliefs as indicators for holding either traditional or progressive family values. Aging is stereotypically associated with increased traditionalism, but research findings suggest that age is positively associated with adaptation and tolerance, and negatively associated with traditionalism (Czaja & Sharit, 1998; Danigelis et al., 2007; Visser & Krosnick, 1998). Increased age also brings more progressive family values in terms of life experiences and

people are more likely to have progressive attitudes concerning cohabitation if their adult children cohabit (Poortman & VanTilburg, 2005).

Perhaps some of the strongest and most agreed upon controls are education and income. Increased education and income are associated with more progressive family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Krull & Trovato, 1994). Specifically, education is likely to impact family values because progressive attitudes are influenced by informational intake. It is predicted that increased education will be associated with more progressive family values.

Region of the country is also strongly associated with an individual's attitudes toward family values. Southerners are more likely to hold traditional in terms of family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2005). The historical makeup and the cultural characteristics such as religious beliefs are possible explanations for the traditional family values perspective that is prevalent in the Southern region of the United States (Lamanna & Reidmann, 2006). In the South, the culture is more likely to be shaped by religion because of the higher rates of church attendance (Finke & Scheitle, 2005).

Family values could also be associated with the respondents' sex. Research has shown that females are more likely to have progressive family values, especially in terms of women's sexual rights issues (Swers, 1998). A large body of research has been devoted to understanding the differences between society's permissiveness of males' sexual freedom compared to females' (Aubrey, 2004; Kelly & Bazzini, 2001; Mark & Miller, 1986; Muehlenhard, 1988). The common reference to this occurrence is the

sexual double standard. Due to this imbalance of sexual freedom, this paper hypothesizes that males' and females' family values are influenced by different factors.

Religious Beliefs

A study of family values would not be complete without an examination of the relationship between family values and religious attitudes. Traditional family values are often colloquially referred to as the opinion of the Christian or Religious Right. This association between religion and politics is reinforced by the major media influences espousing these ideologies (e.g., The Institute for American Families, the National Fatherhood Initiative, the American Family Association; Coltrane, 2001). In general, the traditional perspective refers back to an ultimate authority, such as God and religion, in the formation of family values. For this reason, traditionalists are more likely to have strict family values. Specifically, traditionalists are more likely to hold that premarital sex, cohabitation, divorce, and abortion are wrong; while progressivists are more accepting of all of these behaviors. Since progressivists are more likely to form family values from contemporary social norms, they are less likely to draw on religious beliefs for these viewpoints.

Previous research has also found significant associations between religious beliefs and family values. In terms of abortion attitudes, sexual values, and political affiliation, respondents with increased church attendance and respondents who interpret the bible more literally are more likely to hold traditional values (Bader & Froese, 2005). People with lower church attendance and less literal biblical interpretations are more likely to be progressivists, because they do draw from modern cultural ideals to form their views. Similarly, compared to people who are unaffiliated with a religious tradition, Evangelical

Protestants are more likely to have traditional attitudes concerning abortion, sexual values, and political attitudes, and Catholics have stronger traditional opinions concerning abortion (Bader & Froese, 2005).

Another aspect of religious effects on values is whether or not these outcomes are similar for people holding the same religious beliefs, but different demographic characteristics. Recent research has indicated that young Evangelicals are distancing themselves politically from older evangelicals and becoming more progressive (Dokoupil & Miller, 2009; Mendenhall, 2006; Zogby, 2009). One study compares younger and older Evangelicals attitudes toward political issues to address this question. Aside from the topic of environmentalism, young Evangelicals hold moral attitudes very similar to their older counterparts, and people with strong conservative religious background are likely to have traditional family values regardless of age (Smith & Johnson, 2010). This finding indicates that religious beliefs have the ability to influence family values perspectives more than demographic characteristics, and it signifies the importance of accounting for religious controls when studying family values.

Religious beliefs are necessary to examine in terms of family values, because religion has such a significant impact on the traditional cultural perspective. The progressive perspective is highly influenced by contemporary society. To better understand both progressive and traditional beliefs, this study must examine predictors of both perspectives by taking into account influences from “transcendent authorities” and contemporary cultural influences, which in the case of this study is the Internet. In recent years the Internet has skyrocketed in terms of use and cultural relevance. The remainder

of this chapter will focus on the impact of the Internet on society, and how this could affect family values.

Internet Use and Family Values

The sociology of the Internet is a relatively new area of research for social scientists. In the past ten years the percentage of people who use the Internet has increased by 33 percent. In March of 2000, 46 percent of people reported using the Internet, versus May of 2010 when 79 percent of people were online (Pew Research Center, 2010). This widespread use of the Internet means it is imperative for social scientists to understand what the Internet means for society and how it impacts family values.

