

The Religious Work Ethic and the Spirit of Patriarchy: Religiosity and the Gender Gap in Working for Its Own Sake, 1977 to 2018

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Abstract: Societal beliefs about women's work have long been a metric for gender equality, with recent scholarship focusing on trends in these attitudes to assess the progress (or stalling) of the gender revolution. Moving beyond widely critiqued gender attitude questions thought to be the only available items for measuring change over time, this article considers women's and men's views toward their own work over the last half century. Traditional gender scripts frame women's labor force participation as less than ideal, something to do if financially necessary but not because work is intrinsically rewarding. Historically, this gender frame was reinforced by religion. We examine the gender gap in working for its own sake over time and whether and how religious involvement moderates these trends. Overall, the gender gap has declined to the point where it is now virtually nonexistent. However, religious involvement acts as a countervailing influence, bolstering the gap such that frequently attending men and women have not yet converged in their desire to work. Although the most religious Americans have not yet converged, men's dropping desire to work and women's rising desire to work are society-wide trends, and even the most religious Americans could be expected to converge at some point in the future. Traditionalist institutions contribute to unevenness in the gender revolution, but preferences cannot explain the persistent society-wide precarity of women's work: Women now prefer to work for work's sake at the same rate men do.

Keywords: gender; work; gender revolution; values; social change; religion

Citation: Schnabel, Landon, Cyrus Schleifer, Eman Abdelhadi, and Samuel L. Perry. 2022. "The Religious Work Ethic and the Spirit of Patriarchy: Religiosity and the Gender Gap in Working for Its Own Sake, 1977 to 2018." *Sociological Science* 9: 75-101.


Received: October 26, 2021

Accepted: January 6, 2022

Published: March 9, 2022

Editor(s): Jesper Sørensen, Gabriel Rossman

DOI: 10.15195/v9.a4

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SOCIETAL beliefs about women's work have long been a metric for gender equality, with recent scholarship focusing on trends in these attitudes to assess the progress (or stalling) of the gender revolution. Yet existing studies tend to rely on widely critiqued measures, and the intersection between religion and shifts in gender values remains underexamined. Moving beyond abstract gender attitudes, this article considers women's and men's views toward their *own work* over the last half century, using data from the 1977-to-2018 General Social Surveys. We leverage gender differences on an item typically used to understand the centrality of work to one's life ("If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or would you stop working?") to consider the gender gap in attachment to paid work over time and by religion.

We find the gender gap in working for its own sake has consistently declined; it is now virtually nonexistent. However, religious involvement acts as a countervailing influence, bolstering the gap between women's and men's attachment to work. Unlike nonreligious Americans (among whom the gender gap in work attachment has actually reversed) and moderately religious Americans (among whom the

gender gap is virtually nonexistent), a significant gender gap in work attachment persists among the most religious Americans. Religion reinforces familism and neotraditional gender complementarianism, which assigns women and men “complementary” roles linking masculinity with earning and providing and femininity with motherhood and care work (Edgell 2006; Edgell and Docka 2007). Although the most religious Americans have not yet converged, men’s dropping desire to work and women’s rising desire to work appear to be society-wide trends occurring across groups. Even the most religious Americans are on track to converge at some point in the future.

Theoretical Background

Assessing the Gender Attitude Revolution

The “gender revolution” over the last half century featured dramatic shifts in patterns of gender inequality, largely driven by women’s mass entry into the labor force. Women’s employment reached record highs, the gender pay gap declined, and women’s educational attainment reached and surpassed men’s (Blau and Kahn 2017; Horwitz et al. forthcoming). However, recent research shows progress toward gender equality has slowed or even stalled, and its benefits remain unevenly distributed largely because of the continued precarity of women’s paid work (Cha and Weeden 2014; Damaske and Frech 2016; England 2010, 2011; England, Levine, and Mishel 2020).

In the realm of gender ideology, a marked turn toward conservatism in the 1990s and early 2000s had scholars wondering whether we had actually reached the end of the gender revolution (Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman 2011). Progress toward gender egalitarian attitudes rebounded in the late 2000s and in the 2010s (Schnabel 2016a; Shu and Meagher 2018), but the rate of change toward egalitarianism is slower than it was when the gender revolution began (Scarborough, Sin, and Risman 2019). Findings from Europe suggest that gender ideology is multidimensional with traditionalisms re-forming instead of disappearing (Grunow, Begall, and Buchler 2018; Knight and Brinton 2017). Similarly, Scarborough, Sin, and Risman (2019) find gender traditionalism is being replaced by a dual stance—one that supports gender equality in the public sphere while retaining ambivalence toward it in the private sphere.

Measuring Implicit Attitudes

The most consistent survey questions used to assess gender ideology over time are General Social Survey (GSS) items pertaining to support for women’s work.¹ These classic gender attitude questions have some limitations. For one, they are focused primarily on women’s behavior, whereas men’s behavioral shifts and/or intransigence is a key part of maintaining or eroding gender inequality (England 2010). Scholars have also argued that these measures are outdated, mired in social desirability bias, and unable to capture the complex behavioral choices posed by market constraints (Jacobs and Gerson 2015). Abstract beliefs, especially about

women's work, may not be tied to practices for one's self (Thébaud and Halcomb 2019). A rich literature detailing the choices individuals as well as families make in allocating paid and unpaid work suggests that internalized gender norms, often implicitly held, continue to structure these decisions (Damaske 2020; Gonalons-Pons and Gangl 2021; Maume 2016; Williams, Blair-Loy, and Berdahl 2013). Even those who profess gender egalitarian ideals often end up reverting to traditional gender scripts about men as breadwinners and women as caregivers when their life situation changes and new work–family stressors and responsibilities arise (Gerson 2009; Lippert and Damaske 2019).

Given these limitations it is well worth considering new ways to capture gendered values and orientations related to work. A measure or set of measures with at least some of the following criteria may prove particularly useful:

1. Is not outdated (i.e., does not just capture the 1970s gender situation)
2. Avoids desirability bias toward gender egalitarianism
3. Considers people's own ideals rather than just what is acceptable for others to do
4. Is concrete, not abstract (and preferably addresses what people would do if their circumstances changed)
5. Addresses implicitly held norms rather than just explicitly stated attitudes (preferably people would not even know they're being asked about gender values)
6. Is available over time so that we can track change

If we designed new measures that addressed all of the first five criteria, we would not be able to go back in time to administer them and track change. However, the GSS has, for decades, included a question on whether the respondent would quit working if they received enough money to make work financially unnecessary. This measure, often referred to as "the lottery question," "nonfinancial employment commitment," or "work commitment," has been used as a proxy for work ethic and/or centrality of work in one's life going back to the 1950s (Gallie 2019; Kittel, Kalleitner, and Tsakoglou 2019; Tierney et al. 2020; Vecchio 1980; Warr 1982; Weaver 1997).² This measure can be leveraged in a new way to meet, at least to some extent, all six criteria.

Employment Commitment and Gender

Employment commitment hovers around 70 percent in the United States, having declined in the late 1980s and early 1990s then plateaued (Highhouse, Zickar, and Yankelevich 2010; Kalleberg and Marsden 2019).³ Averaging across GSSs from 1973 to 2016, Kalleberg and Marsden (2019) find that men have higher employment commitment than women. Men's and women's attitudes seem to have moved closer together between 1970 and 1990 (Herring and Wilson-Sadberry 1993), driven primarily by women's increased attachment. We do not know, however, how the

gender gap in work attachment has changed over the last 30 years in the United States.

