

# Work, Family, and Religious Involvement for Men and Women

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*Do family formation and social establishment affect religious involvement in the same way for men and women, given increasing individualism and rapid changes in work and family roles? Using a random sample of adults from upstate New York (N = 1,006), our research builds on previous work in this area by using multiple measures of religious involvement, using multiple measures of individualism and beliefs about work and family roles, placing men and women in their work context, and looking at the relationships separately by gender. Men's religious involvement is associated with marriage, children, and full-time employment, signaling social establishment and maturity. Women's involvement is higher when there are school-aged children in the home, but it is also more intertwined with the salience of religion and with an assessment that religious institutions are a good fit with their values and lifestyles, including egalitarian views of gender. For men and women, views of religious authority and the role of religious institutions in the socialization of children are associated differently with religious involvement at different life stages. We call for further research to understand the gendered nature of religious involvement and the role of beliefs about work, family, and religion in explaining why individuals choose to be involved in religious institutions.*

## MEN'S AND WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

Since the 1970s in the United States, several interrelated changes have altered the work and family landscape: more women, especially mothers of young children, work full time; there are more dual-earner families; and men are increasingly involved in parenting (Furstenberg 1999; Nock 1998; Treas 1999). Americans increasingly endorse egalitarian gender relationships and show an individualistic orientation toward a host of traditional institutions, including family and religion (Ammerman and Roof 1995; Glenn 1987; Verhof et al. 1981; Wuthnow 1998). These changes have been consistently linked to participation in religious institutions (Hertel 1995; Mueller and Johnson 1975; Myers 1996; Sherkat 1998; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995).

Research examining the impact of these social changes on religious involvement has focused mainly on two questions: Does family formation still increase religious involvement, despite the rapid changes in work and family roles (Myers 1996; Sherkat 1998; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995)? And does the rise in women's full-time employment explain the shrinking "gender gap" in the rates of women's and men's church attendance (de Vaus 1984; de Vaus and McAllister 1987; but see Ulbrich and Wallace 1984)? Such work interprets religious institutional involvement as an expression of an individual's structural location (a combination of employment and family contexts), and it posits that as women's structural location becomes similar to men's, their religious involvement profile may also become more like men's (deVaus and McAllister 1987).

Rather than look at overall rates of religious participation, we examine the factors associated with individual religious involvement,<sup>1</sup> which is best understood as a socially-influenced choice (Sherkat 1998). Using data from a random sample survey of residents in upstate New York (N = 1,006), we analyze factors associated with individuals' church attendance, use of congregational ministries, and involvement in other local religious organizations besides congregations. We

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find that structural location (full-time paid employment, family formation) and religious involvement schema (beliefs about gender roles, beliefs about the appropriate role of religious institutions in family life) influence men's and women's religious involvement in different ways. The historic association between religious participation and traditionally gendered roles for men and women may contribute to current gender differences in the way individuals choose involvement in religious institutions across the life course (Christiano 2000; Sherkat and Ellison 1999).

### **Structural Location—Family Formation and Employment**

De Vaus and McAllister (1987) argue that religious involvement is an expression of structural location, understood as a combination of family circumstances (marriage, children) and employment. Religious institutions depend on families for members and resources, and they in turn provide families with norms of marriage and child-rearing and support for the moral socialization of children (Booth et al. 1995; Christiano 1999; D'Antonio 1983, 1980; Gesch 1995; Lehrer 1996; Myers 1996; Miller and Hoffman 1995; Sherkat and Ellison 1999; Sherkat 1998; Thornton 1985). Being older, married, and having children in the home all predict higher levels of church attendance (Argue, Johnson, and White 1999; Chaves 1991; Firebaugh and Harley 1991; Marler 1995; Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995). But as Stolzenberg et al. note, the effects of family formation may vary by gender, since men and women play different roles within the family, even in families embracing a more egalitarian gender ideology (Wilson and Sherkat 1994).

Mueller and Johnson (1975) link full-time paid employment to increased religious participation through the social class hypothesis, which argues that church attendance is an expression of social status and economic security. Using GSS data from 1972 through 1990, Hertel (1995) finds that for all men and for single women, full-time paid employment increases religious involvement, supporting the social class hypothesis. However, for married women, full-time employment<sup>2</sup> reduces both their own and their spouses' religious involvement. Hertel argues that, depending on life stage, full-time labor-force participation in an advanced industrial economy may increase women's individualism and decrease their willingness to assume traditionally gendered roles historically associated with religious institutions (Becker 2000; Booth et al. 1995; D'Antonio 1983; Christiano 2000; Sherkat and Ellison 1999; cf. deVaus and McAllister 1987; deVaus 1984; Luckmann 1967).

### **Individual Assessment of Religious Institutions**

Hertel (1995) reintroduces the debate about the role of "modern" values in explaining religious involvement (cf. Sherkat 1998:1093–94; Luckmann 1967). But he does not include direct measures of the modernized values of individualism<sup>3</sup> and egalitarianism. Previous research identifies at least three dimensions of "modern" (or progressive) values possibly affecting religious involvement that can be measured directly. The first is a belief in egalitarian gender roles for men and women, understood as a rejection of the idea that women ought to specialize in homemaking and family and that men ought to specialize in paid employment as breadwinners (Hertel 1995; cf. Gesch 1995, who uses a different measure, self-identification as feminist, to explain variations in women's religious involvement). Stolzenberg et al. also find that traditional attitudes toward gender roles and what they call "conservative family attitudes" are linked to religious participation (1995:87).