Current research on the topic is quite varied. Until recently, who is using the Internet, was not fully understood in the field of Internet research (Pew Research Center, 2010). Sociologists also have a vested interest in how the Internet can be used to further research through web surveys and other sampling methodologies. How the online community influences social interactions, education, and information flow are also important subjects of current Internet research. The Internet affects the community three ways by: increasing social isolation, creating a weak community replacement, while still strengthening and reinforcing community (Driskell & Lyon, 2002). Overall the shift to a more modern community is an indication that the Internet has the ability to impact family values. People who draw their values from modern social influences are more likely to have progressive family values, so the Internet also has the ability to increase progressive family values.

One of the most intriguing aspects of Internet study is the fact that researchers are still trying to define exactly what role the World Wide Web plays in our lives. Tufekci (2008) suggests that distinguishing Internet use between expressive use, through social networking, and instrumental use, which is the Internet for checking the weather and sports scores. Without a doubt, the Internet is a tool used for every day communication, whether it is to purchase airline tickets or send a business email. Additionally, the web provides a distinct avenue for personally connecting with others. More than just an instrument for sending daily emails, this online community allows people to extend their social networks far beyond geographic boundaries. It's a way to connect with family and friends, and also a method for making new connections without ever having to meet them in person. Finally, it is the most expedient method for accessing news, data, trivia, or general knowledge. It has been dubbed the "information superhighway" for exactly that reason. One topic that the academic community has yet to examine closely is the effect of Internet use on family values.

Some of the research that does exist on the topic of Internet impact on family values looks at how specific issues have been affected by online interaction over time (Bloch, 2007; Rohlinger & Brown, 2009). In other research the chief concern is discovering who is being acknowledged and heard in web-based discourse (Albretch, 2006). Other research has found that regardless of whether or not one is looking for it, Internet users are exposed to sexual and alternative material more often than those who do not go online (Doring, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2003; Putnam, 2000). These exposure effects could lead to more progressive family values.

Progressivists are more likely to draw on modern culture to shape their values, and the Internet is fast becoming one of the most powerful modern communication tools. Additionally the Internet is a forum for information that is alternative to traditional family values which could yield progressive effects. It is predicted that the Internet will impact family values and that going online will be associated with more progressive family values.

CHAPTER THREE

Data and Methods

The data used in this study are from the first (2005) wave of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS). Designed using the General Social Survey (GSS) as a model, the BRS is collected by Gallup. The BRS provides a snapshot of American attitudes and beliefs on a variety of different topics through a combination of fixed content and rotating topic modules. Although it contains questions on a variety of areas ranging from civic engagement to political tolerance, the majority of the fixed content of the Baylor Religion Survey is devoted to religion items. Wave 1 of the Baylor Religion Survey includes content modules the paranormal, the consumption of religious goods and services and moral and political attitudes. Bader, Mencken and Froese (2007) provide a detailed overview of the methodology behind the Baylor Religion Surveys. Consisting of a random, national sample of 1,721 U.S. citizens, Wave 1 of the Baylor Religion Survey was administered and collected by the Gallup Organization.

The first wave of the Baylor Religion Survey is an excellent dataset for examining family values in the United States. Wave 1 specifically includes a "Moral Attitudes" module. This section asks many questions concerning respondents' views on abortion, cohabitation, divorce, and other topics concerning sexual values. Questions in this module ask respondents to indicate to certain degrees if various circumstances are morally wrong.

Dependent Variable

To measure family values, the questions from the “Moral Attitudes” module were run in a factor analysis which loaded the measures into three distinct groups. The largest of the three groups contained the set of questions used to create the family values variable. Several of the questions concern whether or not the respondent feels abortion is wrong in certain situations: “the baby may have a serious defect,” “the woman’s health is in danger,” “the pregnancy is the result of rape,” “the family cannot afford the child,” and “the woman does not want the child.” Other statements involve the respondents’ opinions on sexual relationships and marriage: “[sexual relations] before marriage,” “divorce,” and “living with a partner before marriage.” Finally, two statements concern the respondents’ opinion of family medical concerns “physician-assisted suicide,” and “embryonic stem cell research.” This scale of variables is combined to create the family values measure. The items ask respondents to indicate if they think the a selection of circumstances are “always wrong,” “almost always wrong,” “only wrong sometimes,” or “not wrong at all.” The ten items and four answer choices for each item compromise a scale that measures progressive = 10 and traditional = 40 values.

