

MEN WHO HOLD MORE EGALITARIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD WOMEN WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME IN THE US: WHO ARE THEY?

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ABSTRACT:

Using data from the General Social Survey (GSS), we examine the attitudes of men toward women working outside the home. We illustrate that there are a number of basic demographic characteristics that are related to more egalitarian views being held by men, including: being younger, having more education, holding more liberal political views, supporting abortion rights for women, acceptance of same-sex sexual activity, and not being a religious fundamentalist. When examining these characteristics simultaneously, age, education, political views, and attitudes toward same-sex sexual activity are the strongest predictors of egalitarian gender attitudes for men. These findings suggest that, more important than religiosity in predicting attitudes toward women working outside the home among men, is the desire to control others.

Key words: Gender, equality, religion, abortion, control, autonomy

In recent years, scholars and activists alike have granted increased attention to the role of men in the pursuit of gender equality (Connell 2005). Specifically, studies suggest that men's role in this pursuit relies heavily upon redefining traditional notions of what it means to be a man, and that both women and men would benefit from such transformations. Further, studies suggest that accomplishing gender equality will likely require men's

willingness to relinquish controlling behaviors through the development of vulnerability and more egalitarian notions of women and other social beings (Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). In fact, such studies argue that men's ability—or lack thereof—to embrace the autonomy of others may serve as a barometer of progress toward gender equality within and across varied cultural and structural settings.

Social scientists have long demonstrated that males construct and enact a wide variety of masculinities influenced by: (1) their social locations within interlocking systems of inequality and (2) local, regional, and global attitudes about what it means to be a man (see, e.g., Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messner 1997; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Rather than an inherent quality, studies reveal that masculinities are socially constructed collective practices, beliefs, and patterns of interaction that accomplish the devaluation of women in relation to men and some men in relation to others. Overall, these studies reveal that males learn to act and think in certain ways to demonstrate their claims to dominant social positions (Kimmel 1996).

Understanding masculinities thus requires exploring how males signify masculine selves. This process involves the work men do to establish and affirm the identity: “man” (West and Zimmerman 1987). We may thus conceptualize masculinities as the result of convincing “manhood acts.” Schrock and Schwalbe (2009, 289) conceptualize “manhood acts” as the “work males do to claim membership in the dominant gender group, to maintain the social reality of the group, to elicit deference from others, and to maintain privileges vis-à-vis women.” Whereas the specific elements of a manhood act may vary historically and culturally, all such acts aim to signify masculinity by exerting control over and resisting being controlled by others (see Johnson 2005). While ethnographic and historical studies (see Johnson 2005; Kimmel 1996; Schrock and Schwalbe 2009 for reviews of these studies) reveal the myriad ways men engage in controlling behaviors to signify masculinities, scholars have rarely explored the ways men supporting more egalitarian gender relations may differ in their attitudes, behaviors, and interpretations of what it means to be a man.

To this end, some researchers have utilized statistical data to map some ways attitudes toward women's roles in the family and occupations influence beliefs regarding gender equality (see Johnson 2005; Padavic and Reskin 2002

for reviews). In so doing, researchers have found that respect for women's occupational and familial autonomy correlates strongly with opinions regarding gender equality. Extending these notions, ethnographic and historical research has shown that men often signify masculine selves by exercising control over bodily autonomy of other people—particularly women and sexual minorities—in relation to sexualities and reproductive decision-making (Johnson 2005; Pascoe 2007). The combination of these studies suggests that men's attitudes toward women's familial, occupational, and bodily autonomy may provide signals for understanding the persistence of gender inequality in the contemporary world (see Ridgeway 2011). How might men's attitudes about women's and sexual minorities' autonomy relate to overall conceptualizations of gender equality?

