

HEALERS OF OUR TIME: WOMEN, FAITH, AND JUSTICE A MAPPING REPORT



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The initial research was subsequently enlarged by the Candler School of Theology at Emory University. Led by Dr. Mary Elizabeth Moore,

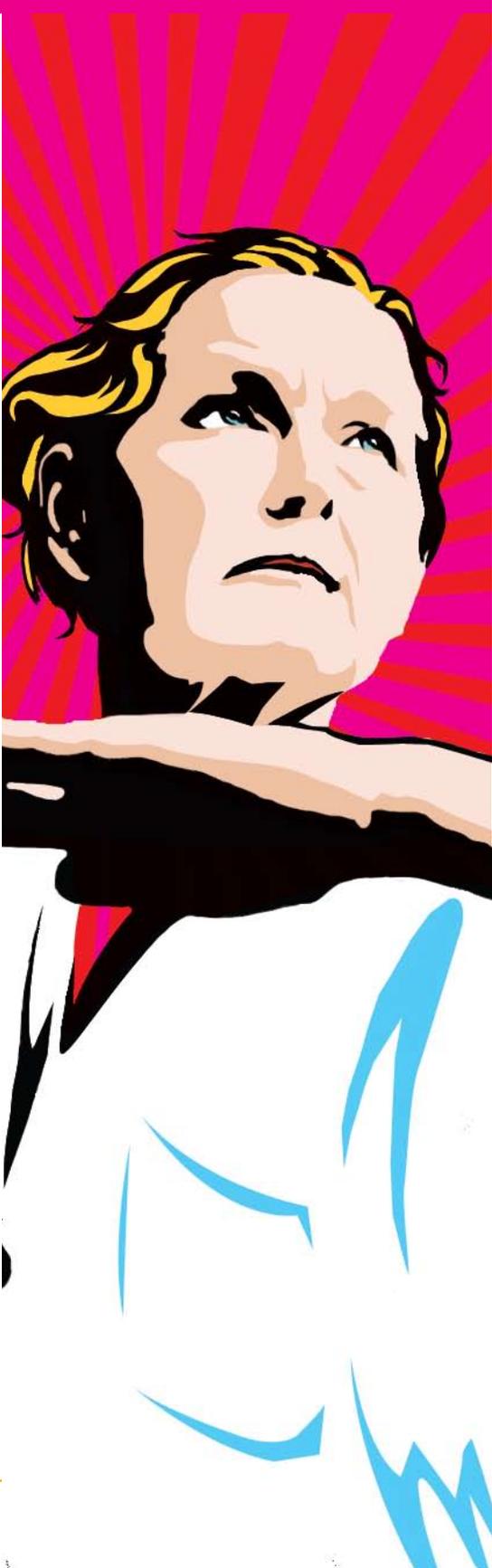
Professor and Director of Women in Theology and Ministry, and Hellena Moon, doctoral student in the Graduate Division of Religion, the research team extended the original pool of women's organizations and expanded the academic research review. They also revised and edited the original report. Team members included Michelle Hall, Ayanna Abi-Kyles, Josey Bridges, and Anne Hardison-Moody.

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Overview

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Healers of Our Time: Women, Faith, and Justice

OVERVIEW

As the twenty-first century unfolds, women of diverse faiths claim authority as healing agents of change

in a world that aches for justice and peace. Though much of their work is done in religious institutions,

it rings with a radical authority that many secular feminists would celebrate.

The progressive funding movement already knows something about secular feminist activists.

Now, this study seeks to illuminate the exciting and multifaceted work of faith-based women activists.



When The Sister Fund began talking about “faith and feminism” in 1990, it was a head-turning idea. Some thought faith and feminism were mutually exclusive. The phrase seemed novel to many of our colleagues. In reality, however, the synergy between faith and feminism is centuries old. It emerged the first time a woman, fueled by her belief in a greater good, rose up to champion the work of justice and peace in her world. It exists all around us today, but is seldom actually named, much less celebrated. Thus, The Sister Fund commissioned this landmark study to both name and begin to map the dynamic interplay of faith and feminism as it currently exists in our culture. Our belief was that mapping this dynamic could help raise consciousness about its power to effect change and healing, as well as help focus attention on the impact it is making in the culture.

In the spring of 2006, The Sister Fund commissioned the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) to conduct a mapping study of women who work for gender justice within a religious framework. Extensions were subsequently provided by the Candler School of Theology’s Women in Theology and Ministry program at Emory University.

We have grouped our research findings on women, faith, and justice into three topic areas:

- social activism,
- academic research, and
- popular culture (including politics and the media).

The goals of this study are to:

- **Map religious women’s progressive gender-focused activism in social justice movements, in academia, and in popular culture in the United States, assessing issues as well as ideas for new initiatives and resources**
- **Raise the visibility of women’s activism and research in diverse contexts where religion and gender justice intersect**
- **Identify ways to build stronger movements for social change by promoting greater alliances between faith-based and secular feminists**
- **Encourage philanthropists, religious leaders, secular feminists, and social justice activists to provide greater support for, and collaboration with, faith-based women activists**

This study, **Healers of Our Times: Women, Faith, and Justice**, is phase one of what we hope will become a larger, more comprehensive effort. Research for the H.O.T. study included an online questionnaire and oral histories, along with an extensive review of women’s writings, organizations, and media presence.

Why Study Women and Faith?

Faith is important to American women. In the United States, 93% of women—or over 106 million—say they believe in God (Harris Interactive 2003), **and 82% of women say that religion is an important part of their lives** (IWPR 2007). Almost 85 million women belong to congregations and over 33 million are active members of those congregations (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001; U.S. Department of Commerce 2006).

Women’s equality and empowerment are also important to American women. Over 77% of women strongly support the idea of women’s full equality in industry, business, and politics. Of these women, 85% say that the issue of women’s equal roles is extremely, or very, important to them (IWPR 2007).

Given these two realities, it is not surprising, therefore, that **the two concerns overlap. Among women in the United States who say that religion is important to their lives, over 75% strongly support women’s full equality** (IWPR 2007). Nonetheless, few visible conversations discuss the intersection of women and faith in the United States. This study focuses on progressive Christian, Jewish, and Muslim women who have an enormous concentration of potential social and political power, but that power has not been networked or resourced sufficiently. Nor has there been enough support for dialogue to explore common concerns between and among faith-based women and women in secular contexts. *What would the world look like if these women further united in action? What if women came together to fight for women’s advancement and empowerment—whether motivated by faith, a concern for justice, a hope for equality, or all of the above? What would happen if faith and feminism came together in the continuing movements for justice?*

This study is a step toward answering these questions.

Context and Implications of the H.O.T. Study

While the purpose of this study is to map *recent* developments in the intersecting fields we refer to as faith and feminism in the United States, it bears mentioning that there are substantial historical precedents for this work. For instance, a large number of early American suffragists, including Matilda Joslyn Gage, Lucinda Mott, and Susan B. Anthony, and abolitionists such as Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, to name only a few, addressed and incorporated their Christian faith into their strategies for gender and racial justice. In spite of discriminations and oppressions emanating from religious authorities, such women maintained some degree of personal faith, in fact drawing courage and inspiration from their religious convictions and (then-considered) radical re-interpretations of scriptures that bespoke of a God who supported justice and equality.

Words and Controversies

The terms *religion* and *secular* present challenges within public discourse. In this study, we use *religion* and *religious* to designate a community's or individual's participation in traditions, institutions, or worldviews that focus on a transcendent Being, beings, or values. We refer to *secular* as explicitly nonreligious institutions, values, or practices. These definitions may overlap at times: some people may claim to be both religious and secular, depending on the context; some may be active and self-conscious about their religious or secular orientation and others not, etc.

Both *faith* and *feminism* are terms that are diversely understood and therefore subject to controversies. For the purposes of this study, we define *faith* as engagement in the diverse dimensions of spiritual life, usually through formal religious communities and practices, but also through other centers of meaning. We define *feminism* as a view of the world that is grounded in women's experience and is committed to building justice for women, enhancing their agency—that is, their ability to effect change—and enriching the larger society with their perspectives and contributions.

An additional complexity surrounding the use of the word *feminism* is that the feminist movement and ideologies in the United States are perceived as having a biased history: one that was a largely white, middle-class women's movement. It should be noted that women of diverse cultural, racial, and class backgrounds were in fact a part of the inception of the core women's movement. And, there have been subsequent significant expansions. African American women have developed *womanist* and *black feminist* movements. Latina women have developed *mujerista* movements.

Asian and Pacific Island women have identified their perspectives as Asian, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Pacific Islander, and so forth. The terms themselves have diverse historical trajectories; thus, we seek in this study to be inclusive by using general terms such as *women's movements*, *women's organizing*, or *women activists*, to denote explicitly pro-women movements for change or the women involved in them. At times, we use multiple terms in order to underscore this diversity, though no list is fully inclusive. Needed in the future are inclusive strategies for change that acknowledge and welcome difference. Hopefully this study helps point the way.

In spite of these complexities, we use *faith* and *feminism* to describe an emerging field of interest in which diverse faith perspectives and women's empowerment fuel each other in dynamic ways for the benefit of all.

Another term used in this study has inherent controversies—*progressive*. Many identify *progressivism* with activist, liberative movements for social change, particularly in relation to women. However, the term's public connotations as a liberal or liberation movement is problematic for some women who, although working for gender justice, do not identify themselves as “progressive,” especially when they are affiliated with religious denominations that are actually considered traditional or conservative. In order to attend to women involved in religious and social activism who identify themselves with other terms, we use multiple words—such as *women's activism* or *women's work on behalf of justice for women*—to maintain a broad scope. As with *faith* and *feminism*, no one term can be adequate for everyone, but we do seek to avoid the narrowest limits of language.

“*I love God and I am a woman*”
— survey respondent

“*As a person of faith, I feel that I am called to work for the equality of women.*”
— survey respondent

In her famous “Ain’t I a Woman?” speech in 1851, Sojourner Truth said:

Then that little man in black there, he says women can’t have as much rights as men, ’cause Christ wasn’t a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them.

And yet, over the years, feminist movements have become increasingly skeptical of religion, resisting what is seen as a patriarchal and oppressive force. The following excerpt from The Network of Spiritual Progressives’ Core Vision describes this sort of tension, and some of its unintended consequences:

Many of the secular [social justice] movements that exist in the world today actually have deep spiritual underpinnings, but often they are themselves unaware of those foundations, unable or unwilling to articulate them and sometimes even holding a knee-jerk antagonism to explicit spiritual or religious language. This antagonism limits their effectiveness, though it derives from legitimate anger at the way that the language of spirituality and religion has been sometimes used to justify war, oppression, sexism, racism, homophobia, ecological indifference, or insensitivity to the suffering of the poor and the homeless of the world. . . . [This] gap has allowed the Right to present itself as the force that cares about spiritual issues. And the Left’s failure to address spirituality has led many to believe their hunger for a larger framework of meaning and purpose must be separated from their involvement with social transformation.

The challenge today, and in this study, is to make clear both historical and contemporary examples of the natural synergy that exists between religious belief and gender equality, with a complex understanding of our pluralistic context. We hope to discover the potential power of faith and religion to empower women, expand their opportunities and contributions, and advance their well-being and that of the world.

Though we have sought to be comprehensive in identifying trends, strengths, and gaps in this field, our results are not exhaustive. Limitations include (1) a focus largely on the United States, with very limited research on other parts of the world; (2) a focus on the three largest U.S. religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—with limited research in other traditions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha’ism, indigenous religions, and neopaganism, etc.; and (3) a skewed response to our online Faith and Feminism Survey (largely white, Christian women), which we supplemented by initiating more outreach to diverse faiths and cultures, via literature research and oral histories.

Overall, the findings of the Healers of Our Time: Women, Faith, and Justice mapping study are remarkable. Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other women of faith across the United States are amplifying their voices, insisting on religious and cultural transformation. From diverse religious backgrounds, these women critique social and intellectual patterns and share a commitment to social change, frequently with serious opposition from authorities and with meager support. The women (and men) involved in religious gender justice activism admit many obstacles, yet they are fueled by both faith and a passionate determination to carry on the work for social change.

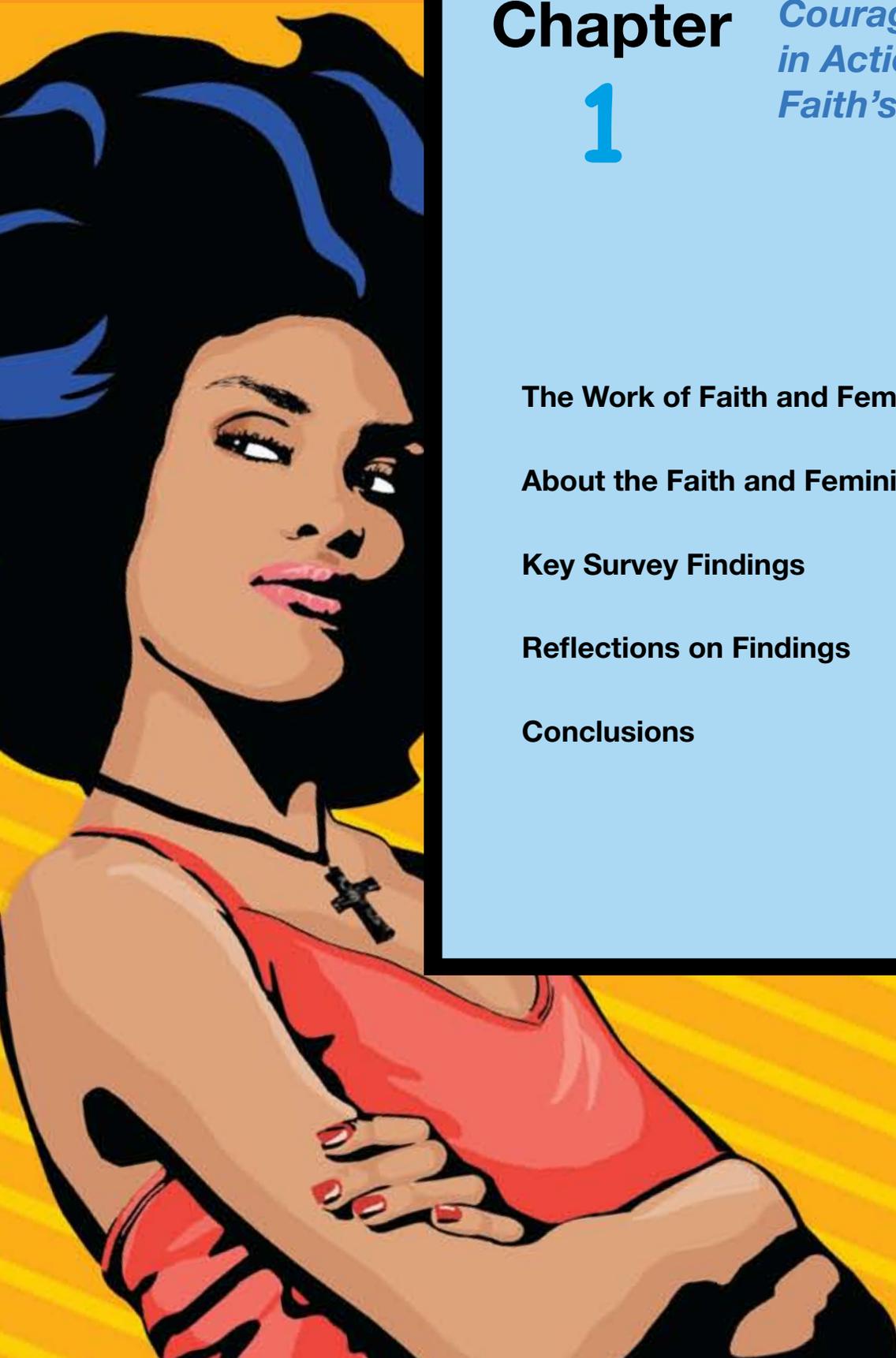
As The Network of Spiritual Progressives organization eloquently states in its Core Vision statement, “We hope to have the courage—in the tradition of the Jewish prophets and interpreters of the Torah, in the spirit of Jesus and the early Christian communities of resistance to Rome, and in the spirit of Muhammad—to speak truth to power.”

“*The truth is that we are all already sisters and brothers. We have only to recognize that truth and allow ourselves to be guided by its profound universal energy.*”

“*We are meant to live in unity. We are meant to be interdependent. We are meant to be responsible for each other.*”

“*Faith and feminism can work together.*”

—excerpts from *Faith and Feminism: A Holy Alliance* by Helen LaKelly Hunt



Chapter

1

Courage and Passion in Action: Women of Faith's Activism

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CHAPTER 1

Courage and Passion in Action: Women of Faith's Activism

Women whose faith informs their progressive activism are claiming a place of power in and between two clearly established worlds: religious institutions and secular organizations. At this intersection lies the groundwork for a more just and nurturing society, where all human beings can thrive.

Faith-inspired women activists bring great passion to their work, and they are thoughtful about why they do it. They routinely tap into spiritual resources to help sustain the difficult work of social change. Though they often exist on shoestring budgets, their work has a lasting impact that far exceeds their resource base. Working largely on the fringes of society, they address many of our entrenched social challenges.

This chapter provides a snapshot of faith-fueled women's progressive activism in the United States. Based largely on an original survey conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), the chapter is further supplemented by additional research (methodology outlined on pp 50-53). In this chapter you will find the following: types of activism survey respondents pursue, motivations for their work, and organizations and partnerships in which respondents pursue their work. We have also included the survey participants' demographic profiles as well

as their challenges, accomplishments, and recommendations.

This glimpse into our respondents' world offers a clear, resounding message: women of faith are often on the cutting edge of social justice work. All they need to further magnify the already considerable impact they have on the world is more support—in terms of partnerships and funding.

The Work of Faith and Feminism

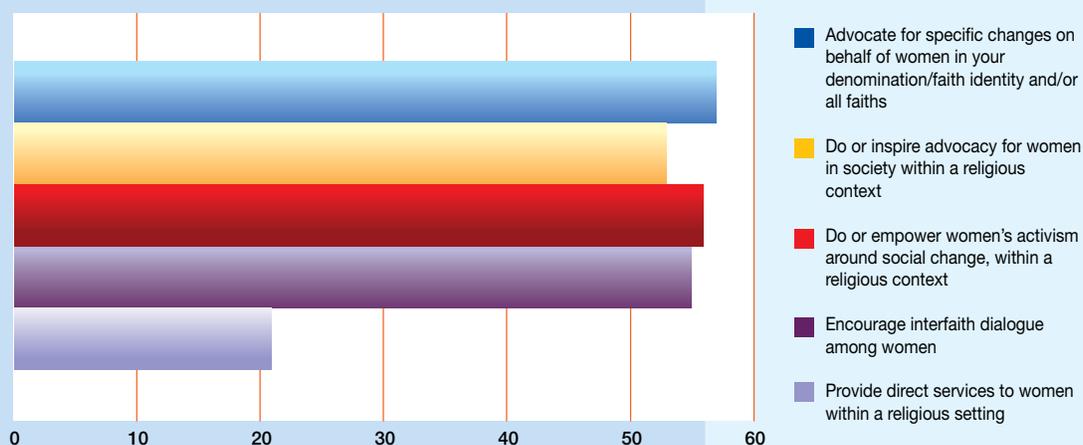
Faith and Feminism Survey respondents are women who actively take up the work of faith-inspired social justice activism. **More than half:**

- 1. Advocate for specific changes on behalf of women within their own denomination, faith identity, or all faiths**
- 2. Do or inspire advocacy for women in society, within a religious context**
- 3. Do or empower women's activism around social change in general (i.e., peace, environment, economic security, etc.), within a religious context**
- 4. Encourage interfaith dialogue among women**

And, **one in five provides direct services to women in crisis within religious settings.** To get an overall sense of the type of activities within this emerging field we call faith and feminism, we asked survey respondents to describe the substance and goals of their faith-related social justice activism, specifically as it relates to their work with women. Respondents could choose more than one option to describe their work, and most did so.

This section summarizes survey respondents' activities and identifies:

- Various types of activism with which the respondents are involved
- One highlighted organization engaging in each type of activism
- A sampling of other organizations occupied with each type of activism

Fig. 1 Types of Activism Related to Faith and Feminism

Percent of respondents choosing each answer

Source: Faith and Feminism Survey, 2006 See appendix 1

About the Faith and Feminism Survey

During the late spring and summer of 2006, IWPR distributed the online questionnaire to approximately 6,000 individuals living in the United States. The goal was twofold: (1) to uncover the work of women's activism steeped in issues of religion and women's empowerment; and (2) to get a better sense of the professional and personal motivations, inspirations, struggles, and resources of the activists.

A total of 548 women responded to the questionnaire. Of those, 348 completed every question. No men responded.

The survey has limitations. Because it was sent over the Internet, it is clearly biased toward women who have spare time and access to technology. Because participants were self-selected—one could choose to respond to the questionnaire, or not—we should also assume some interest in faith and gender justice among them. Additionally, a large number of our respondents were identified through the electronic mailing lists of IWPR, The Sister Fund, or other faith- or feminist-related organizations, making their interest in the subject matter even more likely. Furthermore, the first question, which asked whether or not respondents were “involved in any activities engaging issues of faith and feminism,” acted as a screen. Roughly half of the respondents

answered yes and completed the rest of the questionnaire. We believe these factors may explain why our respondents reflect a middle- to upper-class, educated, and predominantly white Christian female demographic. Our ideal would have been to obtain responses from a more diverse group of women working in secular and faith-based organizations. And, in the future, we would be interested in undertaking a survey of similar dynamic work taking place internationally.

For more detailed information on survey methodology, see Appendix 1. We also provide a detailed breakdown of survey respondent demographics later in this chapter.

Other Sources of Information for Chapter 1

We relied upon several sources to outline the features of faith-based women's social justice activism. In addition to the online questionnaire, we conducted short interviews with activist women, obtained oral histories, and ran online searches and scans of organizational Web sites. We drew from previous research by IWPR and other analysts on activism in this area (see Appendix 2), along with knowledge based on grantee organizations of The Sister Fund.

1. **57%** of survey respondents are women who actively advocate for specific changes on behalf of women within their denomination, faith identity, or all faiths.

Women in this category advance liturgy, symbolism, and the interpretation of scripture. They do so by introducing inclusive and expansive language and new forms of worship. Focusing on how specific women's issues are treated within religious contexts, they promote women-friendly approaches to issues such as violence, sexuality, and reproductive rights.

These women also empower female leaders of faith. Insisting that women's lives be interwoven throughout religious experience, they craft sermons and expand religious education. They work toward women's ordination and support fuller career opportunities for women clergy, rabbis, and religious scholars. They provide support groups and professional networking opportunities online, in person, and at local and national conferences for women who aspire to greater responsibilities. They organize opportunities for women to share their thoughts and strategies with one another, including protests, campaigns, conferences, and public speaking events.

Because women often find fewer restrictions on their religious social justice activism outside the contexts of organized religion, this type of gender justice work is most often done in religiously based, officially independent organizations (Caiazza 2005).

Limited experience in hearing a female preaching voice slowed my progress in finding my own voice.

— survey respondent

WATER

www.hers.com/water

WATER is an organization that **advocates for change on behalf of women within their own denomination, faith identity, or all faiths.**

Founded in 1983 by feminist theologian and ethicist Mary Hunt, and feminist liturgist and psychotherapist Diann Neu, The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) epitomizes the work of faith and feminism. WATER unites scholars, ministers, activists, and others who are struggling for justice from a feminist religious perspective. Together, these partners develop what they refer to on their Web site as "inclusive religious and social communities" and focus "feminist faith" to bring about social justice.

WATER offers multiple opportunities for people who want to get involved in the work of faith and gender justice. The members sponsor workshops and conferences, provide free access to their growing resource center in feminist theology, create feminist rituals and liturgies, and offer lectures on issues ranging from *Feminist Theo-ethics* to the *Globalization of Justice*. They are also developing a mentoring program for emerging scholars of women and religion.

An additional sampling of Muslim, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant organizations and programs that exemplify this category include the following: Anglican Women's Empowerment, the Drisha Institute for Jewish Education, Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance, Las Hermanas, Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAATM), Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity (WISE Initiative), Women's Ordination Conference, Women-Church Convergence and the newly recreated Woman's Ministries program at the National Council of Churches USA.

[For sample listing of activist organizations, with contact information, see Appendix 3, pp. 54.]

2. **53%** of survey respondents are women who do or inspire advocacy work for women in society within a religious context.

Women in this category strive to achieve women's and girl's equal rights in areas such as health, family, economic security, and sexual education. As one respondent explains, "I was a victim of domestic violence for 34 years. Now it is time to work for the liberation of all women." Many of these women are fueled by a moral conviction grounded in scriptural interpretation and belief in religious duty.

These women are also committed to cracking down on violence and abuse. "People in the church tend to be in denial about spouse and child abuse; it can't happen here," one woman writes. "But when they are convinced, they become powerful advocates." They also champion equal pay and the end of women's homelessness. They address issues such as the combined racism and sexism experienced by women of color, and much more. These are women involved in cutting-edge social justice work.

A few examples of organizations in this category of advocacy activism are Balm in Gilead, The Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute, and the FaithTrust Institute. These organizations, working with and through faith communities,

challenge issues in society such as women and HIV/AIDS, cervical cancer, domestic violence, and sexual abuse.