Independent Variables

Internet Use

The main research question in this study concerns whether there is a difference in the family values of Internet users, so a crucial dependent measure is a binary variable for Internet use. Using several questions asking about Internet use, a dummy variable was created. Respondents were coded as Internet users if they indicated that they did any of

the following activities: have any involvement in “Internet-based club, group, or chat-room,” or purchased religious books “from an online retailer, such as Amazon.com” (Internet user=1; Non-user=0) (Refer to Table A.1.).

Attitudinal Controls

Considering the effects that church attendance, being Catholic, and Biblical literalism could cause on these analyses, controls for both were included in all of the models. Church attendance is measured with a question asking, “How often do you attend religious services?: and includes the answers: never, less than once a year, once or twice a year, several times a year, once a month, 2-3 times a month, about weekly, weekly and several times a week (responses coded: 1-9). Catholicism is an important variable to control for, because the Catholic church publically censures abortion, and abortion is a topic in half of the ten statements that compose the family values scale (Declaration on Procured Abortion 1974). Catholicism is measured using a binary variable (Catholic =1; Other = 0).

As a measure of biblical literalism, an item that asks respondents “Which one statement comes closest to your personal beliefs about the Bible?” is used. For Biblical literalism, respondents select from the categories "The Bible is an ancient book of history and legends," "the Bible contains some human error," "The Bible is perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally, word-for-word. We must interpret its meaning," and "The Bible means exactly what it says. It should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects." In this study, the item is treated as a continuous measure of literalism, since higher scores indicate increasingly literal views of the Bible (responses coded: 1-4).

Additionally, because family values could be highly influenced by political beliefs a variable for political attitudes is also included. This variable has seven categories starting with “strong democrat,” “moderate democrat,” “leaning democrat,” “independent,” “leaning republican,” “moderate republican,” and the last category is “strong republican” (responses coded: 1-7).

Socio-Demographic Variables

Several demographic controls are included in these analyses. Education was measured as highest grade completed: 8th or less; 9-12th no diploma, high school graduate, some college, trade/technical/vocational training, college graduate, postgraduate work/degree. Income uses the categories \$10,000 or less, \$10,001-\$20,000, \$20,001-\$35,000, \$35,001-\$50,000, \$50,001-\$100,000, \$100,001-\$150,000 and \$150,000 or more (responses coded: 1-7). The other demographic variables in this analysis include: age (in years), marital status (married = 1), sex (male = 1), and race (white = 1; non-white = 0). Due to the fact that this study is examining family values, whether or not the respondent lives in the South is also controlled for (South =1; Non-South = 0). Table 1 displays operationalization of all of the variables in the analysis.

Methodology

This analysis consists of six OLS regressions using the scale item (more progressive = 10; more traditional = 40) for family values. In these regressions, all of the individual level variables: Internet use, age, education, marital status, income, race, region, sex, biblical literalism, Catholic, church attendance, and political views are included. In three of the regressions, an interaction variable that was created using the

Internet use variable and a centered education variable are included. The interaction variable is included to further explore how education and Internet use influence family values. This is an important interaction to focus on because separately both Internet use and education are likely to be associated with contemporary culture and more likely to predict progressive beliefs. In the final four regressions, male and female samples are examined separately, to further explore how family values are influenced by Internet use and to see if sex of the respondent also influences these values.

Table 1
Operationalization of Variables Used in Analysis

Variable	Measure
<i>Dependent Variable</i>	
Family Values	Additive variable based on BRS family moral attitudes module; 10 = more progressive, 40 = more traditional
<i>Independent Variables</i>	
Internet Use	Does the respondent get online? User =1, Non-user = 0
Biblical Literalism	Measure of biblical interpretation; Less literal =1, Very literal =4 (1-4)
Catholic	Religious tradition control; Catholic =1, Other=0
Church Attendance	Frequency of attendance; Never=1, More than once a week= 9 (1-9)
Politically Views	Seven-point scaled variable; Strong Dem. = 1, Strong Rep. = 7 (1-7)
Age	The age of the respondent in years (18-93)
Education	The educational attainment of the respondent (1-7)
Income	The income level of the respondent (1-7)
Marital Status	Marital status of respondent; Married = 1, Not married=0
Race	The race of the respondent; White = 1, Non-white=0
Region	The region of the respondent; South = 1, Non-South=0
Sex	The sex of the respondent; Male = 1, Female=0

It is hypothesized that Internet use will be associated with less traditional family values. Increase in education will be associated with an increase in more progressive family values. In the regressions where interactions are included, it is hypothesized that increased education and Internet use will be associated with more progressive family values. Additionally, sex of the respondent will likely be associated with different influences of family value formation.

Hypotheses

H₁: Internet use will have a negative effect on an individual's family values, which indicates more progressive family values.

H₂: Increased education will have a negative effect on an individual's family values, indicating more progressive family values.