Seeking to begin addressing these questions, we utilize nationally representative survey data from the General Social Survey to explore variations in men's support of women working outside the home, a manifestation of gender equality. Specifically, we explore distinctions between men concerning their attitudes toward women working outside the home in relation to attitudes that reflect traditional notions of what it means to be a man. In so doing, we find that attitudes predicated on men's exercise of control over others significantly predict lower levels of support for women working outside the home. Our findings thus bolster calls by scholars and activists suggesting that the accomplishment of gender equality will necessitate redefining the practices and beliefs that constitute contemporary manhood, and point to some arenas where men's socialization into more egalitarian attitudes might be especially useful.

Data

To examine the characteristics of men who hold more egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home, we draw upon the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is a nationally representative survey of non-institutionalized Americans, funded by the National Science Foundation and conducted roughly every other year since 1972. Yearly samples range from around 2,000 to 4,000 participants.

Our selection of data from the GSS was constrained by two factors. First, we wanted to make sure that the data we were analyzing was relatively current. Second, we needed sufficient cases in our analysis to allow us to observe the

subtle effects of the variables of interest. As a result, we use the 2000–2012 waves of the GSS combined. Of note, starting in 2006, the GSS modified its data collection procedure to begin gathering data on a panel of respondents, though that was in addition to the regular cross-sectional survey collection. We did not include the panel participants in our analysis. Collectively, the GSS sample from 2000–2012 includes 18,945 cases. However, given our focus is on men, that is reduced by nearly half. Additionally, not every participant is asked the same question every year as the survey designers occasionally split the sample and ask some participants a subset of questions but not others. Our key dependent variables (see below) were often asked of just a subset of males between 2000 and 2012, resulting in a final sample of 4,233.

Methods

While a number of questions have been asked about the role of women in society in the GSS since 1972, three questions have been asked very regularly and have a common set of response options, asking participants to indicate their agreement on a four point scale, (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) disagree, and (4) strongly disagree. The first question asks participants their agreement with the statement, "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works." The second asks participants their agreement with the statement, "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work." The third asks participants their agreement with the statement, "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family."

To capture the variation in responses in all three of these variables, we reverse coded responses on the second question, because the question is framed inversely to the other two. We then combined the three questions by taking the average response across all three. Higher values on the scale indicate more egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home. This turns these three questions into a scale measure of attitudes toward women working outside the home. A standard measure of the reliability of a scale (i.e., a measure of whether the component measures of the scale are measuring the same underlying concept) is Cronbach's Alpha (Carmines and Zeller 1979). Cronbach's Alpha for the three items is .70, which is considered acceptable for a scale, especially for a scale with just three items (Devellis 2003). Throughout this paper we will refer to this scale as the "at

attitudes toward women working outside the home” scale.

We examined a variety of independent variables based on prior research in our effort to better understand which men hold more egalitarian gender attitudes. Included in our analysis are several ratio variables: age in years, educational attainment (also in years), and number of children. The GSS does not provide state-level data but aggregates respondents into regions. We used the region variable that includes the following regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, South Atlantic, East South Central, West South Central, Mountain, and Pacific. We included a measure of marital status that includes the following response options: married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married. We included a simple measure of race with the options: white, black, or other. We included a measure of political views that ranges from (1) extremely liberal to (4) moderate to (7) extremely conservative.

As prior research has suggested that gender egalitarian attitudes are related to men’s sense of control over others (see Johnson 2005 for a review), we included two additional variables. The first is a dichotomous measure of attitudes toward abortion. GSS participants were asked whether or not they thought it should be legal for women to obtain abortions in a number of specific situations. We include just one of those, whether or not they think women should be allowed to get an abortion for any reason. We opted for just one variable for two reasons. First, this question is the most polarizing of the contexts (the others being: rape, the health of the mother is endangered, the child has a birth defect, the mother is too poor to care for the child, and the mother doesn’t want any more children). Second, the inclusion of a single variable is more parsimonious since the relationship is nearly identical, whether a single variable is used or whether all of the questions are combined into a scale. Response options are: (1) yes and (2) no. We also included a measure of attitudes toward same-sex sexual activity (see Pascoe 2007 for relationships between attitudes toward sexual minorities and gender equality). The question asks, “What about sexual relations between two adults of the same sex: do you think it is (1) always wrong, (2) almost always wrong, (3) wrong only sometimes, or (4) not wrong at all?” A helpful reviewer noted that these last two variables—though primarily attitudes toward abortion—also reflect, to some degree at least, attitudes toward women. However, given that what we are trying to predict in our models is attitudes

toward women working outside the home, attitudes toward abortion and attitudes toward homosexual sex are not endogenous to our dependent variable.