[For sample listing of activist organizations, with contact information, see Appendix 3, pp. 54.]

3. **56%** of survey respondents are women who do or empower women's activism around social change in general (i.e. peace, environment, economy, etc.) within a religious context.

Women in this category passionately work to give women greater say and presence in public life. Active in changing policies and practices, they focus on issues as wide-ranging as environmentalism, peace, and militarism, worker justice, racism, and poverty. As to the connection between faith and politics, one respondent suggests, "There are many women whose ideology comes from their faith, but politics does not 'speak' to them." When issues and objectives are framed within the context of their faith, it can motivate such women to action. Such women promote living wage policies, expand housing opportunities, and work to release international political

I care deeply for others on this planet... I refuse to accept injustice.

— survey respondent

NTOSAKE

www.gamaliel.org/Ntosake

NTOSAKE is a program representing women who, within a religious context, are **doing or inspiring advocacy for women in society** as a whole.

Ntosake is an outgrowth of Gamaliel, an organization based in Chicago, which has been developing community organizers and recruiting civic activists in South Africa and the United States for over 20 years. In its early years, Gamaliel's work hadn't specifically addressed women activists. Ten years ago, women working with Gamaliel voiced their frustration about the lack of attention paid to women

and their issues. They took it upon themselves to develop an alternative model: Ntosake, a South African word meaning "she who walks with lions and carries her own things."

Ntosake is a leadership training program for female activists that brings together women from a variety of backgrounds, empowering them to be leaders with a strong public voice. Program participants are encouraged to tap into the emotional core of their community activism, acknowledging that elements of their private lives affect their public experience. They rethink concepts such as faith, power, and outrage, as their trainers explain that even an element such as anger, which many women consider destructive and unholy, can be a

powerful source of inspiration and sustenance for battling injustice. Ntosake also teaches its participants to define and articulate their own self-interest, arguing that only through embracing their own self-interested power can women truly manifest God in the world.

Thanks to Ntosake, women's leadership has grown tremendously in Gamaliel, moving women to claim programmatic and other leadership roles within the organization. And, Ntosake graduates are making external strides for women at every level outside of Gamaliel. With recent local efforts, government contracts have been secured for women in construction and transportation jobs.

prisoners. They fight to make their organizations more intergenerational, LGBT-friendly (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered), and accepting of spirituality and liberation theology.

Some of these change agents have also developed programs specifically designed to mobilize women and encourage their leadership on social issues. These programs often provide training, workshops, and other supports. As one of our respondents writes, “There are many eager women out there longing to be asked for their opinion . . . wanting to be asked to take action.”

Many activist groups promote women’s work for social change on issues that are not exclusive to women’s issues. For example, Women’s Action for New Directions trains women of faith to use political means to reduce military spending and violence through its Faith Seeking Peace project. Evangelicals for Social Action; Faith in Public Life; NETWORK—a Catholic National Social Justice Lobby; The Network of Spiritual Progressives; and Sojourners/Call to Action mobilize progressive people of faith to take action regarding pressing social, political, and economic issues. Counting many women among their membership, they focus on issues such as poverty, war, and racism.

[For sample listing of activist organizations, with contact information, see Appendix 3, pp. 54.]

I believe spirituality and faith provide a unique base from which to build a more sustainable movement for social change.

— survey respondent

4. **55%** of survey respondents are women who encourage interfaith dialogue among women.

For some women in this category, such dialogue simply means discussion among friends within a book club or other interfaith group. For others, it means teaching classes or workshops that compare religious traditions, or convening conferences that draw together a wide variety of divergent individuals to promote understanding and global peace.

Many Muslim respondents involved in interfaith dialogue are interested in challenging stereotypes, such as the belief that Muslim women accept their subordinate role in religious and cultural life, or the idea that they tolerate violence and terrorism. One Muslim woman wrote, “[We must] show the world that we are not passive.” Being Muslim in our post-9/11 world means insisting that Islam does not condone violence and terrorism; instead, Muslim women seek to offer a new image of the American Islamic community (Caiazza 2005). Interfaith dialogues have been an important strategy in these efforts.

A number of other organizations create opportunities for interfaith dialogue as well. Auburn Theological Seminary hosts programs for diverse women of faith through its Women’s Multifaith Program. And, in September 2007, The Women’s Interfaith Initiatives After 9/11 brought together scholars and activists from more than a dozen

FAITH IN PLACE (FiP)

www.faithinplace.org

FAITH IN PLACE (FiP) represents women within a religious context **doing or empowering women’s activism around social change** in general.

FiP works with over 200 congregations, including Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Zoroastrian, Baha’i, and Unitarian. The congregations are united by FiP’s inspiring belief that there are “two great responsibilities common to all faiths: to love one another and to care for

Creation,” according to the group’s Web site. Together, the congregations learn how to promote clean energy and sustainable farming in the state of Illinois.

FiP members are committed to staffing their organization with those they represent—and they represent a lot of people. Because they consistently place the needs of immigrants and people from smaller U.S. religions at the core of their mission and programs, they call on

representatives from these groups to help with program development. For instance, they began a consumer cooperative for Muslims, providing ecologically sustainable and economically fair meat production that meets the dietary requirements of Islam. Muslim representatives joined in this effort.

FiP’s entire staff, and most of its volunteers, are women. What’s more, these women represent various classes, religions, and every major racial and ethnic group identified in our questionnaire, including substantial numbers of Latinas and Arab Americans.

FAITH, FEMINISM AND PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE

www.wfnet.org

The FAITH, FEMINISM AND PHILANTHROPY INITIATIVE **encourages interfaith dialogue among women.** It was coordinated by the Dallas Women's Foundation, with a grant from the Ruth Ray Hunt Memorial. It was administered by the Women's Funding Network in collaboration with four other women's funds across the country: Atlanta Women's Foundation, New York Women's Foundation, Women's Foundation of Colorado, and Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts.

In December of 2006 the initiative began, as 45 women from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and secular women's organizations from across the United States came together for a unique "National Conversation on Women, Faith and Philanthropy."

Together, they asked questions such as: "Who are we . . . As feminists? As women of faith? As philanthropists? As all or none of these?"

"What is the urgency for collaboration? Why women? Why now?" and

"What difference does the work we do make for women and girls? What would make our work-together-more effective?"

Through intense engagement, these women discovered that it was both "possible and necessary to speak about faith openly in the context of the women's movement and the philanthropic community." They explored mutual values—such as a commitment to giving and a concern for women enduring violence and poverty, and shared common tensions—especially regarding language, stereotypes, and issues around

money. For many women who participated, it was the first time they had ever shared so deeply with others of different faiths. And it was a unique experience for all to combine women's interfaith dialogue with the topic of philanthropy.

These collaborative partners encourage local women to organize similar conversations. In their May 2006 National Conversation Monograph, they provide a full report of the above conversation and tools for women to start similar conversations in their own communities.

The *Women, Faith & Philanthropy National Conversation Monograph* can be downloaded at www.wfnet.org/resources. And the final report, "Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy: Finding Common Ground," can be found at www.wfnet.org/resource/report/women-faith-philanthropy.

organizations. Sponsored by The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study and convened by The Pluralism Project at Harvard University, this initiative included organizations such as The Interfaith Alliance, Muslim Women's League, S.A.R.A.H. (Spiritual and Religious Alliance for Hope), Women's Interfaith Solutions for Dialogue and Outreach in MetroDetroit (WISDOM), and Women Transcending Boundaries (WTB), among others.

[For sample listing of activist organizations, with contact information, see Appendix 3, pp. 54.]

5. **21%** of survey respondents are women who provide direct services to women in crisis within religious settings.

Women in this category serve women and girls dealing with issues such as unplanned pregnancies, domestic violence, and poverty and homelessness. Counseling is provided for struggles involving alcohol and drug abuse, abortion, and challenges in, or transitioning out of, incarceration. Our respondents organize services, edu-

cation and multicultural training programs for immigrant women and low-income single mothers. They build homes, organize leadership training for college students, and offer educational programs for middle-school children on sex and body image.

Of those offering direct services, a high number identify themselves as evangelical Christian, Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu. Though these women do not always work in religious institutions, their faith is still a motivating factor. As one of our faith-based respondents in a secular organization writes, "Both clients and providers have to address issues of faith every day. It's always part of what people talk about."

Survey findings in this category were surprising. Only 21% of respondents indicated involvement in direct service. And yet, of the five forms of activism accounted for in the survey, this category is probably much more widely represented in the larger community of women of faith activists.

Religious women of all major faith traditions have created programs across the United States that provide relief services for women in need. Hour Children, Mercy Center, Nazareth Housing, Transitional Housing BARN, and Visitation House Ministries are but a handful of U.S.-based

My faith calls me to do work on behalf of those with little power in the system. My salvation/ healing is caught up with theirs.

— survey respondent

programs begun and run by Catholic nuns alone. Other Christian-based programs include the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Rainbow Center, Redeemed Outreach Ministries, Women's Advocate Ministry, Dorothy's Place, A Sacred Place, and WOMB. A few Muslim and Jewish examples include the Hamdard Center, Turning Point, Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development, and the Shalom Task Force, to name a few.

Though these organizations and programs don't always have an advocacy component, they always seek to empower women. Many are often discreet about their public advertising; they primarily make themselves known through social service agencies and hot lines, appropriate houses of worship, and word of mouth. These programs, often under the radar screen, provide invaluable services to women in need and their families. And they do so in ways that enable these women to keep their dignity intact.

[For sample listing of activist organizations, with contact information, see Appendix 3, pp. 54.]

Wisdom in Unity: Gathering Diverse Voices and Experiences

The preceding section focused on those Faith and Feminism Survey responses that revealed various intersections between women's activism and their faith-based inspiration. Meanwhile, the following section offers an overview of the extent to which our survey respondents desire more connection and collaboration. In particular, respondents emphasized that bridges need to be built between religious activists and secular activists, connections need to be created between academics and non-academics, and widespread diversity is imperative. In other words, our respondents do not only want to speak with, or about, individuals representing all religions, races, ethnicities, ages, and genders, but also want to work together with them to create positive change.

Building Bridges Between Religious and Secular Activists

Few activists from women's secular organizations responded to the questionnaire. This suggests that they do not see themselves in the cross section of faith and feminism. In general, there

BACKLINE

www.yourbackline.org

BACKLINE provides **direct services to women in crisis.**

Backline is a secular organization that its Web site says is dedicated to "addressing the broad range of experiences and emotions surrounding pregnancy, parenting, adoption and abortion." Based in Portland, Oregon, Backline created a toll-free national Talk Line in November of 2004. Talk Line volunteers are committed to "addressing the individual and diverse realities" of callers, with an "openness, honesty, and the deepest respect for reproductive justice."

"If [women] are coming from, or distressed about, a religious stance," writes one of our survey respondents, "it is important to try to hear them, especially if they see their actions as clashing with their beliefs, as many abortion patients do."

A religious volunteer for Backline agrees. She explains that she is "able to reach those who may be having a crisis of faith, or who have spiritual convictions regarding the choices they make around pregnancy" because of her own religious experience. While Backline itself is not religious, this volunteer serves as a crucial resource for women of faith who access its services.

have not been close bonds between religious and secular feminists in recent years (Hunt 2004). Women of faith say they feel unwelcome in secular feminist organizations. Similarly, secular feminists express aversions to religion, based on its patriarchal roots, histories, and current practices. They are concerned that religious women are not truly committed to feminist goals (Caiazza 2005). As one respondent writes, "Religion and faith have harmed and hurt a lot of people, including women, and so many still feel those wounds."

Many religious women activists acknowledge that religion can be oppressive to women. Rather than giving up one or the other, however, they seek to reconcile their faith with their commitment to gender justice. This is a struggle that secular feminists may not understand, and it leaves many women of faith feeling caught between religious and feminist communities. One respondent expressed her frustrated commitment to "creating an understanding that

the two aren't mutually exclusive. Both issues could be strengthened if the groups understood they could work together for each others' benefits."

Our work is listed on conservative religious Web sites or lists as anti-religious. Then on the other hand, some of our work is thought of as not 'serious' by practitioners... because we take religion and faith as a starting point.

— survey respondent

And Yet, Partnerships Do Exist

Three-quarters of our respondents' organizations have developed some kind of partnership with other groups. However, less than one in five were between secular and religious groups. Of the secular-religious collaborations, about one-half focused on reproductive rights. These partnerships brought secular groups, like NARAL Pro-Choice America and the National Organization for Women, together with groups like the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice and Catholics for Choice. The remainder of these partnerships were split equally between women's issues and social justice in general.

Women involved in these partnerships bring their religious perspectives into their nonreligious, nonprofit work. They do so because faith is important to the women they serve, especially when dealing with issues such as abortion and domestic violence.

One religious woman doing this work writes, "I needed an abortion when I was 17, and my rabbi was the last person on earth whom I could have turned to. . . . [Now] as a rabbi, as a Jew, as a mother, [and] as a woman, I cannot stand idly by and watch as one small portion of our population seeks to impose its narrow view of religion and morality on the rest of the country. . . . It is a moral imperative that we stand up to protect women's choices and women's lives."

The Working Group on Women's Public Vision is an intentional partnership between women

leaders in religious social justice movements and secular feminist organizers. Founded by IWPR, this group generates concrete ways to promote women's values and vision. Pushing beyond current "religious" and "secular" approaches, they have been holding forums and publishing research on their findings.

Several survey respondents and oral history project participants attribute their learning of one another to connections they've made at special events. Conferences and public events provide great potential for networking and collaboration between women from faith and secular backgrounds. The annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women meetings, Omega Institute's Women and Power and Enlightened Power annual conferences, and Sacred Circles biennial conferences at the Washington National Cathedral are all events that spiritually empower communities of women.

The Breakthrough Summit, sponsored by the Women, Faith, Development Alliance (WFDA), and held at the Washington National Cathedral in April 2008, was a landmark event. WFDA launched a campaign to support the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals to end the world's most severe poverty by focusing resources specifically on women and girls. To this end, they have mobilized their 80-plus member organizations to increase gender-based funding and support. Hopefully, WFDA will inspire other such partnerships between religious and secular women's organizations to synergistically promote the rights and welfare of women and girls.

[For additional listings of conferences, both activist and academic, please see Appendices 3 "Faith and Feminism-Related Conferences and Events," pp.66.]

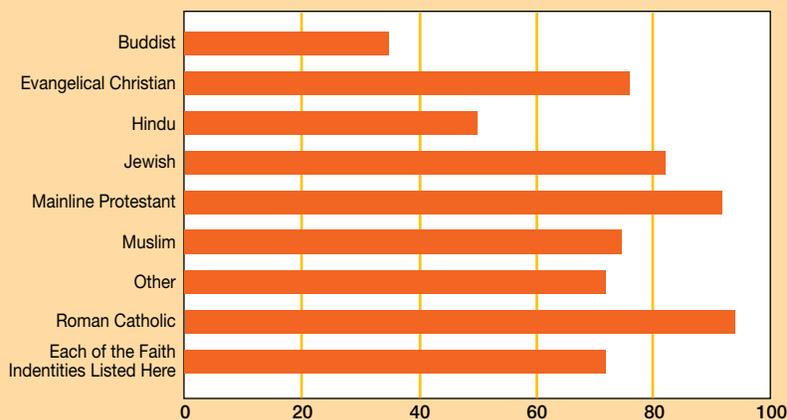
Building Religious Diversity

Approximately 95% of our survey respondents were women of faith. Of this group, at least 79% were from one of the Abrahamic traditions (Jewish, Muslim, or Christian) and 60% were specifically Christian. These numbers are somewhat more diverse than those for the United States as a whole.

According to the American Religious Identification Survey, 86% of U.S. citizens claim some kind of religious identity. Of these, 78.3% identify with one of the Abrahamic traditions and 76.5% identify as specifically Christian (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001).

Fig. 2 Religious Diversity in Organizations Combining Faith and Feminism

The Percentage of Organizations Surveyed That Work with Individuals Representing the Following Faith Identities



Source: Faith and Feminism Survey, 2006 See appendix 1

Among our respondents, 90% work with mainline Protestant and/or Catholic women. Of those, 75% work with evangelical Christian women. Meanwhile, 75% of the organizations surveyed work with Islamic women and another 75% work with women who do not have religious affiliations. Approximately 83% work with Jewish women, 50% work with Hindus and 35% work with Buddhists.

Many of our survey respondents describe their efforts to expand the religious diversity of their programs, particularly to include Muslims.

Among the different types of activism reported, the only notable pattern of difference is that respondents from evangelical Christian, Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu backgrounds were more likely to do direct-service work than Jewish or other Christian denominational respondents. These findings may intersect with race, but we can only speculate from our data. For example, the self-identified evangelical Christians may have included a number of African American women in Black churches; these churches are historically active in providing services to their communities (Dudley and Roozen 2001). Among Islamic, Buddhist, and Hindu women, the high representation in direct services may reflect the growing number of immigrant women affiliated with these faiths. Immigrants often need extra services. Among the Muslim women, the high percentage may result from interfaith programs

that are increasingly intentional about including Muslims since September 11, 2001.

Building Race and Ethnic Diversity

Our respondents were 83% white, 6% African American, 4% Latina, 2% Asian American, 4% Native American, and 1% Arab American. These numbers are less diverse overall than the U.S. population, which is 69% non-Hispanic white, 13% Hispanic, 12% African American, 4% Asian American, 0.7% Native American, and .42% Arab descent (U.S. Department of Commerce 2003, 2004a, 2004b).

Our survey showed that groups with larger proportions of women of color were usually dominated by one background. For example, rather than representing multiple races and ethnicities, a group's makeup is more likely to be predominately African American or Hispanic. Certainly, geographic segregation in the United States plays a role in this phenomenon.

The most diverse groups provide direct service for women in need. Given racial and ethnic disparities in the United States, those in need are more likely to be women of color. In turn, the least diverse groups do advocacy work.

Building Age Diversity

Very few young women—women under the age of 30—responded to our survey. This reflects our finding that older leadership and aging membership dominate the majority of prominent secular and faith-based activist organizations. The Muslim community provides an exception to this rule, where young women seem to be blending their faith and activism to take up the fight.

“We are an older population of women,” one respondent writes. “We struggle to reach out to a younger constituency to carry on the ministry.” Another woman shares her commitment to “supporting and expanding the outreach to young women who are interested in advocacy, questioning the faith system and yet longing for a connection with God.”

Building Gender Diversity

No men responded to our survey.

“We need support from men in the church,” one respondent writes, and adds, “their verbal agreement and action.” Agreeing, another respondent says the work she is most proud of is what she does to create “more forums and dialogues that also involve men and educate men about the issues that women feel are important.”

Building Bridges Between Academics and Activists

“Studying feminist theology and liberation theology in college saved me from leaving the church and religion altogether,” one respondent writes.

Indeed, academics and nonacademics alike frequently publish and organize around faith and feminism. Unfortunately, cross-pollination is rare between various group’s research and events. Yale Divinity School’s Teaching Scholars, *Changing Models: A Consultation with Women Activists in the Academy*, held in May 2007, is an exception to this rule.

The consultation gathered women scholars of religion, each of whom was seeking to combine their action for social change with their academic profession. The participants, approximately 30 women teaching in universities or theological schools in the United States, were prepared to share old models and to create new models for educational transformation. This was a fruitful opportunity to work together as an intergenerational, interracial, and interfaith group to share transformative strategies.

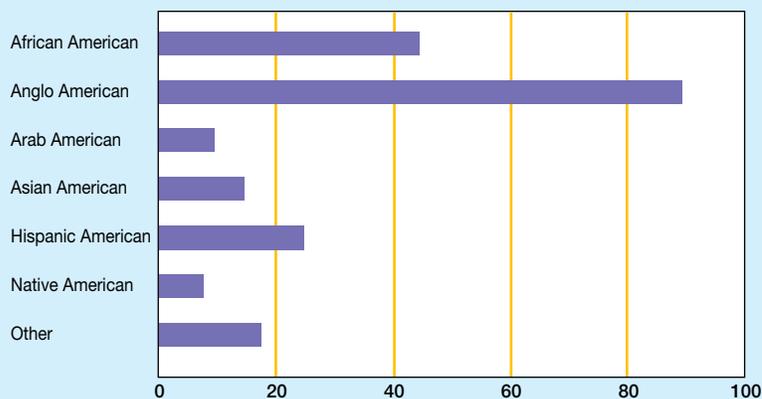
[See Appendix 3, “Faith and Feminism-Related Conferences and Events,” pp.66.]

Bottom Line: We’re Not Going to Do It Without Diversity

When women join together across lines of race, class, and religion, the resulting exchanges empower not only women from all backgrounds (O’Neill 1994, 2007; Caiazza 2006), but move our society forward as a whole. In light of our survey and previous research, we suggest that the current lack of diversity impedes women’s

Fig. 3 Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Organizations
Combining Faith and Feminism

Answer to the question, “What proportion of women you work with identify with each of the following racial or ethnic groups?”



Percentage of survey respondents who answered “Over 10%.” Based on individual approximation.
Source: Faith and Feminism Survey, 2006 See appendix 1

long-term work for social change.

As is the case in women’s organizing in general, the findings from the survey, oral histories, and research suggest the need for more inclusive partnership building. This will require deliberate and responsive thinking about strategies, language, and agendas that can inspire women with both religious and secular approaches to public life. Only by supporting, encouraging, and developing more inclusive models for women’s movements can we build effective, responsive, and transformative new movements for change.

“(It is vital to see diverse peoples) as integrated and teaching about the intersection of race, gender, class, and sexuality justice. So that we stand not only at the edges of each other’s struggles but enter into them.”

— survey respondent



The survey resulted in three primary findings regarding women's experiences working at the intersection between faith and gender equality:

1. Respondents are most proud of being forces of religious, social, and political change; *however*,
2. One in four respondents feels that raising women's issues within religious organizations is a *frequent problem* for them; and
3. One in five respondents reports struggles with funding issues.

1. Respondents' accomplishments emphasize **advocacy for religious, social, and political diversity.**

The questionnaire asked respondents: "What is the most innovative change or important movement you have been involved in?" The most frequently cited accomplishment is causing religious change for women; then causing political, social, or economic change for women (for example, getting more women into political office or other places of leadership, and achieving gains for women in economics, health care, and other areas of life). Still others mention their involvement in setting up shelters or community centers to serve women, while others mention women-focused philanthropy. Leading their religious institutions to embrace a variety of social justice movements is deeply satisfying for respondents. Examples of these include incorporating a focus on liberation theology, becoming more open and affirming to members of all sexual orientations, and creating a stronger sense of intergenerational community. Respondents also mention progress made within their local communities and internationally, such as advocating for peace, endorsing environmental care, promoting living wage policies, getting political prisoners released internationally, and expanding housing opportunities. Younger women tend to cite as a source of pride their work promoting diversity.

Many women are proud of their work in bridging religion and women's organizing. One is

delighted with her work "demystifying feminism for Mormon women and demystifying Mormon women for feminists." Another saw her contributions to feminist economics as her most important work, but has replaced that with "working on feminist, Buddhist, and Christian 'process' thought and social/economic change." Still another's most innovative work is "being part of a discussion group started by a Muslim women lawyers group. They bring a scholarly and activist perspective which is not found in many forums."

Participants in the Emory University oral history project gave similar responses regarding those accomplishments that meant the most to them, including enhancing relationships and quality of life in their communities; empowering the oppressed or undervalued people in their communities; building more inclusive communities (regarding ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation); changing policies and attitudes toward the disenfranchised; and strengthening women's leadership in their religious communities and other institutions. Several participants also uplifted the central value of helping others bring out the best in themselves. Though generational differences appeared in the questionnaire, the older participants also emphasize their efforts to increase diversity in women's movements.

2. One in four survey respondents reported that **raising women's issues within religious organizations was a frequent problem** for them.

Without question, our respondents continue to face significant resistance to their personal, moral, and religious authority. "Ministry in general is simply a boy's club," one writes. Another adds, "I am labeled as 'disharmonious,' " because she supports women's issues.

Resistance to women's empowerment takes explicit and implicit forms. Sometimes, women's concerns are subtly resisted by a religious organization. One woman writes that her greatest difficulty is "dealing with males . . . who feel our ministry is damaging at worst or something to be tolerated at best." Still another insists that women must continue to fight for "the slow but

The roots of sexist and misogynist thinking and action are watered and lovingly tended (to) by our religious establishments.

— survey respondent

steady dismantling of patriarchy.”

“Since I work for and am funded by the denomination,” another writes, “our work is controversial and often attacked by the right wing of the church. We are sometimes criticized, and if not careful, could be censured by the larger church.”

“This week, for example,” adds another, “the speaker (an elderly bishop) for our upcoming meeting was urged by the archbishop of this diocese not to honor his agreement to speak (to our women’s group). He complied.”

The theme of sexism in houses of worship spans the religious traditions represented in our survey, as is illustrated by respondents who write:

“It is VERY VERY difficult to be a feminist in a Christian setting. The intersection of feminism and faith, while it makes sense to me, scares many women and men who are devout in their spiritual practices.”

“[The Imams] are whispering that I must be a lesbian,” one Muslim responded.