In light of narratives about people trying to retire as young as possible, we might assume most people would quit working if they were financially set for life. But in the United States, the majority of people say they would keep working even if they did not need to. Some people may see this as positive evidence of a strong American work ethic, whereas others may question whether it is good to valorize unnecessary work in a society that requires selling one's labor to survive (see Cech 2021). We make no value judgment on whether it is "good" to desire to work, and indeed the overall level of work attachment or how it is changing over time is not our focus; instead, we are leveraging this item in a new way to examine shifts in gender differences in desire to work. Any one person's response to this question is shaped by many things and thus is not directly a gender attitude for which people could try to provide socially desirable responses. Yet considering gender differences in responses—and how they might be changing—can provide a lens on gendered orientations toward work over time. Moreover, we consider the role of religion in maintaining these implicit gender norms. Religiosity and religion rarely appear in studies of how gender attitudes have shifted over time,⁴ and they have not been considered in relation to employment commitment (which is usually not studied in a gender context).

Religion and Gender Attitude Change

Traditionalist religion has, and continues to be, a countervailing force against gender equality. The gender revolution was an important part of broader social changes happening in the 1960s and 1970s, and reacting to these social movements restructured American Christianity around political issues with gender playing a particularly important role for some congregations. Drawing a line around women's issues galvanized the (white) Christian Right in the post-1960s backlash that eventually led to the highly polarized and politicized nature of contemporary religion in the United States (O'Brien and Abdelhadi 2020; Schnabel 2016a; Schnabel et al. forthcoming). Whereas religious groups were previously less political and in some ways more culturally distinct from one another, with the political restructuring of American religion there are now cross-cutting currents such that more intensely religious mainline Protestants hold values in some ways more similar to evangelicals than moderate mainline Protestants—accordingly, religious attendance has become an increasingly important dividing line on issues related to gender and family, whereas denominational divides have become comparatively less important (Perry and Schleifer 2019; Schnabel 2021a; Wuthnow 1988). Religious institutions, often even the more liberal ones, draw clear symbolic boundaries around issues of gender and sexuality, promoting familism and gendered orientations toward one's purpose in life and shaping people's politics toward more traditional perspectives and orientations more generally (Edgell 2006; Edgell and Docka 2007; Schnabel 2021b; Whitehead and Perry 2019).

Since Weber (1930), religion has been highlighted as a factor attributing religious significance to everyday labor. Yet we know relatively little about whether those

more embedded within religious communities are more likely to desire to work if not financially necessary, or whether that pattern would be gendered.⁵ Although we might expect more religious women to work only out of necessity, it is less clear whether religious belief or participation is constraining changes in patterns of gender inequality over time. Research on gender attitudes, for example, shows that people in more conservative religious groups are less gender egalitarian than other Americans, but the changes in their gender attitudes have occurred at a similar rate in recent decades (Schnabel 2016a). However, this similarity in rates of change could reflect what has been called “pragmatic egalitarianism” and “symbolic traditionalism” that distinguishes between what is accepted and what is ideal in terms of gender, work, and family (Gallagher and Smith 1999). Pragmatic egalitarianism (i.e., what is tolerated) accepts that women may need to work because of financial necessity at the same time that symbolic traditionalism (i.e., what is valorized) promotes the complementarian ideal of men as “head” of the family both spiritually and financially and women’s true vocation being motherhood. Accordingly, women’s need to work has been mostly accepted across American religious groups (Schnabel 2016a), but religious embeddedness could differentiate desire to work as religious institutions, even the “liberal” ones, continue to promote familism and the sanctification of motherhood (Edgell and Docka 2007; Hall et al. 2012). In fact, recent research has shown not only that people who frequently attend religious services have more children but also that the importance of attendance—but not religious affiliation—as a predictor of having more children is increasing over time (Perry and Schleifer 2019). This growing salience of religious *practice* over identity in determining familial attitudes and behavior suggests religious participation would likely be a stronger indicator of attachment to traditionalist religious beliefs and schemas of work and family (although it is obviously important to also consider variation in the importance of practice across religious traditions).

Competing Expectations

This study considers gender differences in orientations toward work and how they have changed over time and across levels of religious participation. We will first consider the general pattern of working for its own sake over time. Several trends are possible. First, the gender gap could remain steady over time. Both women and men could be increasingly disenchanted with paid work as wages continue to stagnate and precarity increases (Weaver 1997), and their disenchantment could be growing at the same general rate. Alternatively, the gender gap could be increasing over time. Perhaps more women joined the workforce out of economic necessity rather than preference, and a larger proportion of women are working who would rather not be. Third, and what we expect to be happening in light of women’s new access to meaningful careers and changing gender norms (Cotter et al. 2011; Goldin 2004), women’s and men’s opinions could be converging over time. As the gender revolution occurred, women could have moved toward greater parity with men in the proportion of people working for its own sake as part of their life’s purpose. Simultaneously, the importance of work and providing as performances

of masculinity may have declined, loosening men's attachment to paid labor. Either or both of these changes could close the gender gap.

After considering the broad societal patterns for gender differences in working for its own sake, we shift to the impact of religious involvement over time. The first possibility is that more religious Americans could be similarly committed to work regardless of their gender, and therefore religious participation could be generally unimportant for the gender gap in orientations toward work (even as religion could predict more overall commitment to work for both women and men). Second, religious participation could exaggerate the gender gap in desire to work, making it larger at any given point in time and amplifying it over time as religion seeks to promote traditionalism in the face of social change. This bolstering of traditionalism could be amplified by declining average attendance and the greater distinctiveness of those who continue to attend more frequently. Third, religious participation could bolster the size of the gender gap at any given point in time, but broad societal shifts could be occurring at similar rates across levels of religious participation. This would be in line with the general idea of diffusion where change occurs across groups. Some groups may start to change sooner and others later, and where they start from may be different, but many broad societal shifts occur across the board with similar general trends across groups. Much gender change has been sweeping societal change, such as the rise in egalitarian gender attitudes, and previous scholarship shows that although religion yields more conservative gender attitudes at any given moment, gender attitudes have been shifting at a similar rate across religious groups during this period of rapid social change. We believe this last option is likely if there has, as we suspect, been a general societal decline in the gender gap in working for its own sake.

Methods

Data

This study examines 1977-to-2018 General Social Survey data. The GSS is a nationally representative face-to-face survey of the non-institutionalized U.S. adult population fielded since 1972. In 1973, the GSS began to collect information about whether respondents would continue to work if they already had enough money to live comfortably (notably, this question was only asked of those currently working or temporarily not at work). It was collected as part of the GSS's rotating battery of questions from 1973 to 1987.⁶ Starting in 1988, the GSS implemented a rotating split ballot design to reduce imbalance in time-series analyses and prevent survey fatigue.⁷ The question about working when not financially necessary was placed on two ballots (A and C) of the new GSS split ballot design. Because these ballots are randomly assigned, we capture around two-thirds of the GSS cross-sectional sample for each survey year from 1988 to 2018. This information coupled with the data the GSS regularly collects about respondents' religious lives and other demographic factors make this survey ideal for our purposes. After adjusting for missing data, our analytical sample includes 22,059 individuals from 1977 to 2018.⁸

Measures

Dependent variable. The GSS regularly asks respondents “If you were to get enough money to live as comfortably as you would like for the rest of your life, would you continue to work or would you stop working?” This is a dichotomous measure with the possible responses of “Continue Working” (coded 1) and “Stop Working” (coded 0) asked of respondents currently working or temporarily not at work (additional analyses presented in the online supplement consider “Not Working” as an additional category). When averaged across this time period, around 70 percent of respondents report they would continue working, 72 percent of men and 69 percent of women. Although these proportions may seem similar, they have changed over time. From 1977 to 1981, 78 percent of men and 68 percent of women reported they would keep working if not financially necessary. From 2014 to 2018, around 71 percent of both men and women reported they would continue working even if they did not have to.