Finally, we included three measures of religiosity. The designers of the GSS have classified religious affiliations into: (1) fundamentalist, (2) moderate, and (3) liberal. We use this as a broad measure of religious orientation. We also use a measure of religious service attendance, which ranges from (0) never to (8) more than once a week. Finally, we include a question asking about participants’ belief in a god or higher power. Respondents could choose from the following options: (1) I don’t believe in a god or higher power, (2) I don’t think there is a way to find out if there is a god, (3) I believe in some higher power, (4) I believe sometimes, (5) I believe but have doubts, and (6) I know God exists. While both religious attendance and how fundamentalist or moderate someone is are correlated with attitudes toward abortion and homosexual sexuality (see Table 1), the correlations are not strong enough to raise concerns about collinearity in the models below (see Table 5).

Table 1. Correlations between religiosity measures, attitudes toward abortion, and attitudes toward homosexual sexuality.

	1	2	3
(1) fundamentalism scale	-		
(2) religious attendance	-0.302 ***	-	
(3) abortion for any reason	-0.241 ***	0.286 ***	-
(4) attitudes toward homosexual sexuality	0.293 ***	-0.290 ***	-0.357 ***

We initially analyze the bivariate relationship between each of these items and the attitudes toward women working outside the home scale measure using ANOVA, t-tests, or correlations. Our final analysis is multivariate, using linear regression with the attitudes toward women working outside the home scale as the dependent variable to determine which of the independent variables are the strongest predictors of egalitarian gender views among men.

Results

Table 2 shows the mean score on the attitudes toward women working out

side the home scale for the entire sample, $\bar{x} = 2.61$ ($s_x = 0.63$),¹ which suggests the collective sample leans slightly toward more egalitarian views. The mean age of participants in the survey was 46.36, but there is substantial variation around that mean with a standard deviation of 16.75 years. On average, participants had some college education ($\bar{x} = 13.48$, $s_x = 3.18$), and the average number of children was just under 2 ($\bar{x} = 1.71$, $s_x = 1.69$).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for attitudes toward women working outside the home scale and ratio variables.

	N	\bar{x}	S_x
attitudes toward women	4,154	2.614	0.629
age (in years)	8421	46.360	16.745
education (in years)	8430	13.480	3.183
number of children	8425	1.710	1.695

Table 3 shows the percentages of participants who belonged to the various categories of the nominal/ordinal variables we analyzed, but also compares the different categories on the attitudes toward women working outside the home scale. Attitudes were significantly different for every variable included in Table 3. Men in New England ($\bar{x} = 2.707$) and the West (Mountain states $\bar{x} = 2.651$; Pacific states $\bar{x} = 2.606$) had more egalitarian views than did men from Southern states (South Atlantic states $\bar{x} = 2.543$; West South Central states $\bar{x} = 2.529$). Men who had never married ($\bar{x} = 2.751$) had more egalitarian gender attitudes than married ($\bar{x} = 2.563$) and widowed men ($\bar{x} = 2.403$). Individuals of other races ($\bar{x} = 2.525$) had less egalitarian gender views than did both Whites ($\bar{x} = 2.614$) and Blacks ($\bar{x} = 2.693$). Extremely conservative men ($\bar{x} = 2.235$) had significantly less egalitarian gender attitudes than did extremely liberal men ($\bar{x} = 2.844$). Men who favored women's right to an abortion for any reason had significantly more egalitarian gender attitudes ($\bar{x} = 2.817$) than did men who opposed abortion ($\bar{x} = 2.479$). Men who said they thought same-sex sexual activity was always wrong ($\bar{x} = 2.444$) had less egalitarian gender views than did men who said it was not wrong at all ($\bar{x} = 2.893$). Religious fundamentalists ($\bar{x} = 2.475$) had less egalitarian gender views than did religious liberals ($\bar{x} = 2.743$).

