

Article

A Nationally Representative Survey of Faith and Work: Demographic Subgroup Differences around Calling and Conflict

Elaine Howard Ecklund ^{1,*}, Denise Daniels ², Daniel Bolger ¹  and Laura Johnson ³ 

¹ Department of Sociology, Rice University, Houston, TX 77005, USA; dan.bolger@rice.edu

² School of Business, Government, and Economics, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, WA 98119, USA; ddaniels@spu.edu

³ School of Community Health Sciences, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557, USA; laurajohnson@unr.edu

* Correspondence: ehe@rice.edu

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Abstract: Research has increasingly highlighted the importance of business leaders allowing people to bring their whole selves to work. And religion is an important part of the whole self for many. However, we lack the large-scale national data needed to explore how Americans see the connections between religion and work. Here, from “Faith at Work: An Empirical Study”—a novel, nationally representative dataset—we explore the extent to which working Americans (N = 8767) see their work as a spiritual calling and/or experience work conflict because of their religious faith. We find that one fifth of workers identify their work as a spiritual calling. Our findings also suggest that experiences of religious conflict and discrimination are shaped not only by religious beliefs, but also social location. The initial results highlight future avenues for research and demonstrate the potential of the “Faith at Work” data to shed further light on how religion enters the workplace.

Keywords: religion; work; discrimination; social stratification; workplace

1. Introduction

Work is a major part of life for many Americans. According to estimates from the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(2019\)](#), 63 percent of Americans over the age of 16 are part of the U.S. labor force. On average, full- and part-time U.S. workers collectively report spending 7.99 h per day at work ([U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018](#)). Religion is also an important part of life for many Americans. More than three quarters of Americans are affiliated with a religious tradition, the vast majority of whom identify as Christian ([Pew Research Center 2015](#)). And researchers find a number of positive outcomes for individuals and organizations when employees of all religious traditions are able to bring their whole selves to work: burnout is reduced ([Grandey et al. 2012](#)), constructive conflict behaviors increase ([Fotohabadi and Kelly 2018](#)), and happiness and productivity often improve ([Sabat et al. 2019](#)). In one sense, since religion is an important part of the whole self for many people, the extent to which individuals feel comfortable engaging their religious identity at work is an important empirical question. Another stream of research is also relevant. There is increasing religious diversity in U.S. society ([Putnam and Campbell 2010](#)); given the increase in the number of Muslims, Hindus, and members of other non-Christian religious traditions, it is important to understand how those outside Christian traditions understand the relevance of their faith to their work. We also know very little about how different groups perceive and experience religious discrimination in the workplace. This may be especially salient for those from non-Christian faith traditions, since religious expression in the United States is generally oriented around Christian expressions of religion (e.g., Christmas is

more likely than Ramadan to be honored and celebrated in U.S. workplaces). To date, however, we lack large-scale national data that can help us understand the full range of ways that U.S. workers think about the connections between their faith and work, as well as the extent to which they experience workplace discrimination.

Research suggests that religion and spirituality matter for a range of work-related outcomes, most notably the individual productivity of workers and the bottom line for organizations (Fry 2013; Jurkiewicz and Giacalone 2004). Recent work also finds that religion shapes beliefs about upward mobility in the workplace (Reynolds et al. 2019). Demographic shifts in the U.S. have led not only to a more racially and ethnically diverse society, but also a more religiously diverse society (Putnam and Campbell 2010), changes that have an impact on the workplace. Indeed, many racial/ethnic minority groups in the U.S. are also highly religious (Dougherty and Emerson 2018). Although increased religious diversity has presented unique challenges for U.S. workplaces, social scientists have only recently begun to turn their attention to how religious diversity shapes workplace outcomes and experiences.

Understanding how U.S. workers express, or choose not to express, their religious convictions in the workplace is not only a growing area of concern for scholars, but also for religious leaders and practitioners. Such interest is demonstrated in the rapid growth of the “faith at work” movement with Christian leaders bringing attention to faith–work integration (see Keller and Alsdorf 2012; Sherman 2011), a movement that does not seem to appear in other U.S. religious traditions. This movement has spurred numerous articles and books that focus on how religious people might better integrate these two important aspects of their lives (Miller 2007; Van Duzer 2010; Volf 1991).