As Highhouse et al. (2010) note when using this item to measure work ethic, potential measurement issues should be acknowledged. Respondents could interpret the item in reference to their job (the question is fielded with questions about their job) or paid work generally. And it might be more precise to consider it a measure of work commitment or desire to work (which is closer to how we treat it) than a more general measure of industriousness (how the literature sometimes treats it), as people may have work ethic but apply it to things besides paid labor (e.g., homemaking, volunteer work, etc.). Finally, and this is an issue we consider worth raising but which Highhouse et al. (2010) did not highlight, it was only asked of those in the workforce. This creates a potential censoring issue that could be gendered. We consider this issue important enough that we conduct additional analyses related to it as discussed in the results.

Key independent variables. There are three key predictor variables in our models: gender, religious service attendance, and time. To determine gendered patterns in orientation toward one’s work, we create a binary indicator for *women* (coded 1) and *men* (coded 0).⁹ The GSS has collected information about respondents’ frequency of *religious service attendance* since its inception. They ask, “How often do you attend religious services? (0) Never, (1) Less than once a year, (2) Once a year, (3) Several times a year, (4) Once a month, (5) 2-3 times a month, (6) Nearly every week, (7) Every week, and (8) More than once a week.”¹⁰ We retain all of this information to trace working for its own sake across all levels of this form of religious practice. Averaged over these 41 years, most Americans attend between several times a year and once a month (mean = 3.6) with women attending at a higher rate than men (women’s mean = 3.91; men’s mean = 3.27). Both men and women in this sample have shown a declining rate of religious service attendance. From 1977 to 1981, women’s mean attendance on this scale was 4.3 and men’s 3.5. By 2014 to 2018, women’s mean religious service attendance had declined to 3.4 and men’s to 2.8.¹¹

Finally, we account for *year of survey* to track how these processes change over time. Our time series begins in 1977 and ends in 2018. Gender change can be nonlinear, so we tested various ways of exploring change over time. We tested models with nonlinear terms (e.g., quadratics) and considered models where each year is treated as a series of dummy variables. The data supported a linear time

treatment in this study, and therefore we focus on a continuous variable of year of survey that is coded 0 for 1977, coded 1 for 1978, and this continues to the code 41 for 2018. We present patterns for other ways of specifying time, which support our linear treatment, in the online supplement.¹²

Control variables. We control for a variety of factors including work status (currently full-time worker = 1 or not = 0), job satisfaction (categories for very dissatisfied, a little dissatisfied, moderately satisfied, and very satisfied), general happiness (categories for not too happy, pretty happy, and very happy), and equalized family income. To achieve this equalization, we take the natural log of household income (adjusted to 2018 dollars) divided by the square root of the total number of individuals in the home (Brady 2009). We also include an indicator for those respondents who did not provide income information during their interview (we describe this and our approach to missing data below). We account for education with a categorical measure of highest degree attained. We also include controls for race (white, black, and other race), birthplace (binary for whether born outside the United States), age¹³ (in years, top coded at 89), region (Northeast, Midwest, West, and South), and urbanicity (binary for living in a city). Family structure could affect desire to keep working and do so in gendered ways. In order to provide a conservative test, we control for marital status (currently married = 1) and parenthood (separate categories for zero, one, two, three, or four or more children).¹⁴

To account for religious tradition, we use the religious traditions classification scheme proposed by Steensland et al. (2000). Because of the small number of Jewish respondents, we collapse these individuals as well as the small number with missing affiliation information into the “other religious traditions” category (Schleifer and Chaves 2017). We control for religious tradition—conservative Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic, black Protestant, other, and none—in the results presented in the article. Even if religious practice has become an increasingly important marker and divide over time, it is important to not assume it will operate in the same way across religious traditions. Therefore, we present religious tradition subgroup analyses in the online supplement (see Figure S1 and Table S3). We also decompose the patterns by various additional subgroups, including parental status, marital status, education, race, and region, and consider additional factors including occupational prestige in additional analyses presented in the online supplement.

Analytical Strategy

We use a logistic regression with a series of interactions to capture trends in desire to work when financially unnecessary. This model takes the following form:

$$\ln \left(\frac{\text{pr}(y = 1)}{1 - \text{pr}(y = 1)} \right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Women}) + \beta_2(\text{Attend}) \\ + \beta_3(\text{year}) + \beta_4(\text{int.}) + \beta_5(\text{controls}),$$

where y is the indicator for preferring to work when not financially necessary. *Women* is the indicator of respondent’s gender with the corresponding regression coefficient captured in the β_1 component. *Attend* is the continuous treatment of

religious service attendance with β_2 capturing the linear difference in this type of religious practice. *Year* is our measure for change over time with the β_3 coefficient capturing the linear trend in our outcome over time. To capture group differences on some of our key indicators and time trends, some of our models include interactions (*int.*) with the time trends by group captured in the β_4 vector of coefficients. Finally, the vector *controls* contains all of our control variables with the β_5 vector of coefficients capturing these associations on our outcome measures. β_0 is the model intercept.

We pursue an interactive strategy to compare men and women across religious service attendance and time on our outcome. Allison (1999) pointed out that relying on interactions and split sample comparisons to establish group differences when using categorical models is problematic because of the ways unobserved heterogeneity has the potential to confound comparisons of these coefficients. Allison notes that, unlike in linear regression models, the differences “in the degree of residual variation across groups can produce apparent differences in coefficients that are not indicative of true differences in causal effect” (1999:186–87).¹⁵ This criticism means that a great deal of care is warranted when drawing conclusions based on the coefficient comparison built into the interactive strategy we pursue in this article.

To overcome this issue, we follow Long and Mustillo (2018) and compare these group differences using predicted probabilities.¹⁶ Long and Mustillo argue—aligned with the work of Angrist (2001), Agresti (2013), and others—that predicted probabilities do not suffer from the unobserved heterogeneity issues that comparing coefficient from categorical models do. By comparing predicted probabilities across groups of interest, we can (1) avoid the confounding problems of unobserved heterogeneity in comparing categorical regression coefficients, (2) compare these groups in a fundamentally more flexible way on the original unit of interest, and (3) make use of a wide variety of data visualization procedures to highlight these differences.

To achieve this, we will rely on plotting the trends of our predicted probabilities and difference in predicted probabilities ($pr(y = 1|x \text{ for group 1}) - pr(y = 1|x \text{ for group 2})$) to determine the trend differences for men and women in the impact of religious service attendance on desire to work. All predicted probabilities presented in the article are average adjusted predictions where all control characteristics are allowed to vary freely for each respondent and the standard errors for the probabilities are computed using delta method standard error estimations. All formal tests of probability and marginal effect equality are pursued using these statistics.