1 For readers unfamiliar with these symbols, \bar{x} is a common statistical symbol for the arithmetic mean; s_x is a common statistical symbol for the standard deviation, which is a statistical indication of the spread of scores around a mean.

Those who never ($\bar{x} = 2.693$) or seldom attended religious services had more egalitarian gender views than did those who attended every week ($\bar{x} = 2.506$) or more than once a week ($\bar{x} = 2.191$). Finally, atheists ($\bar{x} = 2.815$) and agnostics ($\bar{x} = 2.931$) had more egalitarian gender views than did theists ($\bar{x} = 2.546$).

Table 3. Means on attitudes toward women working outside the home scale for nominal/ordinal variables and means tests.

	N	%	\bar{x}	S_x	F (or t)*	sig
Region						
New England	164	4.11%	2.707	0.646		
Middle Atlantic	498	12.48%	2.655	0.561		
East North Central	710	17.79%	2.635	0.648		
West North Central	299	7.49%	2.748	0.660		
South Atlantic	848	21.25%	2.568	0.636		
East South Central	255	6.39%	2.543	0.636		
West South Central	455	11.40%	2.529	0.599		
Mountain	309	7.74%	2.651	0.625		
Pacific	616	15.44%	2.606	0.631	4.73	< .001
marital status						
married	2,011	48.45%	2.563	0.662		
widowed	178	4.29%	2.403	0.612		
divorced	615	14.82%	2.565	0.616		
separated	114	2.75%	2.635	0.556		
never married	1,233	29.70%	2.751	0.560	24.45	p < .001
race						
White	3,234	77.85%	2.614	0.634		
Black	504	12.13%	2.693	0.614		
other	416	10.01%	2.525	0.594	8.209	p < .001
political views						
extremely liberal	145	3.62%	2.844	0.718		
liberal	440	10.99%	2.786	0.618		
slightly liberal	446	11.14%	2.774	0.550		
moderate	1,484	37.07%	2.669	0.602		
slightly conservative	648	16.19%	2.569	0.623		
conservative	668	16.69%	2.374	0.618		
extremely conservative	172	4.30%	2.235	0.679	44.884	p < .001
abortion for any reason						
yes abortion for any reason	815	40.63%	2.817	0.586		
no abortion for any reason	1,191	59.37%	2.479	0.622	12.358	p < .001
homosexual sex						
always wrong	1,113	55.35%	2.444	0.624		
almost always wrong	89	4.43%	2.652	0.592		
sometimes wrong	155	7.71%	2.697	0.580		
not wrong at all	654	32.51%	2.893	0.557	79.369	p < .001

Table 3 (continued). Means on attitudes toward women working outside the home scale for nominal/ordinal variables and means tests.

	N	%	\bar{x}	S_x	F (or t)*	sig
religious classification						
fundamentalist	1,051	26.80%	2.475	0.655		
moderate	1,492	38.04%	2.597	0.605		
liberal	1,379	35.16%	2.743	0.606	56.717	p < .001
religious attendance						
never	1,056	25.60%	2.693	0.598		
less than once a year	312	7.56%	2.698	0.581		
once a year	614	14.88%	2.667	0.627		
several times a year	490	11.88%	2.662	0.620		
once a month	293	7.10%	2.659	0.641		
2 to 3 times a month	305	7.39%	2.583	0.618		
nearly every week	173	4.19%	2.572	0.640		
every week	667	16.17%	2.506	0.625		
more than once a week	215	5.21%	2.191	0.670	19.317	p < .001
belief in god or higher power						
don't believe in god	130	4.48%	2.815	0.563		
no way to find out	211	7.28%	2.931	0.569		
some higher power	345	11.90%	2.768	0.562		
believe sometimes	141	4.86%	2.627	0.604		
believe but doubt	533	18.38%	2.717	0.599		
know god exists	1,540	53.10%	2.546	0.635	23.573	p < .001