Beliefs about religious institutions themselves may be linked to involvement. Religious individualism is a broad concept that has received a great deal of attention in the sociology of religion, but most scholars agree on the central importance of views of religious authority in influencing religious participation. A view that religious authority resides in the person's own judgment, not in a religious institution or its representatives, may be linked to reduced

religious involvement (Becker 1999; Bellah et al. 1985; Wuthnow 1998; Hammond 1988, 1992; but see Sherkat 1998 for an alternative interpretation). This is consistent with Verhof et al.'s (1981) description of the rise of a more generalized "individualistic" orientation toward social institutions, which they describe as an increased emphasis on self-expression and self-direction in social life, and a waning valuation of organizational integration (cf. Glenn 1987; Luckmann 1967).

Roof and Gesch (1995) examine a different aspect of religious individualism when they make a distinction between "family attenders" and others. Family attenders believe that family formation and religious involvement are tightly linked, and that those who are married or have children should attend church together as a family (cf. Hammond 1992). Roof and Gesch (1995) find that those who believe in the importance of families attending church together are more likely to actually attend church after marriage and the birth of their children than are others. Religious schema that link family formation and church attendance are likely to reinforce the behavioral connection between family formation and religious participation; the erosion of such schema may lead to reduced participation (Sherkat 1998).

Since de Vaus and McAllister (1987) proposed the structural location theory of religious involvement, research has moved toward exploring whether employment and family formation affect men's and women's involvement in different ways, and has included some consideration of how attitudes and beliefs might mediate the relationship between structural location and religious involvement. Below, we examine how full-time employment, family formation, and values affect men's and women's participation in religious institutions using multiple measures of participation and developing specific empirical measures of different dimensions of the modern, individualistic values explored in other research.

## DATA AND METHODS

### Data

Our data come from the Religion and Family Project, a multiyear, multimethod study of the links between religion and family in four communities in upstate New York. This paper draws on data collected in the first quarter of 1998 from a random-digit-dial telephone survey ( $N = 1,006$ , response rate 60 percent) of residents in four communities and includes working-class and middle-class metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. The survey was designed to gather data on employment, family, religious involvement, egalitarianism, and religious individualism. Respondents were sampled randomly within each community, with some oversampling of areas to yield a good "target population" of working-class and single-parent respondents. Our analysis<sup>4</sup> demonstrated no systematic nonresponse bias beyond those patterns that are usual for random-digit-dial telephone surveys; we have more women than men, and our sample is of a slightly higher socioeconomic status than the community average, according to 1990 census data. Bias was introduced by our oversampling, and to correct this bias sample weights were constructed using 1990 census data.

Our sample represents upstate New York well and is not significantly different than the national average on most demographic variables. Our respondents attend church at about the national average; 50 percent report going "about once a month" or more, while the comparable General Social Survey figure is 48 percent. In our sample 27 percent of respondents either agree or strongly agree with the statement, "It's usually better for everyone if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children," while 28 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with a similarly worded item in the General Social Survey ("A husband's job is to earn money; a wife's job is to look after the home and family"). But our sample is different from the national average in the following areas: it is 94 percent white. We have more Catholic respondents than the national average (40 percent compared with around 29 percent), which

reflects well the population in our four communities. Our sample is more educated than the national average, with almost half (46 percent) reporting they have a college degree or more education.

In addition to the survey data, we conducted follow-up in-depth interviews with 70 survey respondents, men and women, married and single, ranging from age 25 to age 60. These telephone interviews averaged about 35 minutes and were designed to give us additional information to use in interpreting the survey results. These findings, while not used systematically in the analysis, are referred to in the discussion below.

### **Analyses**

An analysis of first-order relationships in our sample reveals that, among those married with children, 59 percent of women and 61 percent of men attend church monthly or more often. Family formation is linked with higher rates of both men's and women's church attendance, bringing husbands' attendance and use of other congregational ministries into parity with wives.' For women, but not for men, marriage and children are also associated with greater salience of religion. For women, less religious involvement and lower salience of religion are associated with full-time work, but the difference is slight unless women work more than 50 hours a week. For men, full-time *and* over-time work is associated with high levels of religious involvement, although the salience of religion is less among men working more than 50 hours a week. Women score higher than men on all of our measures of the "modern" values (see below).

We develop multivariate models to explore these relationships further while controlling for other factors known to be linked to religious involvement. We use logistic regression with three binomial measures of religious involvement: church attendance, use of congregational ministries, and involvement in other religious groups besides local congregations. We construct models for men and women separately, for ease of presentation and interpretation.<sup>5</sup> Tables 1 and 2 describe the variables used in the final regression equations. Table 2 is described in more detail below.

### ***Dependent Variables***

We use three discrete measures of involvement: church attendance, use of congregational ministries (other than worship), and involvement in another local religious organization or group besides a congregation. We do this because creating one combined measure of religious involvement as an index would obscure any differences in the predictors of specific forms of religious involvement (Smith 1998).