H₃: The interaction of increased education and internet use will have a strong negative effect on an individual's family values, indicating more progressive family values.

H₄: Males' and females' family values will have different influences.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

In Table 2 the descriptive statistics of the sample population are displayed. The family values scale has a mean of 22.65, which means that the sample has slightly more progressive than traditional family values. The average respondent is 49.84 years old, has had some college or vocational school, and has an annual income between \$35,001 and \$50,000. The sample is 53 percent male, 57 percent is married, 84 percent is white, and 30 percent of the sample is from the South. In terms of the religious and political attitudes, the average respondent believes the bible should be interpreted as containing “some human error” or as “perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally, word-for-word.” Catholics make up 21 percent of the sample, while all church attendance averages about once a month. Politically, the average respondent is independent. At 46 percent, a little less than half of the sample uses the Internet.

An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression is estimated to understand the relationship between family values, demographic and attitudinal controls, and Internet use. Table 3 reports the coefficients for the analysis.

In this regression, several significant effects are present. As expected, education and income are both negatively significant variables. For each additional unit of education, the family values score decreases by 0.72, meaning that increased education yields more progressive family values. Similarly, for each one-unit increase for income there is a decrease in the family values score by 0.57, indicating that increase in income is associated with a decrease in traditional family values. With a positive coefficient of

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	St Dev	Min	Max	N
Family Values (DV)	22.65	8.54	10	40	1578
Age	49.84	16.59	18	93	1692
Education	4.59;some college	1.61	1	7	1693
Income	4.16;\$35,001-\$50,000	1.60	1	7	1616
Male	0.53	0.50	0	1	1721
Married	0.57	0.50	0	1	1721
South	0.30	0.46	0	1	1721
White	0.84	0.36	0	1	1721
Biblical Literalism	2.64;Bible contains some error	1.08	1	4	1566
Catholic	0.21	0.40	0	1	1721
Church Attendance	4.85; once a month	2.88	1	9	1699
Political Views	3.94; Independent	2.05	1	7	1590
Internet User	0.46	0.50	0	1	1721

Source: Baylor Religion Survey 2005

Table 3
Regression of Family Values

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	20.35*	1.01
Age	-0.01	0.01
Education	-0.72*	0.12
Income	-0.57*	0.13
Male	-0.58	0.35
Married	1.16*	0.39
South	1.42*	0.38
White	-0.08	0.51
Biblical Literalism	-0.00	0.01
Catholic	-0.66	0.42
Church Attendance	1.76*	0.06
Political Views	-0.01	0.01
Internet User	-0.97*	0.36

*p < .05

r² = .448

N = 1426

Source: Baylor Religion Survey 2005

1.42, individuals from the South are more likely to hold traditional family values. Married individuals are also more likely to hold traditional family values with a coefficient of 1.16. Each one-unit increase in overall church attendance (see categories in Chapter Three) increases the family values score by 1.76 thus moving towards more traditional family values, which supports the expectation that higher church attendance is associated with traditional family values. There is no significant effect for biblical literalism or political views.

Internet use is negatively significant, and respondents who use the Internet are 0.97 less likely than non-Internet users to hold traditional family values. This supports the hypothesis that Internet users are more likely to hold progressive family values than individuals who do not use the Internet.

Previous literature indicates that education is one of the strongest predictors of progressive family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Krull & Trovato, 1994). In this study the effects of Internet use on family values are being explored for the first time, so to further explore the relationship between Internet use and education an interaction is estimated in a separate regression. Table 4 displays the results.

The results in this regression are similar to the initial regression, in that both being from the South (1.41) and increased church attendance (1.8) are positively significant and are associated with more traditional family values; however when controlling for this interaction marital status is no longer associated with more traditional family values. Again, income is negatively significant (-0.66) and is associated with more progressive family values. In terms of education, Internet use, and the interaction between them, the coefficients offer an interesting outcome. Education and the interaction variable both

have the expected effect of negatively affecting the family values score, with coefficients of -0.38 and -0.75 respectively, indicating that both variables are associated with increased progressive family values.

Table 4
*Regression of Family Values
 With Education*Internet Use*

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	17.03*	0.97
Age	-0.01	0.01
Education	-0.38*	0.16
Income	-0.58*	0.13
Male	-0.66	0.35
Married	1.16	0.39
South	1.41*	0.37
White	0.01	0.51
Biblical Literalism	0.01	0.01
Catholic	-0.72	0.42
Church Attendance	1.78*	0.06
Political Views	-0.01	0.01
Internet User	-0.87*	0.36
Education*Internet Use	-0.75*	0.22

*p<.05

r² = .452

N = 1426

Source: Baylor Religion Survey 2005

A more in-depth look at the relationship between education and Internet use is graphically presented in Figure 1. In this figure, the sample is separated between people who go online and people who do not. Internet users start out with more traditional family values, but as their education increases their family values get more progressive. Non-users become more progressive with more education but their family values are still more traditional than Internet users.