Table 5 presents the results of three regression analyses. In the first model, only demographic variables are included. With the other variables included, age remains a significant predictor of attitudes toward women working outside the home ($b = -0.007, p < .001$); every additional year of age decreases egalitarian gender attitudes by .008 points. The number of children is also significant ($b = -0.024, p = .043$), with each additional child reducing scores by .012 points. Education significantly increases attitudes toward women working outside the home ($b = .039, p < .001$); every additional year of education increases scores on the scale measure by .039 points. Relative to the West South Central region, none of the regions have more or less egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home. Marital status is not a significant predictor of attitudes toward women working outside the home with the other variables in the equation. Compared to individuals of other races both Whites ($b = 0.177, p = .003$) and Blacks ($b = .245, p = .001$) have more egalitarian gender attitudes. Finally, moving from the liberal to the conservative end of the political spectrum significantly decreases egalitarian gender attitudes ($b = -0.102, p < .001$). These variables explain 17.5% of the variation in attitudes toward women.

Table 4 correlates the three continuous variables—age, education, and number of children—with the gender attitudes scale. All three are significantly correlated with the scale, but in different directions. Age is negatively correlated ($r = -.224$), indicating that older men have less egalitarian gender attitudes. Educational attainment ($r = .199$) is positively correlated, indicating men with more education have more egalitarian gender attitudes. And the number of children ($r = -.188$) is negatively correlated, indicating men with more children have less egalitarian gender attitudes.

Table 4. Correlations between attitudes toward women working outside the home scale and ratio variables.

	1	2	3
(1) attitudes toward women working outside the home scale	-		
(2) age	-0.224 ***	-	
(3) education	0.199 ***	-0.037 ***	-
(4) number of children	-0.188 ***	0.443 ***	-0.155 ***

Table 5. Attitudes toward women working outside the home scale regressed on demographic and independent variables.

