Gendered Support for Democratic Values?

Religion and the Mediating Influence of Psychological Security

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Abstract

Past research indicates substantive gender differences in democratic norm commitment and political tolerance in the U.S. Analyzing gender differences in democratic values, we focus on religion and the separate traits of psychological security as potential explanations as both a mediating force and direct influence. In general, our results show a lack of gendered differences in the religion-psychological security connection to democratic values, and suggest that unless the psychological security traits are considered separately, we fail to capture the unique and disparate contributions of each. Ruling out gender in the religion-democratic values connection, is a unique contribution in this literature.

Keywords: religion, gender, political tolerance, democratic norms, psychological security

Introduction

Democracy has certain demands of its citizens - chief among these are recognition and support of other citizens’ beliefs and practices. That is, the freedom to hold and express one’s political beliefs is seen as a prerequisite for a stable and effective democratic system. Moreover, support for general democratic norms has consistently proven to be a strong, positive, and direct predictor of basic democratic values like political tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1982; McClosky and Brill; Gibson 1992; Marcus et al.). Thus, both a citizenry’s level of support for democratic norms and its level of political tolerance are important. Extensive research has uncovered a variety of individual differences associated with tolerance of divergent viewpoints (e.g., Nunn et al.; Bobo and Licari; Gibson 1992; Marcus et al.). One of the most consistent
findings in this literature is that men and women differ in their commitment to democratic norms and political tolerance. Previous research has shown that women are more reluctant than men to allow unpopular groups to exercise their constitutional rights (e.g., Stouffer; Gibson 1992; Marcus et al.; Golebiowska), differ from men in their choice of intolerance targets (Sullivan et al.; Golebiowska), are less likely than men to endorse general democratic norms (Golebiowska: 52), and differ from men in the influence of psychological security on support for civil liberties (Golebiowska: 55).

Despite the consistent finding that gender differences in democratic values exist, explanations for the “gender gap” has been afforded scant attention in the literature. As such, it remains an open question as to why gender is significantly related to political tolerance and democratic norm support. What is it about gender that influences tolerance of divergent viewpoints and democratic norm support? In attempting to solve the puzzle of gender differences in democratic norm support and political tolerance we focus on religion and psychological security as two potential explanations. Both religion and psychological security are identified in the literature as likely to affect differences in democratic values, but there has been little attempt to understand their connection to the gender gap. We speculate that both women’s generally greater level of religiosity and gendered differences in the impact of psychological security traits on democratic values,1 explains the democratic values gender gap. While women’s lack of support for democratic values is well-documented, comparatively few studies have simultaneously examined the role gendered differences in religious beliefs and behavior have on the development of psychological security traits as well as in producing democratic values or lack thereof.

Previous Research

Religion and the Mediating Influence of Psychological Security on Democratic Values

Not surprisingly, different religious orientations influence support for democratic values. Researchers have consistently shown that religion (as measured by affiliation, attendance, belief, or some combination thereof) tends to impede (directly or indirectly) both democratic norms commitment and political tolerance (Smidt and Penning; Nunn et al.; McCloskey and Brill; Wilcox and Jelen; Green et al.; Eisenstein; Gibson 2010, among others). At the same time, gender differences in religion have been frequently cited. Hoffman and Bartowski (1264) find that women are more likely than men to adopt a literal or inerrant view of the Bible, even among traditions that do not generally embrace a literalist ideology; and this relationship is especially pronounced among those who attend church more often and who are likely more invested in their religious organization. Studies also show that women are more likely than men to be affiliated with a religion, to read the Bible, pray, attend religious service more frequently, and be more fervent in their prayer (Stark 2001; Davis and Smith; Rice; Pew Research Center). Higher percentages of women than men declare themselves religious across religious movements, beliefs, or practices (Stark 2002). Given the many and consistent differences in religious orientations between men and women, and the significant negative role of religion in influencing one’s willingness to grant free expression to minority opinions, it

1 Psychological security is one of the most important predictors of democratic values (Gibson 2006).
seems reasonable to expect that women will be generally more intolerant and less supportive of democratic norms.

Evidence also suggests that variations in both democratic norm support and political tolerance can be found in certain psychological traits (Sniderman; Herson and Hofstetter; Sullivan et al. 1981; Sullivan et al. 1982; Gibson and Tedin; Davis; Marcus et al.; Peffley et al.; Gibson 2002, 2006; Eisenstein). The three common characteristics used in the psychological security index are dogmatism, self-esteem, and social trust (Sullivan et al. 1981: 107). Many studies have maintained that the degree to which people are closed-minded (or dogmatic), insecure (low self-esteem), and distrusting of others undermines support for democratic institutions and processes as well as political tolerance (Sullivan et al. 1981; Gibson 2002; Eisenstein). However, empirical findings suggest that the traditional usage of the composite psychological security measure does not capture the complex nature of the multi-item security index and that the contributions of the separate components of dogmatism, self-esteem, and social trust on democratic values may differ, particularly when linked with religion (Bahr and Martin; Canetti-Nisim; Eisenstein and Clark 2014, 2017; Schoenfeld; Smidt; Smith; Welch et al.). For example, Eisenstein and Clark (2017) show that the separate indicators of trust and self-esteem, as a mediating influence for the effects of religion, are unreliable predictors of support for democratic norms and may, as a result of the offsetting influence of self-esteem, underestimate the negative effect of dogmatism.