*Attendance.* The data include the standard seven-item GSS attendance question, "How often do you attend religious services?" with responses of never, hardly ever except for holidays, less than once a month, about once a month, two to three times a month, once a week, more than once a week. Our two-level attendance variable places those attending never or hardly ever as nonattenders, and all others as attenders. This binary measure avoids concerns that arise about a possible skew in the upper end of the variable distribution because of the possibility of the overreporting of weekly attendance<sup>6</sup> (Smith 1998; cf. Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995).

*Congregational Ministries.* We include a dummy variable for respondent's use of any other congregational ministry besides the main worship service and, in our sample, 38 percent of respondents report using at least one such congregational ministry. Of these, about half report that they are the only one in their household using a congregational ministry, but about half report that other household members also use a congregational ministry. For parents, the other person is often a child, and in-depth interviews indicate significant parental involvement in children's use of ministries, from encouraging children to go, to requiring children's participation, to providing transportation. Most respondents who report using a congregational ministry also attend worship services, although the overlap is not complete.

**TABLE 1**  
**INDEPENDENT VARIABLES USED IN REGRESSION MODELS (N = 1,006)**

Variable	Description of Coding	Mean (SD) or Frequency	
		Women	Men
<i>Demographic Information</i>			
Age	Continuous variable, range 25 to 70	45.0 (12.5)	46.5 (12)
% with a college degree or more	College degree or more = 1	45.8%	48.0%
<i>Religious Identity and Saliency</i>			
Conservative Protestant	Self-identified as conservative Protestant	13.9%	12.0%
Catholic	Self-identified as Catholic	39.7%	41.4%
Saliency of religion	How important is religion to you? Very Important = 1	50.8%	46.7%
<i>Family Stage Variables</i>			
Singles (reference)	Not married	33.7%	32.3%
Married	Married	66.3%	67.7%
Families with young children	Children younger than 6 living in the home	19.2%	15.0%
Families with school-aged children	Children between 6 and 18 in the home	28.3%	24.7%
<i>Employment Circumstances</i>			
% working 35 hours or more per week	Work hours per week equal or greater than 35	49.0%	72.6%
<i>"Modern" attitudes</i>			
Privatism		0.076	-0.098
Authority	Described in Table 2	0.094	-0.123
Egalitarianism		0.076	-0.099
<i>Religious Involvement</i>			
Binary attendance	R attends one or more times a month = 1, otherwise = 0	57.7%	52.1%
Use of congregation ministries	Uses one or more ministry or service	42.8%	34.1%
Other religious group—participation	Participates in one or more religious group besides local congregation	19.2%	18.5%

Source: Religion and Family Project Survey, Penny Edgell Becker, P.I., 1998, Lilly Endowment Grant No. 1996 1880-000.

*Other Religious Groups.* Respondents were asked if they regularly participated in any religious group besides a congregation or if they volunteered for a locally-based religious organization besides a congregation. In our sample, 19 percent of respondents report some involvement in another local religious organization, and interviews indicate that such groups include small in-home Bible studies and discussion groups, Promisekeepers, support groups, and charitable groups such as interfaith food pantries.

#### ***Independent Variables***

The demographic contextual variables we use are summarized in Table 1. We control for age by including both a continuous age measure and an age-squared measure to take into account

**TABLE 2**  
**ATTITUDE SCALES**

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**Additive Scale, Standardized**

*Egalitarianism (Gender Roles)*

It's usually better for everyone if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children (5 = strongly disagree)

Children benefit from the example of seeing both parents employed (5 = strongly agree)

More needs to be done to advance equal opportunities for women (5 = strongly agree)

A working mother can establish just as good of a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work (5 = strongly agree)

**Principal Components Analysis Scales**

*Religious Familism*

Being a church member is an important way to become established in a community (5 = strongly agree)\*

People should attend religious services together as a family (5 = strongly agree)\*

Churches and synagogues play an important role in the moral education of children (5 = strongly agree)\*

*Religious Authority*

Going to religious services is something you should do if it meets your needs (5 = strongly agree)

An individual should arrive at his or her own religious beliefs independently of any church or synagogue (5 = strongly agree)

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\*All variables re-coded so 5 = most progressive attitude and 1 = most traditional.

the curvilinear relationship between age and religious involvement. We also control for having a college degree.

For analytical reasons, we treat religious subculture and religious salience as properties of individuals that may influence decisions about institutional involvement (attendance, participation, use of ministries) (Stolzenberg, Blair-Loy, and Waite 1995). By religious subculture, we mean self-identifying as a conservative Protestant or Catholic.<sup>7</sup> Our dummy variable for religious salience indicates respondents who said religion is "very important" when asked, "How important is religion to you?"

Family formation is measured through variables for being married, having children in the home under six years of age, and having school-aged (6–18) children in the home. Following de Vaus and McAllister (1987) and Hertel (1995), we include a dummy variable for full-time employment (35 hours a week or more). A variable for "unemployed" was tested in early models but proved not to be significant, and so was dropped from final models.