As expected Internet use is negatively associated with traditional family values (see Tables 3 and 4). This is consistent with the hypothesis that Internet use is negatively

associated with traditional family values. To further explore how the Internet and education influence family values, Table 5 shows the results of the original regression of family values, but this time the regression was estimated separately—for a female and male sample. Research indicates that females are more likely than males to have progressive views concerning women’s issues, such as many of the abortion statements included in the family values scale (Swers, 1998). These separate regressions show that men and women’s family values are influenced by different factors.

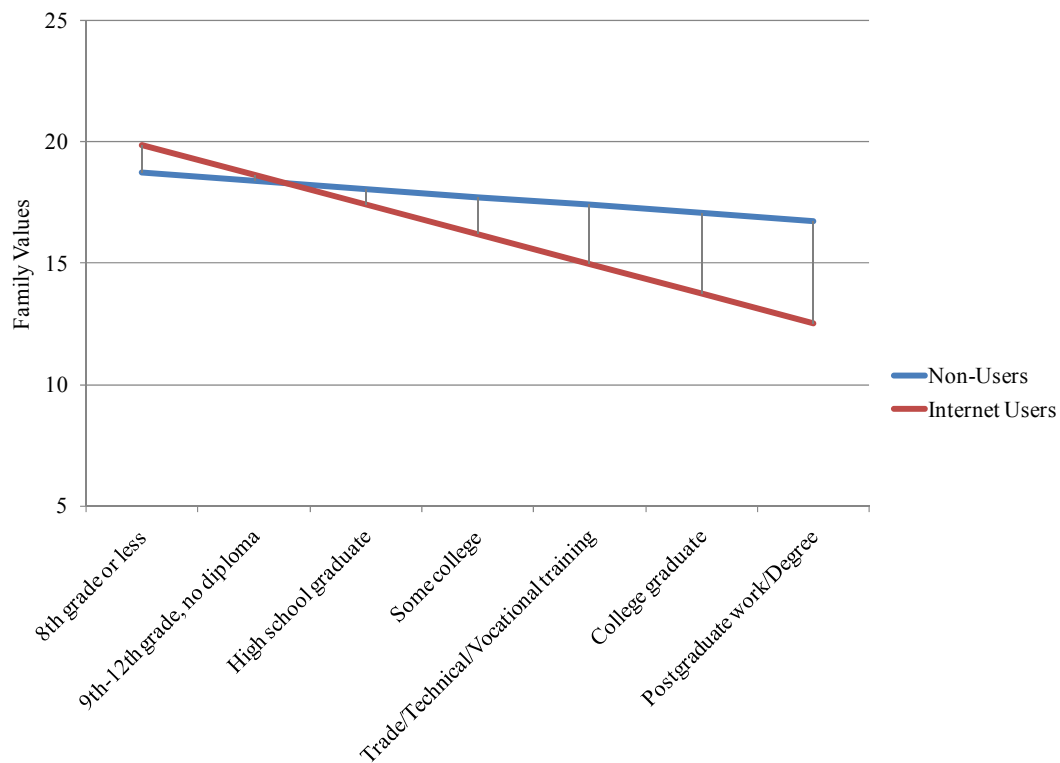


Figure 1. Internet Use and Education on Family Values

In the male sample, the results are fairly similar to the results in the original regression for the total sample. Men are more likely to have traditional family values if they attend church more, are married, or are from the South. They are also more likely to have progressive family values if they have higher incomes and education, and if they use

the Internet. Female family values are significantly influenced by only three variables in this regression. Church attendance has a significant positive effect, indicating that higher church attendance for women increases traditional family values, but neither being married or from the South have any statistical significance for women. Although both increased education and income are associated with progressive family values, Internet use does not have a significant effect for women.

Table 5
Regression of Family Values by Sex

Variable	Female Sample		Male Sample	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	19.68*	1.38	20.03*	1.40
Age	-0.01	0.02	-0.00	0.02
Education	-0.84*	0.16	-0.63*	0.17
Income	-0.68*	0.19	-0.53*	0.19
Married	0.85	0.54	1.72*	0.57
South	0.94	0.52	1.95*	0.54
White	0.90	0.76	-0.71	0.71
Biblical Literalism	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Catholic	-0.27	0.56	-1.07	0.64
Church Attendance	1.87*	0.09	1.63*	0.09
Political Views	-0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01
Internet User	0.10	0.52	-1.81*	0.52
	r ² = .490		r ² = .421	
*p<.05	N =672		N =754	

Source: Baylor Religion Survey 2005

In Figure 2 the effect of education on family values is broken down between the female Internet user and female non-user sample and the male Internet user and non-user sample. The two lines for the female samples show that educated women are more likely to have progressive family values, and non-users are more progressive than Internet users. Conversely, the line for male non-users indicates that education does not influence family values, but the interaction between education and Internet use is stronger for the

male sample and that males with higher education who go online are more likely to have progressive family values than females.