A Gendered Connection? Religion, Psychological Security, and Democratic Values

A variety of studies also suggest that the three common characteristics composing the psychological security index and thought to influence democratic values may vary with gender. Specifically, gender influences trust in diverse areas such as in economic behavior where there is a tendency for men to exhibit more trust than women (e.g., Buchan et al.), strategic decision-making (Croson and Buchan; Kimmel et al.), and even the circumstances under which the decision to trust is made (Maddux and Brewer) – men are more likely to trust members as part of a shared group whereas women are more likely to trust strangers who share a personal connection (such as a friend of a friend).

Similarly, there is a multitude of research on the link between gender and self-esteem. Some results suggest men have more self-esteem (Allgood-Merten and Stockard; Feather; Fertman and Chubb). Other results suggest women have more self-esteem (Connell et al.; Ma and Leung) or find there is no difference in self-esteem between men and women (Greene and Wheatley; Simpson et al.). However, a meta-analysis of the gender and self-esteem literature has concluded that men have slightly higher levels of self-esteem (Kling et al.). Among the various traits, there is sparse information on a direct gender-dogmatism link. Gender and dogmatism are typically studied in relationship to some other variable, such as religion, hostility, or in the development of gendered attitudes – such as an explanation for gender differences in attitudes towards homosexuality. To the extent that there are substantial differences in the religious propensities of men and women, we might expect given the extant literature that this relationship will lead to differential dogmatic tendencies that then manifest in gendered differences in democratic norms and values.

Thus, despite real gender differences in religion (Stark 2001, 2002), psychological security traits (Kling et al.; Buchan et al.), and general norms commitment and political tolerance
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(Golebiowska), there has been insufficient examination of male/female differences in the religion-psychological security-linkage as it relates to democratic values. We argue that there is ample evidence to suggest the following hypotheses:

H1. The effect of gendered religious practices will be reflected in women’s greater intolerance and lack of support for democratic norms;

H2. The source of the gender gap in democratic values may be indirect, through its influence on psychological security.

Furthermore, because psychological security can be viewed as multifaceted with the various components operating relatively independently (on this point see Eisenstein and Clark 2014, 2017), we suggest the following additional hypothesis:

H3. There are reasons to expect differential effects of the sub-components (dogmatism, self-esteem, and trust) in the religion-psychological security connection as it relates to gender.

Data, Measurements, and Design

In order to conduct this research, we utilize two different data sets. The first is James Gibson’s 1987 Freedom and Tolerance survey merged with the General Social Survey (GSS) conducted in the same year. The Freedom and Tolerance survey was a re-interview of the 1987 GSS respondents. The Freedom and Tolerance survey, merged with the 1987 GSS, enables the use of a national sample that brings together the necessary measures of support for norms of democracy, political tolerance, and psychological security, as well as multidimensional measures of religion such as religious belief (doctrinal orthodoxy), and religious behavior (level of religious commitment). While a dataset from 1987 may appear less than ideal, it is one of only a few datasets that is based on a national sample and allows us to bring together all the essential religion, democratic values, and psychological security variables. As an added advantage, Golebiowska in an earlier analysis of the gender gap in political tolerance, relied on the very same dataset facilitating direct comparisons of our results with a different modeling approach, and we can evaluate the two interpretations in explaining persistent gender differences in support for civil liberties of political outgroups.

2 The GSS study was conducted in the spring, and the Freedom and Tolerance study was conducted in June and July. Of the 1,459 subjects eligible for re-interview, surveys were completed for 1,267 respondents (approximately 87% of those eligible). The 1987 GSS survey also included an oversample of 353 black respondents beyond the 191 blacks in the main sample (for a total of 544); 436 black respondents (approximately 80 percent) were re-interviewed in the follow-up summer survey.

3 Studies tend to either provide valid measures of support for democratic norms or religion, but typically not both. For example, the standard GSS does not include measures for psychological security or support for norms of democracy; however, it does adequately measure religion. The Freedom and Tolerance survey provides measures of psychological security and support for democratic norms, but it fails to include measures for the assessment of religion. Thus, the standard GSS alone and the Freedom and Tolerance survey by itself cannot accommodate a study of religion and support for democratic norms. This is emblematic of problems with datasets for conducting research at the intersection of religion and democratic norms. In contrast, by merging the GSS and Freedom and Tolerance studies, we have a dataset inclusive of all pertinent measures.
The second dataset consists of the United States Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy (CID) Survey, which was conducted between mid-May and mid-July of 2005, with a representative sample of 1,001 Americans. In many ways, this study represents an extension of the earlier project in 1987 and as such provides an unusually rich perspective on democratic values and tolerance. In particular, the recent installment offers an overlap of many of the principal researchers from the earlier survey and a continuation of major themes resulting in considerable similarity in the measures of interest. The analysis of the 2005 data set permits us to assess how much the relationships between the variables of interest might have changed in the intervening decades. In both instances, the findings provide a basis of comparison with results from seminal studies such as Sullivan et al. (1982), and McCloskey and Brill that address the role of support for democratic values in a political landscape not so different from the post-9/11 context. That is to say, in an era when Americans’ fear was high and, as a consequence, support for democratic norms and tolerance of nonconformity suffered.