Increased engagement by religious leaders with issues of faith and work is no doubt related to the continued salience of religion in U.S. society. The U.S. remains a highly religious country (Putnam and Campbell 2010); more than 50 percent of Americans report that religion is a “very important” part of their lives (Pew Research Center 2015). However, religious practices are not solely bound to religious institutions. While recent work on “lived religion” has pushed social scientific work outside the bounds of traditional religious institutions (Ammerman 2014; Williams 2010), the relationship between religion and the workplace remains underexplored (Cadge and Konieczny 2014; Grant et al. 2004).

A small body of social science scholarship suggests that people who internalize their religion are more likely than others to view their work as having sacred significance (Davidson and Caddell 1994). Other research examines the concept of “calling” (e.g., Bellah et al. 1985; Dik and Duffy 2009), a perception that one’s work has meaning or purpose such that it is directed toward a greater good.

However, existing empirical studies of how people relate their faith to their work have notable limitations. Nash (1994) and Lindsay (2008), for example, provide thorough empirical examinations of Christians in leadership contexts. But both focus exclusively on individuals at the highest levels of leadership, whether business CEOs or political leaders. No large-scale national survey data has been collected that allows for comparisons of those in different organizational positions of power.

Other studies have begun to explore differences across religious traditions. Neubert and Dougherty (2012), for example, find clear differences among Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, Black Protestants, and Catholics in attitudes and practices associated with positive workplace performance (Park et al. 2016). However, even these studies pay scant attention to differences across other lines of social difference, like social class, gender, or racial–ethnic status. And initial evidence suggests that work–faith integration looks very different for minimum wage workers than it does for CEOs (Sullivan 2006).

Much of the current research on faith in the workplace has been done by management and organizational scholars (see Ghumman et al. 2013, for a review). For example, research suggests that religious faith shapes career orientation, values, and perceived support (Duffy et al. 2010), along with the choice of occupation, particularly self-employment (Audretsch et al. 2013), willingness to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors (Neubert et al. 2015), helping behavior, and creativity (Neubert et al. 2014). Other work strongly suggests that religious expression in the workplace is not simply the result of

personal religiosity, but is shaped by the official policies and informal culture of the organization as well (Lawrence and King 2008). And scholars of organizations have noted that religious expression at work can take on many different forms, especially among often marginalized religious minority groups like Muslims (Maliepaard and Phalet 2012).

The dearth of empirical data on religion in the workplace has also limited our understanding of the prevalence and consequences of religion-related workplace discrimination. Indeed, expressions of religious faith in the workplace—whether verbal or nonverbal—are often subject to discriminatory sanctions by supervisors or coworkers. While Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects workers from discrimination based on their “race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 1964, para. 1), recent research suggests that nearly 20 percent of U.S. workers have experienced religious discrimination in the workplace (Scheitle and Ecklund 2017, 2018; Scheitle and Corcoran 2017). Several older studies suggest that organizations appear to be increasingly concerned about the implications of religious expression in the workplace (Hicks 2002), insofar as it may be viewed as harassment (Gilmer and Anderson 1998) or create other conflicts with U.S. labor laws (Berg 1998; Foltin and Standish 2004; Gregory 1989).

Existing work highlights several predictors of workplace discrimination. The strength of an individual’s religious or non-religious identity affects the extent to which they perceive discrimination (Ghaffari and Çiftçi 2010; Hammer et al. 2012). Religious identities also intersect with other aspects of social location, like gender and race, to shape perceptions of discrimination (Ghumman and Jackson 2008). Widner and Chicoine’s work (2011), for example, finds that Arab American men had to send out twice as many resumes as white men to receive a callback for a potential job, in part because employers associate their names with Islam. Similarly, recent court cases have questioned whether hiring discrimination against Jews should be considered religious or racial discrimination (Affron 2018). Such cases demonstrate the ways that religious identities often intersect with other aspects of an individual’s social location to shape workplace experiences.