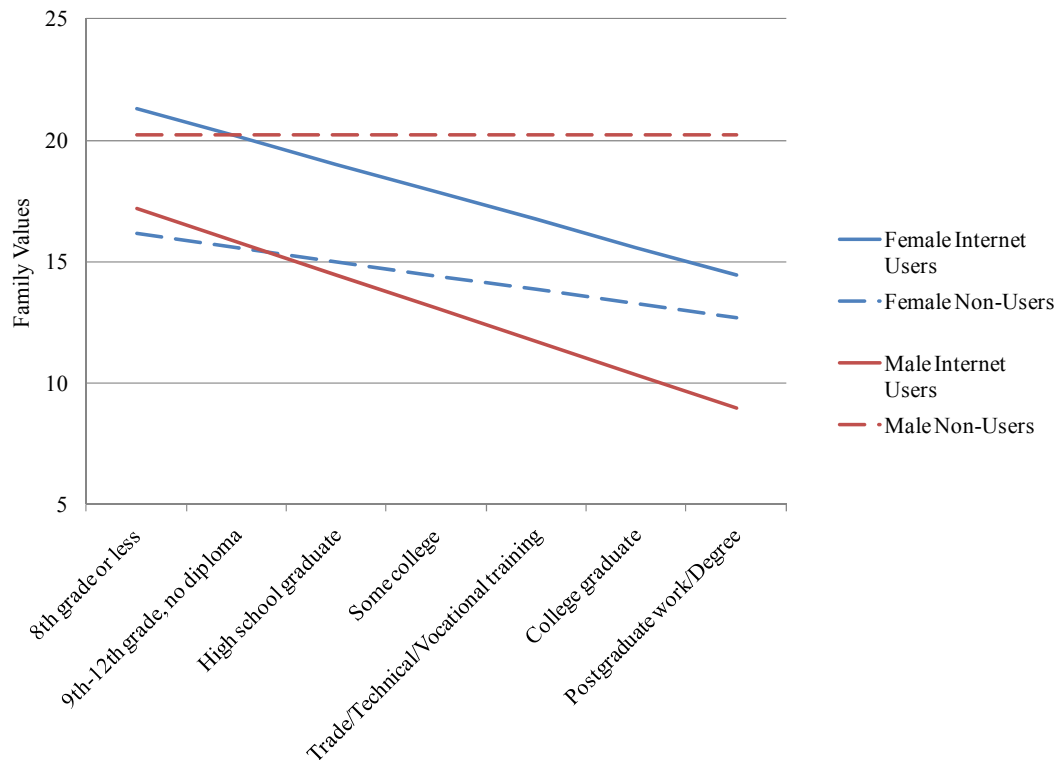


Figure 2. Internet Use and Education on Family Values for Female and Male Samples

To advance this study, it seems logical to examine how the interaction between education and Internet use influences males and females separately. Table 6 displays the coefficients of these two regressions.

This regression indicates that females’ progressive family values are influenced by their education and income. Church attendance is positively significant, meaning that higher church attendance is associated with more traditional family values for women. Internet use is not significant, but its impact has changed direction and is positively associated with traditional family values. Despite this fact, the interaction between education and Internet use is associated with more progressive family values.

Table 6
*Regression of Family Values by Sex
 With Education*Internet Use*

Variable	Female Sample		Male Sample	
	Coefficient	Standard Error	Coefficient	Standard Error
Intercept	15.81*	1.35	17.00*	1.30
Age	-0.01	0.02	0.00	0.02
Education	-0.48*	0.23	-0.29	0.22
Income	-0.70*	0.19	-0.53*	0.19
Married	0.85	0.54	1.72*	0.57
South	0.94	0.52	1.93*	0.54
White	1.00	0.76	-0.62	0.71
Biblical Literalism	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Catholic	-0.34	0.56	-1.14	0.63
Church Attendance	1.88*	0.09	1.64*	0.09
Political Views	-0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01
Internet User	0.11	0.52	-1.62*	.052
Education*Internet Use	-0.70*	0.31	-0.86*	0.33
	$r^2 = .494$		$r^2 = .426$	
*p<.05	N = 672		N = 754	

Source: Baylor Religion Survey 2005

In the male sample, education, income, and Internet use are all associated with more progressive family values. Higher church attendance, being married, and being from the South are still associated with more traditional family values. The interaction between education and Internet use for males is still negatively significant and associated with more progressive family values.