**Measurements**

**Political Tolerance.** Political tolerance is measured by the least-liked approach (Sullivan et al. 1981, 1982) that allows respondents to identify their most disliked group from among a list of groups that represent the left-right continuum. Each of the statements has a five point scale ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly. All responses are coded so that one corresponds to low tolerance and five corresponds to high tolerance. The 1987 data utilizes six items to measure political tolerance. The questions address whether members of the target groups should be permitted to run for public office, teach in public schools, deliver public speeches, hold public rallies, have their phones tapped by the government, and whether their least-liked group ought not to be outlawed. The 2005 data relies on three items (concerning public speeches, running for public office, and holding public rallies) for measuring tolerance that are nearly identical to the 1987 statements and, thus, offer meaningful comparison to the earlier study (see Appendix A for exact question wording).

**Norms of Democracy.** When measuring support for abstract liberal-democratic principles or norms of democracy, the questions used to identify support for norms of democracy fall under two rubrics: general support (e.g., free speech and legal rights) and procedural support (e.g., majority vote, release on bail, the right to not be forced to testify against oneself). In 1987 and 2005, respondents were presented with a series of statements in an agree/disagree format which elicited their views about a range of items tapping into legal and normative rules of democracy. All items have been coded so that 1 corresponds to low and 5 corresponds to high general support for democratic practices (i.e. “democratic norm support”).

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5 See Appendix A for a list of all items associated with each variable.
6 Comparative analysis employing the 3-item tolerance index consisting of the public speech, public officeholder, and public rallies items in 1987 and 2005 reveals no substantive differences in results (not shown, available upon request). As such, results presented here are based on the political tolerance measures contained in each year’s survey.
Psychological Security. Psychological security is measured by three distinct traits: dogmatism, self-esteem, and trust (Sullivan et al. 1982; Davis; Marcus et al.; Peffley et al.). Each item has five response categories ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly. All responses are coded so that 1 corresponds to low dogmatism/self-esteem/trust and 5 corresponds to high dogmatism/self-esteem/trust.

Religion. Religion is a multi-dimensional variable and each dimension must be measured separately. Religious commitment (religious behavior) is measured by frequency of attendance (at a religious institution), frequency of personal prayer, and religious salience (Kellstedt et al.; Layman and Green). In Appendix A, we have explained the slightly different question wording and response options available for these variables in 1987 and 2005. Responses are coded so that lower numbers indicate less religious commitment. Doctrinal orthodoxy (religious beliefs) is measured by biblical literalism, which is coded so that 1 corresponds to low doctrinal orthodoxy and 3 corresponds to high doctrinal orthodoxy. In 2005, differences in religious beliefs is composed of the self-described “born again” measure.

The present undertaking is not without its challenges. An obvious problem in trying to compare the 1987 and 2005 surveys is the introduction of different measures or slight variations in question wording. As a word of caution, it seems reasonable to assume a degree of uncertainty that differences in trends may actually represent the imperfect circumstance of comparing roughly comparable measures. However, it should be noted, that while some questions across the two studies are not identical, the analysis provides a meaningful comparison of the religion-psychological security-democratic norms/political tolerance relationships and how the associations might have changed in the intervening decades. Furthermore, since the specific focus of this research is on gendered differences, we do not expect any noted variation between the surveys to differentially impact responses provided by male or female respondents. Still, we will be cautious of the questionnaire differences in our report of findings.

Unfortunately, the 2005 survey did not contain a self-esteem measure which presents a problem in trying to compare the results from the two different time periods. However, as we discuss later, the weakness of the direct or indirect effect of self-esteem in the models for all adults and considering differences by gender, suggests that too much emphasis may have been placed upon it as a trait of psychological security — at least with regard to the endorsement of democratic norms and political tolerance.

Religion is conceptualized as having three distinct, yet interrelated dimensions: religious belief, religious belonging, and religious behavior (Layman and Green; Kellstedt et al.). Two measures are utilized in this study: belief and behavior.

One constraint is that the prayer frequency was only asked in the 1987 survey. However, a comparative analysis employing the 2-item religious commitment index composed of the religious service attendance and religious saliency indicators in 1987 and 2005 reveals no substantive differences in results (not shown, available upon request). As such, results presented here are based on the religious commitment measures contained in each year’s survey.