	Model 1 (n=4,576)				Model 2 (n=4,576)				Model 3 (n=4,576)			
	b	se	Beta	sig.	b	se	Beta	sig.	b	se	Beta	sig.
age (years)	-0.007	0.001	-0.196	.000	-0.008	0.001	-0.201	.000	-0.007	0.001	-0.193	.000
number of children	-0.024	0.012	-0.067	.043	-0.017	0.012	-0.048	.152	-0.021	0.012	-0.060	.068
education (years)	0.039	0.006	0.195	.000	0.034	0.006	0.171	.000	0.024	0.006	0.120	.000
region (West South Central is comparison)												
New England	0.060	0.102	0.017	.559	0.020	0.103	0.006	.847	-0.026	0.101	-0.008	.798
Middle Atlantic	-0.043	0.073	-0.021	.550	-0.054	0.073	-0.026	.456	-0.108	0.071	-0.052	.129
East North Central	0.058	0.064	0.036	.368	0.054	0.064	0.033	.395	0.020	0.063	0.012	.745
West North Central	0.055	0.083	0.021	.510	0.045	0.083	0.018	.585	-0.018	0.081	-0.007	.824
South Atlantic	0.044	0.062	0.028	.478	0.044	0.061	0.029	.469	0.026	0.060	0.017	.663
East South Central	-0.019	0.083	-0.007	.823	0.015	0.084	0.006	.856	0.013	0.082	0.005	.869
Mountain	0.063	0.080	0.026	.435	0.050	0.080	0.020	.534	0.045	0.078	0.019	.564
Pacific	-0.005	0.067	-0.003	.937	-0.026	0.067	-0.015	.700	-0.073	0.065	-0.042	.262
marital (widowed is comparison)												
married	0.008	0.089	0.007	.925	-0.005	0.088	-0.004	.956	-0.029	0.086	-0.023	.734
divorced	-0.022	0.095	-0.013	.815	-0.037	0.095	-0.021	.700	-0.091	0.093	-0.052	.325
separated	0.033	0.137	0.008	.810	0.035	0.137	0.009	.795	-0.006	0.134	-0.001	.966
never married	-0.012	0.099	-0.009	.900	-0.043	0.099	-0.031	.665	-0.104	0.097	-0.074	.285
race (other is comparison)												
White	0.177	0.060	0.116	.003	0.148	0.060	0.097	.014	0.137	0.059	0.090	.020
Black	0.245	0.074	0.127	.001	0.262	0.075	0.136	.000	0.253	0.073	0.132	.001
political views	-0.102	0.012	-0.233	.000	-0.090	0.012	-0.206	.000	-0.076	0.012	-0.174	.000
religious fundamentalism (fundamentalist is comparison)												
moderate					0.052	0.045	0.040	.246	0.026	0.044	0.020	.547
liberal					0.150	0.049	0.114	.002	0.117	0.048	0.088	.016
religious service attendance					0.004	0.007	0.015	.631	0.013	0.007	0.057	.074
belief in god (theist is comparison)												
do not believe in god					0.024	0.088	0.008	.784	-0.083	0.087	-0.027	.337
no way to know					0.174	0.074	0.073	.018	0.068	0.074	0.028	.358
higher power					0.074	0.06	0.037	.223	-0.035	0.061	-0.017	.571
believe sometimes					0.111	0.076	0.04	.148	0.010	0.076	0.004	.893
believe but doubt					0.107	0.047	0.065	.024	0.047	0.047	0.029	.320
abortion for any reason (no = 0)									0.224	0.038	0.175	.000
homosexual sex									0.054	0.015	0.118	.000
constant	2.750	0.157	.000		2.669	0.160	.000		2.640	0.158	.000	
R ²			0.175				0.193				0.230	

The second model introduces the three religion variables into the regression equation. As a result, number of children is no longer a significant predictor of attitudes toward women working outside the home. Two of the religion variables are significant predictors. Relative to religious fundamentalists, religious liberals ($b = 0.150, p = .002$) have more egalitarian attitudes. Relative to theists, just two stances toward the existence of a god have more egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home: agnostics ($b = 0.174, p = .018$) and those who believe but doubt ($b = .107, p = .024$). The amount of variation explained in attitudes toward women working outside the home increases marginally with the addition of the religion variables to 19.3%.

In the third model, the two variables capturing desire to control the sexuality and reproduction of others are introduced. With the inclusion of these two variables, beliefs in god relative to theists are no longer significant predictors of attitudes toward women working outside the home. However, age, education, race, political views, and religious fundamentalism all remain significant predictors. Individuals who support a woman's right to an abortion for any reason hold significantly more egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home than do those who oppose abortion for any reason ($b = 0.224, p < .001$). Individuals who hold more restrictive attitudes toward same-sex sexual activity hold less egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home ($b = 0.054, p < .001$). The variation explained in attitudes toward women working outside the home in this model is 23%.

Discussion

Our findings offer clear empirical support for Schrock and Schwalbe's (2009) conceptualization of manhood acts as the processes whereby men establish and maintain gender dominance by asserting control over others while resisting being controlled by others (see also Ezzell 2012; Johnson 2005; Sumerau 2012). While this relationship may be seen in many areas of our analysis, it becomes especially clear when we measure attitudes toward women working outside the home specifically in relation to controlling behaviors concerning human sexuality and bodily autonomy. In the following paragraphs, we outline the implications of the overall results while discussing some ways the distinctions we uncover might provide resources for pursuing gender equality and the transformation of existing notions of what it means to be a man.