Most measures except equalized family income have relatively little missing data. Around 16 percent of respondents ($n = 3,634$) do not report their income here. Although normally we might use standard multiple imputation strategies, these present a problem for calculating the complex delta method standard errors for both our predicted probabilities and the difference in predicted probabilities. To overcome this issue, we multiply impute across 20 data sets the missing income data with a model that includes education, gender, race, age, marital status, number of children, and urban residence ($R^2 = 0.24$). With this imputed information, we

replace the missing income in our single original data set with the average value for each individual from these imputed data sets. We further control for those who did not provide income information with an indicator for those missing on this measure. Although this approach helps us to maintain these cases, we should be hesitant to interpret the standard errors on the income coefficient because they have not been adjusted for this imputation strategy here. We also run additional models using listwise deletion and full multiple imputation and find the general pattern is qualitatively unchanged under these conditions (in the online supplement, see Table S4 for the listwise deletion models and Table S5 for full multiple imputation models).

Results

We first consider general trends in orientations toward work and how they have changed over time. Model 1 of Table 1 shows that women have lower log odds of preferring to work when not financially necessary when averaged across this time period.¹⁷ This model predicts that around 73 percent of men and 67 percent of women prefer to keep working when not financially necessary, controlling for several additional factors. This model also shows that religious service attendance shows a positive, although small in magnitude, relationship with desire to work: around 69 percent of individuals who never attend would keep working compared with 72 percent who attend more than once a week. Finally, this model indicates a marginal decline in preferring to work over time. In 1977, around 71 percent of Americans reported a desire to work, and by 2018 this proportion declined to 69 percent. It appears, then, that relatively little change is occurring over this time series. But, as we will show, women and men are moving in opposite directions, with these inverse trends creating the appearance of general stability.¹⁸

Model 2 includes an interaction between gender and year to determine whether men's and women's orientations toward work have changed in different ways across this time series, net of controls.¹⁹ Although regression coefficients suggest a meaningful interaction, given the problems with unobserved heterogeneity for categorical regression coefficients we rely on comparing predicted probabilities instead of simply relying on model significance tests. To make this comparison clear, we plot predicted probabilities in the top row of Figure 1. The left side of this plot shows the separate trends for men and women. In 1977, around 76 percent of men and 66 percent of women expressed a desire to continue working if not financially necessary, a 10-point gender gap. Formal comparisons of these probabilities show they are significantly different ($\chi^2 = 80.06; p < 0.01$).²⁰ By 2018, this gender gap in desire to work shrank substantially, and women (at 68.8 percent) and men (at 69.7 percent) are now statistically indistinguishable in their predicted probabilities of working for its own sake ($\chi^2 = 0.54; p = 0.46$). As we expected, the gender gap in working for its own sake has decreased over time. Importantly, this convergence occurs because of both women's increase and men's decline in desire to work for its own sake, with men's disenchantment actually occurring more quickly than women's rise. This asymmetry where men are moving more than women in a

Table 1: Logistic regression on desire to work when not financially necessary by gender and religious service attendance

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Main effects					
Woman	−0.299 [†] (0.033)	−0.589 [†] (0.068)	−0.006 (0.052)	−0.299 [†] (0.033)	−0.304 [†] (0.118)
Religious attendance	0.022 [†] (0.007)	0.023 [†] (0.007)	0.068 [†] (0.009)	0.016 (0.013)	0.060 [†] (0.019)
Year of survey	−0.002 (0.001)	−0.009 [†] (0.002)	−0.003 (0.001)	−0.003 (0.002)	−0.009 [†] (0.003)
Interaction effects					
Woman × year		0.012 [†] (0.003)			0.012 [†] (0.004)
Woman × attendance			−0.084 [†] (0.012)		−0.071 [†] (0.026)
Attendance × year				0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)
Woman × attendance × year					−0.000 (0.001)
Controls	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>N</i>	22,021	22,021	22,021	22,021	22,021
Akaike's information criterion	25,760	25,738	25,709	25,761	25,698
Bayesian information criterion	26,031	26,018	25,989	26,041	26,002

Notes: Source: General Social Survey, 1977 to 2018. Standard errors in parentheses below regression coefficients. Controls include religious affiliation, happiness, full-time work status, job satisfaction, equivalized family income, marital status, number of children, education, age, race, whether born in the United States, region, and whether respondent lives in a city. All coefficients presented in the online supplement. [†] $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

gender convergence is atypical of the asymmetry of gender change we typically see when movement toward convergence comes mostly from women (England 2010).

To provide further substantive illustration of the closing gender gap, we plot the contrasted predicted probabilities between men and women over time. Here, predicted probabilities for men are subtracted from the predicted probabilities for women at a given time point. We can then generate confidence intervals (the shaded areas indicate 95 percent confidence intervals) for this more formal test of whether the prediction for men equals the prediction for women and plot them over time. (The confidence intervals presented in the left panel for women and men separately are confidence intervals on separate means rather than a formal significance test of whether the estimates for women and men equal each other like these contrasted probabilities; see Belia et al. [2005]). When these confidence intervals include 0, then we can say that the difference between men and women