The survey included a number of items that measured the respondent's attitudes toward gender roles, family, and religious institutions. These items were asked in two separate series of questions (see Table 2).<sup>8</sup> The attitude items all had five possible responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. All items were recoded so that lower levels indicate more traditional attitudes and higher levels indicate more progressive attitudes. Thus for all three resulting attitude items, a higher score indicates a more "modern" (for example, a more individualistic or egalitarian) response.

Four items in the survey were designed to capture beliefs about women's roles across several domains (work, home, public policy) and were used to construct our measure of *Egalitarianism*. These items were added together in a simple additive scale and the score was standardized (converted to a z-score). The resulting scale has an alpha >0.80. This additive scale was compared to a scale constructed by entering the same items into a principal components analysis; the resulting scale correlates with the simple additive scale at above 0.90. The additive scale was used for ease of interpretation.

Several items were included in the survey for the purpose of measuring individualistic attitudes toward religious institutions. A principal components analysis was performed and two

factors emerged. *Religious Familism* measures how loosely or tightly respondents view the links between the community, morality, family, and religion. This component captures the differences between those Roof and Gesch (1995) call family attenders and religious individualists, while also adding the dimension of believing that religious participation is linked to the family's establishment in the local community (Hammond 1992). *Religious Authority* captures individualistic attitudes toward religious authority; respondents who believe one should attend if it meets one's own needs and that one's beliefs should be formed independent of a church or synagogue are ranked highly on this scale (Bellah et al. 1985).

## RESULTS

Table 3 shows the results of the binary logistic regression analyses of church attendance, Table 4 contains the results for the use of other congregational ministries, and Table 5 contains the models for participation in other congregational ministries. We discuss first the results for women (left-hand side of each table) and then the results for men (right-hand side of each table). Full results are presented in Tables 3–5, but for brevity in the text we concentrate on the effects of family formation, full-time employment, and attitudes and beliefs in our discussion.

In all three models, we find positive associations between involvement and having a college degree. Age loses its relationship with religious involvement in models that include family formation, employment, and salience. Those for whom religion is highly salient and those involved in a religious subculture (conservative Protestant, Catholic) are more involved. Most significantly, there are strong gender differences in the factors associated with men's and women's religious involvement, and with the different forms of involvement.

### Women's Religious Involvement

For women, what is striking is the absence of a strong relationship between family formation and women's own church attendance (Table 3) and participation in other religious organizations (Table 5) using multivariate models that control for religious salience. Family formation, specifically having children, is positively linked to women's religious involvement because it increases the salience of religion; apart from this indirect effect, there is no direct family formation effect on women's religious participation. The effect of family formation on religious salience for women (and men) was confirmed by constructing multivariate models of religious salience.<sup>9</sup> In-depth interviews confirmed the relationship between family formation and salience for women. In our interviews, many women talked about marriage and, in particular, the birth of a child, in the same way that this woman did, referring to the birth of her daughter: "I hadn't thought about church for years, and now it seemed very important to me, God seemed important to me, for the first time in years."

The exception to this pattern is the use of other congregational ministries (Table 4). There is a direct and positive relationship between the presence of children and use of ministries, and this effect is twice as large for women with school-aged children. As described above, our in-depth data explain this relationship in part, showing parents' participation in congregational ministries is often through and for their children; this analysis confirms that such effects may operate in ways that are distinct from the salience of religion in parents' own lives (Myers 1996).

For women, there is no statistically significant relationship between full-time paid employment and any form of congregational involvement; additional models (not shown, see note 9) indicate that full-time employment is also not related to reduced religious salience for the women in our sample. We tested interaction terms between full-time employment and all three of our family-formation variables; they were not statistically significant, and are not included in the final model.

Women's own values and beliefs are related to both church attendance and use of other ministries, and they interact with work and family formation as well. However, some of the results are surprising, given earlier work. For example, an egalitarian gender role ideology is positively

**TABLE 3**  
**LOGISTIC REGRESSION, RELIGIOUS SERVICES ATTENDANCE**

Variable	Women (N = 585)			All Men (N = 408)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Context</i>						
Constant	-3.66	-1.90	-2.14	-5.52**	-4.88*	-4.80*
Age	0.06	0.01	0.02	0.10	0.11	0.11
Age-Squared	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
College Degree	0.81***	0.81**	0.87***	0.75**	0.74**	0.74**
Conservative Protestant	1.32***	1.23***	1.34***	1.76***	1.42***	1.59***
Catholic	1.11***	0.91***	0.93***	1.06***	0.88***	0.94***
Salience	2.16***	1.59***	1.60	2.10***	1.70***	1.77***
<i>Family Form</i>						
Married	0.32	0.37	0.41	0.59*	0.42*	0.51
Young Children (less than 6)	0.63	0.55	0.20	1.01**	1.04	0.98*
School-Aged Children (6-18)	0.40	0.38	0.38	0.37	0.34	0.16
<i>Employment</i>						
Work 35 + Hours (full time) <sup>1</sup>	0.05	0.06	0.11	0.49	0.30	0.24
<i>"Modern" Attitudes</i>						
Egalitarianism		0.25	0.26*		-0.02	0.01
Religious Familism		-1.30***	-1.55***		-1.17***	-0.85**
Religious Authority		-0.47***	-0.62***		-0.30*	-1.07**
<i>Interactions</i>						
Religious Authority × Child < 6			0.97***			—
Religious Familism × Child < 6			1.06***			—
Religious Authority × Work			—			1.01**
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.30	0.40	0.41	0.31	0.40	0.20
Minus 2 Log Likelihood	592.09	495.37	482.25	412.00	359.85	346.45
Chi-Square, model	205.91	302.63	315.74	153.07	205.28	218.68
DF, model	10	13	15	10	13	14
Chi-Square, block		96.72	13.11		52.21	13.40
Added DF for block		3	2		3	1
P	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
% Cases Correctly Predicted	77.09	80.51	81.87	72.79	77.70	77.94
N	585	585	585	408	408	408