Figure 3 presents how male and female family values are associated with the interaction between education and Internet use. For both samples, if someone is an Internet user and has more education, their family values will become more progressive. The effect for males is stronger, though, so this indicates that the interaction between education and Internet use has more of an influence on the family values of men.

The findings from this study show that Internet use does impact family values, and is associated with more progressive family values. Education is also associated with

more progressive family values, and an interaction of the education and Internet use variable is associated with more progressive family values. Females' and males' family values are impacted differently by Internet use. For females Internet use alone, is not significantly associated with family values, but for both male and female samples education and the interaction of Internet use and education are significantly associated with more progressive family values, thus supporting the hypothesis.

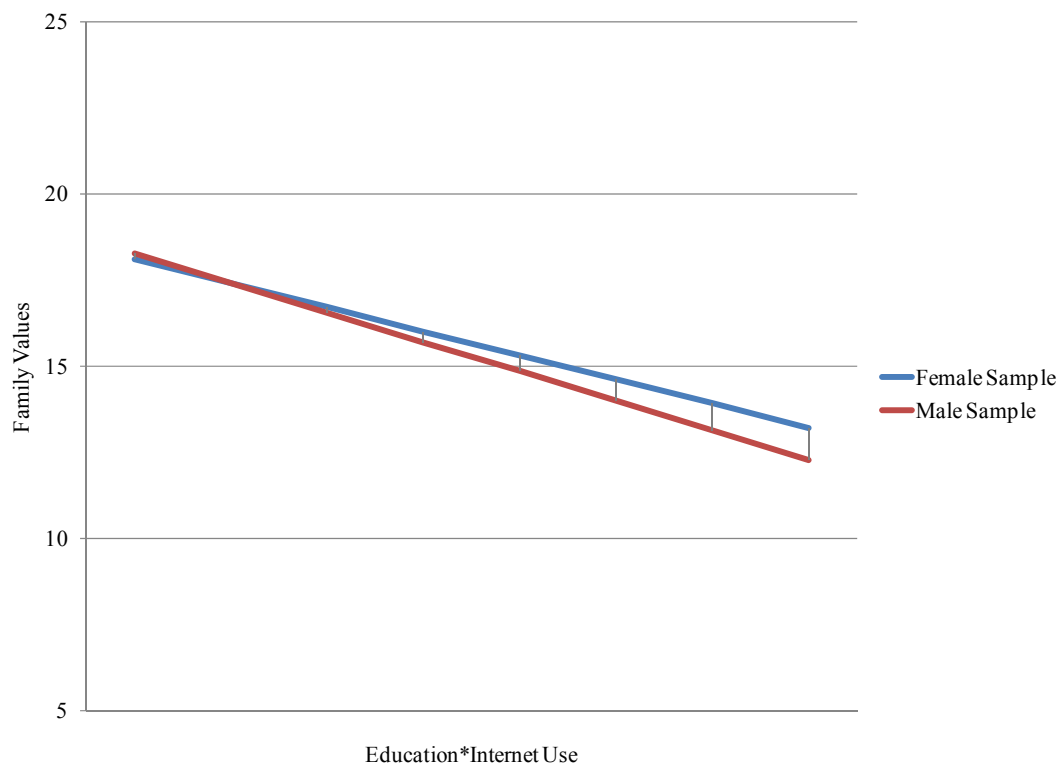


Figure 3. Interaction of Internet Use and Education on Family Values for Female and Male Samples

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

In this study, the effects of Internet use are tested to examine if Internet use leads to more progressive family values. Previous research shows that the Internet community has the potential to impact family values, because the Internet already has the ability to influence so much in our daily lives (Bloch, 2007; Driskell & Lyon, 2002; Rohlinger & Brown, 2009; Tufekci, 2008). The hypothesis was that people who went online were more likely to have progressive family values, and the findings support this hypothesis. When it was decided to further explore possible predictors of family values by examining an interaction effect of education and Internet use and by comparing male and female samples, the results indicate that family values are impacted by a variety of factors. The findings in this study indicate that using the Internet can influence family values.

In the first test not only is Internet use significantly associated with family values, but so are several other variables. Generally, the significant effects were expected for each of the variables. Education and income were associated with progressive family values, and being from the south, married, and church attendance were associated with traditional family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Krull & Trovato, 1994; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2005). Education and Internet use both have the strongest effects for progressive family values. As education increases, progressive family values increase. Drawing from this finding, the study focused on the interaction between education and Internet use to see how the two variables influenced family values. Internet users with lower levels of education begin with slightly more traditional family values than non-

users, but as education increases Internet users have more progressive family values than non-users, even at the high school level.

