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Give Me That Online Religion: Religious Authority and Resistance Through Blogging

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GIVE ME THAT ONLINE RELIGION:

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY AND RESISTANCE THROUGH BLOGGING

by

ERIN ECHOLS

Under the Direction of Wendy Simmonds

ABSTRACT

This study of forty-nine Christian blogs explores how groups of bloggers in two case studies resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies online and where these bloggers draw authority from for these views. The findings reveal that bloggers are most likely to cite texts as sources of authority and are more likely to affirm authority (78.1%) than to challenge it (25.7%). The bloggers in my sample, who were majority male, use an array of strategies in their efforts to resist hegemonic gender norms. These included, but are not limited to, debating God's gender, emphasizing women's roles in the Bible, privileging equality in theological interpretations, redefining masculinity and employing satire and images to delegitimize hegemonic power.

INDEX WORDS: Religion, Blogging, Hegemonic masculinity, Religious authority, Gender, Gender norms, Femininity, Masculinity, Christian, Protestant, Resistance

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ERIN ECHOLS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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1. INTRODUCTION

Researchers have identified that hegemonic masculinity represents "the currently most honored way of being a man"; legitimates the subordination of alternative masculinities and women; and is achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005: 832). But hegemonic masculinity can also be resisted. As Padavic (1997) writes, people engage in both collective and individual resistance against hegemonic gender norms. These resistance efforts can take both formal and informal forms, be public or private, and be organized or unorganized (Padavic 1997; Scott, 1985, 1990; Willis 1977, Fisher and Davis 1993).

Using existing theories on resistance, hegemonic gender norms, and current and historical gender ideologies within Christianity, I explore how groups of bloggers in two case studies resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies online. In addition, I utilize the small but existing literature on the online behaviors of Christians to explore on what sources of authority these bloggers rely. This literature has wrestled with theoretical suggestions that the Internet has the potential to alter the traditional asymmetrical authority structure of religious institutions due to the often cooperative and non-hierarchical structure of everyday online interactions.

For this study, I performed content analysis of forty-nine blogs that are responding to comments made by two prominent evangelical conservative Protestant pastors, Mark Driscoll and John Piper. In 2011, Mark Driscoll made a comment via Facebook that served to police men by inviting his Facebook followers to share stories about effeminate worship leaders and, in 2012, John Piper's speech at a Christian men's conference argued for the exclusion of women from leadership positions in churches.

Because of my unique position of embeddedness in the Christian blogosphere at the time, it became apparent to me that bloggers were reacting to these two statements by posting about

the comments on their personal blog sites. Further analysis revealed that these bloggers appeared to be linking to one another on their blogs – suggesting a level of connectedness and conversation around these two comments. Because of these initial observations, I chose to analyze blog posts that referenced the comment made by Mark Driscoll (n = 24) and the comment made by John Piper (n = 25) to better understand resistance and authority through religious blogging.

The two statements made by the pastors represent the essence of hegemonic masculinity in that they attempt to police men and exclude and discredit women (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005). The comments and the reaction among bloggers provide a unique opportunity for analyzing how Christian bloggers engage in discussions of gender by perpetuating and/or resisting the hegemonic gender ideologies promoted by leaders. These questions extend research on resistance by incorporating online religious communities. This study can also assist in understanding how (if at all) resistance differs online where some researchers claim the traditionally asymmetrical authority structures within Christianity may be altered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Resistance Theories

Resistance theories have identified that resistance does not have to be formal, organized or public to qualify as resistance (Padavic 1997; Scott, 1985, 1990; Willis 1977, Fisher and Davis 1993). Similarly, resistance can take both a collective form and an uncoordinated individual form (Padavic 1997). As Scott writes, "Everyday resistance is informal, often covert, and concerned largely with immediate, de facto gains" (Scott 1985:33).

Theoretically two different criteria have been used to determine whether an act qualifies as resistance: the outcome of the act and the actor's intention (Padavic 1997). Some researchers

(Carnoy 1989; Davies 1995; Fernandes 1988) argue that an act's outcome is what qualifies it as resistance: does it counter or fail to counter dominant ideology? Others argue that even "unsuccessful" acts of resistance qualify as resistance. These researchers consider an act to be resistant based on the actors' intention to act in protest (Davies 1995). However, still other researchers (Willis' 1977) label acts that appear to be in resistance but in which the actors do not explicitly state that they are protesting as acts of "symbolic resistance."

2.2 Hegemonic Masculinity

Traditionally, hegemonic masculinity has been viewed as "a pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005). It represents "the currently most honored way of being a man" and legitimates the subordination of alternative masculinities and women. This kind of gender hegemony is not achieved through violence (though violence and aggression can be used); it is achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinities represent widespread ideals, desires and fantasies of masculinity that serve as a model of gender relations but are not necessarily representative of the lives of actual men. Locally, hegemonic patterns of masculinity are embedded, learned and modeled in formal institutions (i.e. places of worship, schools, etc.). Hegemonic patterns of masculinity are then sustained though the policing of men and the exclusion or discrediting of women. In this way, gender is relational and patterns of masculinity are defined socially in contradiction with real or imagined ideals of femininity (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005).

In accordance with Connell and Messerschmit (2005), I do not suggest in this study that all traits associated with hegemonic masculinity are "negative." Though "negative" traits such as

aggression, violence, and egoism have been associated with hegemonic forms of masculinity, so too have "positive" traits such as being a father and bringing home a wage.

Drawing on Connell and Messerschmitt's work, I consider masculinities as "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action" and organized in relation to the structure of gender relations (Connell and Messerschmit, 2005). Masculinity is not static, but can vary across social settings. Acceptable versions of masculinity in Christian settings may look very different from acceptable standards of masculinity in, for example, a football locker room. Masculinities not only change; they can also be challenged.

2.3 A History of Christian Gender Ideologies

Because masculinity and femininity are social constructions, they vary over time and across and within communities (Connell and Messerschmit 2005). Gallagher (2003) and Bartowski (1997) argue that, within Christianity, two competing gender ideologies have evolved over time: hegemonic and counter-hegemonic.

The hegemonic ideology places emphasis on hierarchy and subordination both in divine relations (God, Christ and church) and in marital relations, through wifely submission to the husband (Gallagher, 2004; Bartkowski, 1997). Though advocates of hegemonic gender ideology generally do not rule out the possibility of compromise and warn against "heavy handed" authority, they do not believe that husbands are required by God to seek advice from their wives. Similarly, within the hegemonic ideology, the ultimate responsibility of family decision-making is held by the man who is believed to be uniquely accountable for decisions (Bartkowski, 1997). In this view, wives are framed as "executive vice-presidents" who must ultimately submit to their husband's "headship" (Bartkowski, 1997).

According to Gallagher (2004), hegemonic ideology finds its origin in the apostle Paul's teachings that women should submit to their husbands (*Ephesians 5*) and that women should not

lead men in the church because of the order of creation - with Adam being made first and Eve being created from his rib (*1 Timothy 2*). This view is evidenced in church history, with Augustine (1886) arguing that women did not fully bear the image of God, Ignatius (1956) emphasizing that it was woman who deceived Adam and Aquinas (1994) framing women as misbegotten men (for a more thorough history see Gallagher, 2004).

In contrast, the counter-hegemonic view, advanced by evangelical feminists (and mainline feminists), places emphasis on mutual submission in marriage through practices such as compromise, discussion and agreement not to take action until a consensus is reached (Bartkowski, 1997). This ideology similarly locates its origins in the Apostle Paul, but emphasizes Paul's statements in *Galatians 2:22* that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female" (Gallagher, 2004), asserts that translations of "headship" from the Greek refer to chronology instead of hierarchical authority, emphasizes female figures in the Bible who exercised authority and highlights the verse in *Ephesians 5* that they argue calls for mutual submission in marriage (Bartkowski, 1997).

Though less often discussed, counter-hegemonic ideology can also be seen historically in Puritan writings that emphasized the mutual support of husbands and wives, Chrysostom's support of mutual deference in marriage and Luther's framing of matrimony as a partnership in which wives and husbands differ only in sex but are identical in purpose (for a thorough history see Gallagher, 2004). The evangelical feminists who adhere to and helped to develop this counter-hegemonic view also have a long history of struggle against hegemonic ideologies.