Moreover, the research documents strong contextual variations in reports of discrimination. This includes both geographic variation (Scheitle and Corcoran 2017) as well as variation across spheres of social life like school, family, and work (Cragun et al. 2012). Scholars, however, often focus on the experiences of specific groups like Muslims (Byng 1998) or atheists (Hammer et al. 2012), rather than comparing experiences of workplace religious discrimination across religious groups.

Despite increased interest among both scholarly and lay audiences about how faith enters the workplace, there are notable gaps in knowledge. Firstly, there is little attention to variation in faith–work approaches across religious traditions and other social groups. Secondly, studies of how faith enters the workplace have mostly focused on men in high SES occupations. There has been little attention paid to people of color, to those in lower SES occupations, and to women. These gaps are important because there are connections between employees’ religious expression and workplace outcomes, like employee retention (Griebel et al. 2014), so differences in faith–work engagement across religious tradition, SES, or other social groupings may have important implications for understanding social stratification in the workplace.

Third, there is a pressing need for more research on how religion overlaps and intersects with other social categories to shape perceptions of discrimination. Recent research highlighting the racialization of religious groups in the U.S. (Selod and Embrick 2013) has demonstrated not only the salience of religious discrimination in U.S. society but also the problems endemic to studying “religious” or “racial” discrimination as discrete phenomena. Furthermore, given evidence demonstrating how religion shapes experiences of hiring discrimination among both the religious *and* non-religious alike (Hammer et al. 2012; Wallace et al. 2014), religious discrimination can serve to perpetuate existing inequalities in the workplace.

Given these gaps, several questions arise which existing datasets are ill-equipped to explore. How do approaches to work–faith integration differ not only across religious traditions, but also

by race, social class, and gender? How does religion overlap with other social categories to shape perceptions of religious discrimination in the workplace?

Our goal in this paper is to provide an overview of the “Faith at Work: An Empirical Study” data, explore initial descriptive hypotheses, and provide directions for future empirical work using these data. Firstly, given that both the popular and scholarly literature (Miller 2007; Van Duzer 2010; Volf 1991) on work as a “spiritual calling” focuses on Christian perspectives, we anticipate the following:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Christians (both Protestant and Catholic) will have different views than members of other religious traditions on whether they see their work as a spiritual calling.*

Secondly, the past literature suggests that work–faith integration is not simply a product of an individual’s religious beliefs, as some studies suggest that low-wage workers often care more about making ends meet than integrating faith and work (Sullivan 2006). Conversely, research on work–faith integration has often focused on elites and individuals from higher SES backgrounds (e.g., Lindsay 2008). We hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Workers at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy and workers with lower incomes will have different views than workers at the top of the organizational hierarchy and with higher incomes (respectively) on whether they see their work as a spiritual calling.*

Thirdly, the U.S. remains a predominantly Christian country despite recent increases in religious diversity and a growth in the number of individuals identifying as non-religious (Pew Research Center 2015). Given this fact, we expect that Christian beliefs and practices will be more acceptable in many workplaces. Therefore, we expect:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Christians (both Protestant and Catholic) will report different levels of workplace religious conflict than members of minority religious traditions.*

Fourthly, conflict might also relate to workplace power. Given that women and some racial–ethnic minority groups in the U.S. are both highly religious (Pew Research Center 2015) and remain vastly underrepresented in workplace leadership roles (Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey 2009), we anticipate that these groups will experience different levels of workplace religious conflict.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Women (when compared to men) will report different levels of workplace religious conflict.*

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *Racial–ethnic minorities (non-Hispanic Whites) will report different levels of workplace religious conflict.*

Finally, given the literature highlighting increased reports of discrimination against Muslims in the post-9/11 political climate (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2015), as well as hiring discrimination against candidates *perceived* to be Muslim (Widner and Chicoine 2011), we also expect that Muslims, in particular, will report different levels of workplace discrimination than other religious groups.