Some studies have expressed concern that dogmatism and doctrinal orthodoxy (biblical literalism) are similar concepts. Our results indicate that this does not appear to be the case. A correlation test of the six dogmatism items with doctrinal orthodoxy measure (biblical literalism) contained in the 1987 data set reveals no association larger than .033 (results available from the authors upon request).
The Model

The theoretical model in Figure 1 summarizes the expected nature of the linkages between religion and the psychological security index to both norm support and political tolerance for men and women. We estimate the model using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) software, which relies on maximum likelihood estimation. Structural equation modeling allows for a series of regression equations, in a model with causal ordering, to be tested simultaneously. As is common in the political tolerance literature, particularly in studies that examine the link between religion and the sub-component dogmatism, (Green et al.; Wilcox and Jelen), we model social variables as causally prior to psychological variables, which in turn precede political variables (on this point see Sullivan et al. 1981; Canetti-Nisim; Eisenstein; Eisenstein and Clark 2014). A number of individual-level factors that appear to enhance or impede democratic values, including education, age, income, political conservatism, and threat perception (e.g. Sullivan et al. 1982), have been included in the model as controls but are not shown for space reasons. The specific focus, in terms of the results, is on gender differences in both norm support and political tolerance as a consequence of the impact of religion and psychological security (directly and as a mediating link connecting religion to democratic norms and values).

Figure 1. Religion-Psychological Security-Norms of Democracy and Political Tolerance Connections

Results

The results shown in Figure 2 are based on the national survey of U.S. adults and demonstrate the religion-psychological security influence on the two dependent variables:

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11 Please note, separate models are used to distinguish between the sexes. In this way, the figures illustrate the degree of differential effects – direct and indirect – of the predictors (e.g. religion, psychological security, etc.) for men and women, and as a result inform gender differences in political tolerance and democratic norm support.

12 Detailed information regarding how this was accomplished as well as the results associated with these additional control variables is available from the authors.

13 We estimate the direct and indirect effects of gender separately (see Appendix B for a summary table of direct effects). To do otherwise, would suggest that the only variable that changes is the dependent variable (either political tolerance or democratic norm support). The figure depicts two separate models: the first, accounting for
democratic norm support and political tolerance. These results provide a baseline comparison as these estimates are for all respondents without gender distinction. Path coefficients that are bold indicate significance at .05 or better and all estimates reported are the standardized coefficients. As can be seen in Figure 2, doctrinal orthodoxy exerts a moderate influence on two of the psychological security traits. In particular, a greater commitment to doctrinal orthodoxy is associated with dogmatic tendencies (.15) whereas self-esteem (-.13) decreases with a literal view of scripture. There is no substantive or statistically significant influence of doctrinal orthodoxy on trust. Likewise, religious commitment has no influence on trust. However, a higher level of religious commitment encourages dogmatism (.21), and lowers self-esteem (-.12).

Figure 2. 1987 Data, Religion-Psychological Security-Norms of Democracy and Political Tolerance Results

Our expectation of differential effects for the psychological security components is confirmed. These findings show that dogmatism is the most important dimension of the psychological security index, not only as a mediating variable but also on its own. The direct effect of a dogmatic personality on democratic norm support and political tolerance is in fact quite powerful. As dogmatism increases, norm support decreases by a staggering -.64 while political tolerance decreases by -.12. Consistent with other research, we find evidence for differential effects among the psychological security sub-components accounting for disparities in political tolerance and democratic norm support (Canetti-Nisim; Eisenstein and Clark 2014; 2017). In addition, we find that the directional influence of trust and self-esteem is sensitive to the particular democratic value being measured. Indeed, as self-esteem increases

gender-distinct patterns in estimating the religion-psychological security-democratic norms connection; and the second, gender-distinct patterns in the religion-psychological security-political tolerance connection. A number of individual-level factors that appear to enhance or impede democratic values including education, age, income, political conservatism, and threat perception, have been included in the model as controls but are not shown for space reasons (available upon request).

14 Empirical estimates of the relationship between religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy, psychological security (trust, self-esteem, and dogmatism), and democratic values (i.e. democratic norm commitment and political tolerance) in 1987, controlling for other variables.

15 For ease of comparison, we have provided a table detailing direct effects for all adults and among men and women in Appendix B.
so does norm support (.14), but the relationship of self-esteem to political tolerance while inconsequential (an insignificant -.05) is negative. Likewise, trust is negatively linked to norm support (-.09) but greater social trust promotes political tolerance (.24). Importantly, however, these results are consistent with recent research (Eisenstein and Clark 2014, 2017) and support our contention that the separate dimensions of the psychological security scale have differing influence and as such, bias the security estimate. More specifically, the directional impact varies with personality trait providing support for the approach that considers the separate influence of each trait on the development of democratic values.