For example, as the early religious motivations of the feminist movement turned to more generalizable assertions of human rights, conservative Christians – pushed by a desire to preserve traditional orthodoxy and purity of doctrine – grew more conservative in their gender ideologies and began to define themselves against "liberalism" and "feminism" as they saw them

in the broader culture (Gallagher, 2004). Despite resistance, evangelical feminists rose up throughout the 1960s and 1970s to challenge conservative practices and ideologies by publically addressing issues of mutuality in marriage and women's participation in ministry through books, newsletters, organizations and journals. In 1975, a group called the Evangelical Women's Caucus held a national conference attended by 360 women that focused specifically on a biblical approach to feminism (Gallagher, 2004).

Within evangelical circles, resistance against evangelical feminism was and remains strong. Evangelical feminism has been framed by objectors as a rejection of God-given hierarchy that adheres to relativistic interpretations of the Bible and, consequently, is perceived to abandon evangelical Christianity altogether. Arguing that evangelical feminists were promoting androgyny and social disorder, evangelical organizations like the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) arose in the mid-1980s to oppose the goals of evangelical feminism. Popular evangelical authors began to argue that gender differences were not only evident in Biblical texts, but were manifest in the physiological and psychological differences between men and women (Gallagher, 2004).

2.4 Current Gender Ideologies within Conservative Protestantism

Skepticism toward feminism remains common among conservative Christians (Coats, 2009; Gallagher, 2003; Gallagher 2004). Due to the successful framing techniques of those pastors and leaders who advocate hegemonic gender ideologies, access to counter-hegemonic views has become difficult. Mainstream Christian magazines have been reluctant to publish explicitly counter-hegemonic articles. As Sally Gallagher (2004) has pointed out, materials advocating counter-hegemonic views have had considerably smaller readership bases than mainline evangelical magazines like *Christianity Today* or *Christian Woman,* which have only

recently featured explicitly egalitarian pieces. Though researchers have largely left the issue unaddressed, there is potential that, as Internet-based media has become more prevalent, the barriers to counter-hegemonic Christian material may have lessened.

However, hegemonic understandings of masculinity, femininity and gender roles were muted as women's participation in the workforce became increasingly necessary for families (Gallagher, 2004). Traditional gender ideologies were caught between changes in the economic market, which pushed for female participation in the workforce, and a desire to hold onto traditional understandings of gender in order to maintain group boundaries. Because of this, research suggests that many conservative Christians continue to hold "complimentarian" views of gender roles in which women and men are seen as equal but different (Bryant, 2006; Johnson, 2010; Bartkowski, 2000; Gallagher, 2004).

Evangelical men's movements, such as Promise Keepers, have attempted to reframe masculine leadership within the home – making the husband a spiritual rather than an economic leader, in an attempt to reconcile female participation in the workforce with traditional gender ideologies. In this "softer" model of traditional masculinity, men are instructed to be sensitive in the home but powerful in business – presumably to avoid some of the authoritarian and abusive practices associated with traditional hegemonic gender ideologies (Donovan, 2012).

With the publication of *Wild at Heart* (2001), a Christian book focused on themes of masculinity, the Promise Keepers' emphasis on responsibility and accountability was challenged by assertions that masculinity ought to be "wild, dangerous, unfettered and free"(Gallagher, 2005: 136). Reaffirming essentialist views of gender, the book argued that men were made for adventure, created to take risks, and should desire to be heroes in a fight for a beautiful woman (Gallagher, 2005).

These conservative Christian ideals of masculinity often revolve around themes of leadership, courage, strength, responsibility, accountability and protection (Coats, 2011; Gallagher, 2005; Bartkowski, 2000) and also place emphasis on fatherhood and men's roles as faithful husbands (Johnson, 2005; Coats, 2011; Donovan, 2012; Bryant, 2006; Bryant, 2009; Wilcox, 2004). This masculinity is framed against media images of incompetent fathers and husbands (Coats, 2011), "effeminate" media images, such as Mr. Rogers (Gallagher, 2005), "irresponsible" men who have sex outside of marriage, don't provide for their families or are perceived as "weak," "soft," and "gay" (Johnson, 2010) and against the perceived ideals of feminism and "gender blending" (Johnson, 2010; Bartkowski, 2000; Gallagher, 2004). Research also confirms that masculine language remains the norm in discussions of God (Bryant 2006) and Christ (Johnson, 2010). Evangelical understandings of masculinity are also pitted against feminine ideals that emphasize modesty (Bryant, 2006), submission (Bartowski, 1997), responsiveness, sensitivity and emotionalism (Bartowski, 2000).

Attempts to shore up a masculine image for Christian men likely occur precisely because of the feminized reputation of Christianity. Characteristics heralded by Protestants since the Victorian era, such as abstinence from sexual relations until marriage, a family orientation, compassion for others, kindness, peacefulness, love and self-control compete with traditional hegemonic understandings of masculinity that often emphasize qualities like strength, aggression and sexual prowess as markers of an ideal masculinity. Maintaining a masculine identity and a Christian identity given the limitations of these competing ideals can be a tricky game that requires emphasizing traditionally hegemonic qualities, such as sexual prowess, while also locating them squarely within the context of faithfulness and marriage.

Data also consistently show that women score higher on every measure of religiosity, when compared with men. Both currently and historically, women are more likely than men to

attend religious services at least once a week - 44% for women and 34% for men (PEW

Research, 2009). Attempts by pastors, churches and Christian authors to reach out to men

through masculine language and ideals may be as much about attempting to increase church

growth by marketing to a currently underserved demographic as it is about reconciling

masculinity with a Christian identity.

2.5 Discursive Tacking

Being caught between changes such as increasing female participation in the workforce

and traditional Christian gender ideologies also presents a conundrum for contemporary

conservative Christians. Alyssa Bryant found, for example, that evangelicals in a campus

subgroup upheld complimentarian views of gender, supported the limiting of female

participation in leadership, and defended the use of masculine language for God. Yet these young

evangelicals also used egalitarian language that asserted equality across genders and exhibited

inconsistencies in their assertions about gender roles (Bryant, 2006; Bryant, 2009).

These seeming inconsistencies are not unique to young conservative Christians, but have

been found to occur elsewhere in what Bartkowski (2007) terms "discursive tacking." Discursive

tacking attempts to capture the way in which evangelical Christians interchangeably vacillate

between egalitarian and patriarchal views of gender (Bartowski, 2007). Discursive tacking often

takes the form of assertions that women are equal to men in "all ways" but must yield to them in

the church and in marriage (Bryant, 2009) and in formal or informal rules that allow women to

teach other women but prohibit them from leading men (Bryant, 2006). The contradictory nature

of discursive tacking can also be seen in Christian literature that recommends discussion and

compromise in marriage but instructs that the ultimate decisions are the responsibility of the

husband (Bartowksi, 1997) and in the finding that evangelicals affirm both the ideal of husband

headship and the ideal of partnership in marriage simultaneously (Religious Identity and Influence Survey, 1996).

As Bradford Wilcox argues, this results in the creation of "soft patriarchs." For example, Wilcox found that, while evangelical husbands do an hour less housework than other American husbands per week, there is evidence that religion may help orient them toward family life in other ways. Church-going evangelical men spend 3.2 hours with children in formal youth activities (ex. Boy Scouts and youth group) compared to 1.6 for religiously unaffiliated fathers (Wilcox, 2004). Yet these same men are still more likely than unaffiliated men to believe that it is better for a man to earn the main living while the wife takes care of the home and family.

2.6 Christian Internet Use and Religious Authority Online

Religion on the Internet can be traced back to the 1980s when discussions about religion took place on Bulletin Board systems (BBSs) and Usenet. As computers and the Internet became more accessible, religious presence grew online and, in 1992, the first online congregation emerged. By 1996, a *Time Magazine* issue that made religion and spirituality online a feature drew public attention to the varied ways religious groups and individuals were using the Internet (Campbell, 2006).

As Heidi Campbell (2006) identifies, religious groups and individuals use the Internet for several purposes: to gather religious information (Larsen, 2001; Hoover, Clark, & Rainie, 2004), for online worship and rituals (Brasher, 2001), for recruitment and missions and for forming and/or maintaining online religious communities. Musa and Abmadu (2012) find that churches engage with the Internet through virtual congregations and church websites that often aim to create a branded presence online. Websites like Crosswalk and Gospel.com provide Christians with Bible study tools (Campbell, 2012). Popular evangelical pastors like John Piper and Mark Driscoll engage with "followers" through Facebook and Twitter (Musa and Ahmadu, 2012).

Facebook groups have also emerged around religious identities (Johns, 2012) and, concerned with the unregulated content of mainstream Internet sites like YouTube, Christians have created GodTube and other religious-based sites (Campbell, 2012).