“As a Roman Catholic feminist, it has been very difficult (and now even more so) to navigate the hierarchical waters of a fraternity.”

As we’ve indicated before, our respondents more often pursue their faith-inspired activist work *outside* official religious institutions. One participant in the Faith, Feminism, and Philanthropy dialogue reports that, of everything she has done on the frontier of faith and feminism, she is most proud of the fact that she stepped “outside of the church hierarchy to work through women’s foundations instead.”

“Sometimes I lose heart,” another woman writes, “more with members of my own faith than with folks outside the [faith] tradition.”

This phenomenon goes beyond religious institutions. Women’s perspectives are frequently ignored in secular work, even when their organizations are dedicated to issues that affect more women than men, such as poverty or income security. A respondent writes that one of her organization’s main problems is encouraging the men to “[listen] to us when we talk about [our] needs.” Another adds, “In social-change organizations, women’s specific concerns are often overlooked. I wish that our organization would focus more on women’s issues.”

3. One in five survey respondents reported **difficulty in securing adequate funding**.

The funding for work at the nexus of religion and women has two serious problems: religious funders are often unsupportive of feminism, and women’s and secular funders in general are often suspicious of religion.

Given the challenges women working in religious institutions are up against, it seems no coincidence that they named funding as their biggest challenge.

This theme was repeated again and again in our survey. When asked to describe their struggles within the work of faith and feminism, they wrote:

“FUNDING!”

“Education for all people AND FUNDING.”

“Funding. Period.”

As one woman writes, “Liberal denominations believe the work is complete. Conservative denominations won’t support you. Feminist foundations do not accept grant requests from religious groups. Corporations are hesitant to fund activities that challenge people’s religious beliefs.”

“Internationally, there has been a reluctance to fund organizations working with women religious leaders, especially in Muslim countries.” Another adds, “. . . as most funders see the world through Western eyes, and are deeply suspicious that progress on these issues can happen.”

Given these constraints, where does this leave women working so hard and creating such positive change in our society?

Reflections on Findings

There is institutional religious support, at least in some degree, for each of the five forms of activism profiled in figure 1, (p. 13). Many religious institutions encourage women’s involvement in interfaith dialogue and rally for women’s activism around issues of social justice in general. For instance, Catholic charities, Protestant welfare agencies, and Jewish local and regional federations have been known to support women’s advancement in varying degrees for many years.

The personal attacks do not bother me. It’s the lack of funding for this important work that is a constant worry.

— survey respondent

“When you respond to what you have been called to do on earth it is not work; it is rewarding. . . . Helping others is a healing salve to my pain.”

— survey respondent

Most mainline Protestant denominations developed women’s societies in the mid-nineteenth century. Women provide leadership in these societies and work on behalf of women worldwide. In the past fifty years these same denominations developed offices and structures for clergy women. These lay and clergy structures, sometimes merged and sometimes separate, have been responsible for encouraging women in leadership, addressing ecclesial issues (such as sexual harassment or discrimination), and advocating for women in the church, politics, and other social institutions. Many Jewish denominations have women’s sections as well, creating structures to support women rabbis and other women in leadership. While Islam does not have an organized hierarchical structure to provide a home for such work, U.S.-based Muslim women have created agencies and informal movements to advocate for women on such issues as domestic violence.

Even with this advancement, the strongest focus of assistance from religious institutions is on direct support for disadvantaged women. This may be viewed in light of a commitment to address the high level of poverty and hardship among women in the United States—a commitment made by a great number of religious institutions across the country. However, it may also be seen as a way for religious institutions to support the women in their congregation

and community while avoiding issues deemed controversial—such as reproductive health and rights, women’s roles in family and the economy, and women’s religious leadership.

This brings us to a key finding of the study—women who fuel their feminist activism with their faith are in need of greater support, financially and otherwise. Religious institutions could more actively advocate and support women who do this work. Churches, mosques, and synagogues could collaborate with secular women’s groups and philanthropic programs to further justice for women.

Because religious bodies are less likely to support more radical advocacy for women, philanthropy can play a particularly important role. Nonprofits can insist that more institutions and organizations with religious approaches adopt gender justice within their work. Philanthropists can also encourage secular groups to pay more attention to issues of religion, faith, and gender.

An example of such a philanthropic effort, profiled on page 17, is the Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy Initiative. From 2005 to 2008, this project expanded funding to include religious feminist activism. The experience and results were truly groundbreaking for all involved, and have been documented in the initiative’s report, “Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy: Finding Common Ground.”

Conclusions

Women’s faith-based social justice activism is powerfully alive. Women across the United States are passionately working for change on the front lines of religious institutions and secular organizations in a variety of ways. Their work often shares the common focus of promoting the perspectives and well-being of women in religion and in society as a whole.

Faith-fueled women activists have established models and best practices. They are building a strong infrastructure for women’s movements, offering a solid foundation upon which new generations of women can build. They have developed ways to redress issues that many governmental organizations in this country are still trying to define.

With all the incredible work being done, women

of faith still face many difficulties in their activism. Many religious institutions remain resistant to women’s leadership and advocacy. Suspicions continue between “religious” and “secular” groups and across lines of religion, race, ethnicity, and class. Funding is woefully inadequate and is stated by many to be their number one problem.

Rather than succumbing to despair or negativity, however, women immersed in the field of faith and feminism are committed to increasing collaboration. They recognize that much still needs to be done to ensure the level of diversity within this emerging movement that will ultimately move us forward as a society. With greater recognition and financial support, they could expand their existing networks and create innovative strategies for social change the likes of which have not yet been seen.



Chapter 2

Like Water Carving Away Rock: Women and Religion in Academic Discourse

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CHAPTER 2

Like Water Carving Away Rock: Women and Religion in Academic Discourse

In the past five decades, research on women and religion has grown exponentially, sparking scholarly interest across disciplines. Women scholars in theology, religious studies, and other fields of the humanities and social sciences have critiqued religious values, traditions, and structures; developed woman-centered theologies; analyzed religion's role in shaping women's lives; and highlighted women's unique perspectives. Their work contributes to understanding the relationships among the many facets of women's existence and identity. Like water carving away rock, these women scholars are changing the faces of academic and religious institutions by bringing voice and recognition to women's

Women have contributed much in the past five decades of research and writing to the field studies of women and religion.

These pioneering women scholars have provided:

- Critique and reconstruction of patriarchal religious beliefs and practices
- Rediscovery and reclamation of more egalitarian or women-centered traditions
- Increased involvement among women of diverse ethnicities and social locations, thereby revolutionizing traditional understandings of how theology is done and what it contributes to understanding mystery and enhancing the quality of life
- Exploration of religion's influence on women's public and private lives, especially their social roles and their opportunities to exercise moral and political authority

perspectives and contributions.

In this chapter you will find an overview of academic research on women and religion. We point to major trends in the last fifty years, revealing some of the academic contributions women have made to transforming what had once been a bastion of male-dominated thought and authority. It also assesses areas where this work could be strengthened, particularly in building better connections across disciplines and with activists and women outside of academia.

The chapter findings are based on an overview of published research on women and religion and a survey of current research and scholarly activities through interviews and Web sites. This study was originally undertaken by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR), with supplemental research provided by the Women in Theology and Ministry program at the Candler School of Theology. The first section of the chapter reviews work in feminist theology and religious studies, followed by an overview of work on women and religion in the social sciences and humanities. The third section outlines formal and informal opportunities for academic collaboration, including conferences, campus and degree programs, and networks. The chapter concludes with questions for further dialogue. Appendix 4 of this study contains additional academic references, and Appendix 6 contains a list of scholars cited in this chapter.

- Creation of academic networks and a few networks with nonacademic communities of women

This review highlights areas of ongoing concern for women in academia. For instance:

- Research on women and religion is largely decentralized, parsed into subfields of larger disciplines, and still somewhat marginalized
- Much academic research is written for specialized audiences and is not available in language and venues that reach mainstream American life
- Conversations about race, class, and other differences have only begun to shape more complex and inclusive frameworks for religion and theology
- Collaborations are only now emerging among university programs in women's studies, theology, and religion, and are even less fully connected to activist women's movements



Advancements in Women's Religious Thought

Almost 50 years ago, Valerie Saiving wrote, "I am a student of theology; I am also a woman" (Saiving 1960). Her words, which preceded the second-wave women's movement, challenged the idea that theology is an objective search for religious truth. Rather, Saiving argued, it is shaped by each theologian's perspective. Because theology had been almost exclusively written by men, she concluded that it did not reflect universal human experience, but male reflections on the Divine. During the next several years, many others pushed the edges of their respective traditions, often with essays and lectures that were later published in books (Daly 1968; Goldberg 1983, 1993; Morton 1986; Heschel 1987; Christ 1988). These scholars echoed the premise of a book that preceded them by more than sixty years. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's *The Woman's Bible: A Classic Feminist Perspective*, published in 1895 and 1898, provided a book-by-book examination of the Bible, placing its events in historical context, interpreting passages as both allegory and fact, and comparing them with myths of other cultures, to argue that women needed to bring their own perspectives to religious values and traditions.

Stanton and the women who followed her identified holes in the fields of theology and religion. Stanton's 1892 address to the U.S. Congressional Committee of the Judiciary, entitled "The Solitude of Self," in which she linked existential dimensions of women's spirituality to women's political advancement, arguably laid an even more far-reaching foundation for the work of empowered women of faith. Scholars have since sought to identify other holes, fill the holes they have found, and reshape theology and religion in more radical ways. Increasingly, they have also recognized the influence of race, sexuality, sexual orientation, age, land of birth, class, colonialism, and other factors.

We acknowledge at the outset that we have focused largely on U.S. scholarship, pointing only briefly to scholarship in other parts of the world as a signal to the permeability of global boundaries. We have also been less comprehensive in reviewing religious studies than in reviewing theological-ethical genres of scholarship within theistic

religious traditions. We have sought, however, to illumine the breadth of the religious studies field, acknowledging the complex, often contentious, relationships between theology and religious studies. For some scholars, these two genres represent different and incompatible fields. For others, they are different but complementary. For still others, theology is one subarea of religious studies. In general, theology and ethics provide critical inquiry into the worldviews, values, and practices that people consider important within a particular religious tradition and in that tradition's relations with the religious and social complexities of the larger society. Religious studies more typically focus on empirical observations, historical and textual analyses, comparative study, and critical inquiry into religious communities and traditions as they exist in relation to one another and the larger society. The lines between these two forms of inquiry are rarely sharp, but the accents are different. Whatever the similarities and differences, feminists across the fields have enriched public understanding of women's roles and experiences as they are shaped, reflected (or not reflected), oppressed, or liberated in relation to religion and its many expressions.

Many academic women see this work as promoting women's agency, equality, and well-being. In our Faith and Feminism Survey, many academics described their work in education and research as a strategy to advance social change. One writes that her teaching exposes students to "a feminist critique of religion [that] respects their religious tradition . . . yet allows them to question, critique, and move through selecting their own spiritual path." The work of feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, and Asian women scholars parallels the activism described in the previous section; however, academic work has not influenced women's lived experience and social movements as much as it could. It remains relatively unknown to most women, including many religious women and feminist organizers. This lack of understanding is reinforced by the cultural dichotomizing of religion and secularity and by stereotypes about academia and women's movements. Women outside of academic and activist circles are often suspicious of both, and women in activist movements are often skeptical of religion. We thus sketch the contours of scholarship in the past four decades and identify

challenges that the field still faces. With thousands of volumes and research projects published since 1970, we can only present illustrative research here, offering a bit more detail in Appendix 6. The following chapter highlights a number of developments among academics working in this arena.

CRITIQUE INFLUENCES of patriarchy, kyriarchy, and colonialism on religion

Feminist theologies have provided compelling critiques of the oppression and exclusion of women in religious teachings, traditions, and institutions. These oppressions are attributed to patriarchy (systems of men's dominance over women); kyriarchy (systems of dominance based on social class, gender, and age, as in the Greco-Roman system of the ancient Mediterranean world); and colonialism (systems of dominance inherited from one nation's rule over another). In the early years of the field, especially within Christianity and Judaism, women critiqued these dominance systems to argue for the inclusion of women's voices and experiences in theology (Daly 1968; Ruether 1983, 2005; Heschel 1987; Schüssler Fiorenza 1992, 1993). Research in this vein "articulated and legitimated the feelings of many women that something was wrong with religion's view of them" (Christ and Plaskow 1992), encouraging women to look beyond the traditional image of women as morally inferior to men (Appendix 4, no. 1). The "something wrong" was greatly expanded with the emergence of womanist, black feminist, *mujerista*, and Asian women's theologies, which engaged the interplay of race, class, and gender that many women experience (Chung 1990). They also highlighted the ingenuity of women in navigating these oppressions (Weems 1988; Williams 1993; Cannon 1995; Isasi-Díaz 1996, 2004; West 1999; Kwok 2005). Since 1970, the dialogue has also become a truly global one, and the analysis of colonialism's influence on religious traditions has brought new critiques to light (Dube 2000). Recently published acclaimed works, *The Torah: A Women's Commentary* (Eskenazi and Weiss 2007), *The Sublime Quran* (Bahktiar 2007), and *Eve's Bible: A Woman's Guide to the Old Testament* (Forth 2008) reinterpret texts from a woman's perspective and offer global implications.

A key theme in this work is that religion not

only oppresses women in formal religious structures, but it also has been used to create, justify, and sustain male dominance and the hegemony of an elite class or nation in all aspects of life. Christianity was the basis for the Western division of labor between public and private life. The division still shapes popular understandings of men's and women's roles in the United States. It has been used to ascribe a lower status to women and to justify women's exclusion from public life. Indeed, we still see it in controversies over women's roles in the labor force, politics, and other spheres (Schüssler Fiorenza 1993; Buchanan 1997; Caiazza 2005). One discovers similar divisions of roles and public-private realms in Islam (Metcalf 1990; Cooke 2000b). The first stage of women's theologies and religious studies did not provide inter-religious, interethnic, or international nuance, nor did it offer strategies for moving beyond patriarchy and colonialism. Once religionists began to offer alternative worldviews and religious practices, they found themselves variously revising and reinterpreting religion, creating new traditions, or abandoning religion altogether.

RECONSTRUCT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS in relation to women's lives, reshaping beliefs, rituals, stories, and practices to be life-giving for women and for all of creation

Many feminist theologians feel that, despite the sexist histories and consequences of most religions, the search for meaning through ritual, symbol, and relationship with the transcendent is central to human life. As a result, religions must be "reformed or reconstructed to support the full human dignity of women" (Christ and Plaskow 1992). Religious traditions thus need to be reshaped to be inclusive and liberating for women (Trible 1984, 1986; Williams 1993; Broner and Nimrod 1994; Appendix 4, no. 2). This often requires philosophical probing and creative reconstruction of ancient traditions in dialogue with one another (Keller 2003, 2004). One finds this trend arising frequently from women, but also from young people and men; indeed, such changes are part of the ordinary processes of cultural and religious transmission, but they are accented by women as they seek to make a place for themselves within their religious communities (Russell 1979, 1987; Ruether

1986; Cooke and Lawrence 2005). Such searching is often done communally, as when women share their stories and seek the wisdom within them (Cannon et al. 2003; Brock et al. 2007), or when women and men do this together (Grob, Gordon, and Hassan 1991). Some more recent communal work engages women across faith traditions in dialogical reconstruction of traditions (Trible and Russell 2006).

Notable in this reconstructive work are fresh explorations by young scholars. Consider a recent panel at the American Academy of Religion, engaging womanist theory in relation to women's bodies in diverse cultures (Appendix 4 no. 2). Consider also the fresh questions and insights in Bischoff and Gaffron's (2005) collection of young women's narratives and theological reflections; these women are seeking and creating new forms of feminism.

In 1993, there was a global theological colloquium of clergy, lay people, and academics, which featured liturgy and language that "reimagined" God through a feminine lens using biblical imagery. The maelstrom that followed this well-attended conference included the closing of denominational women's desks and offices and a withdrawal of funding and support for denominational women's work. It was later labeled The Backlash and was reflective of a broader religious movement toward conservatism and male-centered leadership in the community, church, and home. The colloquium was sponsored by the Twin Cities Metropolitan Church Commission, which drew 2,200 women and men from 27 countries.

RECOVER RELIGIOUS INSIGHTS AND PRACTICES that preceded or counteracted the dominant patriarchal traditions

Some theologians argue that, instead of revising traditions by looking solely to the future, religion can also be reshaped from the past. Consider, for example, Margaret Miles' (2006b) return to Augustine to recover an accent on the body and sensuality, albeit revised from Augustine's view, or her historical reviews of female nakedness and the breasts (2006a, 2008). Using historical approaches, theologians have sometimes argued that their religious traditions began with

egalitarian goals and practices, but that women's subordination emerged from misguided interpretations within patriarchal historical contexts. In the United States, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim theologians often use this approach (Pagels 1981; Levine 1991, 2001, 2002; Schüssler Fiorenza 1992; Frymer-Kensky 1993; Hassan 2004; Manji 2005; Appendix 4, no. 3). Some seek to recover and reinterpret textual traditions (Weems 1988; Newsom and Ringe 1992; Schüssler Fiorenza 1992; Reid 1996; Barlas 2002; De Troyer et al. 2003; Frymer-Kensky 2004; Trible and Russell 2006). Others recover spiritual and mystical traditions (Jantzen 1988, 1995, 1999; Madigan 1998; Soelle 2001; Eskenazi and Weiss 2007). Still others delve into traditions that have been outside of a tradition's mainstream (Pagels 1981, 2003). The recovery process, for most of these authors, is intimately connected to the processes of critique and reconstruction.

*In addition to writing and teaching woman-friendly interpretations, feminist theologians are joining efforts across racial and religious lines to share insights on traditional textual traditions. At the American Academy of Religion conference in 2006, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim feminist biblical scholars convened a panel featuring various facets of the story and significance of Hagar, mother of Abraham's first son. It garnered a great deal of interest at the conference and a book was published featuring its offerings entitled *Hagar, Sarah, and their Children: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*.*

DEVELOP NEW WOMEN'S SPIRITUALITIES drawing upon women's experience and ancient traditions

Another approach to women-centered spiritualities is to abandon traditional faith identities, usually Christianity, Judaism, and Islam in the United States. In 1971, Mary Daly became the first woman to give a sermon from the pulpit of Harvard University's Memorial Church. With this sermon, she led hundreds of women in a walk-out from the church and patriarchal religion (Daly 1968; Gross 1993; Appendix 4, no. 4).

In some cases, theologians who leave traditional religion pursue spirituality through new forms of ritual and practice, based on women's experiences rather than on traditionally recognized sources, such as religious texts or traditional rituals. These theologians have developed and promoted neopagan, goddess, and women's spirituality movements, including women-church movements, which often draw on ancient threads of tradition and are designed to fulfill the spiritual needs of women who are disenfranchised with their traditional religious identities (Christ 1998; Appendix 4, no. 4). Many women describe this approach as empowering and revelatory, but it does remain on the fringe of academic work in religion. As a result, it is relatively inaccessible to women both inside and outside the academy (Christ 2004).

A related strategy for some women is to develop an affiliation with an indigenous spiritual tradition that better reflects their heightened awareness of and commitment to a culture of ancestry. For example, many women have identified with African, Native American, Mesoamerican, or Pacific Islander traditional religions (Teish 1985; Allen 1986; Anzaldúa 1987; Alexander 2005; Stewart 2005; Floyd-Thomas 2006). Such affiliation may augment or supplant the religion in which they were born and reared, such as Christianity. Other women choose to blend traditions in their personal practice, often expressing a desire to draw from both Western-identified (e.g., Christianity, Judaism) and Eastern-identified (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism) religions simultaneously (Walker 2006).

DEVELOP LIBERATIVE RELIGIOUS PRACTICES that liberate women and inspire their sense of worth and agency

Many scholars have provided practical recommendations and alternative practices to transform the valuation, roles, and participation of women in religious communities. They have addressed a wide range of issues, including: women's ordination and leadership; inclusive and gender-neutral language in ritual practice; rituals for birth, marriage, divorce, and other life-marking events; clergy-laity relations; sexuality, gender, and sexual orientation; women's agency in addressing difficult issues such as health, environmental care, female circumcision, and violence; and women's moral authority (M. Hunt

1991, 2004; Isasi-Díaz 1992, Redman 1992; Ruether 1992; West 1999; 2004; Kittredge and Sherwood 1995; Falk 1996; Moore 1998; Kirk-Duggan 2001; Mollenkott 2001; Primavesi 2003; Mananzan et al. 2004; Welch 2004; Phiri and Nadar 2006; Wangila 2007; Appendix 4, no. 5). Other practice-oriented work focuses on reshaping religious leadership from the perspectives and experiences of women. Some scholars have addressed preaching (Fry Brown 2003; E. M. Kim 2004), while still others have taken a look at worship and ritual (Procter-Smith 2000; Walton 2000; Wootton 2000; Neu 2002, 2003; Procter-Smith and Walton 2004). And some have focused on counseling and healing practices (Nelson 1997; Neuger 2002); administration (McKenzie 2001); and teaching (Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett 2004; Moore 2004; Conde-Frazier 2005).

Some work described here overlaps developments in new women's spiritualities; some is deeply informed by women's consciousness without being exclusively focused on women. The state of research is thus a process of escalating diversity and new connections. This work on practices moves beyond diagnosis to action proposals and beyond narrow categories to ever-larger understandings of religious and social practice, and the relation between them. Note also that many citations refer to women outside of the United States; these point to a growing global discourse and the mutual influence that has emerged strongly in the past two decades.

CRITIQUE WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS regarding marginalization of nonwhite, non-Western, and non-Christian women in feminist theology and religious studies

The dominance of white women's perspectives in early feminist theologies has created intellectual vacuums as well as power differentials in religious and civic communities. In recent years, people have become more attentive to issues of white privilege that were ignored or glossed over in early feminist work. Womanism, for example, is rooted somewhat in feminist movements, but more prominently in African and African American liberation struggles and in deep traditions of faith and survival among African American women (Williams, 1987, 1993; Grant 1989; Cannon 1995; Ogunyemi 1996; Floyd-Thomas 2006a; Phillips 2006). Postcolonialist theory is raising new questions about histories of

domination (Dube 2000; Donaldson and Kwok 2002; Kanyoro 2002; Kwok 2005; Appendix 4, no. 6). This complex body of work not only examines questions of identity and difference but also sheds light on significant questions related to issues such as the interpretation of religious texts (Dube 2000; Kanyoro 2002); religious conceptualizations, including Christian beliefs about Jesus (Douglas 1994; G. J. Kim 2002; Orevillo-Montenegro 2006); and about sin and grace (Jones 2000; Suchocki 2005) and social roles of women (Boonprasat Lewis 1998; Mahmood 2005). Furthermore, Fourth World (nations without states) spirituality and spiritually informed feminist thought is providing a space for women who identify with active tribal traditions, such as Dagara, Maori, Aboriginal, or a host of others, to contribute their voices to both theological and political dialogues (Somé 1997, 2003; Smith 1999). This work can potentially illuminate women's social activism and daily life patterns as well as the racial, ethnic, and class divisions found among activists in our study. Perhaps by working together, academics and other activists can develop more respectful, collaborative, and mutually informing movements for change.

CONTEXTUALIZE WOMEN'S LIVES by deepening the study of women with contextual analysis

Women scholars are increasingly open to the rich expressions and concerns from diverse ethnic, racial, class, and geographic communities. Women have thus developed new methods for research that put women at the center of their work and take account of women's historical, social, cultural, community, and economic contexts (Thistlethwaite 1992; Cannon 1995; Chopp and Davaney 1997; Floyd-Thomas 2006a). This has required a movement beyond the more abstracted methods of traditional theology and religious studies, and an opening to new sources and approaches to investigation. For example, scholars in this field often draw upon memoirs, interviews, historical or contextual analysis, or participatory research to develop their thinking about woman-centered approaches to religion (Isasi-Díaz 1994, 1996; Lawless 1994, 2005; Ahmed 1999; Naveh 2003; Floyd-Thomas 2006b; Appendix 4, no. 7). Noteworthy in much of the work is attention to women's bodies and sexuality (Anzaldúa 1990; Douglas 1999, 2005;

Brock and Thistlethwaite 1996; Brock and Parker 2002; Miles 2006a, 2008; Appendix 4, no. 2).

IDENTIFY "DIFFERENCE" AS A CENTRAL CATEGORY by engaging the complexities of religious and cultural difference as they affect the issues, methods, and goals of research

The study of difference creates spaces in which people can develop shared understanding and practice without homogeneity or dominance. Researchers concerned with the complexities of difference are led naturally to an analysis of power, as seen among postcolonial theorists and others (Dube 2000; Donaldson and Kwok 2002; Kanyoro 2002; Kwok 2005; Brock et al. 2007). This discourse on power and privilege mirrors the debates within women's organizing. Thus, the academic research could helpfully inform activist movements as they encounter differences in race, ethnicity, class, religion, and secular-religious complexities. If religion scholars could advance the discourse on these issues, they would inform the language and approaches of women's organizing and public activism. To do this, the scholarship itself would need to be based in participatory, collaborative, listening-oriented methodologies in order to discern and respect the wisdom of women in many religious and social contexts (Fabella and Oduyoye 1988; Oduyoye 1995; Isasi-Díaz 1996, 2004; Neuger 1996; Carpenter 2001; Conde-Frazier, Kang, and Parrett 2004; Procter-Smith and Walton 2004; Conde-Frazier 2005; Brock et al. 2007). It would also need to be accessible beyond academia. Some good examples of this already exist (Anzaldúa 1990; Chung 1990; Kwok 2000; Oduyoye 2001, 2004). The challenge here is to honor difference as a fundamental category of human existence, engaging people in respectful, nonhomogenizing sharing of their differences, and seeking common purposes wherever they emerge.