Source: Religion and Family Project Survey, Penny Edgell Becker, P.I., 1998, Lilly Endowment Grant # 1996 1880-000.

\*\*\*p < 0.001.

\*\*p < 0.01.

\*p < 0.05.

associated with women's church attendance (Table 3) and, among women who work full time, egalitarianism is positively associated with use of other congregational ministries (Table 4, column 3).

Most of the women in our sample believe that churches have become more sensitive in the past decade to women's needs and concerns; 67 percent of women disagreed with the statement "Churches are insensitive and unresponsive to women's needs." In in-depth interviews, most women reported that their own congregation had made recent attempts to be more responsive to women's needs, changing the times of meetings and services to accommodate women who are



**TABLE 4**  
**LOGISTIC REGRESSION, USE OF OTHER MINISTRIES**

Variable	Women (N = 485)			All Men (N = 409)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Context</i>						
Constant	-4.45**	-3.36*	-0.35*	-3.40	-2.55	-2.38
Age	0.67	0.04	0.05	0.01	0.00	-0.01
Age-Squared	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
College Degree	0.51*	0.46*	0.44*	0.11*	0.00	0.08
Conservative Protestant	1.75***	1.59***	1.64***	1.41***	1.22**	1.22**
Catholic	0.39*	0.15	0.15	-0.06	-0.18	-0.18
Salience	1.89***	1.37***	1.33***	1.86***	1.58***	1.59***
<i>Family Form</i>						
Married	0.15	0.17	0.18	0.73*	0.70*	0.74*
Young Children (Less Than 6)	0.82*	0.77**	0.73*	1.08**	0.96**	0.91*
School-Aged Children (6-18)	1.61***	1.67***	1.64***	0.59	0.55	0.51
<i>Employment</i>						
Work 35+ Hours (Full Time)	0.18	0.20	0.16	0.72*	0.62	0.68*
<i>“Modern” Attitudes</i>						
Egalitarianism		0.01***	-0.17		0.07	0.07
Religious Familism		-0.70**	-0.72***		-0.71***	-0.75***
Religious Authority		-0.23**	-0.23*		0.00	0.17
<i>Interactions</i>						
Egalitarianism × Work			0.39*			—
Religious Authority × Child 6-18			—			-0.56*
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.30	0.33	0.33	0.25	0.28	0.30
Minus 2 Log Likelihood	586.04	554.61	551.51	405.07	402.35	380.75
Chi-Square, model	203.76	235.18	238.27	119.21	139.29	143.54
DF, model	10	13	14	10	13	14
Chi-Square, block		31.43	3.09		20.08	4.29
Added DF for block		3	1		3	1
P	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.00	0.00	0.03
% Cases Correctly Predicted	74.87	76.58	77.09	76.77	77.51	78.00
N	585	585	585	409	409	409

Source: Religion and Family Project Survey, Penny Edgell Becker, P.I., 1998, Lilly Endowment Grant # 1996 1880-000.

\*\*\*p < 0.001.

\*\*p < 0.01.

\*p < 0.05.

employed full time, or providing babysitting during committee meetings or other activities. Many of the women we spoke to said that their congregation is helpful in their attempts to balance work and family, in ways that range from the practical (church-sponsored daycare) to the rhetorical and symbolic (work-family discussion groups and parenting classes).

**TABLE 5**  
**LOGISTIC REGRESSION, OTHER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS**

Variable	Women (N = 485)		Men (N = 416)	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
<i>Context</i>				
Constant	- 5.29**	- 4.45*	- 9.75**	- 9.26***
Age	0.11	0.09	0.30**	0.30*
Age-Squared	0.00	0.00	0.01**	0.00**
College Degree	0.48*	0.49*	0.57	0.53
Conservative Protestant	0.37	0.12	1.44***	1.29**
Catholic	0.23	0.07	0.10	0.05
Saliency	1.81***	1.36***	1.80***	1.63***
<i>Family Form</i>				
Married	- 0.05	0.06	0.51	0.45
Young Children (Less Than 6)	0.22	0.21	0.54	0.47
School-Aged Children (6-18)	0.52*	0.49	0.28	0.30
<i>Employment</i>				
Work 35+ Hours (Full Time)	- 0.13	- 0.10	0.63	- 0.67
<i>"Modern" Attitudes</i>				
Egalitarianism		- 0.10		- 0.09
Religious Familism		- 0.44**		- 0.27
Religious Authority		- 0.25*		- 0.03
Cox and Snell R-squared	0.12	0.15	0.18	0.19
Minus 2 Log Likelihood	488.04	473.96	309.75	306.92
Chi-Square, model	77.48	91.57	82.98	185.81
DF, model	10	13	10	13
Chi-Square, block		14.09		2.83
Added DF for block		3		3
P	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
% Cases Correctly Predicted	81.20	81.54	84.35	84.35
N	585	585	416	416

Source: Religion and Family Project Survey, Penny Edgell Becker, P.I., 1998, Lilly Endowment Grant # 1996 1880-000.