Cheong et al (2008) find that Christian bloggers tend to focus on personal religiosity (44.5%), didactic content (39%), criticism of social issues (22.5%), news and information (15.5%) and coordination of practices (7%) in their posts (2008, 115). While hyperlinking is a common practice among all bloggers, Cheong, Halavais and Kwon (2008) find that religious bloggers tend to hyperlink to different sources than non-religious bloggers and have developed their own "Christian A-list" of popular religious blogs to reference in blog posts. These bloggers are also noted to engage in blogging for three primary reasons 1) transmission of Christian values, 2) entertainment and escapism and 3) integration and interaction with other bloggers. As one respondent noted:

> "I have made connections with so many people all across the country, who I've never met, yet I consider them my friends. . . . I feel I've become accepted in a non-judgmental community" (Cheong et. al, 2008: 124-125).

Researchers have argued that the Internet, and Web 2.0 communication in particular, has the potential to alter traditional religious authority that is derived through asymmetrical communication (ex. pulpit communication). Some researchers have found that pastors use the Internet to conduct research for sermons, keep in touch with congregants and attempt to understand younger generations (Cheog et. al., 2011). Pastors note that the Internet has altered their work lives (Cheog et. al., 2011; Fischer-Nielsen, 2012), and churches and pastors engage with the Internet in several ways – ranging from one-way information sharing to user-involving dialogue and cyber-church.

While researchers have argued that the Internet challenges religious authority (Musa and Abmadu, 2012), Heidi Campbell (2007) notes that authority online must be envisioned as involving multiple layers. The Christian bloggers in Campbell's 2010 study used traditional sources of authority such as the Bible – suggesting that the Bible still plays a principal function in establishing authority for Christian bloggers. She also suggests that religious blogs may increase the influence of Christian professionals who made up a significant portion of the bloggers in her study (2010, 271).

Research has been done to understand how people use the Internet for religious purposes, but few studies have explored the ways in which religion online intersects with other dimensions of social life. Though religion and gender have been explored offline, few researchers have discussed if/how these discussions of gender among religious groups change when taken online. For example, do these discussions differ in online spaces where religious authority may operate differently? As Heidi Campbell (2006) identifies, gaining a broader understanding of how religion and gender intersect online is a neglected but essential dimension of Internet research.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research into religion has addressed the intersection of religion and gender but has not explored how these gender ideologies are reproduced or challenged online. Given the unique authority structure of online religious groups (Campbell 2007; Cheong et. al., 2008) there is reason to believe that online Christian discussions of gender may qualitatively differ from Christian discussions of gender offline. Similarly, resistance theories have not branched out into resistance by religious individuals or groups online. From the existing research, two central questions emerge for this study:

What form of religious authority – hierarchy, texts, ideology and/or structures – do bloggers

draw from in their efforts to resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies? And, how do Christian bloggers resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies online through blogging? (Is the resistance collective or individual? What strategies do bloggers employ in resisting/perpetuating hegemonic masculinity?)

With this study I aim to examine an online community's making of meaning – how the community understands gender and authority, and how leaders' views are perpetuated or resisted by individuals or groups. A qualitative approach to Internet research is particularly useful for studying the multiple meanings that emerge online within a given context (Orgad, 2009).

3.1 Sample

The two cases chosen each represent an example of responses by bloggers to religious leaders who made comments in support of hegemonic masculinity. In the first case study, I aim to capture and understand conversations among bloggers that occurred after Pastor Mark Driscoll, a well known pastor who supports male-only leadership and has routinely demeaned non-hegemonic expressions of masculinity from the pulpit, made a statement via Facebook in June of 2011 which read:

> "So, what story do you have about the most effeminate anatomically male worship
>
> leader you've ever personally witnessed?" (Murashko, 2011).

This question then stirred rapid reactions from the Christian blogosphere where conversations emerged around issues such as gender division of labor in churches, acceptable and unacceptable forms of masculinity and acceptable and unacceptable forms of resistance.

The second case study involved responses to Pastor John Piper after he spoke in support of hegemonic masculinity in early 2012 at a Christian men's conference by saying,

> God revealed Himself in the Bible pervasively as king not queen; father not mother. . . .
>
> Second person of the Trinity is revealed as the eternal Son not daughter; the Father and

the Son create man and woman in His image and gave them the name man, the name of

the male…God appoints all the priests in the Old Testament to be men; the Son of God

came into the world to be a man; He chose 12 men to be His apostles; the apostles

appointed that the overseers of the Church be men; and when it came to marriage they

taught that the husband should be the head…Now, from all of that I conclude that God

has given Christianity a masculine feel. And being God, a God of love, He has done that

for our maximum flourishing both male and female. (Murashko, 2012.)

Again, bloggers responded to the comment quickly on their personal blog sites and addressed the

gender division of labor in churches, masculinity and femininity and acceptable and

unacceptable forms of resistance.

The sample for this study was collected utilizing the Google.com blog search function

(http://www.google.com/blogsearch), which, at the time of this study, provided tools for focused

search results. Using the advanced search option, results were limited to English-language blogs.

For the purpose of this study, "blog" was defined as "an online journal focused on personal

content, composed of individual entries, which are frequently updated by a human author whose

contents are intended for a public audience" (Campbell, 2010).

The full quote of Driscoll's comment ("So, what story do you have about the most

effeminate anatomically male worship leader you've ever personally witnessed?") and the partial

quote from Piper's comment ("…God has given Christianity a masculine feel") were used as

search terms to find bloggers who specifically discussed the comments made in July of 2011 and

January of 2012.

Because the full quote from Mark Driscoll is concise, these search criteria yielded the

most focused search results in trials. In contrast, because Piper's quote spans multiple

paragraphs, trial searches revealed that the core portion of the quote cited above captured the

breadth of blog posts on the subject without straying into unrelated content. I further limited the sample to include only authors who identify themselves as Christian on their blogs or otherwise promote their sites as Christian blogs.

Given these parameters, case study one, those bloggers responding to Mark Driscoll's comments, yielded 24 relevant search results while case study two generated 122 relevant results. All 24 posts for case study one were coded. For the second case study, every fourth entry was coded until a sample size of 25 was reached. A sample size of 49 blogs proved more than sufficient for reaching theoretical saturation, given the largely homogenous nature of the blogs I analyzed.

Though the pastors' attitudes and the bloggers who comment on them are a non-generalizable sample, their discussions and the medium they use (blogs) provide an opportunity to analyze sub/cultural meanings created across geographic boundaries and denominations – a method that was once decidedly more difficult and costly using non-internet based research methods (Mann, 2000; Kozinets, 2010; Murthy, 2010).

This study seeks to analyze challenges to hegemonic masculinity. As discussed previously, resistance has been defined in a variety of ways. However, because the data for this study are drawn from a secondary data source, I am unable to gauge any unspoken individual motives in the sample's resistant acts, so this study use the broadest definition of resistance. I count as resistance both those acts where there is a stated intent of protest and those acts which are resistant to the oppressive system - in this case, hegemonic masculinity - but which do not explicitly state that they view themselves to be in protest. Specifically, I am looking for acts/arguments that work against or are framed against hegemonic attempts to police men and/or discredit or exclude women.

Consistent with previous work, I also consider both collective and individual forms of resistance as resistant acts but code these actions accordingly. Collective resistance is considered efforts in which two or more individuals participate together in resistant acts. Individual resistance is considered those acts that undermine hegemonic gender norms but are enacted individually.

3.2 Coding Categories

Relying largely on LaRossa's (2005) description of grounded theory, my first phase of analysis involved open coding, in which similarities and variations in indicators were linked with concepts in order to begin forming variables. Axial coding then followed open coding, in which variables were linked to form a framework that is used to explain the data. Lastly, selective coding assisted in developing core categories. Raw data from the blogs were used in my report to demonstrate how the data and my interpretations of them relate and to allow the bloggers' voices to be expressed directly.

Demographic information (race, gender, marital status, geographic location, profession, etc.) and indicators of religious affiliations or identifications were recorded when available. To answer what form of religious authority bloggers draw from in their efforts to resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies, I drew again from existing codes established in previous research on religious authority (Campbell, 2010). Authority was coded according to the source of authority bloggers drew from (hierarchy, structure, ideology and texts). Campbell's (2010) coding strategy was followed exactly with one exception. While Campbell conceptualized "texts" primarily as traditional forms of written material (scripture, print devotionals, etc.), I also included participants' references to blogs within this category. For example, if a blogger quoted, referenced or linked to another religious blog, this was coded as a reference to textual authority.