Although the results are not visually depicted in Figure 2, we also included paths in the model to assess the direct effects, if any, between religion and norm support and religion and political tolerance (see tables contained in Appendix B for a summary of direct effects).\(^\text{16}\) For religious commitment, its direct influence on both norm support and political tolerance was (.09, p=.06; and -.12, p=.001, respectively); the influence of doctrinal orthodoxy on norm support was a significant -.10 (p=.02). In contrast, the direct link between doctrinal orthodoxy and political tolerance was statistically insignificant (-.03). While the evidence supports a direct link between religion and norm support, the influence is marginal and countervailing. This finding confirms the opposing effects of religion uncovered by Bloom and Arikan (2012), wherein commitment reinforces norm support and religious beliefs undermine it. Simply put, the negligible direct influence of religious beliefs and/or practices indicate that the independent contribution of religion for explaining differences in democratic values is rather inconsequential (Eisenstein; Eisenstein and Clark 2014, 2017; Canetti-Nisim; Burge).

We now turn to the model that considers whether gender-distinct patterns on the dependent variables – democratic norm support and political tolerance – are magnified by the association between religion and psychological security (Figure 3).\(^\text{17}\) Among men, religious belief and behavior solely influence dogmatism while for women the two religion dimensions influence both dogmatism and self-esteem. Regardless of gender, doctrinal orthodoxy exerts a comparable, nonsignificant influence on dogmatism (.14 for men and .15 for women). On the other hand, doctrinal orthodoxy lowers self-esteem, but only among women is the coefficient statistically and substantively significant. Similarly, the effects of doctrinal orthodoxy on trust is also negative regardless of gender, but the effect is inconsequential.

The results for religious commitment (behavior) mirror these results. For both men and women, religious commitment increases dogmatism but the effect is greater among women. In addition, for women, religious commitment significantly reduces self-esteem (-.20), while for men the coefficient is statistically insignificant (-.09). Finally, religious commitment has no effect on trust for either sex. In short, men and women exhibit an increase in dogmatic-thinking as a consequence of their religious commitment and doctrinal beliefs, whereas the

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\(^\text{16}\) We also tested our model allowing religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy to covary; doing so did not alter the results obtained. Based on past research (Layman and Green; Eisenstein), we also tested our model with a path from doctrinal orthodoxy to religious commitment; doing so did not alter the results obtained.

\(^\text{17}\) For the sake of simplification, coefficient estimates for all control variables are left out of this presentation (available upon request).
sole distinctive effect of religion on gender differences in psychological security points to significantly lower self-esteem among women.

Figure 3. 1987 Data, Results by Gender

Considering the influence of psychological security on both norm support and political tolerance, the results for men and women are conflicting, as expected by Hypothesis 3. To begin, dogmatism has the most pronounced direct effect on support for democratic norms for both men (-.67) and women (-.68), but its influence on political tolerance is solely important for men (-.13). Consistent with earlier results, the influence of self-esteem and trust are countervailing, but the trust effect differs by gender only on support for democratic norms. The negative effect of trust on norm support reaches statistical significance for women only. However, the observed differences in the psychological security components are too minor to constitute a major explanation as a possible source of the gender gap (contradictory to H2). Although neither relationship is statistically significant, the estimates corroborate earlier findings that self-esteem contributes to democratic norm commitment but impedes tolerance judgments (see also Eisenstein and Clark 2014, 2017).

Religion-psychological security-democratic values results for men and women. Path coefficients that are bold indicate significance at p=.05 or better and all estimates reported are the standardized coefficients.
Finally, we also tested for the effect of gendered religious practices as predicted in Hypothesis 1 on support for democratic norms and values (these direct effect results appear in Appendix B table). The results from that analysis differ slightly for men and women. For men, the direct relationship between religious commitment to norm support fails to manifest, but the direct relationship between doctrinal orthodoxy and norm support is a statistically significant .08 (p=.02). By contrast, for women, the results indicate a direct and countervailing relationship between religious commitment (.15) and doctrinal orthodoxy (-.10) to norm support. Thus, for women, greater religious intensity and adherence to prayer and service attendance marginally increases support for democratic norms. At the same time, strong fundamentalist beliefs constrain democratic value support for women but positively influences norm support for men. The direct effect of religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy to political tolerance for men is statistically insignificant (-.08 and -.04, respectively). For women, religious commitment discourages political tolerance (-.18, p=.05) and doctrinal orthodoxy is unimportant for tolerant decisions.

In sum, several results stand out. In particular, we expected gendered religious practices to be reflected in women’s greater intolerance and lack of support for democratic norms (H1). Although gender differences emerge as a consequence of religious commitment and religious belief, the divergence is actually quite small – and, as a consequence, largely unimportant for explaining support for democratic values for men and women (see table in Appendix B containing direct effects estimates). However, it also was possible for the source of the gender gap in democratic values to be indirect, through its influence on psychological security (H2). Here again, we find the degree of overlap between women and men is much greater than the difference. After adjusting for the effects of demographic factors, the overall results (in Figure 3) show that apart from the religion and self-esteem linkage, there is relatively little difference in the association of doctrinal orthodoxy and religious commitment to psychological security by gender. At the same time, there were reasons to expect differential effects of the sub-components (dogmatism, self-esteem, and trust) on support for democratic values as it relates to gender (H3). Our baseline (all adults) results in Figure 2 validate the concerns about the common usage of the psychological security index comprised of dogmatism, trust, and self-esteem as a predictor of democratic values. Yet, the gender difference is marginal (in Figure 3) and, therefore, not likely a key source of an “opinion gap” between the sexes.