ANALYZE THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN WOMEN'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION by exploring how religion has fostered the inclusion or exclusion of women in public life

Most religions—including the monotheistic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam—have not granted women full religious authority or

moral agency. Instead, they have assigned women specific roles rooted in family, child care, and private life, associating these roles with fundamental moral values. This system of religious morality has historically provided moral justification for women's exclusion from public life (Pateman 1988; Metcalf 1990; Buchanan 1997; Chopp and Davaney 1997; Schneider and Schneider 1997). It is closely linked in the United States with the popular understanding of democracy, which depends on women to sustain the private sphere, while men control public leadership in politics and economics (Pateman 1988; Okin 1992). Opponents to women's suffrage used this gendered understanding to deny the vote to women, and some people still use this argument to keep women on the margins of public influence.

When women seek political leadership, they face questions about whether they can balance these roles with family, or whether they have the necessary leadership qualities for politics (Kahn and Goldenberg 1991; Kahn 1992; Niven and Zilber 2001). Though frequently judged incompetent for public leadership, women are expected to be omniscient in mothering, illustrated by the blame heaped on working mothers for the crime, truancy, or poor test scores of their children (Caiazza 2006). In religion, many denominations still bar women's leadership and, even where they do not, women clergy often experience resistance from clergy and congregants alike (Schneider and Schneider 1997; Maybury and Sullins 2000; Konieczny and Chaves 2000; Chickering 2001; Cohen and Schor 2004). This work suggests that activism on behalf of women in public life requires attention to religion in order to understand the obstacles and power it wields.

BRIDGE GAPS between theology and religious studies, and between academia and women's lives

Gaps between scholars in theology and religious studies, and between much scholarship and women's daily lives, are interrelated. Indeed, most women do not live compartmentalized lives; their encounters with people in their own religious community are interwoven with encounters with others. The need to understand their own tradition and the traditions (or rejected traditions) of other people are intertwined. The gap between

theology and religious studies is an artificial one at best and a destructive one at worst. It thus perpetuates the tendency, already common, for scholarship to be abstracted from ordinary life. We need to focus greater attention on the existential issues that people face. As Sheila Collins, author of *A Different Heaven & Earth: A Feminist Perspective on Religion* puts it in her essay "Theology in the Politics of Appalachian Women": "If theology is to be meaningful for us, it must not start with abstractions, but with *our stories* . . . We cannot appreciate the meaning of another's experience—especially if that experience occurred two and three thousand years ago—until we have asked the right questions of our own" (1992). We also need communication that is accessible to diverse audiences, including publications that bring academics and activists into dialogue (Braude 2004; Appendix 4, no. 8) and increasing participatory research and collaborations with grassroots communities (Isasi-Díaz 1994, 2004; Conde-Frazier 2005; Tamez 2007).

Developments in Other Disciplines

Scholars who work in the social sciences, humanities, and cross-disciplinary programs also explore issues of faith and activism for women. This section reviews some of this work.

STUDY RELIGIOUS IDENTITY by exploring how women negotiate complex religious identities

This genre of research examines how religious women view themselves, their values, and their roles within their religious communities (Mahmood 2005). Studies to date suggest that women constantly negotiate variegated identities, based not only on religion and gender, but also on ideology, race, and class. Women face diverse, often conflicting, values in their religious traditions. Thus, they often resist dogmatic and dichotomized approaches and embrace ambiguities as part of their worlds (Ozorak 1996; Dufour 2000; Beaman 2001; Bartkowski and Read 2003; Appendix 4, no. 9). Women also make new discoveries as they encounter this multiplicity, seeking support in unexpected communities, such as those more "conservative" or "liberal" than themselves. For example, women with more "conservative" identities often reinterpret traditional values and

beliefs in ways that other women find illuminating. Such findings emphasize the need to bring diverse women together for mutual learning and action.

STUDY CHANGES IN WOMEN'S RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP by analyzing patterns and the consequences of changes

Researchers have studied women's careers as clergy and lay leaders, assessed attitudes toward women clergy, and studied impediments to women's leadership. They find that women are increasingly ordained, increasingly numerous as lay leaders, and advancing in religious hierarchies, as seen in the 2006 appointment of Katharine Jefferts Schori to the position of presiding bishop over the Episcopal Church. Women also have increasingly visible leadership in academic circles. Consider the selection of Yale Divinity School ethicist Emilie Townes as president of the American Academy of Religion and the appointment of Serene Jones as the first woman president of Union Theological Seminary in New York. However impressive this list, problems persist, and women still meet resistance to their leadership. Right now, according to the Association of Theological Schools' 2007-2008 annual data tables, only a quarter of their deans are women, while one-sixth of their presidents are women. In addition, they often experience impediments in their work in religious and academic institutions, including lower pay, occupational segregation, and a glass ceiling that limits their opportunities (Schneider and Schneider 1997; Konieczny and Chaves 2000; Sullins 2000; Maybury and Chickering 2001; Cohen and Schor 2004; Appendix 4, no. 10).

In 2000, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) church became the first of the seven major black denominations to elect a woman bishop by elevating Rev. Dr. Vashti Murphy McKenzie, a strong advocate for women's leadership in the church, to this formerly gender-exclusive post. In 2004, the church elected two more female bishops to the episcopacy, Carolyn Tyler Guidry and Sarah Frances Davis. The stained-glass ceiling is breaking, pane by pane.

STUDY RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS for women's civic and public participation

Many studies show that religious involvement leads to political engagement in the United States overall (Harris 1994; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995; Beyerlein and Chaves 2003; Campbell 2004). However, findings suggest that religious involvement does not encourage women's political participation as much men's, even though women are more religiously active. Women are also less likely to practice "civic skills" within religious life, although practicing these skills (such as running meetings, speaking in public, or recruiting others) leads to higher levels of religious involvement and instills confidence that might lead women to assume these roles in public life (Burns, Schlozman, and Verba 2001).

At the same time, a growing body of research reveals that religion can be a source of strength for women. Social scientists have explored, through archives and interviews, how religious institutions and movements motivate and shape women's public participation (Irons 1998; Pardo 1998; Appendix 4, no. 11). Some also explore how women's political activism changes religious institutions, as women activists claim power within those institutions (Dodson 2002; Appendix 4, no. 12). These findings corroborate our earlier reported discoveries on activism. Women draw inspiration and resources for political participation from religion, despite the generally patriarchal nature of their institutions. Indeed, the resistances they encounter often spur them to encourage other women to become activists.

STUDY POLICIES AND ATTITUDES OF RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS AND SOCIAL SERVICES by analyzing how these institutions address women's voices and concerns

This research is largely concerned with whether religious institutions, given their patriarchal histories and values, can provide effective and empowering services for women. The findings suggest that religious institutions can provide services sensitive to women, but only when they create room for women's voices. Current research suggests that religious institutions promote conservative attitudes toward women

in their service provision; however, they can be transformed if they attend to women's perspectives at the grassroots level. Such findings inform evaluation criteria for "faith-based" social services. They also suggest that activists need to evaluate how religious institutions interact with women if they hope to better women's lives (Nason-Clark 2000; Tangenberg 2003; Foss and Warnke 2003; Appendix 4, no. 13).

ENGAGE MORE ACTIVELY IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH by learning from and collaborating with research across the social sciences, humanities, theology, and religious studies

The interdisciplinary trend is increasing across academia, but is accentuated in women's studies, which relies upon the expertise and subject matter of many disciplines. Research on women also requires connections across small subfields of many disciplines. For example, within political science, religion is a relatively small field. At recent national conferences of the American Political Science Association, few studies of religion were presented—and almost no studies of women. Some scholars argue that the academic marginalization of religion is the result of a bias against it, as well as a natural outgrowth of the U.S. practice of separating religion and state, especially within the largely secular space of universities (Cady and Brown 2002). Biases against religion may be particularly acute for feminist scholars, who are often marginalized themselves and distressed by religion's historical role in the oppression of women. Regardless of the causes, however, a lack of exchange across disciplines will limit the advancement of knowledge.

Academic Collaborations and Networks

Collaborative opportunities such as conferences, professional associations, events, and informal networks are common in academic circles. These opportunities are usually sponsored within particular disciplines, and they generally include nonacademic participants only as recipients of the knowledge that is gathered and constructed in academia. As reiterated throughout this report, academic research would benefit from greater interdisciplinary effort and deeper relationship

with nonacademic women. The overview below outlines goals, opportunities, and limitations within current venues of collaboration.

REACH BEYOND DISCIPLINARY AND VOCATIONAL BOUNDARIES

Most conferences on women and religion engage with a single discipline or with people who share a similar vocation. Though some of these societies have an interdisciplinary character (Appendix 4, no. 14), many academic women in our informal survey expressed a desire for more conversation and collaboration with women outside the halls of academia. Activists responding to our questionnaire echoed a similar desire. We do have some good examples of events that encourage and build relationships (Appendix 4, no. 15), and the challenge is to move increasingly in this direction.

Since 2005, The Ray of Hope Church in Atlanta, Georgia, pastored by the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Hale, has sponsored the annual Women in Ministry Conference, which is led and attended by academic scholars, nonprofit leaders and nonacademic clergy women of African American descent. In this context, clergy women and professors share perspectives on women's leadership in the church, the home, the community, and the academy.

BUILD RELATIONS BETWEEN WOMEN'S STUDIES AND RELIGION

Many college and university campuses provide opportunities to consider issues of women and religion through course work and public events, but this movement is still limited in scope. Women's studies programs in the United States are giving increasing attention to religion, exemplified in the Madeleva Lecture Series at St. Mary's College Center for Spirituality and the multiple collaborations among Emory University's Women's Studies Department, Religion Department, School of Theology, and women's councils and centers (Appendix 4, no. 16). Many colleges, universities, and theological schools cross-list courses between religious studies and theology, and women's and gender studies. Faculty members are sometimes cosponsored across these fields as well. In an informal poll of

women teaching in theology, religion, and women's studies departments, we found this to be a growing trend. The trend is even stronger in public events; about three-quarters of the women in our Faith and Feminism Survey could identify public events on their campuses that address women and religion.

In 2007, Hollis College in North Carolina developed a new course for its undergraduate students entitled *Faith and Feminism*, which was designed to help women explore the connections between their religious faith and their work for gender-based equality.

Relatively few schools have developed degree programs at the intersection of women and religion, particularly outside of theological schools. An Internet search of over one hundred doctoral, master's degree, and certificate programs in women's studies found few with formal programs that focus on spirituality or religion. Although some of these programs offer encouragement and resources for students to pursue these connections, the minimal publicity suggests that religion is not a common area of deliberate focus for women's studies programs. Some explicitly integrative programs do exist, such as Claremont Graduate University's program in Women's Studies in Religion (Appendix 4, no. 17). Others are sponsored by theological schools, such as United Theological Seminary in New Brighton, Minnesota. Still other colleges and universities work with linking organizations such as the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER) or Feminist Studies in Religion, which jointly hosted their first summer forum on feminist theologies in 2008 for graduate students and junior faculty (Appendix 4, no. 17).

SHARE KNOWLEDGE through publications, associations, and informal networks

The sharing of academic knowledge occurs primarily through books, journals, professional

associations, and other networks, which connect women across disciplines. These same avenues could be a resource for building stronger connections with women outside of academia. Networks of women scholars often bridge disciplines and university affiliations to promote mutual learning, support, and public dissemination of their work. In religion, these networks are usually organized among academic women working in theology and religious studies. Two exemplars are Harvard University's postdoctoral program, Women's Studies in Religion, pioneered in 1973, and the Womanist Scholars Program of the Interdenominational Theological Center, which is run by the university's Black Women in Church and Society department. Other examples exist outside of religious and theological studies, though they are less common. The National Women's Studies Association sponsors caucuses across disciplines and WATER builds networks between academic and activist women (Appendix 4, no. 18). These networks are a potential resource for broader collaboration with and outreach to women in nonacademic work.

Feminist scholars also have opportunities to exchange knowledge and ideas through publishing, as in *Feminist Theology* and the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. Such publishing is crucial for building knowledge and shared discourse, as well as for enhancing the academic credentials of individuals. Further, much of this work crosses boundaries among women in diverse vocations (Reid 2000; Weems 2004). Unfortunately, the availability of such resources frequently remains unknown in both public and academic spheres. With this in mind, the National Council for Research on Women has held panels at its two most recent annual meetings that address intersections between faith, religion, and gender, and the council has expressed its openness to collaborative research and convening possibilities.

[See Appendix 3, "Faith and Feminism-Related Conferences and Events," pp.66.]

Conclusions

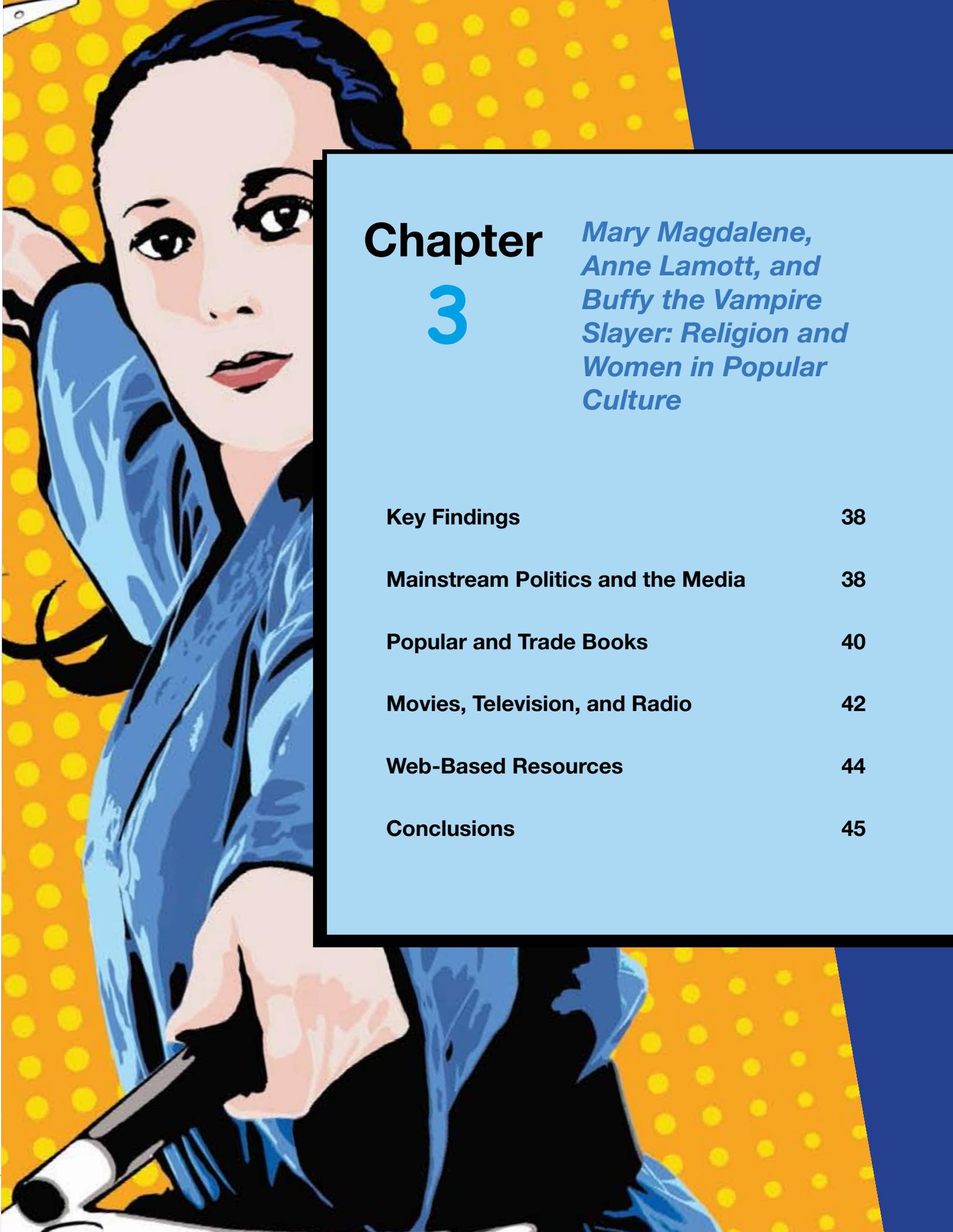
Many academic endeavors have focused on women and religion in the past fifty years. These efforts have added to knowledge and transformed the methods and perspectives of religious and theological studies. The work has the potential to inform the daily lives and social activism of women in many contexts. Unfortunately, most of the work is not widely known to the public, even when it is written in accessible prose. The movement toward accessibility is still

embryonic. The relation between women's studies and religious studies is also developing. Some have been involved in this work for decades, but key insights are only now becoming rooted in popular imagination. Two such insights are that we cannot fully understand women's lives without considering the role of religion, and we cannot understand religion without considering how it has shaped and been shaped by gendered concepts and realities.

This review of academic literature and collaborations raises many questions about how research on women and religion can have a stronger influence within academia and society:

- How can scholars of women and religion organize, collaborate, and share ideas across academic disciplines and fields? How can they communicate and translate their work most effectively for wider audiences?
- How might scholars of diverse religious traditions, ethnicities, and class backgrounds raise awareness and respect for difference, creating spaces in which women can share and learn from difference, discover shared values, and craft shared goals?
- How might academics, activists, and philanthropists learn from and with one another, thus shaping their research, social strategies, and programs?
- How might academics and activists strengthen one another and their combined influence on mainstream scholarship and social movements?

We return to these questions in the final section of this report.



Chapter 3

*Mary Magdalene,
Anne Lamott, and
Buffy the Vampire
Slayer: Religion and
Women in Popular
Culture*

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CHAPTER 3

Mary Magdalene, Anne Lamott, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Religion and Women in Popular Culture

In this chapter you will find a brief overview of how and where women and religion are discussed in politics, public life, the media, and popular culture (including books, blogs, podcasts, movies, television, and more). Overall, in U.S. popular culture, we find little representation of faith and feminism in the strictest sense, meaning some explicit combination of women's involvement in organized religion and progressive gender-justice activism. However, there is a growing interest in "women's spirituality." Books like *Eat, Pray, Love* and *The DaVinci Code*; TV shows like *Oprah*, featuring episodes with spiritual teachers such as Marianne Williamson and Iyanla Vanzant, have enjoyed massive popularity among women. This phenomenon suggests that there is a deep hunger for alternative ways to explore spirituality that validate women's experiences and perspectives. One of the most promising areas for future exploration is how to fill the void in the media and popular culture with representations of women's *collective* faith-fueled social justice work.



- The treatment of women's faith and activism in popular culture (including the worlds of politics, mass media, trade publishing, television, film, and the Internet) reflects the general invisibility, obstacles, and disconnections described elsewhere in this report
- Little attention is given to women, faith, and gender justice. Where present, it mostly occurs in the more democratic media such as the Internet and some aspects of trade publishing

This overview, conducted by the Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) and supplemented by Women in Theology and Ministry, Candler School of Theology, is by no means comprehensive or fully inclusive, nor is it meant to capture the nuances of these categories. Rather, we sought to sketch a general picture, pointing to resources and issues for further examination. Based primarily on Internet scans of databases devoted to the press and media (e.g., Lexis/Nexis, Google News, and the Religion News Service) and books (Amazon.com, Powells.com), we also conducted general searches for events, articles, Web sites, movies, and television programs. These sources were supplemented by interviews with individuals and groups that are active in these public arenas.

Mainstream Politics and the Media

Increased attention to religion has surfaced since the 2004 presidential and congressional elections, particularly on the part of progressive political leaders. As a result, a variety of political organizations and think tanks now devote resources to holding events, conducting surveys, and engaging in other activities related to religion and politics. More secular groups, such as the Center for American Progress, have programs devoted to religion. And faith-based organizations, such as Sojourners, The Network of Spiritual Progressives, and Faith in Public Life, enjoy increased visibility and credibility in their religious and political work.

Much of this new work, particularly from progressives, frames political issues in moral or religious language and symbolism. Often the goal

- Sustained interest on the part of popular culture, politics, and the media requires access to financial and professional resources that most women activists lack. Success, therefore, is dependent on investment by philanthropists and professionals in public relations and advertising

is to provide alternative ways to talk about religion in policy and politics in ways that counter conservatives' dominance of religious issues in public life. However, even in progressive circles, women's voices are not included in these discussions in representative numbers. Where women in politics are covered in the media, they are often reported in demeaning ways—such as the focus on Senator Hillary Clinton's teary response during an interview, rather than on the substance of her message as a serious presidential candidate. This section provides an overview of the treatment of women in political debates and media coverage of religion.

Women are far less visible than men in political events and discussions about religion and moral values.

Though women are increasingly visible in political campaigns and offices—especially with Hillary Clinton as a candidate in the 2008 presidential election—they continue to lack media visibility in politics and religion overall. Conferences, events, and broadcasts on a wide range of issues feature few women as experts and spokespeople. According to a 2005 report by The White House Project, women made up only 14% of the guests on Sunday morning public affairs television programs in the United States between November 2004 and July 2005. Furthermore, they tended to appear in later segments of the programs and were less likely to appear a second time. Meanwhile, women in Congress had fewer newspaper articles published about them and were mentioned far less often in front-page, national, foreign, metro, business, and sports articles than men were, according to Anat Maytal in her 2005 Media Report to Women.

And yet, many of the issues being discussed in the media are integral to women's lives, including "women's moral values" issues such as abortion, contraception, and marriage among welfare recipients, along with more general issues that disproportionately affect women, including poverty and health insurance coverage issues, which are often promoted as the moral values issues of the Left. Even progressive people of faith often fail to sufficiently involve women in the development of their perspectives. For instance, Jim Wallis (2005), a popular progressive evangelical Christian leader, argues for programs that promote marriage among poor families. He refers

to high rates of single motherhood among poor families as a form of massive family breakdown. This critique does not consider the varied reasons for single motherhood, such as removing oneself and one's children from a violent or otherwise detrimental relationship. Women's perspectives would add much to the dialogue.

Women's public roles and conversations about politics, religion, and women's issues rarely receive the same levels of support or attention as men's.

Exceptions exist where progressive and moderate women's voices on matters of religion and politics are heard and discussed, but usually little attention is given in major media outlets. There has been sporadic coverage over the years on PBS's *Religion and Ethics Newsweekly*, at www.pbs.org/religion. Madeleine Albright enjoyed considerable media attention for her book *The Mighty and the Almighty: Reflections on America, God, and World Affairs* (2006). While she focused few of her remarks specifically on women, it was unusual for a woman to be featured as an authority on U.S. foreign policy and religion.

Modest media exposure was given to the release of *What Women Really Want: How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class, and Religious Lines To Change The Way We Live* (2005), by Celinda Lake, a leading political strategist for the Democratic Party and Kellyanne Conway, a leading conservative pollster and market research expert. Their book provocatively concluded that, based on extensive polling of American women and excluding the most controversial topics of abortion and gay marriage, 80% of women agree on 80% of major issues, regardless of political or religious affiliation.

IWPR has hosted numerous events addressing women, politics, and religion, and the Pluralism Project at Harvard University hosted a conference entitled Religion and Politics 2004: Women's Votes, Women's Voices. Other pioneering work by feminist, womanist, mujerista, and Asian women leaders has promoted religiously based, prowomen visions for politics and society (Lamott 2000; H. Hunt 2004; Appendix 5, no.1). In general, these and other efforts would benefit from sustained, strategic support for communication and outreach. Support for professional

media campaigns would be particularly helpful to enhance the visibility of events, issues, and discourses that focus on women and gender justice.

Issues of women and religion are most frequently discussed in mainstream media and politics when events prompt interest in new movements or controversies.

Media events include moments that stir public interest and discussion. Examples include instances when women are elected to positions of religious authority, when their actions stir controversy within their communities, or when religious institutions are divided about women's roles or woman-related issues. Jane Fonda, famous actress and activist, made headlines when she revealed her conversion to faith in 2001. Searches of media databases reveal a range of events when women's faith and activism receive media coverage, pointing to the possibility of utilizing such events and moments of interest to communicate the power of religion's relationship with women's empowerment in politics, religion, and popular culture (Brown 2003; Blake 2005; Lite 2005; Darman 2006; Murphy 2006; Appendix 5, no. 2). Women's organizations could attend to such moments and create media opportunities that serve their goals.

Women's most complex and ongoing work in religion and social structures is rarely covered by newspapers, magazines, broadcast media, or other outlets.

Some examples do exist for publicizing women's more complex religious ideas and practices (Appendix 5, no. 1). However, most of these have emphasized debates over women's rights within their religious traditions. Such coverage characteristically focuses on questions of women's progress (or lack of progress) toward equality as spiritual leaders. In contrast, coverage rarely focuses on more complex issues of women's faith and activism, such as what feminist, womanist, mujerista, and Asian women's theologies might contribute to religious beliefs and values, to women's organizing and public leadership, or to social transformation. One exception to the silence of media in relation to women and religion is a series of reports at Women's eNews entitled "Women and Worship: Change from Within."