An account of why this strategy was chosen can be found in the findings section. (See appendix for coding category definitions.)

Consistent with previous research (Padavic 1997) and in order to answer the first question, how Christian bloggers resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies online through blogging, resistant acts were coded as either collective or individual. Similarly, the various strategies bloggers used to resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies (ex. theological arguments, rights-based arguments, satire) were recorded.

Codes for this study were drawn from existing theory and research on resistance, hegemonic masculinity and authority. Codes were modified as the data necessitated but remained focused on answering the two central research questions to insure a clear focus that aims at extending and, when necessary, modifying existing theory. All coding was conducted by the principle investigator, which has both strengths (consistency of coding) and drawbacks (intercoder reliability cannot be measured and trusted on as a reliability check).

Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart (2000) identify a variety of advantages to conducting research online. Some of these benefits include reducing cost, reaching hard to reach and geographically disconnected populations, gaining access to information that individuals may be reluctant to share in face-to-face interactions, easier handling of data, and reduced transcription errors. However, online research is limited by the computer literacy of the researcher, limits the sample to only those people who have the access and web-use skill necessary to participate and is unable to analyze non-verbal behavior (Mann and Stewart, 2000; Kozinets, 2010).

It is vital to make apparent some taken for granted assumptions about "virtual life" here. Because virtual, in its very meaning is likened to "non-existent," it is tempting to suggest that virtual community and online content are somehow "unreal" or less real than their more traditional, physical forms. This dichotomy fails to understand the ways in which individuals use

the Internet in their everyday lives – not as separate and disjointed pieces, but instead by seamlessly integrating digital life (through e-mails, social networks and web browsing) with offline life (Wellman, 2012). As Nessim Watson writes, "My experience has been that people in the offline world tend to see online communities as virtual, but that participants in the online world tend to see them as quite real" (Watson, 1997).

Because the online world is "real" to participants, the data for this study have the advantage of being collected in a setting that is "natural" for observing bloggers behavior. While the authors of the selected blogs may be modifying their presentation of self for other reasons (ex. because it is being viewed by others on the Internet), they are not likely modifying their presentation of self with the anticipation that a researcher will be analyzing the content of their writing. However, because the data for the study are essentially a self-report of their opinions and behaviors, this study is largely unable to address any potential inconsistencies between their behaviors and their stated beliefs. It is possible that bloggers defending hegemonic masculinity may actually behave in egalitarian ways in their jobs, marriages, etc. It is similarly possible that those resisting hegemonic masculinity through blogging may behave in ways inconsistent with their stated beliefs.

The Internet also presents unique debates about privacy that have ethical implications for Internet researchers. Malin Sveningsson Elm (2009) suggests that different degrees of private and public exist along a continuum ranging from public, to semi-public, semi-private and private. Because I researched publically-accessible blogs that require no registration or membership to access, my work lies within what is currently considered the least risky area and ensures that the subjects can maintain, "control over the extent, timing, and circumstances of sharing [themselves] (physically, behaviorally, or intellectually) with others" (IRB Guidebook). I did not collect data from anyone under the age of 18 or other vulnerable participants to ensure that my

research falls within the guidelines set forth by The Association of Internet Researchers (Ess and Jones, 2003; http://www.aoir.org/reports/ethics.pdf).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Demographics

The full sample for this study was constructed from two different case studies. Upon analysis of basic demographic variables within these two samples, both samples appeared remarkably similar, so demographics are reported for the full sample (forty-nine bloggers) instead of separately for each of the two case studies.

Respondents generally either self-identified their gender or provided a picture that allowed for coding of their gender presentation. Of the forty-nine bloggers, 34 presented as male (69%), 11 presented as female (22%) and 4 (8%) were unlisted. Of these, 31 (63%) identified as married with a remaining 18 (37%) not identifying their marital status. 53% of the sample listed that they had (a) child(ren). One respondent self-identified as gay and one respondent self-identified as bisexual.

Though most bloggers in the sample did not report their racial/ethnic identity, blogger's racial presentations can be loosely inferred from images of themselves included in their profiles. In the total sample of forty-nine blogs, 39 (79.5%) identify as or present as white, one as black, one self-identified as Asian and two as other - they self-identified as Philipino and Egyptian. The remaining six bloggers (12%) in the sample did not display an image of themselves or disclose their racial or ethnic identity.

This way of determining the racial make-up of the sample is imperfect and fails to account for individuals who identify as multi-racial or present as white, but identify as non-white. However, these statistics are maintained within the descriptive statistics, in order to give

some racial context to the sample by emphasizing the largely white make-up of the sample. Because expressions of hegemonic masculinity in particular can differ across groups, maintaining these descriptive statistics as a reference is important to understanding how these bloggers resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic masculinity online.

The majority of the sample (86%) disclosed their profession in their profile. Twenty-seven of the 49 bloggers (55%) in the sample were employed as Christian professionals. This group was largely made up of pastors but also included worship leaders and Christian musicians, Christian authors and professional Christian bloggers. Six of the remaining (approximately 12% of the sample) bloggers were full or part-time students in Theology/divinity School – most working on completing a Masters' in Divinity. Seven respondents (14% of sample) did not disclose their profession and the remaining 9 respondents (approximately 20% of the sample) were employed in careers ranging from writer, librarian and photographer to civil litigator and non-profit worker.

Only 14 respondents (approximately 28% of the sample) identified their religious denomination in their profile. The following were listed by one or more respondents: evangelical, Baptist, Southern Baptist, Presbyterian, Mennonite, Catholic, emergent Christian, Christian Church, Methodist, Episcopal, reformed and ex-Pentecostal.

Lastly, 53% of the sample (26 respondents) identified their geographic location. The following states were listed by respondents in order of frequency: California (4), Illinois (3), Texas (3), Michigan (2), Oklahoma (2), Tennessee, Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Maryland, Louisiana, Idaho, Arizona and Georgia. Two respondents listed locations outside of the United States: one in Alberta, Canada, and one in England.

Most notably, the sample is over-representative of men, whites and Christian professionals/theology students. An over-representation of men is not unusual compared to previously similar samples of online Christian groups (Campbell, 2010). An over-representation of whites is similarly unsurprising. A breadth of research has documented a tendency toward racial segregation in online spaces (boyd, 2011; Magnet, 2007; Hargittai, 2010; Kolko, 2000). Finally, the overrepresentation of Christian professionals and theology students is consistent with previous samples of this population (Campbell, 2010). As Heidi Campbell (2010) argues, this suggests that traditional sources of authority still have significant power online.

4.2 Authority

A total of 480 references to religious authority were coded in the study. The most common form or authority referenced was religious texts (n = 222, 46.25 %), followed by roles (n = 180, 37.5%), theology (n = 68, 14.2%) and structures (n = 10, 2%).
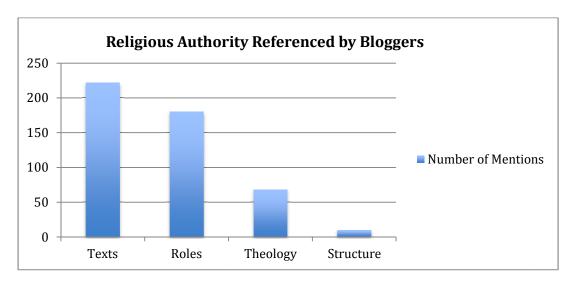

Figure 1.1: Religious Authority Referenced by Bloggers

For religious texts, three different subcategories were identified: the Bible, Christian books/magazines and Christian blogs. Though previous researchers have not included religious

blogs as a source of religious authority, I find that, if nothing else, the number of references to blogs as sources of authority warrants their inclusion – they were referenced more than four times as often as Christian books/magazines. The Bible was the most frequently identified text (n = 146, 65.7%) and was followed by religious blogs (n = 61, 27.5%) and Christian books/magazines (n = 15, 6%).

Table 1.1: References to Texts

Texts	Driscoll	Piper	Total
Bible			
Affirmation	59	85	144
Challenge	1	1	2
Christian Publications			
Affirmation	4	9	13
Challenge	1	1	2
Blogs			
Affirmation	20	32	52
Challenge	6	3	9

Within the category of roles, four subcategories were identified: God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit), Biblical characters, Christian professionals (pastors as well as Christian professors and Biblical scholars) and historic religious figures. The most frequently identified role was Christian professionals (n = 75, 41.6%). This was followed by Biblical characters (n = 63, 35%), God (n = 34, 18.8%) and historic religious figures (n = 8, 4%).

