

Perry L. Glanzer, “The tragic academic neglect of mothers’ impact: And a Christian remembrance and call for change.” *Christian Scholar’s Review*, May 7, 2021. A partial preview. [The Tragic Academic Neglect of Mothers’ Impact: And a Christian Remembrance and Call for Change - Christian Scholar’s Review \(christianscholars.com\)](https://christianscholars.com/2021/05/07/the-tragic-academic-neglect-of-mothers-impact-and-a-christian-remembrance-and-call-for-change/)

We cannot count on academics to study the most important realities in our lives (versus the latest academic fad). Motherhood is one of those important realities. Noble Laureate and University of Chicago economist James J. Heckman recently made this astounding **observation**, “[W]hat we don’t have—and to me, it’s an amazing deficiency—we don’t any good economic and social studies of the impact of a mother on the child’s outcome.” This lack of academic studies demonstrates that we (meaning academics) take for granted the contributions of mothers. Christian academics should be different.

Of course, it starts by recognizing and showing gratitude for the contributions of our own mothers. Today, I want to honor the contributions to my mother to my life (and I encourage other blog contributors to add their comments about their own mothers). Of course, I could expand upon her loving sacrifices and care in many dimensions, but I want to focus on her unique spiritual and intellectual contributions.

Growing up on a farm in Minnesota, she knew how to work (please don’t ask her about having to do chores—especially feeding the chickens). The work ethic she developed on the farm helped her pursue excellence (perhaps at time a bit too much in the eyes of all the men when it came to cleaning, especially before company). As a result, she pursued excellence as a mom as well. For example, her years honing her baking skills in 4H meant my friends always wanted to come to our house for her baked goods, and our family always enjoyed breakfasts and suppers together.
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Despite her lack of college education, my mother poured her life into mentoring younger women, many of whom had advanced degrees. She recognized that the practical wisdom she had gathered and lived was not developed or bounded by academic degrees and that it can and should be passed along to younger Christian women. In many ways, I hope I can be as good a disciple-maker, intellectual guide, mentor and teacher as my mother was and continues to be.

Of course, these types of stories are vitally important, but I want to end with an academic alter call of sorts. Why have Protestant Evangelicals not been the leaders in the academic study of motherhood and its influence? Personal stories are great, but we need mixed methods research in this area to make a significant academic contribution. Oddly, when I think about the social science scholars of marital and family life that I know, most of them are Catholics. Granted, Catholics have a certain motivation. My former Ph.D. classmate **Julie Hanlon Rubio**, who studies family ethics, laughed when I asked her why she chose her field of study and said, “Protestants have all the good, popular marriage and family books because our leaders are all single men! We need Catholic scholarship on the family”

Protestants do have plenty of popular books. But where are young Protestant, men and women who are studying motherhood with scientific and social science expertise and theological acumen? Perhaps one day we will have multiple complex social science and economic studies of the impact of mothers produced by Christians. It is knowledge many of us already know from experience, but we still need the academic and not simply the Mother’s Day version of praising our mothers. Academically, we cannot and should not take our Mothers for granted. A new, **fascinating science of motherhood** is emerging. Will we be part of it?