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *Muslim workers will report different levels of experiencing workplace discrimination than workers identifying with other religious traditions.*

2. Data and Methods

Three types of data were collected for the broader “Faith at Work: An Empirical Study”: focus groups, a national survey, and interviews. Nine focus groups with congregants and religious

leaders were conducted in Seattle, Houston, and New York. A nationally representative survey of 13,270 people, with oversamples of Muslim and Jewish Americans, was conducted, and over 200 one-on-one in-depth interviews with survey respondents were completed. In this article, we focus specifically on an overview of the survey data and point out important contours of the data that will be important for subsequent analyses to build upon.

The survey was conducted by the survey firm Gallup, through the Gallup Panel, a nationally representative, probability-based panel of U.S. adults 18 years of age or older. Research suggests that samples drawn from probability-based online panels provide more accurate estimates than random-digit dialing or non-probability online samples (Chang and Krosnick 2009), and therefore they have been increasingly utilized in studies published in top social scientific journals (e.g., Pedulla and Thebaud 2015). The Gallup panel includes more than 100,000 individuals. A stratified sample of 29,345 was selected based on estimates from the 2017 Current Population Survey, along with oversamples of Muslim ($n = 752$) and Jewish ($n = 882$) panelists. These groups were selected for oversampling because they represent meaningful traditions in the U.S. even though their numbers are relatively small.¹ A total of 13,270 individuals completed the survey, including 202 Muslim and 576 Jewish respondents. The overall completion rate for the survey was 45.2 percent based on the American Association for Public Opinion Research guideline RR5, which takes into account only completed surveys (American Association for Public Opinion Research 2016; Callegaro and DiSogra 2008).² Survey respondents were given the option of completing the survey in either English or Spanish. The survey was administered by Gallup through both mail and web-based instruments between 2 October 2018 and 15 December 2018. Most of the current analysis is restricted to full-time and part-time employees ($n = 8767$), and results have been weighted to account for probability of selection and nonresponse.

Analysis presented below describes the general landscape of the intersection of faith and work, with a focus on full-time and part-time employees. Weighted percentages are presented and notable subgroup comparisons are discussed around questions of calling, conflict, and religious discrimination. Chi-square tests were used to explore the presence/absence of associations between the categorical demographic variables and faith/work-related outcomes. The null hypothesis is that there is no association between variables. A significant p -value indicates a statistically significant association, although it does not specify a direction. This analysis is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to give readers an overview of this novel data.

3. Results

Characteristics of the sample are described in Tables 1 and 2, which compare the full sample of survey respondents ($n = 13,270$) to the subset of full-time and part-time workers ($n = 8797$). Table 1 describes basic demographics of the entire sample by gender, sexual orientation, race, age, education, income, and immigration status as well as separately describing the subsample of workers. While the focus of the current analysis is workers—both part-time and full-time—it is important to note that the demographics of this subgroup of workers is different from the overall sample obtained for the Faith at Work Study. Firstly, a higher proportion of men (54 percent) are engaged in full- or part-time paid labor when compared to women (45 percent). Secondly, a lower proportion of our sample of workers were 65 or older (six percent compared to 19 percent of full sample), an age at which many individuals retire and step out of the workforce. Thirdly, a higher proportion of workers have a bachelor's degree (17 percent compared to 13 percent of full sample) or post-graduate advanced degree (21 percent compared to 17 percent of full sample). Fourthly, a higher proportion of workers were concentrated

¹ Muslims are one of the fastest-growing religions in the U.S., and have reported the highest levels of discrimination in the workplace in recent years (Bartkoski et al. 2018). Judaism has had an important historical presence in the U.S. and in studies of work (Lynn et al. 2011).

² The overall panel survey response rate, which includes all stages of the selection process, was 1.2 percent.

in higher income brackets (27 percent report making more than 120,000 USD annually, compared to 22 percent of the full sample). Fifth, a lower proportion of the subsample of workers identified as Christian (59 percent compared to 63 percent of full sample) and a higher proportion did not identify with any religion (31 percent compared to 27 percent of full sample). A lower proportion of workers described themselves as “moderately” or “very religious” (45 percent) compared with the overall sample (50 percent).