Table 1.2: References to Roles

Roles	Driscoll	Piper	Total
God			
Affirmation	11	23	34
Challenge	0	0	0
Biblical Characters			

Affirmation	7	43	50
Challenge	12	1	13
Christian Professionals			
Affirmation	3	16	19
Challenge	30	26	56
Historic Religious Figures			
Affirmation	5	1	6
Challenge	2	0	2

Theology, the third category of authority, revealed three subcategories: theological debates, Christian practice and the character of God. Most bloggers addressed theological issues or debates (n = 50, 73.5%), while others referenced the character of God (n = 14, 20.6%) or Christian practice (n = 4, 5.8%).

Table 1.3: References to Theology

Theology	Driscoll	Piper	Total
Debates			
Affirmations	10	26	36
Challenge	9	5	14
Practice			
Affirmation	3	0	3
Challenge	1	0	1
Character of God			
Affirmation	2	12	14
Challenge	0	0	0

Lastly, three major subcategories were identified for structure: religious organizations (n = 3, 30%), governing bodies (n = 2, 20%) and individual church bodies (n = 2, 20%). Three others fell outside these three categories and were coded as other (n = 3, 30%).

Table 1.4: References to Structure

Structures	Driscoll	Piper	Total
Religious Organizations			
Affirmation	1	0	1
Challenge	2	0	2
Governing Bodies			
Affirmation	0	0	0
Challenge	2	0	2
Individual Churches			
Affirmation	0	2	2
Challenge	2	0	0
Other			
Affirmation	1	2	3
Challenge	0	0	0

The majority of references to authority were affirmations (n = 375, 78.1%), while the rest were challenges (n = 105, 25.7%). The two categories of religious authority most likely to be challenged were hierarchy/roles (n = 71, 67.6%) and theology (n = 15, 14.3%). Challenges to structures (n = 6, 5.7%) and texts (n = 13, 12.4%) occurred least often. Texts were most likely to be referenced as affirmations of authority (n = 209, 55.7%) followed by roles (n = 109, 29%), theology (n = 53, 14%) and structures (n = 4, 1%).

This suggests that even bloggers engaging in resistance to hegemonic gender norms within religion still rely heavily on traditional forms of religious authority such as texts and hierarchy/roles. However, these bloggers are also willing to challenge religious authority

particularly within the hierarchy/roles category as well as forms of authority that fall within the theology category and are also likely to cite other blogs/bloggers as forms of authority. Authority derived from structures (ex. religious organization or institutions) are the least cited by these bloggers and suggest that the sample places greater emphasis on other sources of authority compared to formal religious institutions.
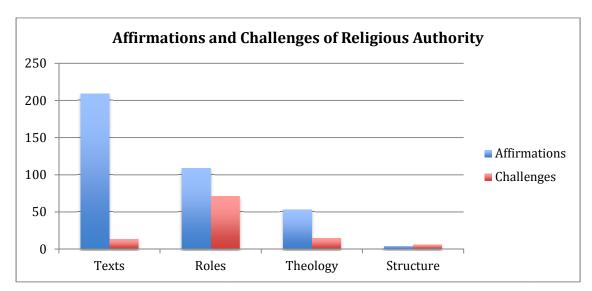
Affirmations and Challenges of Religious Authority

Figure 1.2: Affirmations and Challenges of Religious Authority

4.3 Resistance

Bloggers in the study were coded as either resisting hegemonic masculinity or perpetuating hegemonic masculinity. Though resisters may also construct arguments or engage in rhetoric that perpetuates certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity, their attempts at resistance generally distinguish them from individuals who largely work to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity by continually policing men or excluding and discrediting women. In the full sample, 4 individuals were clear perpetuators, 41 (83.6%) were coded as resisters and 4 were neutral or otherwise unidentifiable as either perpetuators or resisters.

Bloggers identified as resisters were then further coded as engaging in collective or individual resistance and in formal or informal resistance. Creating categories for the coding of

resistance efforts is not easy in the context of the blogosphere. For example, should references to other bloggers within a blog post be considered collective resistance? Does the social nature of blogs (ex. through comments) necessitate that all resistance through blogging is in some sense collective?

Bloggers were identified as engaging in collective resistance when they formally stated that they were acting alongside another blogger or other bloggers. For example, "Elizabeth" wrote a blog asking that men in particular respond to what she considered to be the "dangerous" theology of John Piper around issues of gender as a way to affirm that issues of gender were not merely the responsibility of women to address. Both male and female bloggers then responded to her request.

In the sample of forty-nine blogs, 26 bloggers stated that they had read a blog by another blogger asking for informal or formal acts of collective resistance. Of these 26 bloggers, 9 explicitly stated that they were using their blog as a way to engage in collective resistance based on the request of other bloggers. Because I am using the strictest definition of collective resistance by stipulating that bloggers must explicitly identify that they were engaging in resistance alongside or at the request of another blogger, I suspect that these numbers seriously underestimate the level of collective resistance in which bloggers engage. Twenty-nine of the forty-nine bloggers (59%) reference or link to other bloggers. While this does not qualify as collective resistance for this study, it is a key part of the social dimensions involved in both blogging and resistance.

The blogosphere similarly does not lend itself to easy definitions of formal or informal resistance. Should taking the time to write a blog addressing one's feelings about an authority figure or Christian practice be considered formal or is it an everyday act of informal resistance – similar to complaints about bosses among co-workers? For the purposes of this study, acts of

formal resistance are identified as those acts that extend beyond complaints, theological arguments, or anecdotes to attempt to concretely affect the authority figure/structures in question through institutional channels. Only three of the 41 resistant bloggers (7%) were identified as engaging in formal resistance efforts. Specifically, these bloggers wrote letters or e-mails to the governing bodies of the church that employs Mark Driscoll asking that they advise him to stop "bullying" others.

The majority of resisters in this study engaged in informal acts of everyday resistance. In differentiating formal and informal resistance, it is important to note that one is not being privileged above the other. As Clay Shirky (2008) and others have identified, everyday acts of informal resistance can have significant impacts locally and globally. In fact, as Shirky argues, it is possible that these informal acts of resistance may have become both more normal and more impactful as technology has spread and the once necessary reliance on formal avenues of resistance has lessened. For example, Shirky argues that, because of the collaborative potential of online interactions, informal acts of resistance online can achieve large goals once attributed primarily to formal acts of resistance offline.

4.4 Resistance Strategies

4.4.1 Employing God's Gender in Resistance

God's relation to gender arose as a central theme in blogger's resistance efforts. In both samples God was said to be gender-less. As Lance writes, "God is gender-less…the divine being who created gender and thus encompasses and transcends it." Chris echoes these sentiments when he states, "No member of the Trinity, in the divine essence, has a masculine or feminine DNA."

Yet other bloggers address God's relation to gender differently. These bloggers do not conceive God as genderless but frame God, in the words of one blogger, as "gender-full." Drawing from an array of Bible verses, these bloggers argue that God is both male and female because God made man and woman in his image (Lance, David, Jeff, Jason, Chloe, Chris), God is described in the Bible as both father and mother (Jeff, Craig, Timothy, Maddox) and God is addressed in both masculine and feminine metaphors within scripture (David, Kelli, Craig, Timothy, Chloe, Maddox, Hayden).

> "Some want to think of God as primarily male. Some want to think of God as an empty neuter – a personality that can only be characterized as *genderless*. But to me, God "feels" *gender-full,* both male *and* female. God's personality should be thought of as rich and vibrant, abounding in characteristics that we would classify as both masculine and feminine" (Jason).

Regardless of their stance on the gender-less-ness or gender-fullness of God, bloggers often emphasize feminine aspects of both God and Jesus in scripture as a form of informal resistance. God is emphasized as a "Provider, Nurturer and Sustainer who feeds the young" (Jeff), a nursing and comforting mother (Lance, Jeff, Craig, Timothy, Hayden, Maddox), a woman in labor (Jeff), as a hen who gathers her chicks (Jeff, Hayden, Maddox) and as someone with an "uncompromising demand for justice and fairness, and a deep abiding love for humanity-as-children, that could easily, if not more readily, be characterized as feminine rather than masculine" (Jason). Similarly, Jesus is claimed by these bloggers to exhibit feminine characteristics because he speaks gently, heals instead of wounds, weeps at loss, is generally non-violent, was "beaten up" on the cross and extolled meekness as a virtue (Darren, Lance, Kendall).