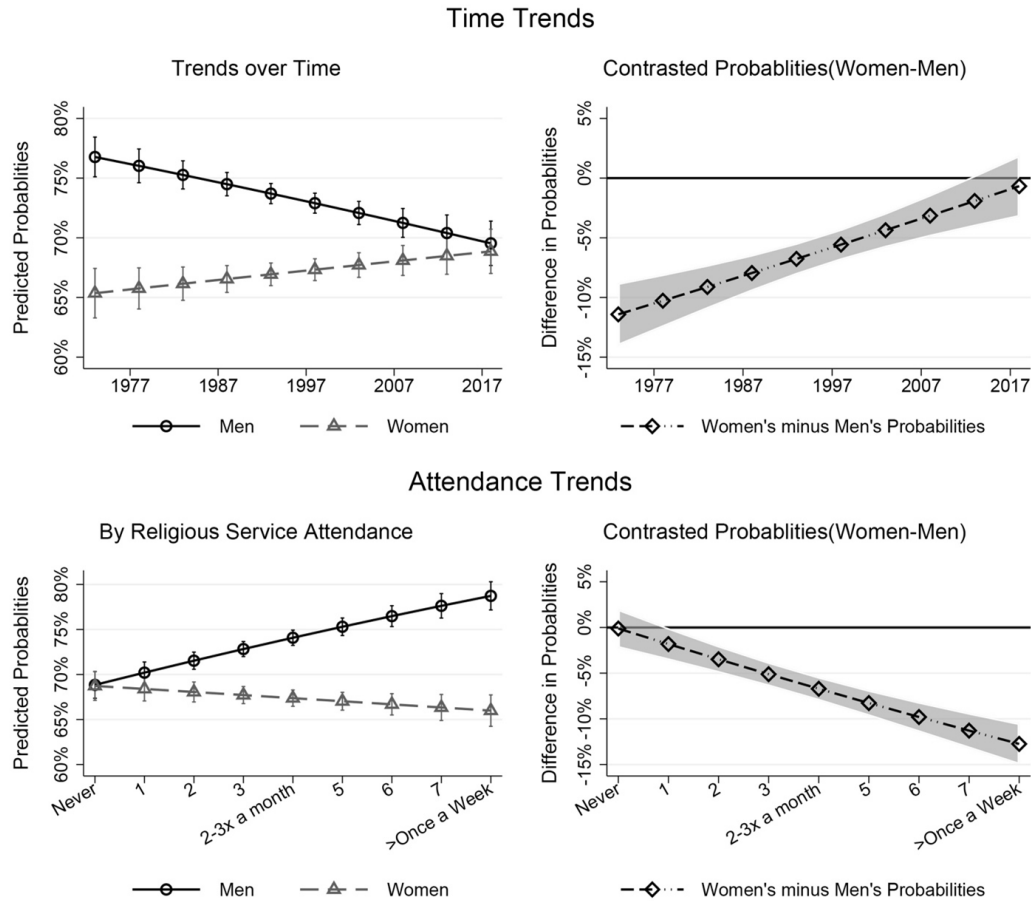


Figure 1: Gender differences in willingness to work when not financially necessary by time and religious service attendance with relative difference plots. Source: General Social Survey, 1977 to 2018. Linear best fit trend line. Models underlying predicted probabilities parallel those in Table 1. They include the following controls: religious affiliation, happiness, full-time work status, job satisfaction, equalized family income, marital status, number of children, education, age, race, whether born in the United States, region, and whether respondent lives in a city. Full models presented in the online supplement. When examining year, the underlying model controls for attendance. When examining attendance, the underlying model controls for year.

in no longer statistically significant. From this plot, we can see that the difference between men’s and women’s predicted probability of continuing to work when not necessary has declined over the past four decades. As of 2014, there is no longer any statistically meaningful gender difference. As we can see for these trend lines, the declining gender gap is a product of both men’s declining desire to work when not necessary coupled with women’s increasing desire to work (but more of the former than the latter).²¹

Having considered the broad societal patterns for gender differences in working for its own sake over time, we shift to consider religious participation. In model 3 of Table 1, we test whether men’s and women’s attitudes toward work vary across

levels of religious service attendance. Again, we turn to a comparison of predicted probabilities—shown in the bottom row of Figure 1—to determine if there is a substantively meaningful difference. Although women and men are converging across time, across levels of religious service attendance the gender gap grows wider. From these plots, we can see gender similarity among those who never attend religious services ($\chi^2 = 0.01; p = 0.91$) when averaged over this time series. Among those who attend religious services most frequently, however, there is a large gender gap in the probabilities of desire to work ($\chi^2 = 124.57; p < 0.01$). For these individuals, around 79 percent of men are predicted to prefer to work compared with 66 percent of women, approximately a 13-percentage-point gender gap. The contrast plot highlights that meaningful gender differences emerge among those who attend “less than once a year,” and the gender difference in predicted probabilities is over 10 percentage points among those attending nearly every week or more. Overall, attendance and desire to work are related in opposite directions for women and men, and similar to what we saw for time trends, it is actually men’s desire to work that varies more by level of religiosity: the most frequently attending men report substantially more desire to work than the least frequently attending men. Religion, therefore, seems to bolster men’s stated work ethic, perhaps rooted in an ideal of men as breadwinners contributing to family and society.

Model 4 from Table 1 interacts religious attendance by time on desire to work. Because we are interested in gender differences, however, we will focus on model 5, which further decomposes the gender difference by interacting time, attendance, and gender. Regression models with three-way interactions can be difficult to interpret under normal conditions, and with the added complication of unobserved heterogeneity for categorical models this is even more challenging. By focusing on predicted probabilities, we can overcome the difficulty and be more confident drawing conclusions from our models (Long and Mustillo 2018). Figure 2 plots trends for men and women over time for those who never attend (row 1), who attend once a month (row 2), and who attend weekly (row 3), along with the contrasted probabilities.

Among those who never attend religious services, we see that by 2018 there is a trend toward a reversal of the gender gap with a larger proportion of women than men predicted to prefer working when not financially necessary. In 1977, 73 percent of men are predicted to prefer working compared with 67 percent of women, a six-point difference in the predicted probabilities across gender ($\chi^2 = 6.23; p < 0.05$) for these infrequent attenders. By 2018, women show a higher predicted probability of preferring to work, at around a five-point reversed gender gap at this time point. This reverse gap, where women desire to work more than men among the least religious Americans, is statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 5.39; p < 0.05$). Predicted probabilities also allow us to compare within-gender trends over time and determine whether they are statistically significant. In 1977, 73 percent of men preferred to continue working, and by 2018 this percentage declines to 65 percent, a significant eight-percentage-point decline ($\chi^2 = 9.55; p < 0.01$). By comparison, women’s three-point-increased probability of preferring to work over these 41 years does not reach statistical significance ($\chi^2 = 0.92; p = 0.34$). Therefore, the