As a further test of gendered differences in the religion-psychological security-democratic values linkage by means of more contemporary data, we now turn to the survey of U.S. adults in 2005. The results shown in Figure 4 are for all respondents without gender distinction. All path coefficients that are bold indicate significance at .05 or better and all estimates reported are the standardized coefficients. As can be seen in Figure 4, religion – doctrinal orthodoxy and religious commitment – is largely inconsequential in the development of personality traits. In particular, with the exception of a slight increase in dogmatic tendencies (.16) associated with religious commitment, religious beliefs and practice do not account for differences in psychological security.

19 Please note a measure of the self-esteem concept is not available in this survey. As a result, the psychological security index consists of the social trust and dogmatism components.
These findings confirm that dogmatism is the most important dimension of the psychological security index, not only as a mediating variable but also on its own. Indeed, dogmatism is the most important predictor of norm support (−.74) and political tolerance (−.30). The model also reveals that higher levels of trust in others encourage tolerant judgments (.13), but differences in social trust are irrelevant for explaining norm support. Furthermore, while the results are not visually depicted in Figure 4 (see table in Appendix B), consistent with earlier models we include paths to estimate direct effects, if any, between religion to democratic norm support and political tolerance. The direct influence of religious commitment is a moderate increase in norm support (.10), but differences in the degree of religiosity are unrelated to the willingness to tolerate the expression of ideas or interests one opposes (−.01) – as is the influence of doctrinal orthodoxy on both norm support and political tolerance (.03 and −.04, respectively).

In Figure 5, we consider whether gender-distinct patterns manifest in the association between religion and psychological security in the development of democratic values. As with the results for all adults, we find that heightened church attendance, prayer, and religious guidance is significantly associated with dogmatic thinking (.14 for men and .19 for women, p<.05). Conversely, disparities in social trust as a consequence of religion are only found to appear among women so that greater religious commitment slightly improves trust in others but has no influence whatsoever on men. At the same time, doctrinal orthodoxy is not a predictor of either psychological security trait and does not appear to dramatically differ by gender.

It is worth pointing out that the above analyses are quite consistent with the 1987 results despite the exclusion of the self-esteem personality component. The demonstrated effect of the relationship – strength and direction – between religion and psychological security are generally consistent across the time periods. In this regard, the influence of religious beliefs and commitment on psychological security is rather unimpressive and hardly of the magnitude

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20 Empirical estimates of the relationship between religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy, psychological security (trust and dogmatism), and democratic values (i.e. democratic norm commitment and political tolerance) in 2005, controlling for other variables.
that one would predict to explain variations in the personality traits identified as useful for the development of democratic values. The findings also indicate that the influence of religion on social trust has been overrated in the literature. With the sole exception of a very slight increase among religiously committed females (.09), religion is unimportant for encouraging trust in others. The same can be said for the direct effect of religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy on norm support and political tolerance. The results in the Appendix B table show that the effect of religion on democratic values is somewhat greater for women. However, we find that the direct positive effect of religious commitment on the endorsement of democratic norms among all adults in 1987 and 2005 is largely driven by the religious habits among women – contrary to hypothesized expectations (H1). Though even here, the effect of religion to democratic values is considerably weak (e.g., .15 for women versus .09 for men in 1987) and offers little in the way of explaining gender gaps in the tolerance of divergent viewpoints or support for democratic norms.

Figure 5. 2005 Data, Results by Gender

In terms of the influence of psychological security on democratic values, we find differential effects among the security sub-components (as expected in H3) with dogmatism showing the most pronounced and negative influence on both norm support and tolerance.

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Trust} \rightarrow \text{Support for Norms of Democracy} \]

\[ \text{Doctrinal Orthodoxy} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

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\[ \text{Religious Commitment} \rightarrow \text{Dogmatism} \rightarrow \text{Political Tolerance} \]

\[ \text{Religious Committee...
Gendered Support for Democratic Values?

regardless of time period; and the magnitude of the effect varies slightly by gender (as expected in H2) but differs dramatically in accordance with the considered democratic value. To elaborate, the estimated effect of dogmatism is such that women are less likely to support democratic norms (−.80 for women as compared to −.68 for men) and also less likely to express tolerance for divergent viewpoints (−.42 for women versus −.21 for men). The influence of social trust also varies little by gender with the effect of trust in others moderately important for explaining differences in political tolerance but not norm support.