This reframing serves, in part, to resist hegemonic masculinities within religion that place men as central to the Biblical narrative and frame God as exclusively masculine. However, this reframing also reifies existing definitions of masculine and feminine as opposites. For example, framing Jesus' weeping as un-masculine and his love or gentility as feminine maintains the male/female dichotomy that sees gender as binary and essential instead of socially constructed.

Despite linking Jesus with traits and behaviors that are deemed feminine, Jesus' gender remains generally unquestioned. As Kelli writes, "no one can debate that Jesus Christ was a man." Ben also affirms this claim when he asks; "Jesus was decidedly a man – no arguments there, right?" Despite Jesus' gender going generally unquestioned, bloggers do attempt to explain away the necessity of Jesus being male. Just as Kelli argues below, the justification for the maleness of Jesus is repeatedly listed as a matter of practicality, given the patriarchal culture Jesus was born into:

> [T]he Son of God became incarnate as a man in the context of a first century Jewish community in Roman-controlled Palestine. To have become incarnate in a woman would have been ludicrous, to put it badly. No woman could have garnered the kind of authority and following that Jesus did, as a man. Within the Israelite faith, males were the "public," establishment spiritual leaders" (Kelli).

This framing situates the maleness of Jesus as a practical matter given the historical context rather than as a more intentional decision made by God to give priority to masculinity by making Jesus a man rather than a woman. Explaining away Jesus' maleness resists hegemonic masculinity by providing an excuse for the Son of God's male status and attempting to open up additional space for women and femininity within the narrative. However, leaving Jesus' gender unquestioned also points to blogger's continued reliance on essential and binary understandings of gender that conflate sex and gender.

The overwhelming majority of bloggers in both samples discussed God in their writing using masculine pronouns. This appears to be an assumed practice among the sample, despite their general resistance to the idea that God is exclusively masculine. Only one blogger in the sample explicitly acknowledged his use of masculine pronouns by saying,

> "DISCLAIMER: Throughout this blog post I will use the pronoun "he" to describe God, which might contradict everything I say in this post. But it saves time instead of saying "he/she/it" all the time." (Timothy)

Even this cursory acknowledgement maintains the use of masculine pronouns for God on the grounds of practicality (though, to be certain, using "she" or alternating "he" and "she" would be no more time consuming). It appears that, regardless of resisters' beliefs that God may be genderless or "gender-full," adopting gender neutral or female pronouns for God is still beyond the currently accepted norms within the Christian blogosphere. This practice is consistent with hegemonic masculinity because it places masculinity as central and excludes femininity in references to the deity.

4.4.2 Emphasizing Women in the Bible

Bloggers were particularly quick to cite women in the Bible as references for their resistance. This strategy reframes women as central figures in the Biblical narrative – instead of accessories – and thus calls into question Piper's assertion that Christianity should have a "masculine feel". For example, these bloggers emphasize the leadership roles that women held in Biblical stories (Elizabeth, Kelli, Chris, Ben, Hayden, Maddox, Chole, Kendall, Lee). In particular, the roles of Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene were emphasized. Female apostles, deacons, and priests are similarly addressed in blogger's resistance as well as Old Testament examples of prominent females like Deborah and Esther. This informal reframing serves to resist hegemonic masculinity by decentralizing masculine contributions to the religion

and by opening up additional space for women's voices, experiences and stories. Arguing for the primacy of women's contributions to the religion's narrative focuses on female inclusion instead of the female exclusion found within hegemonic masculinity.

4.4.3 Privileging Equality in Religious Interpretations

Gender equality arose as one of the most prominent themes in the data and centered on relationships and Church roles. Consistent with previous research findings, I found that resisters defined marriage as egalitarian – generally dismissing gendered division of labor, exclusively masculine leadership and, instead, emphasizing mutual submission and service as fundamental to equality in marriage. As Clayton writes:

> This is not a pure democracy• it is a relationship of equals. It is not a 50/50 division of labor• it is a striving to pour ourselves out to one another as servants. This is not a battle for power• it is a joining together in the story of redemption and in fighting the good fight.

This reframing goes so far as to deemphasize traditional understandings of equality – "a 50/50 division of labor" – in exchange for emphasizing service and reciprocity in marriage. This understanding of equality is consistent with other blogger's definitions of equality in marriage. A 50/50 division of labor is deemphasized in exchange for arguments of mutual submission and mutual servanthood in marriage. It is unclear how blogger's see this working out practically, but this definition does place both men and women as servants who are to submit to their spouses at times. Therefore, this framing of marriage counters hegemonic masculinity by arguing that men, as well as women, must behave as servants and assume a submissive position in marriage.

On the subject of church roles, resisters overwhelmingly relied on Paul's assertion in Galatians that there is neither male nor female to argue for the uselessness of gender as a qualification for leadership. As Chris states, "frankly in Christ there is not male and female (Gal.

3:28)." Lance adds, "If we belong to Christ, then we are family. Period. There are no red-headed step children in the Kingdom."

However, resisters also rely on other evidence drawn from Scripture to affirm their position. Bloggers used interpretations of Biblical texts to argue that the New Testament in particular was a decidedly counterhegemonic document (Craig, Chris, Maddox, Chole). As Craig states, "[a]mong my favorite aspects of the Scriptures is that despite a male-dominated middle eastern culture, the role and value of women have always been ahead of their time culturally in the Bible."

Bloggers argued that Jesus engaged in resistant acts by actively associating with women within the unquestionably patriarchal culture in which he was embedded (Maddox, Chole). They also argued that his death and resurrection liberated humankind from an unequal social order that was caused by the "original sin" in Genesis (Josh, Jason, Craig, Cory).

Bloggers clearly rely heavily on textual religious authority for this argument. Framing gender as irrelevant "in Christ" resists hegemonic masculinity by placing men and women on equal ground. Reframing the Bible as a counter-hegemonic document also serves to resist hegemonic masculinity by deemphasizing decidedly patriarchal scriptures and placing emphasis on the comparatively egalitarian nature of certain stories, customs and norms discussed in the text. Similarly, emphasizing the counter-hegemonic practices of Jesus reframes the central male in the Biblical narrative as resistant to hegemonic masculinity. This reframing allows bloggers to suggest that the Bible supports movement toward a more egalitarian society. However, it is also blind to gender oppression in that it ignores and fails to address some of the social consequences associated with patriarchal practices documented within scripture.

4.4.4 Redefining Masculinity

In resistor's attempts to redefine masculinity against Piper's and Driscoll's hegemonic masculinity, bloggers often link manhood and masculinity to characteristics such as responsibility, leadership, courage, non-violence, wisdom, integrity, servanthood love, strength, and self-sacrifice. Examples of masculinity are defended using Biblical characters such as David and John the Baptist who are said to love Jesus and God, be poetic and get "emotional about the Creator [which] is the most natural disposition of anyone – male or female." (Darren). While some of these characteristics are consistent with hegemonic understandings of gender (ex. leadership, courage and strength), others serve to challenge aspects of hegemonic masculinity (ex. love and servanthood).

Well-known or famous men who are said to exhibit non-hegemonic masculinity are also brought up by bloggers to counter hegemonic definitions. Lance writes, "[m]y issue is the implication that people who you are able beat to a pulp are not worthy of your respect. Which I imagine would include Ghandi, Einstein, and Mr. Rogers." Bloggers similarly draw on their own "feminine" traits to argue for an expanded definition of masculinity Todd writes:

> I am not, and have never been, drawn to any of the following: big trucks, fast cars, guns, hunting/fishing trips, boxing/UFC/wrestling, violent video games, or… insert "manly" activity here… The point is, in advocating "masculine" Christianity, there tends to be only one definition of "masculine" that gets in the door, and this definition simply does not describe many men.

These arguments attempt to blur the line in binary understandings of gender expression. In fact, bloggers are arguing, similar to Connell and Messerschmit (2005), that there are multiple ways of expressing masculinity. This resists hegemonic masculinity by framing alternative masculinities as legitimate masculinities.

Bloggers also bring up "bad" examples of masculinity in the Bible. For example, it is brought up that Jesus rebukes men who act in violence (Darren, Lance). Bloggers criticize Adam for eating from the tree in Genesis, Noah for his drunkenness, Aaron for being a pushover, David for committing adultery, Lot for being a pervert, Abram for lying, Moses for being a coward and the disciples for abandoning Jesus (Jason, Darren, Ed). These examples of men who do masculinity "badly" tell us as much about what resisters think masculinity is and is not as their more concrete definitions of masculinity do, because these images of masculinity serve as examples that are publically policed as deviant and unacceptable.