Mass media occasionally covers the role of spirituality in inspiring women's activism.

This kind of coverage is generally neutral about questions of women's official religious authority. Rather, it provides examples of how women are motivated by, and make decisions based on, their spiritual beliefs. In many cases, it reinforces women's traditional roles in religion as nurturers and caregivers. It can, however, provide models of women translating their religious values into less traditional forms of public life (Warren 2002; CBS/AP 2005; Dornin and Murgatroyd 2006; Fears 2006; Appendix 5, no. 1).

Popular and Trade Books

The world of popular books includes a variety of genres that engage issues of women and religion. Offering diverse examples of women-centered spirituality, these books assist readers in rethinking religion from women-centered perspectives while drawing issues of women and religion into the public eye. More than in other areas of popular culture and media, popular books offer relatively diverse opportunities for readers to explore issues of women and religion.

Fictional and biographical books include a popular genre that tells stories of women's experiences—whether personal, or in religious communities, sacred texts—and the history of traditions.

Biographies, autobiographies, and novels exploring women's religious lives, rituals, and practices have enjoyed great popularity. For example, Anne Lamott has written several very popular autobiographies based on her experiences with Christianity, single motherhood and recovery from alcoholism, including *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith* (2007), *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (1999), and *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith* (2005). Other popular autobiographical works featuring women's journeys with religion and spirituality include Sue Monk Kidd's *The Secret Life of Bees* (2002) as well as her *The Dance of the Dissident Daughter: A Woman's Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine* (1996) and Lauren Winner's memoir, *Girl Meets God* (2002). Many of Alice Walker's books, including *Anything We Love*

Can Be Saved (1997), *The Color Purple* (1990), and *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For* (2006), are infused with her Buddhist and womanist convictions. And, Elizabeth Gilbert's spiritual travelogue, *Eat, Pray, Love* (2007) was on the *New York Times* best seller list for more than a year.

Books like Miriam Cooke's (2000a) account of the fictional Muslim woman, Hayati, or the prolific short stories of *Jewish women* (Antler 1991) offer a fictional yet historically accurate view of how faith is interwoven into women's lives. In other cases, fiction provides alternative narratives of well-known stories. This includes a wide range of Jewish women's Midrashim (Hyman 1997) and such imaginative retellings of biblical narratives as *The Red Tent* (Diamant 1997). One reviewer of *The Red Tent* said that this genre provides a window into what religious texts and stories might be if "written by God's daughters, instead of her sons" (Hudson 1998). Reviews, blogs, and essays on the Internet suggest that these stories inspire women readers to explore their own relationships to religion and spirituality (Appendix 5, no. 1).

The most popular recent fictional example of this genre is *The DaVinci Code* (2003), ironically, written by a man. More than 60 million copies of Dan Brown's book were sold worldwide, and it was translated into 44 languages. The book, and the subsequent movie, generated substantial discussions in the media and on the Internet, exploring the controversies around the fictional book's thesis, which suggested the existence of a revisionist conspiracy to suppress the role of women and the "divine feminine" since the early days of the Church. The book's plot, based on the idea that Jesus Christ married Mary Magdalene and had a child, was especially provocative.

Several writers have developed women-centered practices for prayer and ritual.

Meant to encourage and equip women for innovations in their personal and congregational practices, several publications retrieve ancient practices, create new practices, or develop woman-shaped resources for prayer, music, and ritual. Some are rooted in specific religious identities, while others transcend those differences or take an approach seen to be "spiritual but not religious." Janet R. Walton's *Feminist Liturgy: A*

Matter of Justice (2000) describes the history of feminist worship practices and makes practical suggestions for applying these principles to liturgies in synagogues and churches. Kathy Black and Heather Murray Elkins's *Wising Up: Ritual Resources for Women of Faith in their Journey of Aging* (2005) offers rituals for women's rites of passage. *She Who Prays: A Woman's Interfaith Prayer Book* (Jensen and Harris-Watkins 2005) provides interfaith feminist readings, prayers, and rituals for daily worship.

A number of books integrate African American religious sensibilities with such contemporary traditions as New Thought and Mental Science, including Susan L. Taylor's *In the Spirit* (1993) and *Lessons in Living* (1995), as well as numerous books by Iyanla Vanzant. Other books link Christianity with what has been referred to as the African Tradition of Deep Thought, such as Linda James Myers' *Blessed Assurance: Deep Thought and Meditations in the Tradition and Wisdom of Our Ancestors* (2004). Several authors, such as Sobonfu E. Somé, in her books *The Spirit of Intimacy: Ancient Teachings in the Ways of Relationships* (1997) and *Falling Out of Grace: Meditations on Loss, Healing and Wisdom* (2003) and Luisah Teish in *Jambalaya: The Natural Woman's Book of Personal Charms and Practical Rituals* (1985), present rituals based on indigenous or New World African traditions to Western audiences. Prolific author Starhawk brings goddess worship, feminist earth-based spiritualities, and European pagan traditions, such as Wicca, to popular audiences in such books as *The Spiral Dance* (1979) and *The Earth Path* (2004).

Some works focused on women's spiritual practices are inter-religious explorations, such as Sera Beak's *The Red Book: A Deliciously Unorthodox Approach to Igniting Your Divine Spark* (2006). This book is directed at invoking spirituality in the "twenty-something" audience of young women and explores Hindu and Buddhist traditions, dotted with personal stories and suggested practices.

Some popular books highlight religious women telling and interpreting their stories, values, and visions.

Written by academics, women clergy, lay religious women, and even women without religious affili-

ation, these religious reflections usually combine narrative with discourse. Inherent in this writing is the belief that all women's voices and experiences matter. This writing is particularly powerful because it upholds diversity and connects to the daily grist of women's lives. This writing's focus is designed to share life and give strength to others, support women's religious leadership (Ahmed 2000; Aldredge-Clanton 2003; Chittister 2004, 2005; M. Hunt 2004; Abdul-Ghafur 2005; Appendix 5, no. 2), or emphasize the political aspects of women's experiences with religion, stressing the history and potential of women's faith-based activism (Buchanan 1997; Zaman 1999; Lamott 2000, 2005; Caiazza 2005; Appendix 5, no. 2).

The idea that religious women's values can help revitalize women's activism in the United States is upheld in this work. And some authors have gone further, inspiring women to translate religious values and priorities into public life in tangible ways (Bolen 1999, 2005; H. Hunt 2004; Morrison and Dykstra 2005; Caiazza 2006; Appendix 5, no. 2). Women activists would benefit from expanded resources like these, particularly works that encourage them to translate their central values into meaningful patterns of daily life and activism for the common good. In many cases, this involves translating academic work into more accessible and practical language. It might also involve documenting the stories and work of activists, as several have already done with Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa.

Popular books from “conservative” communities take divergent approaches to issues of women and religion, sometimes encouraging traditional relationships and roles and sometimes offering alternative perspectives.

Two of the publishing genres that reinforce women's traditional roles and values are Christian evangelical romance novels and evangelical self-help books (Wick 1999). Debate exists as to whether these romance novels encourage submissiveness in relationships or offer “genuine encouragement in . . . the direction of love” (Barrett 2003). Evangelical self-help books give guidance regarding women's stories and life experiences, providing lessons from religious

texts and women figures. While some of these books avoid controversial issues of women's rights and roles, others actively repudiate the goals and strategies of feminist movements (Curtis 1999; Stack 2000).

Conversely, another genre in conservative Christian publishing criticizes religious leaders and theologies that deny religious authority to women, encouraging equality in ministry and other forms of public life. Frequently penned by scripturally and politically conservative women and men, this writing argues for equality in many areas of women's lives, including ministry. These writers also tend to support women in the workplace, asserting that Christian women can simultaneously be mothers, professionals and ministers. Interestingly, they support this while also holding traditionally conservative views of politics and controversial social issues. One example is found in J. Lee Grady's *10 Lies the Church Tells Women: How the Bible Has Been Misused to Keep Women in Spiritual Bondage* (2000) and *25 Tough Questions about Women and the Church* (2003). Grady argues that women should be given equality as ministers and should be supported as equals at work and in politics.

Movies, Television and Radio

Due to the success of a few recent movies and television shows about issues of religion and spirituality, analysts suggest that studios will be producing more films or programs with religious content in coming years. In 2006, Fox Films established a production company called Fox Faith. The company is devoted to producing films that reflect Judeo-Christian values, and other studios are also pursuing this type of work (Muñoz 2006). Also, Krista Tippett's *Speaking of Faith*, carried weekly by more than 200 National Public Radio stations, has successfully presented diverse conversations about what the program refers to on its Web site as “religion, meaning, ethics, and ideas” in a thoughtful way since 2003. Episodes of *Speaking of Faith* are available online and can be downloaded as a podcast (www.speakingoffaith.publicradio.org). As cinematic focus continues to develop, women concerned with faith and women's ability

to effect change should monitor the portrayals of religion and women's lives and, as much as possible, promote depictions of women that stress the complex textures of their lives and contribute directly or indirectly to their empowerment and religious value.

Religion and women are increasingly visible in popular television programming.

Most mainstream entertainment media has kept religion at a distance (Belief.net 2003; Levantry 2004). In recent years, however, some highly visible programs have involved leading-women characters who explore faith and their relations with the Divine, including *Saving Grace*, *Touched by an Angel*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Joan of Arcadia*, and *Seventh Heaven* (Appendix 5, no. 3). All of these shows have nondenominational religious overtones and symbolism, most of which are Christian. Women's relations with other religious traditions like Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam are still largely missing from television, however, as are some of the complex struggles that women have experienced within their religious traditions and communities and in their civic involvement.

Talk shows also discuss issues of women's spirituality and life patterns.

Oprah Winfrey's show is a notable example of how the content and focus of talk shows can be informed by women's daily spiritual practices. It focuses on nourishing women's inner selves through reading, reframing, and reflection. Emphasizing the pursuit of happiness, wholeness, and respect for oneself and others, these values are tied to Oprah's concept of God. Applying them to public life as well, Oprah calls on viewers to extend this self-improvement to their families and communities. Highlighting her own and other women's stories, Oprah's spirituality is quite influential, given her popularity and prominence. Her "Live Your Best Life Tour" in 2001 was completely sold out, and she has been the inspiration for a book called *The Gospel According to Oprah* (Nelson 2005).

Religious programs and networks often explore women's spirituality, but usually in ways that support women's traditional roles.

One area where religion is explicitly and con-

tinuously evident on television is in devotional programs and channels, including the Christian Broadcasting Network and the Christian Television Network. Many of these networks include programs or segments devoted to women's spirituality. Many also include women preachers, including the popular Joyce Meyers, Juanita Bynum and Paula White. Though their prominence as women leaders in the arena of public, evangelical religion is novel, they do not generally promote changes in women's traditional roles. The focus of their sermons, conferences, and books is on personal salvation and the value of women's traditional roles in the family.

Films that address issues of faith and social activism are largely documentaries outside of mainstream moviemaking.

Few mainstream films embrace themes that are even indirectly relevant to faith and feminism. Two recent exceptions are *The DaVinci Code* (2006) and *Persepolis* (2007), an award-winning animated film about a young Muslim woman coming of age after the Iranian Revolution. Other feature films that portray women in religious roles include *Sister Act I* (1992) and *II* (1993), and *The Preacher's Wife* (1996).

Meanwhile, a handful of independent documentaries that deal with issues related to women and religion have been produced in recent years (Appendix 5, no. 4). *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (2008) features the efforts of Christian and Muslim women in Liberia to create a large peace movement. The movement ended the second civil war in that country and laid the groundwork for the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first woman president of an African state. *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America* (2005) chronicles the lives of three activist women—a Muslim, a Hindu, and a Buddhist. Though this film is shown by universities and religious denominations rather than popular theaters, it has enjoyed a wide viewership. *The Education of Shelby Knox* (2005) was a PBS documentary about a devout Christian teenage girl who "becomes an unlikely advocate for comprehensive sex education, profoundly changing her political and spiritual views along the way."

A variety of mostly older films and videos portray women in diverse traditions. *Women and Islam* (1993) argues for a feminist interpretation of Islam. *Religions of the Book: Women Serving*

Religion (1991) traces women's religious roles in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. And *Women and Spirituality: Goddess Remembered* (1999) examines pre-Christian, goddess-centered religions and contemporary women's spirituality movements inspired by them.

Web-Based Resources

The Internet offers a democratic and accessible place to explore issues of faith and social activism, while providing a public forum for communication and conversation. It has potential to build community among women of all ages, though it does raise questions of access, whether due to socioeconomic conditions or cultural values. Web-based approaches to communication, however democratic, can never be fully inclusive, but they are more accessible than most media. Several large compilations provide opportunities to explore social justice and transformation; others engage women in various religious communities; and still other sites, such as Beliefnet.com, include sections on women's issues and resources (Appendix 5, no. 5).

Also, many of the organizations included in Appendix 3, pp. 54, feature Web sites with extensive resource listings.

A growing number of online communities are dedicated to sharing women's experiences and stories about religion and social activism.

The Web has the ability to bring together women around shared experiences and concerns, using interactive technologies such as blogs and chats to gather stories and thoughts. We can already see the connective power of such Web sites as hercode.org and faithandfeminism.org, both sponsored by The Sister Fund (Appendix 5, no. 5). Other connective sites include the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (www.thecirclecawt.org); North American Council for Muslim Women (www.pluralism.org/research/profiles/display.php?profile=74029); and PANAAWTM—Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (www.panaawtm.org).

There are additional Web resources that serve specific groups of women, for example,

Mormon feminists (feministmormonhousewives.org), Christian lesbians (www.sisterfriends-together.org), and ecoeminists (eve.enviroweb.org). Concurrently, the ability to create larger, more pluralistic communities of women around issues of faith and feminism on the Web remains untested. A potentially powerful method for women to collaborate on religion and social activism would be Web sites designed for mutual learning and collaboration on issues of common concern. In addition, social-networking sites like MySpace, Facebook, and Gaia (which is particularly oriented toward spiritual- and social-change interests) allow users to form globally accessible online interest groups, and could facilitate such collaborations. Other public and religious sites, such as Sojourners (www.sojournal.net) and On Faith (<http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith>), are ripe to offer daily or weekly active communication on matters of particular concern to women. This kind of work could be particularly potent among younger women, who tend to have more knowledge of, and active relationship with, Web-based resources.

The Web provides opportunities to explore questions of women's religious identities and values.

Run by universities and individuals interested in women and religion, these sites include annotated bibliographies, blogs, essays, and academic work. Harvard Divinity School's Women's Studies in Religion Program offers an extensive site with resource links (www.hds.harvard.edu/wsrp). Other Web sites focus on specific interests or religious traditions. The following lists a few of these sites: Women's Ministries of the Episcopal Church Center, Muslim Women's League, Café (an online magazine of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America), and Feminist Mormon Housewives. Womanist scholar Renita Weems has a blog entitled *Something Within* that advertises itself in the following way: "For Thinking Women of Faith About Matters of Church, Race, Gender, Sex, Values, Culture, Justice, Spirituality and, oh yeah, God." Other Web resources are found on woman-oriented pages within a larger Web site. Many of these sites are relatively low tech and infrequently updated because of volunteer staffing.

Organizations devoted to women's activism in

religion provide resources and encourage conversation through the Web. In many cases, the organizations that run these Web sites overlap with those profiled in the activism section of this report. Their sites increase the visibility of their work, but the cited resources may be limited. Rarely interactive, they do provide information on upcoming conferences and events. They offer women the ability to learn more about issues of religion, gender, and social activism. Women can also connect with other women of similar interests, both nationally and internationally (Appendix 5, no. 5).

Conclusions

Women have made inroads in promoting conversations about religion and feminism in a variety of popular culture venues, including books, film and broadcast media, and the Internet. The Web in particular provides exciting opportunities for cross-pollination between diverse groups. Yet these conversations about women and religion primarily occur outside of mainstream public life. They are on the margins of the media, where they are generally given cursory treatment without the depth of attention that could encourage a broad, complex conversation and amplify the voices of women.

These findings on women and the media raise questions about how individuals, organizations, and philanthropists can create deeper and broader conversations about women in religious and public activity:

- How can we raise the visibility of women's voices in debates over moral values, religion, and politics that are currently occurring in political life? Can women transform these debates to offer new models for change, and to avoid the polarizing tendency of leaders to claim that they represent "core" values and "truths" better than their opponents?
- What kinds of women might carry the most power and authority into those debates?
- How might deeper, more complex conversations be encouraged in the mainstream media about women's faith and activism?
- Popular publishing offers a range of genres for engaging religion and women's issues—through fiction, memoirs, practical guides for life and liturgy, and policy-focused books. How can we build on these resources most effectively? Can these be linked to other areas of popular culture, to encourage more activity in movies, television, and other forms of media?
- How might new language, imagery, and conversations be introduced into television and movies as they increasingly speak to religion and women?
- What strategies could encourage conversations around religion and women on the Internet? How might this medium bring women into new forms of community?

We revisit these questions as we now turn to recommendations in the final section.



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HEALERS OF OUR TIME: WOMEN, FAITH, AND JUSTICE

Recommendations for the Future

Christian, Jewish, Muslim and other faith-inspired women activists and scholars are involved in transformative work. Yet women committed to joining their religious or spiritual convictions with progressive social justice activism encounter obstacles that include a dearth of opportunities to collaborate across communities and arenas of work; meager resources to support their organizations and activities; minimal visibility and influence in public life; and the long, slow process of achieving their goals. This recommendations section builds on some of the more specific suggestions offered throughout this chapter. We encourage women from every community to infuse their work with information from this report, to entertain the proposals below, and to generate additional strategies for change.

The recommendations we have take the form of both a question and then a declaration.

Can you imagine what would happen if:

- **Activists would explore additional ways to build collaborations among diverse women who are devoted to religious faith and social activism?**

We need to build stronger connections. Common divides—between religious and secular women, activists and academics, ethnicity and social classes—need to be bridged. Collaborations will require developing attitudes and new language and strategies for organizing.

- **Experienced activists would mentor and support a new generation of budding activists to encourage long-term change?**

Many organizations involving women of faith and social passion have leaders who have devoted their lives to these issues. They now need to ensure that this work does not end as leaders retire in the coming years. Mentoring younger activists ensures continuity of this important work while ushering in fresh perspectives, new networks, language, and strategies for social change on behalf of women.

- **Activists would build alliances between religious and secular women to support their diverse purposes and to develop stronger collaborations for comprehensive change?**

Cross-categorical networks generate complex understanding of issues, fresh interpretations, and a broader scope of influence for both—as well as increased solidarity to strengthen each other's work.

- **Religious leaders might work vigorously to support women's empowerment, both inside and outside their official structures?**

The moral authority held by religious institutions can transform women's empowerment in religious communities, politics, economic life, and the wider culture. To undo the damage of centuries of oppression, religious leaders must continually engage in historical critique and ongoing reflection of women's contributions and leadership. Religious leaders are in a particularly good position to build support in congregations, judicatory structures, and social service offices for women's religious leadership. Everyone will benefit from the passion, innovation, and dedication that religious women bring to their communities.

- **Leaders of progressive and social change movements could include women's advancement and empowerment among the central goals of their work?**

Women must continually demand inclusion. In addition, leaders in politics and religion should put women's priorities, lives, and empowerment at the center of their efforts. This is especially true for groups that hope to mobilize women around political or social change.

- **Activists, political leaders, and philanthropists would work together to develop**

strategic, sustained, and well-resourced public relations to raise the visibility of women's issues?

Developing a branded campaign for women's issues could effectively alert the public to the concerns of women's lives, inspiring new activism. Because public relations is costly in time and money, philanthropy will need to play a central role in developing this work, as will professional planners and strategists.

• Collaborations between activist women and leaders of public media would create new opportunities to engage the public with issues of women, religion, and social change?

Commercial success can coexist with efforts to address topics of women and faith. One venue for potential change is the major Hollywood film studios. Others are publishing houses, television shows, and making greater use of the Internet. Activists can make better use of strategic events to gain news coverage, and they can also pursue models that have successfully reached large audiences in the past, such as publishing fiction or producing inspirational programs. Again, working with professionals in these fields and finding new sources of funding would be important to the success of this work.

• Time and resources were devoted to identifying and equipping spokespeople for women, religion, and social activism?

Visible spokespeople can help win the respect of established leaders and further women's social justice causes on many levels. New leaders may need assistance from publicists and others with public speaking, engaging the media, and political strategizing.

• Academics and activists would develop more opportunities to share their knowledge and experiences with one another?

Academic women's efforts to develop tangible contributions from complex research and theorizing could be developed and supported more widely. Feminist scholars of religion could produce guides for holding conversations about issues of faith and activism and facilitate those conversations with activists in the field. Respectful collaboration on practice-oriented and publically disseminated work can contribute to overcoming the traditional academic divides. Activists and civic leaders need to create opportunities to share their wisdom and draw academic women into conversation. Bridging these disciplines will be transformative for all participants and their work.

• Philanthropists would boldly fund activism at the nexus of women and faith?

Both individual and institutional funders are needed to focus on and make a serious commitment to this transforming vision.

Final Thoughts

The world of faith and feminism is large, active, and inspiring. It encompasses the work of women in religious and social service, academia, politics, the media, and popular culture. It is manifested in conversations about women's roles in religion, the role of religious women in social movements, and even the relevance of women's values to politics. The diversity of events, partnerships, movements, publications, and accomplishments described in this report point to an important reason why most people are not occupied in the combined agenda of women, religion, and social activism, at least in visible ways. This work is widely dispersed and under-resourced. Women involved in these diverse areas have their hands full with their respective goals and efforts, which leaves little time and resources to engage one another, particularly when they live and work in different communities and come from different backgrounds. Further, their work has limited support from religious, political, philanthropic, and even women's movement institutions.

Even with these limitations and challenges, our research reveals that the work of enhancing women's agency—their amazing ability to effect change—is alive and well. What we need now is to join hands and ideas, concerns and hopes, diagnoses and dreams, words and actions, strategies and wisdom, prayers and courage. The social justice work emerging is vibrant and laden with potential. The women who have been cited in this study have demonstrated over and over again that their works, rooted in faith and feminism, have the ability to transform and heal many of the ills plaguing our culture. Even with limited resources, women of faith are making an undeniable difference in their communities around the globe. Imagine our world, in the not-too-distant future, if these incredible women were adequately funded and networked.



Appendixes

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Appendix 1: The Faith and Feminism Survey of Activism

Methodology and Demographics

In 2006, The Sister Fund commissioned The Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR) to conduct a mapping study of the field of faith and feminism. Between May 15 and July 24, 2006, IWPR fielded an online questionnaire on activism pertaining to both faith and feminism. The questionnaire had two main goals: (1) to identify existing work combining faith and feminism, and (2) to capture, on a basic level, the motivations, accomplishments, resources, and difficulties facing women within their work on these issues.

The questionnaire was developed by IWPR in conjunction with The Sister Fund and primarily circulated through both organizations' electronic mailing lists, with an initial distribution of approximately 6,000 e-mail addresses. Many of these original recipients came from lists devoted to issues of religion or faith and women, but most did not, as they were included in IWPR and The Sister Fund's general mailing lists. The researchers also targeted several specific constituencies by reaching out to organizations with larger mailing lists that could distribute the announcement. These included the following groups: the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER); the American Academy of Religion's distribution lists for feminist and womanist scholars; the National Women's Studies Association; Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWM); lists of religious activists with the National Alliance for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC); the Justice for Women Working Group of the National Council of Churches of Christ; and the National Council of Women's Organizations. The survey can be compared, in a sense, to a series of one-on-one interviews obtained through a snowball sample.

We cannot claim that the findings from the questionnaire are statistically representative of the United States as a whole or even of activists involved in religion and gender equality. As an online tool, it is clearly limited by who has access to computer time, hardware, and knowledge. Self-selection, too, is an issue. Respondents

could choose to participate (or not) based on a wide range of factors, including their attraction to (or disinterest in) terms such as "faith" and "feminism," their knowledge or evaluations of The Sister Fund and IWPR, and many other reasons. In addition, our findings were limited by the scope of The Sister Fund's and IWPR's mailing lists, which were not designed for this purpose and are likely skewed toward highly educated, upper-income women, given the populations involved in our work as a philanthropic foundation and a research institution, respectively. On a basic level, we do not know what the universe of activists combining faith and feminism looks like—is it more or less racially or religiously diverse than the overall U.S. population? Is it, too, skewed toward women with higher educations or incomes? Answering these questions, in order to develop a more representative sample for this project, would require a far more comprehensive, rigorous, and expensive set of methodologies than we could pursue, given limitations of time and money. At the same time, the questionnaire gives an interesting snapshot of women working on issues related to faith and women's empowerment—what work they do, why they do it, and with whom.

Overall, 548 women (and no men) answered the questionnaire and 348 completed every question. Among these respondents, 250 identified the organizations where they pursue activism; these women represent over 170 different groups and institutions.