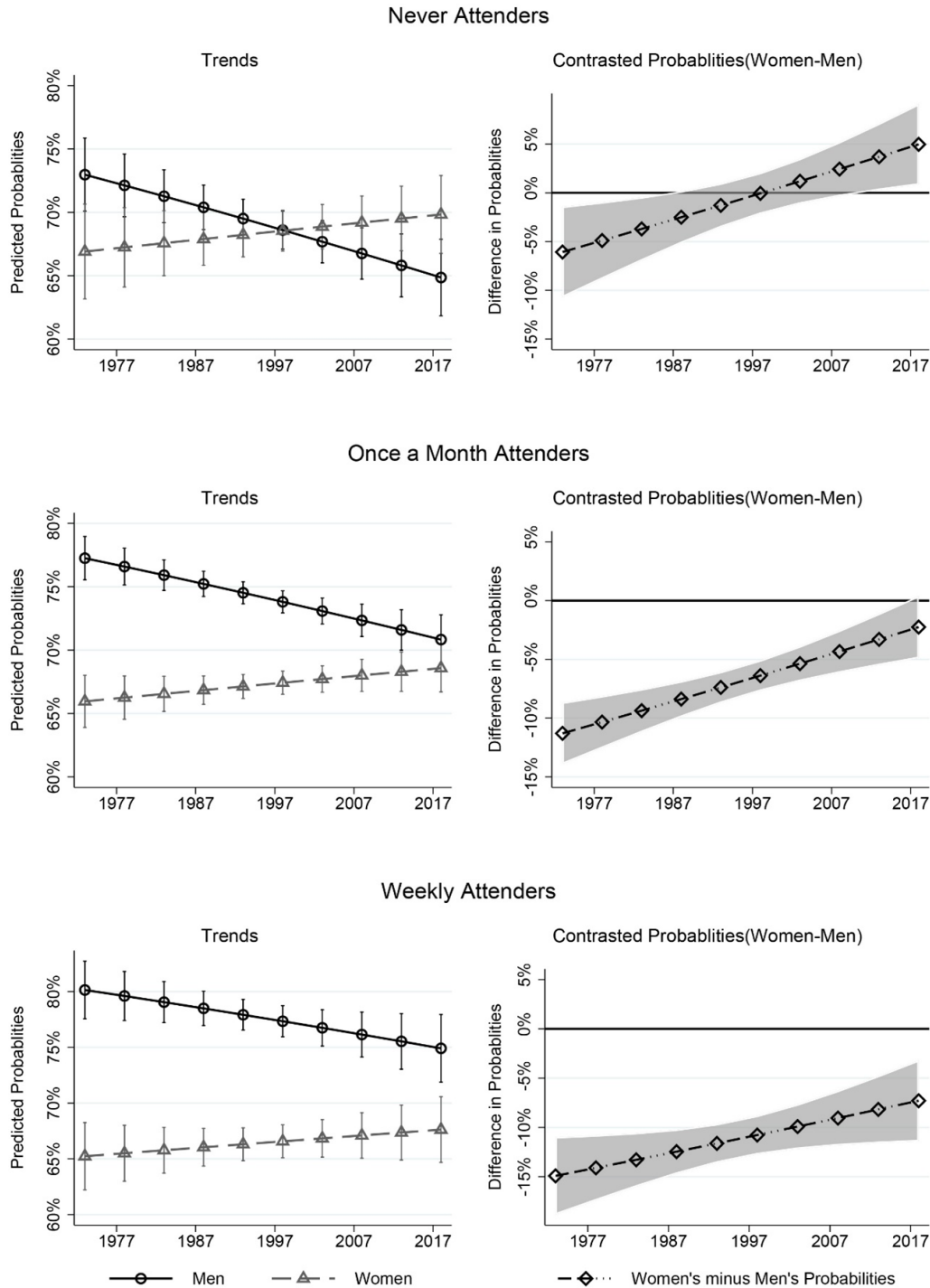


Figure 2: Trends in gender differences in desire to work across levels of religious service attendance with relative difference plots. Source: General Social Survey, 1977 to 2018. Models underlying predicted probabilities parallel those in Table 1. They include the following controls: religious affiliation, happiness, full-time work status, job satisfaction, equalized family income, marital status, number of children, education, age, race, whether born in the United States, region, and whether respondent lives in a city.

trend toward women preferring to work more than men among the least religious Americans is driven largely by men's declining desire to work.

Among those who attend monthly (middle row of Figure 2), we see a very different ending point. But this ending point is different because of a different starting point rather than different over-time trends. From the contrast plot, we can see men and women show significantly different predicted probabilities across this time series. It is not until 2018 that the difference between men's and women's predicted probabilities becomes only marginally different ($\chi^2 = 3.55; p = 0.06$). In terms of trends, men decline by a meaningful six percentage points ($\chi^2 = 14.96; p < 0.01$) and women increase by only two points, a trivial difference ($\chi^2 = 2.17; p = 0.14$). The trends for this middle group follow the same general pattern as other groups, and the overall levels at any given point in time appear similar to those for the general population (suggesting that this middle group is illustrative of the population average).

The final group we focus on are those who attend services weekly (bottom row of Figure 2). From the contrast plot, we can see that the gender differences are maintained across time for these individuals. Although these groups do show a similar trend toward convergence over time, the difference in probabilities is never less than a seven-percentage-point gender gap for these 41 years. In 1977, around 80 percent of men are predicted to report desiring to work when not financially necessary, and by 2018 this proportion has declined to 75 percent, a five-percentage-point decline ($\chi^2 = 4.37; p < 0.05$). Weekly attending women, like women who attend less frequently yet started out with a greater desire to work, show only a nonsignificant three-point rise in desire to work over the same time frame ($\chi^2 = 0.79; p = 0.37$).

Across all groups we see similar overall trends, with men becoming substantially and significantly less likely to desire to work and women becoming slightly (and typically not significantly) more likely to desire to work. Although the gender gap in working for its own sake has shrunk across all groups, a gender gap remains fairly stable among the most actively religious Americans. To further examine the comparability of the rates of change across groups, we conducted tests of second and third differences in predicted probabilities as presented in the online supplement. Table S6 shows that although the overall convergence was slightly larger among less religious Americans (combining men's decline and women's rise in desire to work, there was a little more than 10 points of convergence among never attenders and about seven points among moderate and weekly attenders), the rate of gender convergence was not significantly different across religious groups. Religious participation amplifies the gender gap in working for its own sake at any given point in time, but similar over time trends are present across levels of religious participation.²²

Religious participation clearly matters, but we might expect that the impact of religious participation varies by the type of religious institution in which it occurs. Whereas we control for religious tradition in our models for Table 1, in results presented in the online supplement (see Table S2 and Figure S1) we decompose these associations across some key religious tradition categories. Overall, we found that never attending conservative and mainline Protestants have converged over

time, with women trending toward more desire to work than men. But among the most frequently attending conservative and mainline Protestants there is less convergence—especially among mainline Protestants, where instead of women trending toward more desire to work they are actually trending toward less desire to work. Among Catholics, never attenders were already converged in the 1970s and remain similar today, whereas frequent attenders started out diverged but have converged over time. Among black Protestants there is general gender similarity in desire to work across both time and attendance: in other words, black Protestant women and men have been and remain similar in their desire to work regardless of time period or how religious they are. These results suggest that the overall patterns were driven primarily by conservative and especially mainline Protestants (among whom regular attendance is more distinctive rather than just expected as it is among conservative Protestants). And although it would appear that religious involvement in historically white Protestant churches has reinforced traditional gendered orientations toward work, that has not been the case for historically black Protestant churches.

We have seen evidence for general diffusion of the closing gender gap in desire to work across levels of religious participation and, for the most part, across religious groups. With diffusion, we might expect similar patterns across segments of society but also some catching up, with groups with the largest gap changing faster because they have more room to move. We also considered patterns across additional subgroups and found evidence for a society-wide convergence in women's and men's desire to work, with movement toward convergence found across most groups alongside instances of catching up occurring when some groups started out with larger gaps than others. As shown in Figure S5 in the online supplement, across family statuses where there was a gender gap in desire to work in the 1970s there has been movement toward convergence. Among single people with no children there was already no gap in desire to work in the 1970s, and, as we might expect for this group that started out at the apparent endpoint of societal change, they remained fairly steady, whereas other groups with more room to move changed more.

Figure S8 in the online supplement shows that white Americans started out with a wider gender gap in desire to work than black Americans in the 1970s, and thus white Americans converged more quickly than black Americans because they had more room to move toward the convergence they both reached as of 2018. Similarly, those regions of the country with larger gaps in the 1970s converged a bit more quickly so that across regions there is general gender similarity as of 2018. An exception to general convergence across groups is present for education. Among those with less than a bachelor's degree there was a large gender gap in the 1970s, and there has been quick convergence over time. But among those with a bachelor's degree or more education, there was a smaller gap in the 1970s that has persisted over time. Even though the education trend is distinctive, it still fits the overall pattern where the groups who started out with the largest gender gap in desire to work in the 1970s demonstrated the most convergence since then. It is notable, therefore, that there is a lack of faster change among the most religious Americans who had the most room to move in terms of starting with a larger gender gap. This

lack of faster convergence among a group that started with a substantially larger gap may suggest that religious gender traditionalism did hold back what would have otherwise been faster change to catch up with other groups in the movement toward the closing gender gap in working for its own sake.²³

The outcome measure was only asked of those working. Obviously, those who are working have, for whatever reason, selected into working, and as more women have joined the workforce alongside rising inequality and stagnating wages it is possible there are more women joining out of necessity than preference. We might assume that those least committed to paid work would be least likely to be asked the question, and especially when fewer women were in the workforce there might have been strong selection effects so that those women who most wanted to work were in the paid workforce. We also might assume that the rising number of women working over time could suppress women's measured desire to work, making the convergence in the gender gap less likely and more surprising. Looking at the data from another angle provides additional insight on change trends. As shown in Figures S20 and S21 in the online supplement, the patterns for the gender gap in workforce participation over time in many ways parallel the patterns for desire to work with women joining the workforce and, more recently, some men leaving, although with clear nonlinearity. There was a rapid closing of the gender gap in working up through the 1990s driven by women's increasing workforce participation. More recently and in step with the stalling of the gender revolution, there is a slower closing of the gap—and this continued closing has been driven more by men's declining workforce participation rather than women continuing to increase their participation.