Resisters frame masculinity as not fixed: "masculinity and femininity are not fixed and eternal sets of attributes, but are by and large culturally defined, and always changing" (Emma). In addition to arguing, as discussed elsewhere, that masculine language in scripture and masculine images of God are a result of culture (Kelli, Craig, Maddox, Chloe) bloggers address how definitions of masculinity have changed across time. For example, Kendal notes, that "[o]ver a hundred years ago many baby boys were dressed in pink, because some believed that red was a masculine colour, and masculine lite would have been pink". This understanding of masculinity argues for the socially constructed nature of gender and resists the idea of gender as essential. Framing gender as a social construction helps to resist against hegemonic understandings of masculinity by arguing that alternative expressions of masculinity (ex. men wearing pink) are historically legitimate expressions of masculinity.

Though resisters generally agree that gender/sex are not linked to behaviors alone, bloggers have some disagreement about the definition of gender. Christine argues for an identity-based definition of gender:

> a penis is not what makes someone male. The colors or clothes a man wears or how he
> talks or walks are not what makes him a man. A man is someone who identifies and

understands himself as a man. Period.

In contrast, Pate argues for a biological definition of gender when he writes, "[a] man also can't make himself any more of a woman, whether it's by dressing like a metrosexual worship leader, or getting a sex change." Other bloggers similarly affirm that they recognize a "male and female distinctiveness" which suggests a binary and essentialist construction of gender.

Resisters do generally insist on the essential nature of heteronormative practices. For example, bloggers argue that Jesus could not call God "mother", because this would dishonor his earthly mother, Mary. This statement relies on heteronormative assumptions about parenthood and marriage and legitimates the exclusion of feminine pronouns from references to God. Clayton similarly states that "homosexuality is a sin when acted upon in thought, word, or deed," and Jeff writes that the "most true" reflection of God's image occurs in heterosexual marriage. Heteronormative practices like these uphold hegemonic masculinity by subordinating alternative (non-hetero) expressions of masculinity.

4.4.5 Satire

Though satire is not used widely by the sample (approximately 14% appear to use some form of satire), it plays an interesting role in resistance that should not go ignored. Several bloggers who use satire as a form of resistance, employ it as a means of discrediting hegemonic definitions of masculinity. Robert writes, "Really, Mark? Perhaps they should punch themselves in the face 5 times to show how "manly" they can be."

Other bloggers use it to resist specific comments that were meant to police their resistance. For example, when a previous commenter said this in response to Emma's blog post, "Women use church as a hammer to make men [...] fit their norms. They substitute Precious Moments thoughts for actual Biblical teaching," Emma responded back on her blog with this image addressed to the commenter.

Figure 1.3: Precious Moments Drawing

These strategies attempt to counter hegemonic gender norms by making fun of expressions of hegemonic masculinity through satire. Emma's response to the commenter's attempt to police her contribution similarly resists hegemonic masculinity because she refused to be censored and, instead, quipped back with an image that satirized what the commenter said. This satire serves as an effort to delegitimize his statement, but also challenges hegemonic assumptions about femininity because it involves a woman perpetuating with violent imagery.

4.4.6 Images

Sixty-three percent (n = 31) of the sample embedded at least one image into their blog posts. For these bloggers, the images they use communicate additional information, can serve as an additional form of resistance and communicate assumptions about masculinity, femininity and race.

A total of forty images were found in the sample. Fifty-five percent (n= 22) of the images are photographic, thirty percent (n=12) are hand drawn or digital illustration and fifteen percent are computer screen shots that involve both words and images (n = 6). Ten of the forty images (25%) depict Mark Driscoll or John Piper in some way. Generally this involves a photo of Piper or Driscoll's face, but some of these photos also appeared to be strategically chosen. For example, in one photographic image, Driscoll is making a punching motion towards Piper's face and, in another; he has gritted teeth, and tensed, outstretched arms as if he is making a grabbing

motion at someone/something. Bekki captions a third image of Driscoll's face with the - presumably satirical - sentence: "How a real man should look!" Lastly, Driscoll is shown in an illustrated drawing with a flame on his tongue – presumably an illusion to James 3:5: "Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark" (New International Version, James 3:5). These images appear to be strategically chosen by bloggers as a way to satirize (and thus delegitimize) Driscoll's hegemonic expressions of masculinity.

Four of the forty images (11%) include an image of the Facebook status Driscoll posted and one documents a tweet by John Piper. Eleven of the images (27.5%) depict a singular man other than Driscoll or Piper. These images are all images of white men and most draw from stereotypes and satire to illustrate ideas about hegemonic masculinity. For example, males in these images are depicted as engaging in athletics, holding guns and having large muscles or flexing. Several of these images appear to be satirical in nature as they are overly exaggerated versions of masculinity. For example, in one image a body-builder-like Jesus half-hangs from a wooden cross he has ripped apart with his brute strength. In another image, a Jesus-like figure stands is in a boxing ring in boxing gear and the words "Machismo Theology" are typed beside him. These satirical images communicate ideas about the most honored way of being a man but also satirize those conceptions of hegemonic masculinity. However, the focus on men also serves to reify hegemonic masculinity by placing men as central figures.

Seven images (17%) depict women in some way – either alone (n = 4) or with a male (n = 3). Several of these images appear to communicate bloggers feelings about women's issues within Christianity. For example, an image of a woman's neck wrapped in silver chains and a large gold lock is captioned: "SUBMISSION. The husband is the head of the wife and that's the way it is, period. – Pat Robertson." Carter similarly adds an image of a large red button that

reads, "SUBMIT" to his blog post that focuses most of its textual attention on analyzing the Bible verses that address wives submitting to their husbands.

These images supplement the text and communicate visually the ideas expressed within the post. Blogs not only provide a medium to construct written arguments or engage in written resistance; blogs are also a channel for forms of artistic resistance. Some of the images assist in bloggers' resistant acts by making satire out of representations of hegemonic masculinity or graphically illustrating the subordination of women. Other images serve primarily as reference points to the subject(s) being discussed in the text of the blog post. However, these images also provide a window into the basic assumptions of bloggers.

4.5 Assessing Race in Resistance

Within the forty images gathered from the sample, not a single image depicts any person of color; thirty people are depicted in the images either by photograph or by illustration and all represent white individuals. This finding is not inconsistent with the racial makeup of my sample, which was approximately 79% white, with the second largest group (14%) being those whose race was unidentifiable/unreported.

Discussions about race within the text are also rare. Five of forty-nine bloggers (10%) address race in any way. Race was generally brought up to draw a parallel to gender inequality and the gender identity of God. As David writes:

"To say, as Piper says, that Christianity has "a masculine feel" is as silly as saying Christianity has "a white, Anglo-Saxon feel." The same mistake our forefathers made in excluding a particular race from full participation in Christianity is being made by our modern heroes in excluding a particular gender."

Craig reflected on his often unconscious assumptions about God's race, and Hayden links to a

music video titled "God is not a white man" – a video which goes on to depict only two characters of color: an Asian "communist" and a Middle Eastern "terrorist". The failure to incorporate images of people of color points not only to the racial segregation of the online space, but also to the "colorblind" nature of the space and the blogger's within it (Bonilla-Silva, 2006).

4.6 "Good" vs. "Bad" Resistance

The approach and effectiveness of resistance efforts remained up for debate among bloggers after resistance was enacted. Bloggers were particularly likely to engage in discussions about what kinds of resistance efforts were appropriate and inappropriate. These bloggers generally emphasized the necessity for resistance to be done "in love," with respect, and without "blanket attacks on one another's character" (Elliot, Amie). While some bloggers supported blogging and the letter-writing campaigns that other bloggers had suggested and organized (Clayton, Chad, Matthew, Caitlyn), Adam argued that "mass protest" was not the most "redemptive" way to address the issues, because it was unlikely to change Mark Driscoll's "heart." Similarly, bloggers often framed Driscoll's and Piper's statement as a matter of individual sinful behavior that could be corrected – not as a larger structural issue of gender inequality within churches and Christian culture.

Several of the bloggers in the sample openly discussed the Internet as a tool for resistance. Many raised concerns about the immediacy of the Internet – concerns that it gives power to hasty speech/hasty speakers. As Chad discusses:

The book of James in chapter 3 explains how deadly the tongue is and even

cautions teachers about their words. James even tells would-be teachers that maybe they

 ought not teach. If a person cannot control their tongue, or in this case their keyboard,

maybe they should re-evaluate whether or not they should be using various social media

to 'teach."