Respondents were 34% mainline Protestant, 19% Catholic, 16% Jewish, 5% evangelical Christian, 3% Muslim, 2% Buddhist or Hindu, and 22% other, including women from Unitarian Universalism, Unity, Mormonism, Quakerism, unaffiliated spiritualities, and others. Another 5% had no religious identity. These numbers are somewhat more diverse than those in the United States as a whole. According to the American Religious Identification Survey, 76.5% of Americans overall are Christian, with 24.5% Catholic and 52% Protestant (mainline Protestant and evangelical Christian). Another 1.3% of Americans are Jewish, 0.5% are Muslim, 0.4% are Hindu, 0.5% are Buddhist, and 0.3% are Unitarian Universalist. Approximately 14% have no religious identity (Kosmin, Mayer, and Keysar 2001). Thus our sample includes a smaller proportion of Christians than the U.S. popula-

tions, with larger proportions of women who are Jewish, Muslim, and from other faith identities.

Respondents to the questionnaire were 83% white, 6% African American, 4% Latina, 2% Asian American, 4% Native American, and 1% Arab American. These numbers are less diverse overall than the U.S. population, which is 69% non-Hispanic white, 13% Hispanic, 12% African American, 4% Asian American, 0.7% Native American, and .42% of Arab descent (U.S. Department of Commerce 2003, 2004a, 2004b). Our sample includes a larger proportion of white, Native American, and Arab American women but a smaller proportion of Hispanic, Black, and Asian American women. Again, we do not know how representative this sample is of overall activism combining faith and feminism.

Questions Posed

- 1) Are you involved in any activities engaging in issues of women and faith?
- 2) What kinds of activities do you or your organization pursue around women and faith? Please check all that apply.
 - Providing direct services to women within a religiously oriented setting
 - Within a religious context, doing or empowering women's activism around social change
 - Within a religious context, doing or inspiring advocacy for women
 - Advocating for specific changes on behalf of women in your denomination/faith identity and/or all faiths
 - Encouraging interfaith dialogue among women
 - Other, please specify
- 3) Please add some description of your activities.
- 4) What proportion of the women you work with identify with each of the following racial or ethnic groups?
 - White/Caucasian
 - Black/African American
 - Hispanic/Latina
 - Asian American
 - Native American
 - Arab American
 - Other
- 5) What proportion of the women you work with identify with each of the following religions?
 - Mainline Protestant
 - Evangelical Christian
 - Roman Catholic
 - Jewish
 - Muslim
 - Hindu
 - Buddhist
 - Other
 - None
- 6) If you have marked "other" for either of the questions above, please specify.
- 7) Do you work with economically disadvantaged women? (yes/no) In what way?
- 8) Why have you chosen to do this work?
- 9) Have you encountered any difficulties in this work? (yes/no) If so, what kinds?
- 10) What is the most challenging or innovative movement you have been involved in?
- 11) In your work, where do you see the greatest need for support? How might funders, women's organizations, researchers, or other groups better help your efforts?
- 12) Please provide the following contact information: (name, organization, address 1, address 2, city/state, zip code, phone, fax, email address)
- 13) Please enter your Web site address, if you have one.
- 14) Can we contact you for more information about your work?

- 15) Do you partner in this work with other individuals or organizations? (yes/no) If so, whom?
- 16) If there is an individual or organization you think we should contact, please provide contact information for them here. (name, organization, address 1, address 2, city/state, zip code, phone, fax, e-mail address)
- 17) Please enter a Web site for this organization, if you know it.
- 18) If you have contact information for a second individual or organization, please provide it here. (name, organization, address 1, address 2, city/state, zip code, phone, fax, e-mail address)
- 19) Please enter a Web site for this organization, if you know it.

We are interested in understanding the sex, race, and religious backgrounds of respondents. If possible, please answer the following questions about yourself. All answers are voluntary.

- 20) What is your sex? (male/female)
- 21) What is your race or ethnicity?
Check all that apply.
 - White/Caucasian
 - Black/African American
 - Hispanic/Latina
 - Asian American
 - Native American
 - Arab American
 - Other, Please Specify
- 22) What is your religious identity?
 - Mainline Protestant
 - Evangelical Christian
 - Roman Catholic
 - Jewish
 - Muslim
 - Hindu
 - Buddhist
 - None
 - Other, Please Specify
- 23) What is your age?
- 24) What is your occupation?

Appendix 2: Overview of Additional Sources

Database on Faith and Feminism

A second resource used to conduct the overview was a database amassed by IWPR of organizations, individuals, literature, events, and pop culture resources within the field of faith and feminism. This database was compiled based on several sources: contact lists used by IWPR and The Sister Fund in their related work in research and grant making; Internet searches and online searches of publication and media databases; recommendations by existing contacts for additional individuals and groups to connect with; and, of course, the questionnaire. IWPR also conducted an informal survey of academics to assess collaborations and major developments in research and writing about issues related to women and religion or spirituality. Supplemental research was later performed by Emory University, including additional Internet searches, academic research, and online searches of publication and media databases. Again, the resulting database is not a complete list of resources, activities, or individuals involved in issues of religion and women's empowerment, but, like the questionnaire, it provides a snapshot.

Interviews with Innovative Leaders

To ensure that the voices of women of color and the smaller U.S. religions were a significant part of our analysis, IWPR supplemented the questionnaire with individual interviews targeting women of color and organizations they work with. Participants in the interviews were chosen from respondents to the questionnaire, based on their descriptions of their work and their willingness to be contacted about it. They were chosen with two criteria in mind. First, IWPR wanted to explore the experiences of women of color, who are less well represented in the questionnaire sample than in the U.S. population, in order to ensure that their voices were heard. Thus, the invitation list included women of ethnicities not yet represented. Second, IWPR was interested in hearing about particularly innovative approaches to faith and feminism. Overall, these two

criteria corresponded closely, as some of the most exciting and pioneering work in this area is led by women of color.

IWPR researchers contacted participants based on these criteria to learn more about their experiences, successes, and views on how best to support their work in future programming. The insights collected within the interviews are included here, both in the content of the overall report and in the profiles of individual organizations.

Oral Histories

A third resource was the Oral History Project of Candler School of Theology, which is used in the first major section of the report to amplify the questionnaire analysis. The Oral History Project gathered 95 interviews and presentations with thirty-four women—full sets from nineteen women, plus one or more interviews with fifteen others. The heart of the project is to gather life stories, with the purpose of learning from women who have lived strong lives and have helped shape religious communities and culture. The research team used the following criteria in selecting the oral historians:

- Women who lead by their moral authority—by their integrity and example
- Women of courage who have persistently challenged, changed, or sustained traditions in their communities
- Women who have faced tragedy, adversity, or obstacles
- Women who represent diverse geographies (rural, urban, and suburban); ethnicities; theological and political views; ages (over 40); and ministries (both ordained and lay). Diversity also includes women whose influence is quiet and localized, as well as those known widely for groundbreaking leadership.

The women interviewed thus far are Christian, with the exception of one rabbi. Their ethnicities are Caucasian (20), African and African American (12), and Asian and Asian American (2).

The oral history method includes several elements: formal and semiformal presentations; two to four semistructured interviews; collections of published and unpublished materials by and about the women; and analysis, interpretation, and public sharing. For this study, the Candler School of Theology analyzed the women's oral histories to discover their interlocking commitments to faith and social activism. Though they analyzed all 95 interviews, they gave particular attention to the fourteen African, African American, Asian, and Asian American oral histories (a total of 42 presentations and interviews). The purpose was to enlarge the ethnic diversity of the overall study and to amplify the questionnaire and other research findings of this report with an in-depth collection of life stories.

Web Search

A fourth resource was an Internet search of more than 200 organizations that bring women together to address intersections of faith and social activism. These organizations are worldwide, interfaith, and highly diverse. Some are sponsored formally or informally by a faith tradition or a group of women within a tradition. Some are sponsored by ecumenical or interfaith bodies. Some focus on social action and are not explicit in their mission statements and Web sites about the religious perspectives or motivations of women who participate. The research team discovered the faith commitments of these organizations through sources beyond the Web sites, such as brochures or personal contacts. These Web sites have informed the entire report, especially the last section on public media. A sample of the organizations is offered in Appendix 6, focusing particularly on those within the United States.

Appendix 3 Samples of Faith and Feminism- Related Organizations and Events

WOMEN'S FAITH-BASED Social Justice Organizations and Programs

U.S.-BASED AND -FOCUSED

Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community

Promotes leadership of women professionals within Jewish institutions at national and local levels.

New York, NY
(212) 869-9700

www.advancingwomen.org

Audrey Johnson and Myrtle Magee Ministries

Educates and equips women of the African Diaspora to reach their full potential in church, civic, and social arenas; takes strong stand against racial and gender inequality, poverty and moral decay.

Humble, TX
(281) 31A-JAMM

www.ajammministries.com

Alliance of Faith & Feminism

Unites secular and religious activists and movements by creating opportunities for dialogue, such as events and Web-based booklets on rotating topics related to faith and feminism.

York, PA
(717) 880-6257

www.faithfeminism.org

Anglican Women's Empowerment

Through the Office of Women's Ministries at The Episcopal Church Center, provides tools, resources, and forums to empower Anglican women around issues of equality, peace, and justice.

New York, NY
(212) 922-5346

www.episcopalchurch.org/women

Balm in Gilead

Works with thousands of Black churches nationally and internationally to advocate for Black women regarding HIV/AIDS and cervical cancer.

Richmond, VA
(804) 644-2256

www.balmingilead.org

Black Church and Domestic Violence Institute, The

Provides church support, advocacy, and capacity development to empower and protect victims of domestic violence, hold abusers accountable, and promote healing and wholeness in African-American communities.

Atlanta, GA
(770) 909-0715

www.bcdvi.org

Catholics for Choice

Works in partnership with reproductive health, interfaith, and Catholic Church reform groups that share commitment to safe, legal reproductive health care; affirms moral capacity for women to make sound decisions about their lives.

Washington, DC
(202) 986-6093

www.catholicsforchoice.org

Christians for Biblical Equality

Composed of individuals and church members from more than 80 denominations who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnicities and all economic classes.

Minneapolis, MN
(612) 872-6898

www.cbeinternational.org

Church Women United

Works through UN office, as well as local chapters, to organize events, to produce publications, and sponsor awards for Christian women.

New York, NY
(800) 298-5551

www.churchwomen.org

Damaris Project, The

Story-based discussion group provides women with resources for starting conversations in their personal circles and communities about women's lives and the teachings of Jesus.

Dallas, TX

www.damarisproject.org

Dorothy's Place

Only emergency walk-in shelter for street women in Monterey County, CA. Provides a safe, non-judgmental, nurturing space for women through its Women Alive! program.

Salinas, CA

(831) 757-3838

www.dorothysplace.org/empowering_women.asp

Drisha Institute for Jewish Education

World's first center for women's advanced study of classical Jewish texts, places women in leadership positions within Jewish communities across the world, and sponsors women's empowerment programs.

New York, NY

(212) 595-0307

www.drisha.org

The Emancipation Institute

Links prison ministries and outreach programs to incarcerated women to transform the women's lives both in and out of prison.

Guilford, CT

(203) 458-3244

www.emancipationinstitute.org

Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus

Supports, educates, and celebrates Christian feminists from many traditions; encourages and advocates the use of women's gifts in all forms of Christian vocation; provides educational opportunities, networking, and mutual encouragement.

Indianapolis, IN

office@eewc.com

www.eewc.com

Evangelical Lutheran Church of America

Through Justice for Women program, challenges and seeks to eradicate sexism in the church and in society.

Chicago, IL

(773) 380-2281

www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Justice-for-Women.aspx

Faith in Place (FiP)

Teaches congregations how to promote clean energy and sustainable farming in Illinois.

Chicago, IL

(312) 733-4640

www.faithinplace.org

FaithTrust Institute

Provides religious leaders and community advocates with tools and knowledge they need to address religious and cultural issues related to abuse.

Seattle, WA

(206) 634-1903

www.faithtrustinstitute.org

The Hamdard Center

Through the Shelter for Domestic Violence Program, offers housing and support services to Muslim women who are survivors of domestic abuse.

Addison, IL

(630) 835-1432

www.hamdardcenter.org

Hour Children

Multifaceted family service provider committed to the loving care of incarcerated mothers, ex-offenders, and their children, providing short- and long-term support services.

Long Island City, NY

(718) 433-4724

www.hourchildren.org

Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance

Advocates for meaningful participation and equality for Jewish women in family life, synagogues, houses of learning, and communal organizations to the full extent possible within Jewish law.

New York, NY

(212) 679-8500

www.jofa.org

Jewish Women’s Archive

Presents the stories, struggles, and achievements of Jewish women in North America.

Brookline, MA
(617) 232-2258

www.jwa.org

Las Hermanas

Contributes to the development of *mujerista* theology, a theological school of thought that uses religious understandings to provide a culturally appropriate context for Latina feminist hermeneutics.

San Antonio, TX
(212) 740-4812

LILITH Magazine

“Independent, Jewish & Frankly Feminist” magazine charts Jewish women’s lives with exuberance, rigor, affection, subversion and style.

New York, NY
(212) 757-0818

www.lilith.org

Ma’ayan: Torah Studies Initiative for Women

Community-based program helps women study traditional Jewish texts.

Newton, MA
(617) 581-6831

www.maayan.org

Magdalene/Thistle Farms

Residential community founded by a chaplain for women with a history of prostitution, abuse, and drug addiction. Thistle Farms is a cottage business where residents create natural bath and body products.

Nashville, TN
(615) 322-4783

www.thistlefarms.org/founder.html

Mercy Center

Community center, offers programs and services that empower women to reach their full potential and become agents of change.

South Bronx, NY
(718) 993-2789

www.mercycenterbronx.org

Muslim Women’s Institute for Research and Development

Provides hunger relief, health education, and transitional services to new immigrants; does interfaith work.

Bronx, NY
(718) 960-2262

www.mwird.org

Muslim Women’s League

Sponsors programs for girls and explores scriptural interpretation concerning women’s roles in Islam.

Los Angeles, CA
(626) 358-0335

www.mwusa.org

National Council of Churches USA

Through Women’s Ministries and the Justice for Women Working Group, seeks to promote justice and leadership among women within the NCC, its member churches and society at large.

New York, NY
(212) 870-3407

www.nccusa.org

Nazareth Housing

Supports the needs of families, especially women with children and those most vulnerable to economic or ethnic disparity, in obtaining stable and safe housing.

New York, NY
(212) 777-1010

www.nazarethhousingnyc.org

NETWORK

Founded by forty-seven Catholic nuns, NETWORK is a progressive voice within the Catholic community that has been influencing Congress in favor of peace and justice for more than thirty years.

Washington, DC
(202) 347-9797

www.networklobby.org

Ntosake program at Gamaliel

Leadership training program for women to develop a strong public voice.

Chicago, IL
(636) 891-8004

www.gamaliel.org/Ntosake

Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry

Brings together Asian women who are interested in theology and ministry.

Berkeley, CA
(510) 459-5123

www.panaawtm.org

Rainbow Center

Provides services for Korean Christian women fleeing domestic violence.

Flushing, NY

(718) 539-6546

Redeemed Outreach Ministries

Promotes self-worth and quality of life among women, girls, and their families worldwide.

Rosedale, NY
(888) 398-0569

www.redeemedoutreach.org

Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice

Develops prochoice sermons and religious education curricula, provides resources for counseling services, and supports prochoice networks of clergy and lay leaders.

Washington, DC
(608) 827-9668

www.rcrc.org

Resource Center for Women & Ministry in the South

Provides resources and sponsors programs on creativity, spirituality, feminism, and social justice.

Durham, NC
(919) 683-1236

www.rcwms.org

Sacred Place, A

Fosters a deeper spirituality among incarcerated women in Connecticut in order to help them lead responsible, spiritually enriched lives that are drug-free and crime-free.

East Lyme, CT
(860) 739-4518

www.asacredplace.org

S.A.R.A.H.

(Spiritual and Religious Alliance for Hope)

Interfaith women committed to empowering community through dialogue, community service, and panel discussions by conforming to the highest values of all faiths.

Southern California

www.sarah4hope.org

Satyana Institute

Through the Power of Reconciliation program, addresses need for women and men to collaborate, taking a spiritually grounded approach to transforming gender injustice.

Boulder, CO
(303) 588-7715

www.satyana.org

Shalom Task Force

Offers a rabbinically endorsed means to provide abused women with confidentiality, professionalism, a sympathetic ear, and advice.

New York, NY
(888) 883-2323

www.shalomtaskforce.org

Tahirih Justice Center

Baha'i-inspired, provides pro bono direct legal services and social and medical service referrals to immigrant women and girls fleeing gender-based violence and persecution.

Falls Church, VA
(703) 575-0070

www.tahirih.org

Transitional Housing BARN

On the grounds of a St. Benedictine monastery, provides housing, supportive services, life management skills, and financial education for homeless women and their children.

Bristow VA
(703) 369-1325

www.barninc.org

Turning Point

Addresses needs of Muslim women and children through crisis intervention, individual and group counseling, advocacy, outreach, education, and training.

Flushing, NY
(718) 883-9400

www.turningpoint-ny.org

Visitation House Ministries

Dedicated to making a difference in the lives of economically poor women and their families.

San Antonio, TX

vhminfo@visitationhouseministries.org

www.vhmin.org

Voices of Sophia

Works toward the reformation of the Presbyterian Church (USA) into a discipleship of equals, and focuses on challenges to the full participation of women in the life of the church.

Sante Fe, NM

www.voicesofsophia.org

WISDOM (Women's Interfaith Solutions for Dialogue and Outreach in Metro Detroit)

Gives women opportunities to listen to one another, respect one another's differences, and take action toward change.

Bloomfield Hills, MI

www.interfaithwisdom.org

WITNESS

Through The Women's Leadership Institute, prepares women for leadership in the Church and addresses feminist theology and feminist spirituality.

Holland, MI

(616) 395-7876

www.witnesschange.org

WOMB (Women Organizing, Mobilizing and Building)

Promotes Black women's health (spiritual, physical, emotional and economical), economic development, relationship building, and education.

Brooklyn, NY

(718) 237-4612

www.destinyconference.netfirms.com/womb.htm

Women-Church Convergence

A coalition of autonomous Catholic-rooted organizations and groups raising a feminist voice and committed to an ekklesia of women that is participative, egalitarian, and self-governing.

Falls Church, VA

(703) 671-6712

www.women-churchconvergence.org

Women in Islam

Coalition of professional and social activist Muslim women representing a broad spectrum of human rights, and social justice interests.

New York, NY

(212) 576-8875

www.womeninislam.org

Women Transcending Boundaries

Began in September 2001, interfaith dialogue with monthly meetings of over 50 women.

Syracuse, NY

info@wtb.org

www.wtb.org

Women's Advocate Ministry

Provides active outreach, crisis intervention, referral and supportive services to incarcerated women and their children, the majority of whom are at the Rose M. Singer Correctional Facility at Riker's Island.

New York, NY

(212) 280-7320

www.womensadvocateministry.org

Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual

Networks feminists in religion through programs, workshops, conferences, and consultations. Offers feminist, faith-based resources, including research, counseling, spiritual direction, liturgical planning, and an extensive resource library.

Silver Spring, MD

(301) 589-2509

www.hers.com/water

Women's Interfaith Institute

Provides variety of interfaith activities through which women of spirit can express their beliefs, form a community for action and leadership development, and find loving support.

Seneca Falls, NY

(315) 568-1726

www.womensinterfaithinstitute.org

Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity (WISE Initiative) coordinated by American Society for Muslim Advancement

Empowers Muslim women to fully participate in their communities and nations, amplifying their voices at all levels of political, economic, religious, and social discourse. Committed to

working toward the establishment of a global Shura (religious) Council comprising Muslim women scholars and activists.

New York, NY
(212) 870-2552

www.asmasociety.org/wise

Women's Ordination Conference

Promotes feminist theologies and practices in the Roman Catholic Church; works for women to be ordained as deacons, priests, and bishops.

Fairfax, VA
(703) 352-1006

www.womensordination.org

Women's Theological Center

Addresses issues of social justice from a faith and spiritual perspective. Cultivates leadership among women from diverse communities, sharing tools for working authentically across differences of race, class, sexuality, religion, etc.

Boston, MA
(617) 585-5655

www.thewtc.org

Young Women's Christian Association

Fights for racial justice and women's economic advancement through its hallmark programs. YWCA USA is both the oldest and the largest women's organization in the United States. Its global network, World YWCA, is over 150 years old and includes 125 countries worldwide.

Washington, DC
(202) 467-0801

www.ywca.org

WOMEN'S FAITH-BASED Social Justice Organizations and Programs

INTERNATIONAL

Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology

Community of Asian women involved in theology and ministry, holds conferences and meetings, and publishes a theological journal, *In God's Image*, and newsletter, *womenet*.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
enquiries@awrc4ct.org

www.awrc4ct.org

Con-spirando

Empowers women in the areas of ecofeminism, spirituality and theology in Latin America.

Santiago, Chile

www.conspirando.cl

Ecumenical Women at the United Nations

Consists of churches and ecumenical organizations at the United Nations, focuses on religion and human rights from a gender perspective, through the Commission on the Status of Women.

New York, NY
(212) 808-5360

www.ecumenicalwomen.org

Global Women of Faith Network, an initiative of the World Conference of Religions for Peace

Trains women religious leaders to assume increasingly visible leadership roles in transforming conflict, promoting peace, and advancing sustainable development.

New York, NY
(212) 687-2163

www.wcrp.org/initiatives/women/index

HandCrafting Justice

Project of Sisters of the Good Shepherd, partners with women living in poverty around the world by showcasing and selling their handcrafts at colleges, churches, women's groups, and community events.

(718) 204-0909

Astoria, NY

www.handcraftingjustice.cedris.org

KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights

Fights for issues related to domestic and global human rights for Muslims.

Washington, DC 20036

(202) 234-7302

www.karamah.org

Potohar Organization for Development Advocacy

Sponsors faith and feminism workshops in rural Pakistan.

Ithaca, NY

poda_pakistan@yahoo.com

www.globalgoodspartners.org/producers_poda

Sisters in Islam

Promotes women's rights within the framework of Islam through research, advocacy, legal services, and public education.

Petaling Jaya Selangor, Malaysia

sistersinislam@pd.jaring.my

www.sistersinislam.org.my

Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding

Through Middle East-North Africa Women's Peace Initiative, channels resources and publicity to individual religious women in East-North Africa who risk their lives to bring peace to their communities.

New York, NY

(212) 967-7707

www.tanenbaum.org/wpi.html

Women, Faith, and Development Alliance

Collaborative campaign to strategically place women at the center of international economic policy implementation by way of a partnership among 100+ global faith, women and development organizations. Cofounded by the Washington National Cathedral, InterAction, Women Thrive Worldwide, and World Conference of Religions for Peace.

Washington, DC

(202) 537-3184

www.wfd-alliance.org

Women for Afghan Women

Works to secure Afghan women's rights within the framework of Muslim law to protect them against domestic violence, forced marriage, child marriage, rape, honor killings, etc.

Flushing, NY

(718) 321-2434

www.womenforafghanwomen.org

Women Living Under Muslim Laws

International network provides information, support, and a collective space for women whose lives are shaped, conditioned, or governed by laws and customs said to derive from Islam.

wluml@wluml.org

www.wluml.org/english/index.shtml

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS That Have Supported Women's Activism

Auburn Media

Lifts religious voices that speak passionately on political and social issues with a respect for religious freedom and religious diversity.

New York, NY

(212) 662-4315

www.auburnmedia.org

Beautitudes Society, The

Develops and sustains emerging Christian leaders at seminaries and divinity schools to build a progressive network for justice, compassion, and peace.

Santa Barbara, CA

www.beatitudessociety.org

Evangelicals for Social Action

Promotes Christian engagement, analysis, and understanding around major social, cultural, and public policy issues.

Wynnewood, PA

(484) 384-2990

www.esa-online.org

Faith in Public Life

Provides advanced communications and organizing tools to progressive faith leaders and organizations.

Washington, DC

(202) 435-0260

www.faithinpubliclife.org

Faith Voices for the Common Good

Promotes greater public awareness for a shared vision among diverse religions, utilizing advanced technologies.

Oakland, CA
(510) 459-5123

www.faithvoices.org

Interfaith Alliance, The

National nonpartisan “advocacy voice of the interfaith movement” promotes democratic values, defends religious liberty, challenges hatred and religious bigotry, and reinvigorates informed civic participation.

Washington, DC
(202) 238-3300

www.interfaithalliance.org

Network of Spiritual Progressives, The

Seeks to foster a “New Bottom Line of love, generosity & ecological sensitivity in our economy, education, media, & government”; challenges the misuse of God & religion by some on the Religious Right and religiophobia among some on the Left.

Berkeley, CA
(510) 644-1200

www.spiritualprogressives.org

Progressive Muslims Union

A grassroots organization providing a forum and voice for North American Muslims who wish to pursue a progressive intellectual, social, and political agenda.

info@pmuna.org

Sojourners/Call to Renewal

Seeks to proclaim and practice the biblical call to integrate spiritual renewal and social justice.