In general, the results here are relatively consistent with those based on the national sample of the American public in 1987. In fact, the estimated influence suggests that, as hypothesized in H3, the effect of the personality traits work in contrasting ways and the directional impact is contingent upon the outcome variable. While the impact of dogmatism on political tolerance and support for democratic norms is consistently negative, the influence of self-esteem and trust in others depends on the particular estimate of support for democratic values (norm support or political tolerance). Further, while the directional relationships between dogmatism, trust, and self-esteem and democratic values are consistent for men and women, in 2005 moderate gender differences appear in the influence of the security dimensions accounting for women’s greater intolerance and moderated commitment to democratic norms – consistent with H2. Yet, given the absence of the self-esteem measure, further research is needed to determine if the result reflects true gendered differences in democratic values support or are an artifact of the slight modeling modification. Finally, the direct influence of religion is relatively minor and offers little in the way of explaining gender gaps in democratic norms or political tolerance (contradictory to H1).

Discussion and Conclusions

Previous scholarship has highlighted the fact that women are less likely than men to “put up with” divergent viewpoints and are generally more intolerant. This study set out to investigate whether gender differences in the endorsement of both norm support and political tolerance was a consequence of differences in religion and psychological security. Unlike most other studies, we explored the independent role of religion and the separate traits of psychological security as both a mediating force and direct influence on gendered differences in democratic values. Comparative analysis of data from two national samples in 1987 and 2005 produce rather similar findings. From our results, several patterns emerge. To begin, based on the general model sampling all adults, the direct relationship between religious commitment and doctrinal orthodoxy to democratic norms and political tolerance, in general, failed to materialize. This is as we expected given the existing evidence (on this point, see Sullivan et al. 1982; Canetti-Nisim; Eisenstein; Burge; Eisenstein and Clark 2014, 2017). Rather, the results are completely consistent with the expectation that the influence of religion on support for democratic norms is largely the result of personality. The findings also highlight that dogmatism is the most important component part of the secure personality construct, not only as a mediating variable but also on its own. More importantly, these results, in large part, do not vary with gender.

Our results also establish that while a host of studies document the variability of religious practices of men and women in American society, the effect of religion on the development of personality traits is similar for men and women. In particular, the dominant influence of
gendered support for democratic values?

religious beliefs and religious commitment was in the promotion of dogmatic thinking, irrespective of gender. However, the effect was more pronounced among both men and women who participate more often in the practice of religion rather than an adherence to any particular religious teaching. Yet, the indication given the relatively small contribution of either religious dimension is that both doctrinal beliefs and religious practices are largely inconsequential for explaining differences in psychological security. Further, we find religion is relatively unimportant for explaining differences in political tolerance and democratic norms and this is true for men and women alike. Hence, while the literature has generally demonstrated a negative association between the various components of religion and levels of political tolerance, our results empirically verify that religion does not account for differences in democratic values – even taking into consideration one’s gender.

At the same time, we find justification for the theoretically important role of personality sources in the development of political tolerance and democratic norm support. Consistent with the extant literature, the personality construct is a strong predictor of tolerance and support for democratic norms. The most consistent finding links dogmatism to democratic values, but there is relatively little gender difference in the association – greater dogmatism encourages lower levels of tolerance and norm support among both men and women. However, as hypothesized, the separate components have differential effects, providing a ringing endorsement for disaggregating the psychological security index and estimating the individual effects of dogmatism, trust, and self-esteem. When the effect of the separate components of the security construct are partialed out, dogmatism is the “best” indicator and the countervailing influence of trust and self-esteem demonstrate that unless the trait measures are considered separately, we fail to capture the unique and disparate contributions of each. It is important to note that the lack of a self-esteem measure inhibits direct comparisons of the 1987 and 2005 surveys. However, the comparative results are instructive and provide a compelling case for concluding that the relationship between religion and support for democratic values is almost entirely indirect, suggesting that gender gaps in democratic values have more to do with differences in psychological security than religion-based explanations. Moreover, the results indicate that the merit of self-esteem and social trust as a determinant of democratic norms has been overrated in the literature. If anything, the results raise doubts as to the utility of employing these personality traits as a component part of the psychological security index.

In both the general models and analyses considering gender-distinct patterns, we observe very little differences in the religion-psychological security connection to democratic norm support or tolerance regardless of differences in sample, question wording, and time period. Overall, we believe these results are consistent with discussions concerning religion and psychological security in predicting support for democratic values and further support the claim that the influence of religion is mediated by psychological security. The important empirical contribution is we validate that the link between religion and democratic values is not direct, nor is the relationship contingent upon gender. In other words, it would be incorrect to assume that the gender disparity in religious practices discourage democratic norm support or political tolerance among women. Gender differences in religiosity do not make a direct, independent contribution – the mediating link is what matters for explaining democratic values gaps. With this in mind, we believe that by ruling out a gender-specific
connection to religion in the development of democratic values, as well as establishing which psychological security dimensions are most important, our study makes a unique contribution to the tolerance literature.

In sum, these findings do not fully support a negative association between religion and democratic values; rather, in and of itself, religion has a negligible impact on the endorsement of democratic values. The compelling evidence is that individuals are likely to adopt anti-democratic attitudes, not because their religion makes them so, but because psychological attributes – in particular, dogmatism – predisposes them toward intolerance or the rejection of democratic values. In contrast to the prevailing scholarly tendency to attribute negative social outcomes to religion, these results reveal that religion cannot be considered the sole, nor even a primary, factor impeding beliefs in democratic values or freedom. Rather, it would appear that anti-democratic values are a byproduct of one’s psychological attributes and is almost entirely unrelated to one’s religion or gender.