These bloggers advise others to think about what they type before they send it out onto social media platforms or their blogs. As David states, "I have adopted an old motto as a new paradigm for my writing: 'Never make an Internet promise when glad, never write an Internet blog when mad.'" Emphasizing love and kindness, individual rather than structural aspects of gender inequality and the need to be cautious about hasty speech may serve to silence individuals who wish to engage in resistance but have difficulty reconciling resistant acts with a Christian emphasis on kindness, love and grace.

5. CONCLUSION

With this study I aimed to address questions of meaning – how the sample understands gender, where bloggers draw authority from for these views and how these views are perpetuated or resisted by individuals or groups. I sought to address what form of religious authority – hierarchy, texts, roles and/or structures – bloggers draw from in their efforts to resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies.

The findings in this study both echo and challenge previous findings and raise theoretical questions. The claims of this study are drawn from a small and non-representative sample, but the findings offer some limited but critical initial findings and are able to capture a more nuanced understanding of religious authority and resistance online than larger samples would have captured.

To answer the first research question, where do bloggers draw religious authority from, I analyzed which roles, theologies/ideologies, texts and structures were used more often by bloggers. I found that bloggers are most likely to make references to texts which are followed by roles, ideology/theology and, lastly, structures.

While traditional sources of authority such as religious texts (46.25%) were relied upon by bloggers in my sample, I included religious blogs as a subcategory under religious texts, which previous studies (Campbell, 2010) did not include. If religious blogs (n = 61) are removed from the category of religious texts, the remaining traditional texts (the Bible and Christian publications) are sited by bloggers 33.5% (n = 161) of the time and references to blogs make up 12% of the references to authority in the overall sample. Removing blogs from the category of religious texts would place references to roles, which made up 37.5% of the sample, above references to religious texts. While the Bible was referenced more often (65.7%) than religious blogs, religious blogs were referenced considerably more than other textual religious sources such as Christian magazines and books (27.5% and 6% respectively).

Most references to authority (78.1%) were affirmations while the rest were challenges (25.7%). The categories of religious authority most likely to be challenged were hierarchy/roles (67.6%) followed by theology (14.3%). Challenges to structures and texts occurred least often. Instead, texts were likely to be referenced as affirmations of authority, followed by affirmations of roles, theology and, lastly, structures.

Consistent with the findings in previous studies (Campbell, 2010), my sample consisted primarily of Christian professionals (55%) and divinity students (12%) and was over-representative of males. These findings suggest that Christian professionals and men may maintain considerable power and social presence in online religious communities that is similar to the power and social presence they have in offline religious communities.

However, in contrast to previous studies (Campbell, 2010) which found affirmation of roles most common, only 29% of the sample's affirmative references to authority were mentions of religious roles and the majority of the references to roles were references to Christian professionals, not references to God as was found in Campbell's study. Consistent with

Campbell's findings, the majority (67.6%) of the challenges to authority addressed roles. Categories of authority that are challenged were similarly least likely to be religious texts. These findings suggest that, while Christian professionals and other religious elites appear to have a significant presence in Christian spaces online, many of these same individuals are using online spaces to challenge and resist certain sources of religious authority (particularly other Christian professionals) online.

While some studies of religion online have suggested that the Internet may be used principally to challenge religious authority, these studies results are more consistent with Campbell's (2010) findings that religious bloggers spend the majority of their time affirming forms of religious authority. However, I argue that this is more nuanced than Campbell presupposes in her study. Merely counting the references to forms of authority does not fully capture the nuanced ways in which bloggers both challenge and affirm forms of religious authority online.

It became clear, through more thorough qualitative analysis, that challenges to authority were necessarily accompanied by affirmations of authority. That is to say that, when a blogger seeks to challenge a religious figure/role, for example, that blogger also often uses multiple affirmations of religious authority to validate that challenge. For example, a challenge to John Piper (role) for excluding women from leadership positions may be accompanied by multiple references to scripture (texts), other leaders (roles) and religious debates (theology) as a way to validate the blogger's challenge of John Piper.

In this way, affirmations of authority simultaneously serve an integral role in challenging religious authority by providing a source of authority for the challenge. For example, a blogger may challenge a source of authority associated with a religious role (ex. John Piper) while also affirming another religious role, a certain interpretation of a biblical text or a theological debate

as an alternative source of authority. Individuals on both sides of a given debate (ex. gendered division of labor in churches) tend to draw from similar types of religious authority (particularly the Bible), but come to understand those sources of authority in different ways. This suggests, for example, that many bloggers find religious roles to be a central source for the establishing of authority but had disagreements over meaning and practice.

Because challenges to authority are so nuanced, I also investigated how Christian bloggers resist and/or perpetuate hegemonic gender ideologies online through blogging. I was specifically interested in whether resistance took collective or individual forms, and in the specific strategies bloggers employ in resisting hegemonic masculinity.

The majority (83.6%) of the bloggers in my sample were identified as resisters. A small portion of the sample (18.4%) were identified as engaging in collective resistance. However, given the unusually strict definition for collective resistance that is necessitated by the constraints of my data, I suspect that this number underestimates the level of collective resistance. Seven percent of the bloggers in the sample engaged in formal acts of resistance by directly appealing to institutional channels to enact change (ex. letter writing campaigns), while 92.7% of the sample engaged in informal acts of resistance.

Not to be underestimated, the social and collaborative nature of blogging is evident in the sample not only in bloggers' references to each other as sources of authority, but also through linking to each others' blogs informally as well. Fifty-nine percent of the sample hyperlinked to or referenced one or more other blogs on their own blog post.

Bloggers used an array of strategies in their efforts to resist hegemonic gender norms. These included, but were not limited to, debating God's gender, emphasizing women's roles in the Bible, privileging equality in theological interpretations, redefining masculinity and employing satire and images to communicate information and delegitimize hegemonic power.

However, some of these strategies also served to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity. For example, emphasizing the "feminine" qualities of God and Jesus serves clear practical purposes in these bloggers resistance efforts. Reframing Jesus and God as feminine through scripture allows bloggers to call into question Driscoll's belittling of effeminate individuals – if God is feminine, surely there is nothing wrong with being effeminate. Similarly, emphasizing the feminine characteristics of God and Jesus allows those responding to Piper to defend the legitimacy of a feminine as well as a masculine "feel" to Christianity. Yet these resistance strategies also serve to reify the masculine/feminine binary that complimentarian thought relies on by maintaining masculinity and femininity as both "real" and opposing.

Similarly, the assumed practices in which bloggers engage, such as using masculine pronouns for God, reinforce hegemonic understandings of God and are inconsistent with bloggers' arguments elsewhere that God is genderless. These concrete practices undermine bloggers' resistance efforts.

Lastly, bloggers' discussions regarding "good" and "bad" resistance placed emphasis on love, grace and respect as qualities of "good" resistance while qualities such as attacking or speaking with haste were considered "bad" examples of resistance. There is some indication among bloggers that engaging in resistance, which is generally critical in nature, may be difficult for some bloggers to reconcile with the traditional Christian emphasis on love and "giving grace." This may limit the strategies open to Christian bloggers when engaging in resistance as these individuals likely feel increased pressure to refrain from resistant acts they deem to be combative and/or critical.

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APPENDIX

Religious Authority Coding Categories: (Derived from Campbell, 2010).

Coding Category	Definition (derived from Campbell, 2010)	Examples
Religious Roles – "Roles"	''References or appeals to a recognized religious authority figure or a traditional church leadership role''	Jesus, God, John Calvin, Pastor Mark Driscoll, St. Augustine, Al Mohler, Paul, Pricilla, Bishop N.T. Wright
Religious Structures – "Structures"	''References or appeals to religious hierarchies, church structures or other patterns of church life''	Southern Baptist Convention, The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Mars Hill Church, Resurgence Ministry, North American Mission Board
Religious Ideology – "Theology/Ideology"	''Reference or appeals to commonly held Christian beliefs, [theological debates] or characteristics used to identify individuals as Christian''	Biblical literalism, Women's role in church leadership, Baptism of the Holy Spirit, Discipleship, Calvinism, Biblical equality of genders,
Religious Texts – "Texts"	''References or appeals to a religious text used to support argument such as Apostles Creed, Apocrypha, Bible, Christian books, the Nicene Creed, Westminster Confession of Faith" and Christian blogs	Bible, New Testament, Book of Prayer, Christian non-fiction texts, Religiously-oriented blogs