Washington, DC
(202) 328-8842

www.sojo.net

Tikkun Leil Shabbat

Independent prayer groups (minyanim) organized by young Jews across the United States, in which women can lead prayers and read the Torah. Services are inclusive of women and men, gay or straight.

www.tikkunleilshabbat.blogspot.com

United Church of Christ

Provides leadership for members to establish justice and equality for women in all parts of the world. It endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action and maintains a strong link to the United Nations.

Cleveland, OH
(216) 736-3868

www.ucc.org/women

WOMEN'S SECULAR ACTIVIST ORGANIZATIONS That Have Supported Women's Faith-Based Activism or Research

Association for Women's Rights in Development

Connects, informs, and mobilizes people and organizations committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development, and women's human rights. Conducting Resisting and Challenging Religious Fundamentalisms advocacy research project.

contact@awid.org

www.awid.org/go.php?pg=challenge_fundamentalisms

Backline

Provides direct access for women and their loved ones to get support, information, and discussion related to abortion; hosts national, toll-free talk line with trained volunteers, many of whom are women of faith.

Portland, OR
(888) 493-0092

www.yourbackline.org

Center for the Advancement of Women

Dedicated to research-based education and advocacy for women; produces the *Women on Religion Survey* on how women define the influence of religion upon their attitudes toward issues that most affect their lives.

New York, NY
(212) 391-7718

www.advancewomen.org

Institute for Women’s Policy Research

Through Religion, Politics and Women’s Public Vision, conducts research and outreach that identifies values motivating women’s public activism and strengthens collaborations between women activists in religious and secular organizations.

Washington, DC
(202) 785-5100

www.iwpr.org/Politics_Religion_PublicVision/Home.htm

National Council of Women’s Organizations

Includes 200+ women’s organizations pursuing policy and activism to address issues of concern to women, including family and work, economic equity and education. Has many faith activist groups in membership.

Washington, DC
(202) 293-4505

www.womensorganizations.org

National Council for Research on Women

Network of 100+ leading U.S. research, advocacy, and policy centers; collectively generates evidence-based information that promotes the advancement of women and girls.

New York, NY
(212) 785-7335

www.ncrw.org

Sakhi for South Asian Women

Through Faith-Based Initiative, highlights the role of spirituality and faith in the decision-making and healing process that domestic violence survivors undertake.

New York, NY
(212) 714-9153

www.sakhi.org/learn/policy.php

South Asian Network

Reaches out to faith-based communities regarding the issue of domestic violence. Creates opportunities for dialogue among male leaders in the South Asian community on the subject.

Artesia, CA
(562) 403-0488 x113

www.southasiannetwork.org

White House Project, The

Aims to advance women’s leadership in all communities and sectors by filling the leadership pipeline with a richly diverse, critical mass of women. With SheSource.org and Auburn Media, is training a faith and feminism speakers bureau.

New York, NY
(212) 261-4400

www.thewhitehouseproject.org

Women’s Action for New Directions

Empowers women to act politically to reduce violence and militarism, and to redirect excessive military resources toward unmet human and environmental needs. Created Faith Seeks Peace project to train women of faith activists.

Atlanta, GA
(404) 438-6598

www.wand.org

Women’s eNews

News source dedicated to covering issues of particular concern to women and providing women’s perspectives on public policy. Produced Women and Worship and Women and Islam article series on women and religion.

New York, NY
(212) 244-1720

www.womensenews.org

Women’s Research and Education Institute

Connecting the Dots . . . Women, Religion, and Public Policy, a collaboration with faith-based organizations to discuss policy within a feminist context, and integrate experiences and efforts of faith-based groups with policy and academic research to encourage public-sector policies that increase women’s equality.

Arlington, VA
(703) 812-7990

www.wrei.org/ConnectingtheDots.htm

PHILANTHROPIES That Have Supported Activism For and Among Women of Faith

Atlanta Women's Foundation

Part of Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy Initiative, is Georgia's only public foundation focused solely on the needs of women and girls.

Atlanta, GA

(404) 577-5000

www.atlantawomen.org

Boston Women's Fund

Organized African American Women Faith-Based Philanthropy initiative. Published *Expanding the Circle . . . An African American and Asian Women's Perspective on Giving* that focused on Black women's faith-based giving circles.

Boston, MA

(617) 725-0035

www.bostonwomensfund.org

Dallas Women's Foundation

Part of Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy Initiative, invests in education and training, health care, economic sustainability, domestic violence protection, and pregnancy prevention programs for women and girls.

Dallas, TX

(214) 965-9977

www.dallaswomensfoundation.org

Dobkin Family Foundation

Jewish foundation, funds feminist programs, advancing women and girls' roles for a more inclusive society.

New York, NY

(212) 440-0800

nancy@dobkinfamily.com

Faith Partnerships

Through Sisters of Faith Initiative, encourages collaborations among grantmakers, religious groups, and the government in addressing poverty. Focuses on "sister work, spirit work and strategic (philanthropic) work."

Raleigh, NC

(919) 834-8335

www.faithpartnerships.org/index.htm

Ford Foundation

Through Religion, Society and Culture program, funded projects focused on women and religion.

New York, NY

www.fordfound.org/fields/religionandculture/overview

Foundation for the Advancement of Women in Religion

Raises funds for women who are involved in progressive scholarship and practice related to religion.

Washington, DC

(202) 390-7006

www.womeninreligion.org

Global Fund for Women

Through Rights within Religious and Cultural Traditions initiative, supports projects by women working to promote women's rights within their own faith communities and cultural traditions.

San Francisco, CA

(415) 202 7640

www.globalfundforwomen.org

Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago

Funds programs on behalf of Jewish women in need in the United States and abroad.

Chicago, IL

(312) 357-4850

www.juf.org/women/jwf.aspx

Mary's Pence

Catholic organization, collects and distributes funds for the self-empowerment of women throughout the Americas.

Staten Island, NY

(718) 720-8040

www.maryspence.org

New York Women's Foundation

Part of Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy Initiative, works to transform the conditions of poverty and to create an equal and just future for low-income women and girls in the five boroughs of NYC, and helps them achieve sustained economic security through expanded opportunities.

New York, NY

(212) 261-4586

www.nywf.org

Sister Fund, The

Funds grassroots organizing and scholarship; hosts events and other projects that give voice to the work of women of faith engaging issues of gender justice. Published the *Something New is Emerging* report, an archive of the Faith and Feminism Dialogues series.

New York, NY

(212) 260-4446

www.sisterfund.org

www.faithandfeminism.org

Texas Muslim Women's Foundation

Supports Muslim women in developing their identity and making significant contributions to society through community activism, providing a role model for Muslim youth, and setting a standard for themselves.

Richardson, TX

(972) 880-4192

www.tmwf.org

Third Wave Foundation

Feminist, activist foundation, supports young women and transgender youth ages 15 to 30 working toward gender, racial, economic, and social justice; funded faith-based groups under Reproductive Health and Justice Initiative.

New York, NY

(212) 228-8311

www.thirdwavefoundation.org

Women's Funding Network

Through Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy Initiative, establishes a rapprochement between women's faith-based organizations and the women's funding movement.

Oakland, CA

(510) 435-6048

www.wfnet.org

Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts

Part of Faith, Feminism and Philanthropy Initiative, dedicated to increasing resources and opportunities for all women and girls in the four counties of Western Massachusetts.

Easthampton, MA

(413) 529-0087

www.womensfund.net

ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS with Women-Centered Religious Programs

American Academy of Religion

Hosts networks such as The Women's Caucus in Religion, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Group, Lesbian-Feminist Issues in Religion Group, and Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group, and other groups that meet at AAR's annual meetings and communicate electronically throughout the year. Members are largely faculty at colleges, universities, and divinity schools.

Atlanta, GA

(404) 727-3049

www.aarweb.org

Auburn Theological Seminary

Through Women's Multifaith Program, provides programs and educational initiatives to cultivate, sustain, and inspire women to have meaningful encounters with women from other traditions.

New York, NY

(212) 662-4315

www.auburnsem.org

Barnard College

The Center for Research on Women hosts a series of lectures, panel discussions, and conferences exploring a wide range of feminist and social justice issues, including religion. In 2007, the center hosted a Women and Religion exhibit.

New York, NY

(212) 854-2067

www.barnard.columbia.edu/crow

Boston University

Through Anna Howard Shaw Center, promotes structures and practices that empower women and honor diversity, through research, education, support, and advocacy.

Boston, MA

(617) 353-3075

www.bu.edu/sth/shaw

California Institute of Integral Studies

Through Women's Spirituality Program, offers womanist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches to an active spirituality and ecosocial vision of peace, justice, and sustainability.

San Francisco, CA

(415) 575-6100

www.ciis.edu/academics/wse.html

Claremont Graduate University

The first program focused on the intersection of women's studies and religion in the United States. Offers a Master's and PhD in Women's Studies in Religion.

Claremont, CA

(909) 621-8085

www.cgu.edu/pages/1016.asp

Emory University

Through Women in Theology and Ministry Program in the Candler School of Theology, promotes scholarship and programs that support, consult with, and advocate for lay and ordained women and their communities.

Atlanta, Georgia

(404) 727-4180

www.candler.emory.edu/ACADEMIC/WTM/index.cfm

Graduate Theological Union

Through new Program for Women's Studies in Religion, offers certificate in women's studies in religion and theology, drawing upon diverse voices, experiences, academic disciplines, and faith traditions.

Berkeley, CA

wsr@ses.gtu.edu

www.gtu.edu/about/academic-centers-programs-and-affiliates/wsr

Hartford Seminary

Through Women's Leadership Institute, presents curricula with feminist perspectives on scripture, theology, psychology, spirituality, ritual, and leadership.

Hartford, CT

(860) 509-9500

www.hartsem.edu/academic/wli.htm

Harvard Divinity School

Through Women's Studies in Religion Program, the first program to focus on the interdisciplinary study of women and religion focuses on research that expands the base of knowledge about women in religion.

Cambridge, MA

(617) 495-5705

www.hds.harvard.edu/wsrp

Interdenominational Theological Center, The

Through Black Women in Church and Society and its Womanist Scholars in Religion Program, facilitates inclusion and full participation of Black women in the life and work of the church and the larger society.

Atlanta, GA

(404) 527-5713

www.itc.edu/pages/wsp/WSPHome.htm

Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion

The oldest interdisciplinary, inter-religious feminist academic journal in religious studies.

Cambridge, MA

(617) 384-8046

www.fsrinc.org

New York Theological Seminary

Through Resource Center for Women & Ministry, supports ordained and lay women in ministry; conducts conferences and symposia.

New York, NY

(212) 870-1215

www.nyts.edu

Pluralism Project at Harvard University

Through Women's Network Initiative, offers a series of multireligious consultations with women leaders, activists, and academics, accompanied by focused research, local convenings, and the creation of a documentary film named *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America*.

Cambridge, MA

(617) 496-2481

www.pluralism.org/women

San Francisco Theological Seminary

Through Doctorate of Ministry with International Feminist Emphasis, invites theologically trained women who are leaders in their churches and communities to share together in a global learning community representing a wide variety of Christian traditions, with a majority of participants from Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

San Francisco, CA
(800) 447-8820 *865

web.sfts.edu/index.asp

Yale University

Through Women, Religion and Globalization Project, explores relationship between women religious practitioners and political, economic, and social developments, both locally, around the world, and in the larger context of international affairs.

New Haven, CT

www.yale.edu/macmillan/wrg/about.htm

**Faith and Feminism-Related
CONFERENCES and EVENTS**

American Association of Religion – Annual meeting. Chicago, IL, Nov 1-3, 2008.

American Jewish Congress' Commission for Women's Empowerment – “American/Israel Dialogue” brought together American and Israeli feminists. Tel Aviv, Israel, May 2006.

The Association of Theological Schools –Women in Leadership in Theological Education annual conference. Pittsburgh, PA.

American Society for Muslim Advancement –“Women's Islamic Initiatives in Spirituality and Equity” (WISE) conference. New York, NY, Nov. 2006 and Malaysia, spring 2009.

Association for Women's Rights in Development – “Faith, Feminism and the Power of Love” session at international forum. Bangkok, Thailand, Oct. 2005. “Faith, Feminism and the Power of Love, Part II” session at The Power of Movements conference. Cape Town, South Africa, Nov 14-18, 2008.

Auburn Theological Seminary and Women Center Stage – “God's Troublemakers: How Women of Faith are Changing the World” panel addressing young women's redefinition of religious activism. New York, NY, April 16, 2008.

Brandeis University Feminist Sexual Ethics Project – “Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacy” conference. Waltham, MA, Oct. 15-16 2006.

Christians for Biblical Equality – “Sent to Preach the Gospel: Women and Men Using their Gifts for the Great Commission,” International Symposium on Gender and Mission. Toronto, ON, July 18-20, 2008.

Church Women United – 2008 Ecumenical Women's Gathering conference. Independence, MO, June 19-22, 2008.

Council on Foundations – “Faith and Feminism: a Paradox or Blueprint for Bold Philanthropy?” panel at leadership summit. Washington, DC, May 2008.

Harvard Divinity School – “Religion and the Feminist Movement” conference. Boston, MA, November 1-3, 2002.

Interchurch Center – “Women in Religion in the 21st Century” conference. NY, NY, Oct. 2006.

Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance – Passion and Possibility: 10th Anniversary International Conference on Feminism and Orthodoxy. New York, NY, Feb. 2007.

Jewish Theological Seminary – “For There is Hope –Gender and the Hebrew Bible” conference to honor the memory and legacy of Dr. Tikva Frymer-Kensky. New York, NY, Oct. 21, 2007.

Las Hermanas – Las Hermanas Tejedoras Del Futuro – Weavers of the Future Biennial National Conference. New York, NY, Oct. 2007.

National Council for Research on Women – “Faith, Feminism, and Academe: Where Are the Connections?” panel at annual conference. Atlanta, GA, May/June 2007. And, “Working at the Intersections of Faith, Gender, and Religion” panel at annual conference. New York, NY. June 6, 2008.

National Women’s Studies Association—Annual conference features Catholic Interest Group, Jewish Women’s Caucus, and Feminist Spirituality Group. Cincinnati, OH, June 19-22, 2008.

New York Theological Seminary – “Called by God: Developing Leadership Strategies for Women in Ministry.” New York, NY, June 2007.

Omega Institute – Women and Power and Enlightened Power conference series addressing women’s engaged spirituality. Rhinebeck, NY. Held in the fall annually.

PANAAWTM – “For Such a Time as This: Empire, Globalization and the Church” annual conference bringing together Asian and Asian American women religion scholars and academic administrators. Burlingame, CA, April 2008.

“REVEAL: Young Women Defining the Divine” interfaith conference for emerging young women spiritual leaders. New York, NY, Spring 2009.

Seattle Pacific University – “Religions and Feminisms: Countering Mutual Silence,” one-day conference. Seattle, WA, April 2008.

Spelman College – “Sisters of African Descent: Connecting Spirituality, Religion, and Vocation” conference. Atlanta, GA, Sept. 2006.

Washington National Cathedral – Sacred Circles, biennial conference exemplifying “fourth wave” of feminism, with women’s activism grounded in love, compassion, and community connection. Feb. 16-17, 2007.

Women’s Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual and Feminist Studies in Religion – “Making the Connections: Claiming Our Past—Envisioning Our Future Together” forum. Washington, DC, June 2008.

World Forum for Democratization in Asia – biennial conference. Manila, Philippines, September 19-21, 2007.

Appendix 4: Samples of Women's Academic Discourse

1. Critiquing the oppression and exclusion of women in religious traditions and institutions

- In *The Church and the Second Sex* (1968), one of second-wave feminism's first critiques of Christianity, Mary Daly examines Catholic texts, histories, and philosophies to argue that the Church's historical and contemporary violence against women is both profound and misguided. She argues, for example, that the Church has emphasized biblical texts that support women's oppression while downplaying evidence that Christ had an egalitarian approach to gender.
- Rosemary Radford Ruether traces the development of Christian concepts of women's moral inferiority in *Sexism and God-Talk* (1983). She shows, for instance, that the story of Eden was translated into the principle that women are morally weak and thus unable to dependably exercise moral authority.

2. Reconstructing religious traditions to reflect and engage with women's experiences

- Esther Broner and Naomi Nimrod's *The Women's Haggadah* (1994) infuses the Jewish Passover seder with elements that address women's oppression. For example, participants recite the Plagues of Women, including rape, breast cancer, unequal pay, and battery, rather than the traditional Ten Plagues sent to warn the Egyptians of God's retaliation for their treatment of the Jews.
- Kate Ott, Melanie Harris, Jenna Tittsman, Teresa Delgado, and Rachel A. R. Bundang presented a paper at a November 2007 panel given for the American Academy of Religion in Boston titled "*Bound for Justice: Engaging Womanist Theory and the Parallel Concerns of How Women's Bodies Are Signified from Womanist, Latina, Asian and White Feminists' Perspectives.*"
- Delores Williams, a womanist Christian theologian, reinterprets the Hebrew Bible story of Hagar as African American women's experi-

ence as slaves and outcasts. Hagar, Abraham's slave, bears him a son (Ishmael) and is later sent away when Abraham's wife, Sarah, has a son of her own (Isaac). With no resources at her disposal, Hagar beseeches God for help and receives a vision that guides her to nourishment. Williams sees the story of Hagar as a tale of God's support for an outcast. She also argues that "liberation in the Hagar stories is not given by God; it finds its source in the human initiative . . . [Even today] many Black women have testified that 'God helped them make a way out of no way' " (Williams 1993, 4-6).

3. Recovering and building upon a redeemable past

- Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1992) argues that early Christianity carved out egalitarian roles for women, but Biblical stories of Jesus were selected much later to support theological approaches that downplayed women's roles, in part to make the Christian message more acceptable within a patriarchal culture.
- Elaine Pagels (1981) argues that the second-century Gnostic texts, which were found in Egypt in the twentieth century and deliberately left out of the New Testament, reveal a diversity of opinion in early Christianity about the roles of women. She, too, argues that Biblical texts were based more on sociopolitical concerns than on consensus-based doctrine.
- Riffat Hassan (2004) argues that Islam's emphasis on direct, unmediated connections to Allah is in conflict with the oppressive treatment of women in religious practices and values, and that the Qur'an protects women's rights and equality.
- Asma Barlas (2002) analyzes the development of ideas about religious authority and knowledge in Islam to show how Muslims came to read inequality and patriarchy in the Qur'an and use it to justify patriarchal religious and social structures. Barlas argues that the Qur'an's teachings do not support patriarchy, but rather affirm gender equality.

4. Developing new spiritualities: abandoning traditional faith identities and seeking alternatives

- Daly's walkout of Harvard Memorial Church

(1971) demonstrated her official cutting of ties with organized religion. She also invited other women to remove themselves from an institution that did not want women, thereby becoming liberated from the limitations of Christianity. She continued this accent in her writing thereafter.

- Rita M. Gross rejects Christianity because of its doctrine of exclusivity, the idea that Jesus is the only way to salvation. She argues that Christianity cannot overcome the damage caused by this doctrine, and explains that Buddhism, despite its sexist practices, can “revalorize” religion, bringing it closer to “its own fundamental values and vision,” which are egalitarian (1993).
- Carol Christ, in *Rebirth of the Goddess* (1998), summarizes the many ways that women interpret the idea of the goddess, and she outlines the importance of the feminine divine for herself and other women. She argues that feminist “thea-logy” must root its theory in women’s experiences.

5. Proposing liberative practices for women

- Ada Maria Isasi-Díaz (1992) critiques the hierarchical relationship between Catholic clergy and laity and argues that the Church’s attempts to “mystify” the sacred are a way to establish control. She argues that *mujerista* theology democratizes the sacred by locating its source in everyday life experience and providing examples of woman-centered liturgies. In other works, she proposes practical pathways to building justice.
- Cherry Kittredge and Zalmon Sherwood (1995) provide a guide to liturgies and rituals for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities in their collection, *Equal Rites: Lesbian and Gay Worship, Ceremonies, and Celebrations*.
- Sheila Redman’s “Remember the Good, Forget the Bad’: Denial and Family Violence in a Christian Worship Service” (1992) examines the role of Protestant churches in perpetuating violence against women and children through denying violence and sentimentalizing motherhood. Redman provides suggestions to ministers for intervening and addressing women’s needs.
- Marcia Falk’s *The Book of Blessings: New Jewish Prayers for Daily Life, the Sabbath, and*

the New Moon Festival (1996) offers original prayers as well as Jewish women’s prayers from different time periods, translated from Hebrew and Yiddish. Falk introduces these and suggests them as alternatives to traditional prayers that are patriarchal in focus.

6. Contextualizing women’s contributions

- Delores Williams (1987) argues that womanism deepens feminist approaches by giving womanist scholars “the freedom to explore the particularities of Black women’s history and culture without being guided by what white feminists have already identified as women’s issues.” She raises issues of access to power, survivalism, and slavery as distinct and integral to African American women’s experiences in ways they are not for white women.
- Laura E. Donaldson and Kwok Pui Lan (2002) call for feminist theology to look beyond national borders. A Native American and a Chinese woman who was raised in British-controlled Hong Kong, Donaldson and Kwok argue that feminist theology must recognize the intersections among gender, religion, and colonialism to avoid replicating the “‘colonial gaze’ of traditional Western theology” (3).

7. Honoring difference

- Isasi-Díaz, in *Mujerista Theology* (1996), argues that supporting and empowering Hispanic women’s daily struggle for meaning are central to *mujerista* theology. Isasi-Díaz describes her own experience of self-discovery, exploring what it means to live as an outsider and oppressed “other.” She stresses the importance of interaction and involvement with women at the grassroots in developing methodologies for *mujerista* theologies.

8. Overcoming gaps

- Anne Braude’s *Transforming the Faiths of Our Fathers: Women Who Changed American Religion* (2004) is a powerful effort to write for diverse academic and activist audiences. The book includes essays by activists and academics exploring women’s spirituality and religious women’s roles in U.S. women’s movements. It grew from a conference on religion and the

feminist movement at Harvard Divinity School in 2002. Both the conference and book illustrate the kind of work that could build stronger connections between activists and academics.

9. Studying religious identity

- Resnick Dufour (2000) analyzes how Jewish feminist women use Jewish, spiritual, and feminist criteria to decide whether they will accept certain religious practices or beliefs. Her findings suggest that people judge practices and teachings based on multiple identities before including them in their self-understandings.
- Lori G. Beaman (2001) explores how Mormon women negotiate their identities. She finds a wide range of opinions about women's labor force participation, the concept of male headship, and the priesthood. She also finds that traditionalist Mormon women frequently support at least practical arguments for women's paid labor, transform the idea of male headship to mean partnership and teamwork, and downplay the importance of the priesthood by framing it as work with little reward.
- Marie Griffith (2000) highlights the relationship between secular feminists' and conservative Evangelical Christian women's perspectives on women's empowerment. She argues that secular feminist dismissal of conservative women of faith smacks of classism and anti-religious prejudice, urging secular feminists to consider the possibility that submission may be a form of empowerment for some women, allowing them to stop trying to be the same as men, in order that they may truly be themselves. She also draws out important similarities and connections between secular feminists and conservative evangelical Christian women.
- John Bartkowski and Jen'nan Ghazal (2003) find that both conservative evangelical Christian and Muslim women interpret ostensibly patriarchal traditions in empowering ways. For example, traditionalist evangelicals claim that they are liberated by submission to men, since they will not have to concern themselves with nondomestic decisions. Within Islam, traditionalists describe the veil as an energizing symbol of devotion to Allah.
- E.W. Ozorak (1996) argues that most religious women perceive gender inequality in their religious institutions, which they deal with by

focusing on what they like about their religion, comparing religious inequality with inequality elsewhere, or, most often, appealing to a capacity to change tradition by working subtly within its structures. Women generally see relationships as more important to their religious experiences than institutional hierarchies; thus, their concern for inequality is muted in favor of those relationships.

10. Studying changes in women's religious leadership

- Mary Ellen Konieczny and Mark Chaves (2000) evaluate differences between the congregations of men and women clergy to find that women's congregations are more likely to be generally under-resourced than men's. They also find that woman-headed congregations are most prevalent among African American, nondenominational churches. Similarly, Paul Sullins (2000) finds that female clergy are over-represented in the lower ranks and experience ongoing discrimination.
- Karol Maybury and Sarah Chickering (2000) find that men are more likely to evaluate successful female pastors as less effective in their sermons.
- Carl and Dorothy Schneider (1997) find that in remote Catholic churches, nuns and women in lay leadership are becoming de facto priests, because it is difficult to find priests to run churches or administer sacraments.
- Steven M. Cohen and Judith Schor (2004) find that female rabbis serve in smaller congregations and earn less than their male colleagues. They also have less stable careers, get fewer interviews in their job searches, and are more likely to hear negative remarks about their gender and age within congregational settings. Notably, Cohen and Schor's work was commissioned by the Rabbinical Assembly of the Conservative Movement, exemplifying a successful partnership between researchers and practitioners.

11. Studying the role of religion in women's public participation

- Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 1892 address to the U.S. Congressional Committee of the Judiciary, entitled "The Solitude of Self," in which she

linked existential dimensions of women's spirituality to women's political advancement, arguably laid a far-reaching foundation for the merger of faith and feminism. For reference: gos.sbc.edu/s/stantoncady1.html.

