

**Title:** Gender and Religiosity in Adolescent Sexual Self-Efficacy

**Author:** Brianna McCaslin

**Abstract:**

Religion and sexuality are two spheres of the social world which are highly gendered. Gendered narratives can strongly influence both religious and sexual identities, particularly in adolescence when interpersonal scripts are becoming crystallized. When exploring adolescence, previous research has found religion to have a protective effect decreasing their risk behaviors, particularly sexual risk behaviors. Religion is also positively associated with self-esteem and self-efficacy. However, if the domain of self-efficacy is sexual practices, does religion, an institution traditionally prohibitive of adolescent sexual activity, still have an empowering effect? Does the impact of religion differ based on gender? Using a nationally representative sample of American adolescents, this paper explores the questions.

I find that sexual self-efficacy is strongly influenced by gender and religiosity, though different dimensions of sexual self-efficacy are differentially impacted. Generally women report higher levels of efficacy, but this varies by type of religiosity. Private religiosity is more helpful for adolescent women's sexual self-efficacy than public religiosity. Understanding which pieces of being religious help or hinder sexual self-efficacy, and by extension sexual health practices, education and intervention efforts by health professionals can be improved and created in a way respectful of religious traditions.

**Bio:**

Brianna McCaslin is a third-year PhD student in the department of Sociology, a Gender Studies minor, an affiliate of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society, and a Notebaert Fellow at the University of Notre Dame. Her research interests are at the intersections of gender, religion, sexuality and culture at both individual and organizational levels. Some of her current research topics include religious identity negotiation around contraceptive decision making of practicing Catholic women and concepts of self and stigma through representations of women's bodies in the online body positivity movement.