\*\*\*p < 0.001.

\*\*p < 0.01.

\*p < 0.05.

Our survey of pastors in the same four communities (N = 125, response rate = 76 percent) bears this out. Some 80 percent of congregations provide babysitting during congregational meetings or activities besides the main worship service, 31 percent offer parenting classes, 23 percent provide some regular forum for discussions of coping with work-related stress, and 17 percent offer full- or part-time daycare during the week for church members. The perception that churches have themselves become more egalitarian and are engaged in finding ways to support women's work *and* family roles may lie behind our findings.

Strong negative associations are found between all forms of religious involvement and our indicator of familism (coded such that a high score on the familism item indicates a more individualistic approach). Women who believe it is important to attend church as a family, that churches are important in the moral socialization of children, and that going to church helps one become

established within a community are more likely to attend church, use congregational ministries, and participate in other religious organizations. Women who have a more individualistic response on these items, viewing their own religious participation as being distinct and separate from their family roles and community involvement, are less likely to attend church, use other ministries, or be involved in another religious organization. The effect of school-aged children on women's involvement in other religious organizations disappears when familism is entered into the model (Table 5, column 2).

As shown by the positive interaction term (Table 3, column 3), having a young child in the home modifies the relationship between religious familism and women's church attendance. Those most likely to attend church are women with a familistic orientation towards church and young children; those least likely to attend are those without young children and with an individualistic response to the religious familism items.

We see a slightly different result for our measure of views towards religious authority. For women who are mothers of young children, an individualistic approach to religious authority is associated with a *higher* probability of church attendance (as indicated by the interaction terms in Table 3, column 3). In-depth interviews helped explain this seeming paradox. When we asked mothers of young children who attend church to tell us about their decision to do so, several respondents told us that they felt it was important for them to figure out their own religious beliefs now that they had children so that they could answer their children's questions. They also wanted to provide their children with an opportunity to learn about religious faith so that the children could be well equipped to make their own decisions later in life about religious involvement. As one woman said, "How will they know if religion is something they want, something they need, if they never have a chance to learn about it?" If mothers want to equip children to "figure out for themselves" the role of religion in their lives, then their church attendance is, in fact, consistent with an individualistic orientation towards religious institutions.

### Men's Religious Involvement

For men, structural factors are relevant for congregational involvement. Marriage and the presence of young children (under age six) are related to a higher probability of church attendance, although the marriage effect disappears once men's own attitudes are taken into account (Table 3, last column). Full-time employment is related to use of congregational ministries (Table 4).

High religious salience is also related to all three forms of religious involvement for men. We constructed multivariate models predicting the salience of religion for men parallel to those constructed for women (models not shown, see note 9 for details). We found that family formation and full-time employment have no effect on the salience of religion for men in our sample in models controlling for age, college degree, and religious subculture (Catholic and conservative Protestant). For men, the effect of family formation and employment on involvement in religious organizations is direct, and there is no indirect effect that operates through religious salience.

For men, religious involvement seems to flow somewhat automatically from what deVaus and McAllister (1987) would call "structural location," indicating the continuation of a link between religious participation and men's roles as husbands and providers. In in-depth interviews, men were more likely than women to report that they had "automatically" begun attending church when they got married or when their first child was born. They were also likely to say that they had not really thought about it and could not really articulate why they had returned to church, that it simply seemed "appropriate" and "natural" once they had started a family.

For men, gender role ideology (egalitarianism) is unrelated to all forms of religious involvement in our sample. However, men's views of religious institutions are related to their involvement in local congregations (Tables 3 and 4). Men who are not employed full time, who have an individualistic view of religious authority, and an individualist response to the familism items have a lower probability of attendance.

In the model of men's use of other congregational ministries, there is a significant interaction between an individualistic view of religious authority and having a school-aged child (Table 4). Use of congregational ministries is highest when men have school-aged children coupled with a less individualistic view of religion, and lowest when men have no children and a less individualistic view of religion (suggesting that men with a more traditional view of religion do not see a need for involvement unless they have children to be involved with). Presence of school-age children makes little difference in the probability of ministry usage for men who have highly individualistic attitudes. From this interaction, we extrapolate that an individualistic view of religious authority may counteract some of the "family formation" effect on involvement for men.

Table 3 (last column) shows an interaction between full-time employment and an individualistic view of religious authority on church attendance. Those with more individualistic views of religious authority are less likely to attend, and the effect is even greater for men who are not working full time. The most likely to attend are men who are not working full time and who have less individualistic views of religious authority—these are most likely older retired men, for whom full-time employment is disentangled from the social establishment nature of church attendance. Full-time employment increases the probability of attendance for men with highly individualistic views of religious authority; employment weakens the probability of attendance for men with more communal views of religious authority. In depth interviews showed that men are more likely than women to talk about feeling a sense of responsibility for figuring out what they believe in a way that is not linked to experiences of parenting.