- Jenny Irons (1998) investigates the recruitment, motivations, and participation of Black and white women during the civil rights movement in Mississippi. She finds that both were often recruited into the movement through religious institutions; however, this phenomenon was stronger for Black women. Further, she discovers that Black women tended to be more involved at the grassroots level, whereas national religious organizations more often recruited white women.
- Mary Pardo (1998) finds that local Catholic churches, as a center of community life, help provide a sense of collective identity that has encouraged civic activism among Mexican American women in Los Angeles. Women's involvement has led them to challenge, visibly and subtly, the patriarchal structures of congregations.

12. Studying effects of women's activism on religious institutions

- Jualynne Dodson's *Engendering Church: Women, Power and the AME Church* (2002) argues that women in the African Methodist Episcopal Church historically advocated for the abolition of slavery and social mobility for the community. However, they also used sheer numbers, effective organizing, and fund-raising resources to work for equality in the AME Church during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, culminating in the election of the church's first female bishop in 2000. By exploiting key resources, including a formal women's structure, women were able to challenge the patriarchy of the church.

13. Studying relationships among religious women, religious institutions, and social services

- Nancy Nason-Clark (2000) argues that religious women who suffer from abuse require help from their congregations and from secular social welfare agencies. Feminists, she says, are correct to see religion as part of the prob-

lem, based on evidence that clergy are slow to condemn violence and at times hold women responsible. But many religious women who are abused value religion as central to their lives; thus, models of assistance that reject or avoid religion are unlikely to break cycles of abuse. Nason-Clark recommends that religious institutions and secular support services develop integrated referral networks.

- Kathleen Tangenberg (2003) argues that, although "faith-based" initiatives are associated with conservatives, women working at the grassroots of social work in so-called "conservative" religious organizations offer ideas that frequently align with feminist perspectives. They create spaces that encourage spirituality without adhering to the rules of organized religion, and they express feminist ethical values by living with or working closely with the poor and marginalized.
- Louis L. Foss and Melanie A. Warnke (2003) assert that, for fundamentalist Christian women who are the victims of abuse, religion is integral to healing. Counselors who help these women need to incorporate religion as part of the healing process.

14. Sponsoring interdisciplinary opportunities

- The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) holds annual Women in Leadership in Theological Education conferences. The Association provides educational support for women faculty and administrators and assists schools in their efforts to include more women in leadership positions. Participants for the conferences are selected on the basis of applications from women faculty and administrators in ATS schools, and preference is given to women in midlevel administrative positions, junior-level faculty, and minority applicants. ATS also holds an annual Senior Administrator Retreat for women serving as presidents and deans of member schools. Though these meetings are focused on theological education, they bring people together with different disciplinary backgrounds, and strong relationships are formed.
- Wabash Center for Teaching and Learning in Theology and Religion holds many kinds of conferences and events, including two-year

faculty workshops, which include three or more meetings and informal correspondence. The results are a deepening of interdisciplinary interchange and personal relationships.

- Some fields, such as political science and sociology, have annual conferences that include panels on religion. For example, the American Political Science Association's annual meeting has a section on Religion and Politics that sponsors several panels each year. These panels rarely address issues of women and politics, however, and panels on women and politics rarely address religion.
- Emory University has a Religions and Human Spirit Strategic Initiative (RHS), which sponsors interdisciplinary research, conferences, courses, special events, publications, and resource development that involve faculty and students across all seven schools of the university. In addition, Emory has a Center for the Study of Law and Religion, which sponsors research projects, conferences, and publications. Women are featured in some aspects of both programs, particularly in RHS research projects in reproductive health, depression, and conflict and peace-building.

15. Sponsoring academic events for wide audiences

- Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM) has held annual conferences since 1984 to bring together Asian and Asian American women who are religion scholars, faculty members, and academic administrators from a broad range of denominations and backgrounds. The conference provides a way to address questions of justice and theology through ongoing conversations. Beginning in 1996, conferences have also included an opening public panel, held at the local host institution, to make the work of Pacific, Asian, and North American Asian women visible in that community and share ideas with the larger theological community.
- Since 2001, The Pluralism Project's Women's Networks have been convened in a series of multireligious consultations of women leaders, activists, and scholars. These events were envisioned as a way to include women's voices in public conversation on religious pluralism.

Past sessions have included a focus on women's religious activism and inter-religious networks, especially in the period after September 11, 2001, in movements for social change, and in political life. The Pluralism Project is located at Harvard University.

- A conference on religion and the feminist movement was hosted by the Women's Studies in Religion Program at Harvard Divinity School in 2002 to highlight connections between religion and second-wave feminism. This conference was also an effort to document the stories of religious women who advanced the second-wave women's movement. The conference included religious women activists who work for change in religion and in other venues, as well as historians, scholars, and students. Ann Braude's *Transforming the Faiths of Our Fathers: Women Who Changed American Religion* (2004) is a compilation of essays by conference speakers.
- The Feminist Sexual Ethics Project at Brandeis University sponsored a conference called "Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacy" in October 2006. This conference was designed to bring together academics and activists around questions of sexual morality. Speakers were researchers and activists from around the world who took on questions of race, gender, religion, and morality in history and contemporary life.
- Jewish Theological Seminary sponsored a conference on gender and the Hebrew Bible in October 2007. It was entitled *For There Is Hope: Gender and the Hebrew Bible*. The conference was held to honor the memory and legacy of Dr. Tikva Frymer-Kensky.
- Seattle Pacific University sought to address the marginalization of religion and spirituality in women's studies, sponsoring a conference entitled "Religions and Feminisms: Countering Mutual Silence," April 2008.

16. Attending to religion within women's studies programs

- One of the more visible campus lecture series on women and religion is the Madeleva Lecture Series at the Saint Mary's College Center for Spirituality in Notre Dame, Indiana. The series has included many influential Catholic women

scholars of theology and religion since its founding in 1985. In 2000, previous lecturers wrote the “Madeleva Manifesto: A Message of Hope and Courage,” which encourages young women to pursue a “gospel feminism” and “to stay in the struggle to overcome oppression of all kinds whether based on gender, sexual orientation, race, or class.”

- Emory University’s first Women’s Symposium was jointly sponsored by the Department of Women’s Studies, President’s Commission on the Status of Women, Emory Center for Women, and Candler School of Theology’s Women in Theology and Ministry. This collaboration is a visible sign of similar collaborations related to Women’s History Month, oral history research projects, and associate memberships of religion faculty in the Department of Women’s Studies.

17. Developing academic programs on women and religion

- The Women’s Studies in Religion Program of Harvard Divinity School was founded in 1973 as the first interdisciplinary program on women and religion. This program, which offers five postdoctoral fellowships a year, encourages scholarship on the meaning of religious scriptures, women’s roles as religious leaders, and the importance of religious teachings and practices in larger societies. Program scholars come from a wide variety of fields, from literary studies, to political science and history, to theology and religious studies.
- The Anna Howard Shaw Center of the Boston University School of Theology is committed to advancing religious change for women. Its mission is to support women in the church; to provide education on issues and practices relating to women in ministry and religious and theological studies; to support and encourage equality of opportunity in these fields; and to advocate for women’s full inclusion and leadership. It sponsors events that convene women clergy and supports research about their retention and career change. It also holds lectures and awards for students, researchers, and women in ministry.
- The Women’s Spirituality Program of the California Institute of Integral Studies emphasizes the study of world religions, cultural his-

tory, philosophy, embodied wisdom, the beliefs of marginalized cultures, and women’s voices from varied backgrounds and identities. This program, which offers PhD and MA programs, uses womanist, feminist, and postcolonial approaches to study an engaged spirituality and an applied vision of peace, justice, and sustainability.

- Claremont Graduate University offers an MA and PhD in Women’s Studies in Religion. Students are able to work in women’s studies combined with one of the other graduate areas of religion, and are encouraged to work with faculty across the University and Claremont Colleges. This was the first graduate degree program focused on the intersection of women’s studies and religion in the United States.
- The Program for Women in Theology and Ministry, Candler School of Theology, promotes scholarship and programs that support, collaborate with, and advocate for women and their religious communities. To that end, the program sponsors classes and a certificate program for degree students; special events for the seminary, university, and larger community; research projects to study the uniqueness of women’s lives and contributions to religion and culture; the Annual Women’s Forum; and a resource center.

18. Bridging disciplines and institutional affiliations

- The American Academy of Religion (AAR) has several networks that bring women scholars together around a variety of issues. These include the Women’s Caucus in Religion, Committee on the Status of Women in the Profession, Women and Religion Section, Feminist Theory and Religious Reflection Group, Lesbian-Feminist Issues in Religion Group, and Womanist Approaches to Religion and Society Group. These networks generally meet at AAR annual meetings and communicate electronically throughout the year.
- National Women’s Studies Association sponsors several caucuses of women studies scholars who are interested in religion. These groups, which meet during the association’s annual conferences, include the Catholic Interest Group, Jewish Women’s Caucus, and Feminist Spirituality Group.

- The Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual (WATER) convenes meetings of the Feminist Liberation Theologian's Network at the annual AAR conferences. The network, which is organized by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Mary E. Hunt, brings together feminist scholars, ministers, and activists. WATER is also an independent nonprofit that links academic work to practice, most recently creating the Feminism in Religion Forum (2008) in partnership with Feminist Studies in Religion.
- Feminist Studies in Religion (FSR) is a nonprofit whose goal is to foster feminist studies in religion in all of its diversity. It promotes global critical feminist work in religious studies, theology, thealogy, and spirituality, both inside and outside the academy and at the grass-roots level. Founded in 1983, FSR pioneered the field of feminist studies in religion through the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. More recently, it has created other spaces for feminists to develop new initiatives, such as the Teaching for Change Conference in 2005 and the Feminism in Religion Forum in 2008 (cosponsored with WATER).

APPENDIX 5: Samples of Women in Popular Media

1. Media coverage of issues related to Faith and Feminism

- In 2004, a decision by the Southern Baptist Convention to leave the Baptist World Alliance because of the alliance's support for women's roles as pastors, among other issues, received press attention. See "Southern Baptists Vote to Leave 'Liberal' World Group" in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* (Blake 2004).
- A 2005 woman-led Muslim religious service in New York received attention from several major papers, as did the subsequent international outcry about the event from male religious leaders. See "With Women at the Forefront, a Muslim Service Challenges Tradition" in the *New York Times* (Elliott 2005) and "Imam Rips Woman-Led Prayer" in the *New York Daily News* (Lite 2005).
- The appointment of Rev. Katharine Jefferts Schori as presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church received substantial coverage in 2006. This event was treated as a milestone for women's advancement in religious leadership, but also as a controversial and potentially divisive step for the Episcopal Church. Media coverage suggests that the event was used strategically by conservative religious groups to call for a return to "traditional" religious values about women's roles. See "New Episcopal Highlights Old Anglican Rifts over Women's Roles" in the *Associated Press* (Murphy 2006).
- IWPR's work on religious women's values in public life, including *The Ties That Bind* and *Called To Speak* (Caiazza 2005, 2006), generated coverage in a variety of print and broadcast venues. See "Will Religion Complete the Women's Movement?" on Belief.net (Cunningham 2005); "Women Urged to Be Active in Values Debate" in the *Associated Press* (Lester 2005); and "Women Explore Ties between Rights and Religion" on Women's eNews (Stevens 2005).
- Coverage of Coretta Scott King's funeral in February 2006 brought a distinctly religious angle to her role carrying on her husband's commitment to civil and human rights. Scott King was held up as embodying "Christ-like love" in her public and private life and was also praised for carrying herself with grace and kindness. Coverage reflected several themes: her political goals and achievements, her contributions as a public role model for women and men, and the development of her work within her roles as a spiritual leader's wife and a Christian woman. See "Coretta Scott King's Legacy Celebrated in Final Farewell" in the *Washington Post* (Fears 2006) and "Body of Coretta Scott King Laid to Rest: Presidents, Preachers, Performers Join Farewells at Funeral" on CNN.com (Dornin and Murgatroyd 2006).
- Coverage of the ordeal of Ashley Smith, who was held hostage after a series of courthouse murders in Atlanta in 2005, highlighted her valor and strength, while rooting them in her spirituality. Coverage focused in particular on the book *The Purpose-Driven Life* (Warren 2002) as inspiring her ability to relate calmly to her captor. Her own accounts recounted his assertion that they were brother and sister in Christ and that she was his angel. See "Atlanta Hostage Recounts Ordeal" on CBS.com (CBS/AP 2005).
- In 2006, Southwestern Baptist Theological

Seminary fired Sheri Klouda, the only woman teaching in its School of Theology. The seminary had hired Klouda as a tenure-track assistant professor four years earlier. During her time at Southwestern, Klouda had received favorable reviews and regularly filled her classes. However, when the seminary elected its new president, Dr. Patterson, Klouda was told she had to leave because women were not to teach male future pastors Hebrew and Aramaic.

2. Popular literature that addresses issues related to Faith and Feminism either explicitly or implicitly

- *Anything We Love Can Be Saved* (Walker 1998) is a series of short personal essays on a range of topics from Walker's Buddhist and womanist perspectives.
- *At My Mother's Feet: Stories of Muslim Women* (Zaman 1999) features Canadian Muslim women activists describing how they live out their spirituality through work, reinterpreting sacred texts, fighting for women's political equality, and working globally on behalf of peace.
- *Border Passage, A* (Ahmed 2000) explores questions of theology and identity through an exploration of Ahmed's own life story. Ahmed's work illustrates the power and insights of using personal experiences and historical analysis as methods in understanding the practice of religion.
- *Breaking Free: The Story of a Feminist Baptist Minister*. (Aldredge-Clanton 2003) is a memoir that focuses on the consequences and power of bringing together faith and gender equality for religious women.
- *Called to Question: A Spiritual Memoir*. (Chittister 2004) provides a model of feminist spirituality based on Chittister's life and experience.
- *Called to Speak: Six Strategies That Encourage Women's Political Activism* (Caiazza 2006) identifies ways to encourage women's political activism, based on the personal and external factors that hold them back.
- *Canaan Trilogy* (Halter 2006) includes novels about Sarah, Zipporah, and Lilahand.
- *Choosing to Lead: Women and the Crisis of American Values* (Buchanan 1997) explores the history of women's leadership, including the religious values that many women activists historically brought to American public life and reform, and argues that women can bring a new vision for building democracy in this country.
- *Christian Feminism*, published by Sojourners magazine (Morrison and Dykstra 2005), provides readings and questions designed to inspire group discussion in congregations, reading groups, and other settings about Christianity and issues of gender justice.
- *Color Purple, The* (Walker 1983) tells the fictional story of Celie, a young black girl living in Georgia in the early years of the twentieth century.
- *DaVinci Code, The* (Brown 2003) reevaluates the role of Mary Magdalene in particular, and the feminine divine more broadly.
- *Eat, Pray, Love: One Woman's Search for Everything across Italy, India and Indonesia* (Gilbert 2007) explores one woman's soul-searching quest for spiritual balance through a tell-all travelogue.
- *Faith and Feminism: A Holy Alliance; Five Spirited and Spiritual Women Throughout History* (H. Hunt 2004) outlines the split between religious and secular feminists, calling for the two communities to build better understanding and work together more closely.
- *Faith in the Valley: Lessons for Women on the Journey to Peace* (Vanzant 1998) offers spiritual and other advice and inspiration for African American and other women.
- *Gilded Chamber, The* (Kohn 2004) retells the story of Esther.
- *Girl Meets God: On the Path to a Spiritual Life* (Winner 2004) explores Winner's personal search for spirituality, taking her from Orthodox Judaism to Christianity.
- *Guide for Women in Religion, A: Making Your Way from A to Z* (M. Hunt 2004) provides a comprehensive guide for women who are building careers in academic settings, religious institutions, and religious nonprofit organizations.
- *Living Islam Out Loud: American Muslim Women Speak* (Abdul-Ghafur 2005) explores the experiences of American-born Muslim women of diverse backgrounds as they speak about the role of values and spirituality in their

lives, tackling issues such as relationships, dress, and activism.

- *Matters of the Heart: Stop Trying to Fix the Old—Let God Give you Something New* (Bynum 2002) describes Bynum's personal journey toward Christian enlightenment.
- *Midwife's Song, The: A Story of Moses' Birth* (Ray 2000).
- *Millionth Circle, The* (Bolen 1999) explains how to form consensus-based circles of human support in hopes that, one day, the millionth circle of support will alter the psyche of the human race.
- *Queenmaker: A Novel of King David's Queen and Wisdom's Daughter: A Novel of Solomon and Sheba* (Edghill 2001).
- *Red Book, The: A Deliciously Unorthodox Approach to Igniting Your Divine Spark* (Beak 2006) aims to invigorate spirituality for young women.
- *Red Tent, The* (Diamant 1997) retells the Old Testament story of Dinah while exploring communities built by women, and places of power carved out by women, within the strictures and roles assigned to them by men.
- *Ties That Bind, The* (Caiazza 2005) asks that we look to the values of progressive religious women, with their focus on community and interconnectedness, to rethink the goals and strategies of women's movements and build new models of organizing.
- *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (Lamott 2000), *Plan B: Further Thoughts on Faith* (Lamott 2005), and *Grace (Eventually): Thoughts on Faith* (Lamott 2007) bring together Lamott's personal experiences, her faith, and her public life to illustrate the ways in which they are inextricably intertwined.
- *Trouble with Islam, The: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith* (Manji 2005). The author calls for *itijihad*—the right for Muslims, and especially Muslim women, to voice dissent—openly debating the leaderships' interpretations of Islamic scriptures.
- *Way We Were, The: A Story of Conversion and Renewal* (Chittister 2005) recounts Sr. Joan Chittister's experiences with the changes in women's religious orders in the Catholic Church. What Women Really Want: How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class, and Religious Lines to Change the Way We Live (Lake 2005) explores what

women really want from the perspective of a popular political strategist and leading trend-spotter.

- *Woman's Worth, A* (Williamson 1994), aims to empower women, including those who may have difficulty embracing feminism, celebrating the goddess in all.

3. Television programs showcasing central women characters' encounter with religious themes

- *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997) and *Charmed* (1998), along with shorter-lived programs such as *Wonderfalls* (2004), *Tru Calling* (2003), and the newer *Ghost Whisperer* (2005), equate spirituality less with religion and more with the paranormal and mystical. These shows also offer a more complicated version of morality, in which female lead characters struggle with spiritual and ethical questions.
- *Joan of Arcadia* (2003) meets the idea of God directly. This show challenges a tradition in many religions of denying women's religious authority.
- *Saving Grace* (2007) features Holly Hunter's encounters an unconventional angel named Earl, who offers to guide her away from her fast life and set her on the straight and narrow.
- *Seventh Heaven* (1996), now in its eleventh season, traces the lives of a minister and his family, including his daughter Lucy, who follows in his footsteps to become a minister herself.
- *Studio 60 on the Sunset Strip* (2006) introduced a female lead character who is an overtly evangelical Christian. The character, Harriet Hayes, is touted as the most talented comedian on the faux "Saturday Night Live" show-within-a-show that is the subject of the series. She, like Studio 60's real-life producer Aaron Sorkin, also dislikes the hypocrisy of the political religious right. This show is relatively new, but it seems likely to take on questions of politics more than women's issues per se.
- *Touched by an Angel* (1994) marked an increase in attention to religious imagery and themes in mainstream television. As one critic writes, the show "proved that spiritual themes are interesting, relevant, and marketable. [The show] made it OK to mention God and act like God exists on TV. If *Touched By an Angel* had not been successful, we would never have seen *Joan*

of *Arcadia* (Beliefnet.com 2004). While the show is perhaps not feminist in the sense of promoting women's lives and well-being, nonetheless, it offers images of women taking positions of religious authority.

4. Independent films and documentaries engaging issues of Faith and Feminism

- *Acting on Faith: Women's New Religious Activism in America* (2005) explores the lives and work of three American women—one Buddhist, one Hindu, and one Muslim—for whom faith, activism, and identity are deeply intertwined.
- *Don't Call Me a Saint* (2006), a documentary about Dorothy Day, explores her radicalism and her personal story of wrestling with feminism, social justice, and Catholicism.
- *Education of Shelby Knox, The* (2005) is a documentary about a young Baptist high schooler who has personally pledged to remain a virgin until marriage. However, when Shelby learns that her high school, which teaches "abstinence only," has some of the highest teen pregnancy and STD rates in Texas, she becomes an advocate for comprehensive sex education.
- *Entertaining Angels* (1996) documents the life of Dorothy Day, featuring Moira Kelly and Martin Sheen.
- *Persepolis* (2007) is an animated film by Iranian-born Marjane Satrapi, sketched in the same style as Satrapi's popular graphic novels are. The film is about her life during Iran's Islamic revolution, in which she portrays her young self struggling to balance her faith and her politics, while refusing to conform to Muslim demands for women.
- *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (2008) is a powerful documentary about Muslim and Christian Liberian women coming together in prayer and protest to bring peace to their country. Together, they were able to compel peace talks between the warlords and the corrupt government that had made their lives in Liberia hell on earth. The film won the Best Documentary Feature award at the 2008 Tribeca Film Festival.
- *Preacher's Wife, The* (1996) features Whitney Houston as the gospel-singing wife of a preacher who has lost his faith in himself. When an angel named Dudley, played by Denzel

Washington, comes along, he both increases and decreases the couple's troubles.

- *Saved* (2004) explores questions of morality and gender roles within evangelical Christianity. A satire, *Saved* tells the story of a "good Christian girl" who has sex with her boyfriend to save him from being gay. She becomes pregnant and begins to question her religion; the film ends with a message of acceptance.
- *Sister Act* (1992) stars Whoopi Goldberg as a lounge singer pretending to be a nun after a mob boss puts her on his hit list.
- *Sister Act II: Back in the Habit* (1993) features Whoopi Goldberg struggling to teach music to a class of rowdy teenagers.
- *Women and Islam* (1993) is a short film by Leila Ahmed in which women's rights, especially within marriage, are discussed from a gender justice perspective.

5. Internet resources for those interested in Faith and Feminism

- The Association of College and Resource Libraries' Women's Studies Section features links on Women and Theology (www.earlham.edu/~libr/acrlwss/wsstheo.html).
- Dr. Katie King, associate professor on the Women's Studies faculty at the University of Maryland, features a list of Web sites exploring feminist perspectives on contemporary expressions of faith, among other resources (www.womensstudies.umd.edu/wmstfac/kking/teaching/400s/spirit/spirit.html).
- Beliefnet.com has extensive resources about religion and spirituality in the United States, including many associated with public life. This Web site has a section on women that includes writing and resources on women's roles, issues, and spirituality (see www.beliefnet.com/index/index_39330.html). Because Beliefnet has no ideological approach to its material, it contains a wide variety of resources, some supporting women's empowerment in religion, and some much more conservative.
- The SkyDancer site (www.loudzen.com/skydancer) is an individually sponsored site that includes essays and links about feminism and Buddhism.
- Christian + Feminist (www.users.csbsju.edu/~eknuth), "dedicated to the proposition

that faith and feminism are not mutually exclusive,” provides links to resources on Christian feminist theology.

- Ecofeminist Visions Emerging outlines the principles of ecofeminism, including its links to women’s spirituality (eve.enviroweb.org).
- Women’s Ministries of the Episcopal Church Center (www.episcopalchurch.org/women) features an extensive listing of events, summaries of recent developments related to women in the church, and essays on women and religion.
- The Muslim Women’s League’s Web site (www.mwlnusa.org) has extensive commentary and essays, including explorations of religious text and doctrine, about the role of women and issues such as divorce, dress, and genital cutting.
- At www.faithandfeminism.org, both sponsored by The Sister Fund, women find spaces where they can share their experiences and thoughts about religion. Many women have submitted stories and short essays, and these sites encourage interaction.
- SisterFriends Together (www.sisterfriends-together.org) has collected stories from lesbians about their experiences with Christianity. It also provides essays on theology and homosexuality as well as links to Christian gay and lesbian congregations around the country.
- The Something Within blog (www.somethingwithin.com/blog) announces itself as being “for thinking women of faith.” It discusses “matters of church, race, gender, sex, values, culture, justice, spirituality and, oh yeah, God.”
- Started in 2004, Feminist Mormon Housewives (www.feministmormonhousewives.org) is a Mormon blog whose mission is to provide “a safe place to be feminist and faithful.” As of January 2008, there are eight bloggers who regularly post on the Feminist Mormon Housewives (FMH) Web site on issues that include (among others): abortion, education, polygamy, parenting, and Mother in Heaven. Feminist Mormon Housewives.org founder Lisa Butterworth was featured in a *New York Times* article in May 2005 where she noted, “I was getting really frustrated at church because I couldn’t talk about a lot of things that were bothering me about history, about feminism... I wasn’t interested in bashing the church; I

wanted to find something that could be faithful, liberal and feminist. I didn’t find that, so I created it” (Nussbaum). Many of the responses to the myriad posts on the FMH Web site are from women who are relieved to find that they are not alone (being both feminist and Mormon).

APPENDIX 6: Reference List

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The Sister Fund is a private women's foundation that believes progressive women of faith are the Healers of Our Time. They are H.O.T. The Sister Fund supports H.O.T. women transforming faith, and faith transforming feminism. It challenges perverted applications of scripture that exclude or demean women and girls, and advocates for fullness of life through social, economic, political, and spiritual empowerment for all.

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