Considering the trends across three categories (would continue working, would not continue working, and not currently working) in Figure S22 in the online supplement, we see women moving toward both being more likely to work and more likely to want to keep working. Given parallel patterns suggesting that increasing desire to work and actual workforce participation go hand in hand—and in light of possible selection effects—it is possible that if the question were asked of everyone that there may have been a more dramatic convergence over time (women's commitment to workforce participation could have been biased upward earlier when more women were out of the workforce and not asked the question and men's commitment biased upward later when more men were out of the workforce and not asked the question).

Discussion

This study considered women's and men's orientation toward their own work, examining changes in the gender gap in working for its own sake over the last half century and whether these changes were moderated by religion. The gender gap in working for its own sake has consistently declined over time to the point where it is now virtually nonexistent. This gender convergence was driven both by women becoming more likely and especially by men becoming less likely to say they would keep working even if they were not compelled by financial necessity. Religiousness is a countervailing force, with a gender gap in working for its own

sake persisting among the most religious Americans. However, this convergence is a general societal phenomenon occurring across groups, and even the most religious Americans are converging and could be expected to reach parity at some point in the future. In other words, a general current is taking all boats in the same direction in this convergence in work commitment, and, rather than going against the current, the most religious simply started at a different location and have not caught up.

We argued that exposure to religious ideologies and schemas could bolster the gender gap in working for its own sake. Presumably, regular participation in religious communities reinforces familism and neotraditional gender complementarianism, associating masculinity with earning and providing for one's family and femininity with motherhood and care work for one's family (Edgell 2006). To the degree that religious participation persists, women and men will continue to internalize divergent messages about the intrinsic value of work, leading to different orientations toward work that could help explain, in part, the greater precarity of women's workforce participation. The results of this study, however, are generally in line with past research suggesting that although religious Americans are more traditional, they are changing as well (Schnabel 2016a). This suggests that, in line with work on cultural diffusion, when general societal change occurs it happens across all groups, with some groups simply starting out ahead, whereas others need to play catch-up. In fact, once the most progressive groups reach a ceiling of completed social change, traditional groups with more room to move may even start changing more quickly (Baldassarri and Park 2020).

The literature has clearly demonstrated that the gender revolution is slowed, uneven, and in some ways stalled. But we know less about exactly why this slowdown has occurred or why the reality of gender inequality persists even as gender attitudes continue to change. Based on work on gender frames and stereotypes, it would appear this slowdown is due, at least in part, to the persistence of implicit cultural frames and societal norms about gender, family, and work and the extent to which they permeate society (Benard and Correll 2010; Correll, Benard, and Paik 2007; Ridgeway 2011). In an attempt to get at internalized gender norms, deeply held values, and gendered self-concepts, we measured orientations to one's own life and work and analyzed gender differences within them. This study pushes beyond abstracted gender attitudes, which seem to outpace actual social change.

Underlying preferences and orientations become increasingly important as people have more choices available to them. For example, if wages were to rise in the United States and/or if a strong social safety net were established, then we might see a widening in the gender gap in unemployment among highly religious Americans where women remain less likely to say they would work for its own sake. The potential for increased gender differentiation resulting from progressive social change is illustrated by the literature on occupational segregation in societies where people have more choice and options (Charles and Bradley 2009). This literature suggests that as we have more opportunities available, we are more likely to indulge our gendered selves, and personal preferences and orientations like those considered here could become increasingly important over time depending on other societal changes.

Whereas most movement toward gender parity during the gender revolution has been driven by women shifting toward men, the opposite was the case here. Typically, what is feminine gets devalued, men do not want to become like women, and masculinity frequently remains intransigent. Here we have shown, however, what appear to be changing definitions of masculinity, or at least a loosening of the norm that men must be ideal workers committed to their job above all else. We might imagine several reasons—positive, negative, and neutral—why men would be less committed to work than in the past, but, regardless of exactly why, men are now substantially less likely to say they would keep working even if they did not have to than in the past. And men's declining desire to work has played a central role in the gender convergence in work orientations we have seen occur over the last half century.

This study has limitations that we would like to acknowledge and highlight as opportunities for future research. The GSS provides high-quality data over time, but these data are cross-sectional (apart from some short-term longitudinal data collected more recently), and we were limited to the items available over time. For example, we think attendance is a good measure of religiosity and religious-tradition embeddedness, and we were able to explore some additional measures including views of the Bible and religious tradition as shown in the online supplement, but we would have liked to cross-check the patterns further with other measures like religious salience or Christian nationalism only available more recently or in a couple of specific years. Additionally, given data availability we could only look back to the 1970s, and although this was an important time the gender revolution was already under way, so we are unable to look at patterns before the gender revolution, including what may have been peak levels of familism in the 1950s.

As our focus was on social change over time and the GSS collects general population samples, there are only a handful of respondents from minority religious traditions in any given survey year, so by looking at on average patterns we end up focusing on the impact of religion for the dominant religious group (Christianity). Even when we purposefully consider subgroup patterns such as those presented in the online supplement, we cannot consider whether and how the patterns would be different for minority religious groups. This is an especially important point, as research has shown that religious service attendance can mean different things for different religious groups, and among Muslims in the United States—where attendance is not required of women and can be an indicator of greater engagement in public life—women who attend more frequently are actually more likely to work for pay (Abdelhadi 2017). Finally, we would like to highlight that the question about people's orientation toward their work was only asked of those working. Theoretical extrapolation based on our additional analyses led us to suspect the convergence pattern might have been even more pronounced if the question were asked of everyone, but as it was not, we cannot know for sure how compositional shifts in who was asked the question could have affected the patterns.

This study points to a few avenues for future research. First, it used a new measure of gendered work orientations that could be explored further. We showed that the gender gap on this item has declined but has done so in an uneven way:

although convergence is occurring across levels of religious participation, a gender gap persists among the most religious Americans. Notably, the pattern was driven more by men's declining desire to work than women's rising desire to work, and men's declining desire to work—which could be due in part to factors such as rising inequality, declining opportunities, deunionization, and work quality issues—offers opportunities for future examination.²⁴ In fact, this study highlights the importance of gender to research on general trends in desire to work over time. Whereas past research highlighted a slow overall decline, we show this is a gendered trend with a fast decline among men with a slow rise among women.