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Appendix A

Dependent Variables: Democratic Norm Support and Political Tolerance

Norms of Democracy (1987 data)
1. If someone is suspected of treason or other serious crimes, he should not be entitled to be released on bail.
2. When the country is in great danger we may have to force people to testify against themselves in court even if it violates their rights.
3. No matter what a person’s political beliefs are, he is entitled to the same legal rights and protections as anyone else.
4. Any person who hides behind the laws when he is questioned about his activities doesn’t deserve much consideration.
5. I believe in free speech for all, no matter what their values might be. Each item has five response categories ranging from agree strongly to disagree strongly.

Norms of Democracy (2005 data)
1. Society should not have to put up with those who have political ideas that are extremely different from the majority.
2. Free speech is just not worth it if it means that we have to put with danger to society of extremist political views.
3. What our country needs is one political party which will rule the country.
4. The party that gets the support of the majority ought not to have to share political power with the minority.
5. Our country would be better off if we just outlaw all political parties.

Political Tolerance (1987 data)
1. Members of the [subject selected least-liked group] should be banned from being President of the United States.
2. Members of the [subject selected least-liked group] should be allowed to teach in public schools.
3. The [subject selected least-liked group] should be outlawed.
4. Members of the [subject selected least-liked groups] should be allowed to make a speech in this city.
5. The [subject selected least-liked group] should have their phones tapped by our government.
6. The [subject selected least-liked group] should be allowed to hold public rallies in our city.

Political Tolerance (2005 data)
1. “Members of the [least liked group] should be allowed to make a speech in our community.”
2. “Members of the [least liked group] should be banned from running for public office.” (Reverse coded so that agreement indicates lower political tolerance)
3. “Members of the [least liked group] should be allowed to hold public rallies and demonstrations in our community.”

Psychological Security

Dogmatism (1987 and 2005 data)
1. Of all the different philosophies that exist in the world there is probably only one that is correct.
2. To compromise with our political opponents is dangerous because it usually leads to the betrayal of our side.
3. A group which tolerates too many differences of opinion among its own members cannot exist for long.
4. In the long run the best way to live is to pick friends and associates whose tastes and beliefs are the same as one’s own.
5. There are two kinds of people in this world: those who are for the truth and those who are against it.
6. Most of the ideas that get printed nowadays aren't worth the paper they are printed on.

Self-esteem (1987 data only; no measures for self-esteem in 2005)
1. I never try to do more than I can for fear of failure.
2. I think that in some ways I am really an unworthy person.
3. When I look back on it, I guess I really haven't gotten as much out of life as I had once hoped.
4. I often feel I have done something wrong or evil.
5. People today have forgotten how to feel properly ashamed of themselves.

Trust (1987 and 2005 data)
1. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?
2. Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful, or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves?
3. Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?

Religion

Religious Commitment items (1987 data)
Frequency of Attendance is measured by asking: How often do you attend religious services?
1. Less than once a year
2. Once a year
3. Several times a year
4. Once a month
5. 2-3 times a month
6. Nearly every week
7. Every week
8. More than once a week

Frequency of Personal Prayer is measured by asking: About how often do you pray?
1. Less than once a week
2. Once a week
3. Several Times a week
4. Once a day
5. Several times a day

Religious Salience is measured by asking: “Would you call yourself a strong [religious preference] or not a very strong [religious preference]? (1987 data)
1. No Religion
2. Not Very Strong
3. Somewhat Strong
4. Strong

Religious Commitment items (2005 data)

Frequency of Attendance is measured by asking: Apart from special occasions such as weddings and funerals, about how often do you attend religious services nowadays?
1. Never
2. Less often (than special holy days)
3. Only on special holy days
4. At least once a month
5. Once a week
6. More than once a week
7. Every day

Religious Salience is measured by asking: “How religious would you say you are?”

0. Not religious at all 1 through 9 10. Very Religious

Doctrinal Orthodoxy item (1987 data)
The Biblical literalism question asked respondents: Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?

1. The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts.
2. The Bible is the word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word.
3. The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.

Doctrinal Orthodoxy item (2005 data)
Would you call yourself born again?

1. No 2. Yes

Political Conservatism
This concept is measured by two items. The first is political ideology ranging from extremely liberal (coded as 1) to extremely conservative (coded as 7).** The second is party affiliation ranging from strong Democrat (coded 1) to strong Republican (coded 7).

The remaining variables, education, age, and income, are standard demographic variables.
Appendix B

Table 1. Direct Effects of Doctrinal Orthodoxy and Religious Commitment ON

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* p<.05 or less; a p<.06; b p<.10

Table 2. Direct Effects of Dogmatism, Self-Esteem, and Faith-in-People ON

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