In its simplest terms, our results demonstrate that, among men in the United States, more egalitarian attitudes toward women working outside the home may be found among younger men living outside the South with fewer children who are less religious but more politically liberal, better educated, and who grant greater autonomy to others. If we deconstruct this snapshot, it is noteworthy that education, age, race, and political views are incredibly strong predictors, and the consistency of these predictions suggests that socialization processes (embedded within aging and educational exposure especially) play a powerful role in men's self definitions as well as their conceptualizations of women (see also Schrock and Schwalbe 2009). Considering that these factors have been shown to also influence acceptance of gender inequality and attitudes toward women's right to define their own educational, occupational, and relationship priorities (Padavic and Reskin 2002), our analyses suggest socialization plays a primary role in overall attitudes toward women (see also Johnson 2005).

Also noteworthy is that when other factors (such as religion and autonomy) are taken into account, regional variations play a smaller role in men's attitudes, which suggests the role of the South in predicting less egalitarian attitudes may be heavily tied to the preponderance of religious activity and lack of laws protecting bodily autonomy in the region (see Johnson 2005). Our results thus suggest that early women's movement attempts to bolster education and legal rights to bodily (and especially sexual) autonomy may continue to provide powerful tools for the continued pursuit of gender equality. Even in relation to other common factors outlined in gender studies (Padavic and Reskin 2002), attitudes toward bodily autonomy continue to, as women's movement leaders have long argued, exert considerable influence upon men's conceptualization of the social location of women (see also Schrock and Schwalbe 2009).

Finally, it is revealing that our autonomy variables ultimately provide the strongest predictors of attitudes toward women working outside the home. In fact, the finding that attitudes toward same-sex sexual activity provide the most powerful predictor, coupled with the predictive power of abortion attitudes, suggests that controlling women's sexuality (long the goal of heterosexual marriage in American history, see Kimmel 1996) may be the ultimate issue at the heart of American economic gender equality. This would suggest that early women's movement pushes for reproductive and other sexual rights

may continue to represent incredibly important avenues for the promotion of economic gender equality. By the same token, political attacks on reproductive autonomy and non-heterosexual activities may ultimately be—as many commentators have argued—primarily an attempt to undo economic gains made by the women’s movement throughout the last 100 years and return women to complete subordination.

With this cultural context in mind, one could thus ascertain men’s views on women by exploring voting and advocacy patterns concerning same-sex sexual and reproductive politics. As our findings reveal, each of these issues provides important proxies for men’s interpretations of women (though our focus throughout has been on women working outside the home). Stated simply, men who are willing to embrace the autonomy—especially sexual—of other members of society are much more likely to promote egalitarianism, whereas men who seek to exercise control over others’ sexual decisions likely extend this control to other issues and experiences (see Schrock and Schwalbe 2009 for similar implications drawn from decades of ethnographic studies of men and masculinities). Researchers, activists, and policy makers may need to pay special attention to political debates concerning personal autonomy if they seek to ascertain chances for and methods to accomplish occupational equity specifically or economic equity in general.

To this end, our results provide the other side of the coin suggested by ethnographic and historical research into masculinities. Whereas ethnographic and historical analyses convincingly demonstrate a multitude of ways men remain the dominant social group by exercising control over others and promoting policies that limit bodily and occupational autonomy of women, our analysis reveals how such exercises show up in the attitudes men develop toward women in the context of women working outside the home. Similarly, ethnographic and historical analyses suggest that men who lack control in one area may seek to reclaim it in other areas (see Sumerau 2012). Our analysis reveals that these attempts to exercise control trump other socio-demographic variables in the prediction of attitudes toward women working outside the home. We would thus echo existing advocacy programs, like the socialization workshops offered by Jackson Katz and others, and policy protocols, like recent United Nations’ calls for a transformation of what it means to be a man, by calling for socialization processes and programs that encourage men to respect, embrace, and affirm the autonomy of other social beings.

As our results suggest, such endeavors would facilitate the development of more egalitarian attitudes among men, and in so doing, likely encourage men to take on more active roles in the promotion and accomplishment of gender equality.

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