#### FAMILY VALUES AND RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT IN THE ERA OF THE MODERN FAMILY

Family formation is related to men's and women's religious involvement in different ways. For women, family formation is linked to greater religious salience, which is associated with greater participation in religious institutions. For women, there is no direct effect of marriage on any form of religious involvement, only the indirect effect that operates through religious salience. Having children has no direct effect on women's own church attendance or involvement in other religious groups, although it does have a direct effect on women's use of other congregational ministries. For men, family formation is unrelated to the salience of religion in models that control for age and religious subculture, but family formation does have a direct effect on all forms of men's congregational involvement. The effect of young children on men's religious involvement is especially strong.

Unlike Hertel (1995), we find that women's full-time employment does not reduce religious involvement. Our findings may be different than Hertel's (1995) because we control for more contextual factors than he included. Being conservative Protestant or Catholic, in our sample, is linked to greater religious involvement across life stage and work status.

The differences in family formation effects and full-time employment effects on men's and women's religious involvement are particularly striking. De Vaus and McAllister (1987) investigated whether full-time employment makes women "more like men" in their religious involvement. But we find that family formation and, especially, parenting, makes men "more like women" in their religious involvement. This makes sense given other work that suggests that marriage and parenting are becoming more important in men's lives and more central to men's identities.

We find some support that "modern" attitudes are related to a lower probability of religious involvement. The attitudes that matter most are those having to do with religious institutions themselves—how much authority they are given in forming an individual's own beliefs and decisions, and whether individuals believe them to be positively associated with family formation and important for the moral socialization of children. Myers (1996) argued that the importance of religion to parents is directly related to religious socialization. In addition, our analyses suggest that parents are more likely to be religiously involved, and to take their children to congregational

activities, if they believe not only that religion is important but that it is directly relevant to the moral socialization of children and an appropriate expression of a family-oriented lifestyle.

Religious involvement is also dependent on gendered perceptions of how religious institutions fit—or do not fit—into the various stages of adult life. For men, religious involvement still signals, as it did in the time of Mueller and Johnson (1975), *increased maturity and social establishment*. Men with college degrees, families, and full-time jobs who believe that going to church is a family activity and a way to become established in the community are the most religiously involved. For adult men, the institutional realms of work, family, and religion fit together and are understood to be mutually supportive.

For women, the story is more mixed. Women's own church attendance and their participation in other religious organizations is mostly determined by their own attitudes, beliefs, and religious subculture and not by family formation and full-time paid employment. Women in our in-depth interviews gave more elaborate and explicit reasons for their religious involvement, and if they were uninvolved, they were more likely to talk about a lack of perceived fit between religious institutions and their own lifestyles and values. The effects of marriage and full-time employment on women's church attendance operate through their relationship to the personal salience of religion.

We know that women take a more "expressive" orientation toward institutions more generally (Tolbert and Moen 1998), and they give a higher priority to finding a coherent sense of meaning in life (Beutel and Marini 1995). At this vantage point, after a period of rapid change in women's work and family roles, it seems that women are also more "expressive" about their religious involvement, making conscious and articulate choices about involvement based on their own assessments of the relevance of religious institutions in their own lives. To a lesser extent, men do this as well, leading to the direct relationship between religious individualism and reduced involvement for men.

Of course, great caution is warranted in interpreting the causal direction of the relationship between progressive attitudes and religious involvement. Roof and McKinney (1987) and Bellah et al. (1985) speak of religious individualism as reducing involvement, positing a very specific causal connection (cf. Wuthnow 1988; Hammond 1992). But Sherkat (1998) argues that the causality may work in the opposite direction, reasoning that socialization into traditional religious subcultures may cause individuals to be and to remain less individualistic. Likewise, while a mother who rejects religious familism may not take her children to church, a mother in a traditional church may have been taught not to reject religious familism in the first place (Leher 1995; Sherkat 2000; Christiano 2000; Woodberry and Smith 1998). Without better data on religious involvement styles over the life course, it is impossible to adjudicate this debate about causality. And, in fact, it is quite possible that the causal influences work in different directions for different subgroups of respondents.

Our analysis suggests that we must continue to develop direct, empirical measures of the "modern values" that may influence involvement in religious institutions. Such analyses shed light on the meaning of religious involvement in men's and women's lives. They also make us rethink our simple assumptions about the unitary effect of very large constructs like "individualism" on involvement in religious institutions. For example, our analysis shows that religious individualism can be more closely associated with religious involvement at some life stages, and egalitarianism, while unrelated to men's religious involvement, has a slight positive relationship with some forms of involvement for women.

Our findings also suggest caution in generalizing findings on church attendance to other forms of religious involvement, as we find different bundles of factors associated with various forms of institutional involvement (Smith 1998). We also suggest caution in generalizing findings on all forms of religious involvement without regarding the effects of gender on religious involvement choices.