The gender gap in desire to work for pay has closed among all but the most religious Americans. At a moment when women disproportionately had their labor force participation curtailed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Collins et al. 2020; Qian and Fuller 2020), our results demonstrate that women do not simply have a preference for “opting out” of employment. Women desire to work for work's sake at the same rate men do. Therefore, neither explicit gender attitudes nor gendered orientations toward work can explain why women are more likely to leave work than men. It appears that it is structural barriers women face—such as a lack of free or affordable childcare and a lack of workplace flexibility and support, alongside men's avoidance of care work—pushing and pulling women out of the labor force and perpetuating gender inequality. At the same time, by examining how religious participation is implicated in the gender gap in work orientations, we demonstrated one of the ways the gender revolution's effects have been uneven. Pockets of Americans, specifically the most religiously active Americans, continue to have more gender-polarized orientations toward their employment. By attending to cultural institutions such as religion, we can trace the ways the gender revolution has been uneven and stalled both structurally and ideologically.

Notes

- 1 Studies typically use the following GSS items: FEPOL, FECHLD, FEPRESCH, and FEFAM, which assess respondents' feelings toward women's aptitude for engagement in politics and the impact of women's work on child and family well-being (Cotter et al. 2011; Scarborough et al. 2019, 2021; Schnabel 2016a; Shu and Meagher 2018).
- 2 Many studies using this measure are not concerned with gender differences and are therefore not summarized in detail here. For thorough reviews of ways these measures have been used, see Gallie (2019), Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010), and Sharabi and Harpaz (2019).
- 3 There is extensive research on employment commitment in the European context. Because this article is focused on the United States, we do not review this rich literature in detail. See Gallie (2019) for a thorough review of this scholarship.
- 4 Scarborough, Sin, and Risman (2019) do not include religion as a covariate. Shu and Meagher (2018) find that more religious and evangelical Americans are less gender egalitarian overall but do not examine these trends over time.
- 5 Past research has already demonstrated gendered patterns in the relationship between religion and work for other factors such as human capital investment, employment, and income (Glass and Jacobs 2005; Schnabel 2016b).

- 6 From 1972 to 1987, the GSS collected the core questions every year and the rotating battery questions for two consecutive years, and every third year the GSS rotated these questions off its survey instrument. For our purposes, this means that this question was not asked in 1975, 1978, 1983, and 1986.
- 7 See Appendix Q in the GSS Codebook (<https://gss.norc.org/get-documentation>).
- 8 The GSS did not use a full probability design until 1976 and did not collect information on whether people were born in the United States until 1977. To avoid issues with using years without a full probability sample and because nativity may play an important role in one's willingness to discontinue working when not necessary and be conflated with religious participation, we focus on the full probability years with the birthplace measure. Alternative tests including these years (and excluding the birthplace control) demonstrate substantively equivalent patterns (see Figure S10 in the online supplement).
- 9 The binary treatment of gender in these data is not ideal. This limitation is exacerbated by the fact the GSS did not historically ask respondents their gender but instead had interviewers assign binary categories to the respondents. Although this is a notable limitation, no other data set we are aware of includes the information provided here over a such a long time series.
- 10 Although the GSS does contain other measures of religiosity (e.g., frequency of prayer, belief in the Bible, etc.), we focus on attendance because it captures involvement in and exposure to religious institutions that have promoted gender traditionalism. Recent work by Perry and Schleifer (2019) documented that this measure is a more powerful predictor of traditionalist family values and behavior than religious identities (although the latter is also accounted for here). Moreover, religious service attendance has been readily available for the years in question. Figure S14 in the online supplement presents patterns for views of the Bible despite it being available for fewer years.
- 11 We considered various nonlinear treatments of attendance, including a series of dichotomous categories. These additional analyses were consistent with the patterns presented in the article. See Figures S3 and S15 in the online supplement for some of these additional analyses. We have also chosen not to mean standardize our measure of attendance for our interactive models. We do so because the 0 value of our attendance measure ("Never attending religious services") is of substantive interest and retaining the original categories makes interpreting the magnitude difference in attendance more straightforward. In separate models, our mean variance inflation factor for the fully interacted model is 3.98, and the same model with mean standardized religious service attendance measure for the interaction terms is 2.72.
- 12 See Figure S2 in the online supplement for a comparison of the linear treatment time against the unfitted treatment and fractional polynomial treatment of time. The patterns are similar and lead to the same overall conclusions. For parsimony and ease of interpretation, we retain a linear treatment of time here.
- 13 Additional analyses restricting the sample to people aged 65 and younger demonstrate substantively equivalent results (see Figure S13 in the online supplement).
- 14 In many ways, controls provide a conservative test (if not potential mediation) of gender differences, as gender is in theory randomly assigned and largely not selected into. The controls are more important, however, for considering potential confounds when looking at religious participation as a predictor. Additional analyses presented in the online supplement (Figure S4) show the general patterns are similar with and without accounting for controls (although the general patterns are similar, the overall magnitude of differences over time and levels of attendance are, as might be expected, a bit more pronounced without controls).

- 15 For further discussion of this issue, see Williams (2009) and Long and Mustillo (2018). Whereas Kuha and Mills (2020) argue that this issue may be overblown (also see Cramer 2007), we pursue a conservative strategy here to establish these group differences following the recommendation of Long and Mustillo (2018).
- 16 Average marginal effects could also be used to overcome this issue, and we opt for predicted probabilities because they are effective for visualizing over-time trends and highlighting substantive patterns. Average marginal effects are effective for testing the significance of interactions, but predicted probabilities can be used for this as well by testing first, second, and third differences as we do in the online supplement.
- 17 As noted in the table, all models in Table 2 include controls. For the sake of clarity and brevity, we present the coefficients for key variables in the article and present the full multipage table in the online supplement (Table S1).
- 18 Although not our focus, we want to highlight a perhaps interesting nonlinear pattern for number of children: those with the most children have the most desire to work with a large difference between those with no children and those with four or more children. Although we might imagine a few possible explanations, one possibility is that work is something of a haven for the “heartless world” of kids, a source of adult identity in the face of much unrequited effort at home (Hochschild 1997).
- 19 See Figure S4 in the online supplement for patterns without controls.
- 20 From a χ^2 test of probability equality with delta method standard errors.
- 21 We present linear trends but also considered several nonlinear approaches. There is a fair amount of year-to-year fluctuation on desire to work, with some of this fluctuation seeming to track economic and political period effects (Highhouse et al. [2010] similarly note this fluctuation, linking it to economic period effects). There is similarly a good amount of fluctuation in job satisfaction over time (see Figure S12 in the online supplement). Part of this fluctuation could be due to the fact that both items are asked of those who work. We checked overall trends for job satisfaction and a number of work attitudes to ensure what we are uncovering is specific to this theoretically relevant measure of desiring to work. As shown in Figures S12 and S16 to S19 in the online supplement, the pattern of a large gender gap that has converged over time is specific to desire to work and is not present on general work attitudes.
- 22 It is especially noteworthy that the rates of change are similar across groups despite the fact that there is compositional change in the groups with declining average attendance meaning there is movement from more frequently attending categories to less frequently attending categories.
- 23 Although there was not catching up among the most frequently attending Americans, we also considered pattern across views of the Bible, which were available for fewer years, and did find what may be some catching up among biblical literalists (see Figure S14 in the online supplement).
- 24 One obvious possibility that we already considered was occupations, especially as women have received more education over time while some career options that provide “good” jobs without college degrees have dwindled. Additional analyses presented in the supplement demonstrate that occupational prestige cannot explain the closing gender gap in desire to work.

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