Because the family values variable involves many issues surrounding sexual values, it is also interesting to note that in this second test, marriage loses in significance. Further exploration of the sample was necessary to uncover what could be underlying factors for this change. Socially, sexual values have been a divisive subject. From sexual double standards to a woman's right to choose in the case of abortion, it seemed that the best way to examine the relationship between Internet use and other predictors, and family values was to separate by sex and compare the samples. The differences between the male and female samples shed light on what shapes their family values and how Internet use is an influence.

For females, there is no association between Internet use or marriage and family values. This finding is interesting, because it means that education and income are the strongest predictors of progressive family values, and church attendance is the only significant predictor for traditional family values. Males, on the other hand, have several significant factors associated with family values. Males with higher education, income, and who are Internet users are more likely to have progressive family values; while, males who are married, or from the South, or have higher church attendance are more likely to have traditional family values. In this comparison of the sexes, it appears that males' family values are associated with Internet use, being married, and from the South, and females' are not significantly impacted. Research has already shown that married individuals and people from the South are more likely to have traditional family values (Bader & Froese, 2005; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2005), perhaps males' family

values are influenced more by their culture and socialization, while females' family values are more influenced by personal demographics. This could explain why married males from the South are more likely to have traditional family values.

In the graphical presentation of these results, in Chapter Four, the findings are slightly easier to visualize. Males who go online begin with more progressive family values than males who do not, and as their education increases their progressive family values increase even more. However the family values do not change for males who do not go online, regardless of education level. Female Internet users begin with much more traditional family values than their non-user counterparts, and even with increased education female Internet users still have more traditional family values than non-users. This clearly demonstrates that males' family values are highly influenced by Internet use, while females' are more influenced by education.

One reason these differences for males and females might be occurring could be due to how these groups are using the Internet. Research shows that males are more likely to frequent sexual websites than females are (Doring, 2010; Mitchell, Finkelhor, & Wolak, 2003). This difference could mean that males are exposed to more alternative sexual material when they go online, than females are; which could lead to less traditional family values for males. Additionally, it is important to note, that educated females who are Internet users have more progressive family values to begin with than males who are not Internet users. This means that despite the fact that male Internet use is a stronger predictor of progressive family values than female Internet use is, females still similar family values overall.

The final test looked at how males' and females' family values were influenced by the interaction variable of education and Internet use. In this test the interaction variable for males and females had very similar effects for family values. For both males and females increased education along with Internet use results in more progressive family values. While the females' family values were more strongly influenced by education, the males' were more strongly associated with Internet use, resulting in comparable effects for the interaction variable.

Conclusion

Family values are necessary to study because they have the ability to affect personal and public matters. In 1991 when Hunter discussed the culture war in American society, he described two distinct groups that are still battling twenty years later, the progressivists and traditionalists. Progressivists form their values based on contemporary culture and society, while traditionalists form their values based on a "transcendent authority." Previous research has shown that the tendency to have either progressive or traditional family values is influenced by a variety of demographic characteristics as well as religious and political beliefs (Bader & Froese, 2005; Krull & Trovato, 1994; Xu, Hudspeth, & Bartkowski, 2005). This study examines how Internet use can also influence family values in terms of progressivism and traditionalism.

Until recently, sociologists' research of the Internet has been limited to answering questions about online behavior, and how Internet use impacts our research methods. Research on how the Internet can impact attitudes and opinions has only just recently become a subject of interest. This study adds to the growing body of Internet research by indicating that there is an association between Internet use and family values. More

specifically, this research shows that family values involving both personal opinions and greater social norms can be influenced by Internet use, and that Internet use is associated with more progressive family values. This research also indicates, that males and females form these opinions based on different factors, which will be important to track as more data becomes available.

Future research could focus on the new questions produced in this study. Since Internet use can influence attitudes about family values, what other attitudes could be affected? Why are males' and females' family values influenced by different factors? In terms of family value transmission, how will children's values be affected as technology continues to advance? Similarly, if men and women's family values are influenced differently by Internet use and education, how will this impact children in single parent homes? As the technological age continues to bring new advancements to the way society communicates, it is imperative that social scientists study the ways these new technologies influence societal changes.

APPENDIX

Table A.1.
Descriptive Statistics for Binary Internet User Variable

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percent
Answered “yes” to being involved in an online community	235	14	-	-
Answered “yes” to purchasing religious items online	557	32	-	-
Internet User Binary	-	-	792	46

N = 1721

Source: Baylor Religion Survey 2005

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