While we have a sample that is in many ways close to the national averages, in other ways it is not: our sample is more Caucasian and of a higher socioeconomic status than the national average. Thus our findings may not generalize to poorer, less educated, or nonwhite populations. In

particular, the relationship between full-time labor force participation and religious involvement might be different in a predominantly working-class community. While we include controls for conservative Protestant and Catholic subcultures, a systematic comparison of the differences between Catholics, conservative Protestants, and other religious subcultures is beyond the scope of this analysis. Such an examination is important for future research in this area.

This study exemplifies a productive way to frame the analysis of men's and women's religious involvement. Including empirical measures of the values that may mediate the effects of structural location on religious involvement allows us to avoid post-hoc interpretations of the mechanisms linking work and family formation to involvement for women and men. Modeling distinct bundles of factors that predict men's and women's involvement provides a way to begin thinking about the meaning of religious involvement in men's and women's lives after a period of rapid change in the links between work, family, and religion.

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#### NOTES

1. The causal processes leading to variation in overall *rates* of religious involvement may or may not be the same as the causal processes leading to variation in individual choices to become religiously involved (Leiberson 1985). Some of the explanations for variation in religious involvement rates in the general population also look at life-cycle factors. The debate about rates of religious involvement, while important, is a separate question and is beyond the scope of this paper and the data upon which it is based. See Sherkat and Ellison (1999) for a review.
2. In contrast with part-time employment, which women may use as a strategy for reconciling economic needs with a modified form of traditional gender roles (Lehrer 1995; Sherkat 2000).
3. Verhof et al. (1981) provide a good overview of increasing individualism in the United States with a focus on a shift in the locus of well-being. Glenn (1987) reviews the evidence from national attitude surveys for increases in individualism measured along multiple dimensions. Wuthnow (1998) reviews the literature linking individualism and religious participation (cf. Becker 2000; Sherkat 1998).
4. We checked for nonresponse bias by comparing our sample to U.S. Census (1990) data for our four communities on basic demographic and social class characteristics. We also conducted a 119-person survey that was administered to individuals who initially declined to participate in our resident survey. This questionnaire was a much-shortened version of our original survey, administered primarily to discover if those initially not responding show some systematic pattern in their gender/family ideology, work commitment, religious orientation, religious beliefs, or religious involvement. Means on these measures showed no significant differences between the original and the nonresponse sample.
5. To test the statistical significance of the differences between the coefficients for men and women, we model men and women in the same analysis, including a dummy variable for gender and testing interaction terms of gender and the other measures. Across models for all three outcome variables, statistically significant interactions occurred between gender and the following variables: full-time employment (35+ hours a week), age, college degree, Catholic, religious salience, children age 6–18 in the home, egalitarian gender role ideology, and religious individualism. In models for two out of the three outcome variables, statistically significant interactions between gender and the following variables were present: conservative Protestant, marriage, presence of children under six in the home, and religious familism.
6. However, this measure also puts into the same category those who attend church about once a month and those who attend more than weekly. We also analyzed our final logistic regressions with the variable divided differently (only those attending two to three times a month or more counted as an "attender"); the results were very similar to the models presented here, with only very slight variations. Models are available upon request.
7. Conservative Protestant was classified following Smith (1987). Controlling for Catholic is not as usual as controlling for conservative Protestant, but upstate New York has a high percentage of Catholics, and earlier descriptive analyses showed that being Catholic was related to most other measures of involvement among our respondents.
8. Various numbers of respondents had missing values for one or more items in each set; examination of the missing values found no systematic patterns, indicating that the missing values were distributed randomly. Thus, it was appropriate to impute a valid response for the missing values. "Hot-deck" imputation was used to complete the records of the respondents with missing values on the attitude items (Little and Schenker 1995). This imputation method involves

stratifying the sample into groups on the basis of characteristics relevant to determining responses on the items to be imputed. For the gender and family ideology variable, the groups were designated by age and gender; for the attitudes and beliefs towards religious institutions, groups were designated by age, gender, and religious orientation. For each item, cases with a missing value were assigned a valid response randomly selected from the complete cases within its stratification cell.

To assess whether imputation affected the resulting scales, each scale was constructed three times. The first analysis used only the cases with complete records for the set of items (i.e., all cases with nonimputed values). The second and third analyses used the total sample with imputed values for those respondents who originally had missing values; the imputation procedure was done twice, resulting in two sets of imputed cases. The results of the three analyses did not differ significantly, indicating that the imputation did not bias the analysis. Imputation was also tested in each regression model (by inserting dummy variables indicating whether any values were imputed on any set of variables) to check whether the imputation had a significant effect on the model. In all cases, the variable for imputed values showed no effect and was dropped from the models shown.

9. We performed a binomial logistic regression on salience, coded so that "1" corresponded to religion being "very salient" and a "0" corresponded to religion being "not very" or "somewhat" salient for the respondent. Independent variables include our other contextual variables (age, age-squared, college degree, conservative Protestant, Catholic), family formation variables (married, young children, school-aged children), and the full-time employment variable. In the model for women, two family formation variables (young children, school-aged children) had a positive and statistically significant effect on salience. In the model for men, family formation effects on religious salience did not reach statistical significance. Models, constructed separately for men and women, are not shown, but are available upon request.

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