Table 1. Sample descriptors—demographic variables * (percentage of sample).

Variable	Response Options	Full Sample (n = 13,270)	“Workers” Employed FT/PT (n = 8797)
Gender	Men	48	54
	Women	51	45
	Prefer to self-describe	1	1
Sexual Orientation	Prefer not to say	1	1
	Heterosexual or straight	89	89
	Gay, lesbian, or homosexual	3	3
	Bisexual	5	5
	Prefer to self-describe	1	1
	Prefer not to say	2	2
	Don’t know	1	1
Race	White, non-Hispanic	67	67
	Hispanic	12	13
	Black	12	11
	Asian	1	1
	Other	3	3
	Multi-racial	5	5
Age	18–24	6	6
	25–34	25	32
	35–44	16	20
	45–54	18	21
	55–64	17	16
	65+	19	6
Education	High school or less	41	32
	Tech/trade/some college	21	22
	2-year associate’s degree	8	8
	4-year bachelor’s degree	13	17
	Post-grad school/degree	17	21
Household Income	Less than \$12,000	6	3
	\$12,000 to \$23,999	8	6
	\$24,000 to \$35,999	10	9
	\$36,000 to \$47,999	9	9
	\$48,000 to \$59,999	10	9
	\$60,000 to \$89,999	19	20
	\$90,000 to \$119,999	15	18
	\$120,000 to \$179,999	13	16
	\$180,000 to \$239,999	5	7
	\$240,000 to \$1000,000	4	4
	More than \$1000,000	0.3	0.2
Immigrant Status [‡]	Yes	7	7
	No	93	93
Immigrant Parents [‡]	Yes	10	10
	No	90	90

Source: Faith at Work: An Empirical Study Survey (2018). * All numbers are percentages and have been weighted to account for probability of selection and nonresponse. ‡ Immigrant status and immigrant parents were mutually exclusive.

Table 2. Sample descriptors—faith and work variables * (percentage of sample).

Variable	Response Options	Full Sample (n = 13,270)	Employed FT/PT (n = 8797)
Employment Status	Employed full-time	56	82
	Employed part-time	12	18
	Not employed, but looking	4	-
	Not employed, not looking	28	-
Number of Jobs †	One	-	85
	Two	-	12
	Three or more	-	3
Organizational Position ◇	Top	17	17
	Middle	48	45
	Bottom	36	38
Religious Identity	Evangelical Protestant	26	25
	Mainline Protestant	18	16
	Catholic	17	16
	Other Christian	2	2
	Jewish	2	2
	Muslim	1	1
	Other religion	4	4
	No religion	27	31
	Don't know	2	2
	Attend Religious Services	Never	28
Less than once a year		16	16
Once a year		6	7
Several times a year		14	15
Once a month		3	3
Two to three times a month		5	5
Nearly every week		8	7
Every week		13	11
More than once a week		6	5
Pray		Never	26
	Less than once a week	14	15
	Once a week	6	6
	Several times a week	16	16
	Once a day	12	11
	Several times a day	27	22
Religiosity	Not at all religious	28	32
	Slightly religious	22	24
	Moderately religious	33	30
	Very religious	17	15

Source: Faith at Work: An Empirical Study Survey (2018). * All numbers are percentages and have been weighted to account for probability of selection and nonresponse. † Number of jobs was only asked of workers. ◇ Organizational position asked of workers as well as those who were self-employed and retired. Individuals who work multiple jobs were asked to reflect on their overall work experience. Individuals who were retired were asked to reflect on their most recent job.

3.1. Worker Demographics

Among the subsample of part-time and full-time workers, (hereafter referred to as “workers”), 54 percent were men, 45 percent were women, and some respondents preferred to self-describe as some other gender (one percent) or preferred not to disclose their gender (one percent). Nine out of ten respondents (89 percent) reported being heterosexual or straight, eight percent reported being a sexual minority, and several did not disclose (two percent preferred not to say; one percent said “don’t know”). Workers most often identified as White (67 percent), followed by Hispanic (13 percent), Black (11 percent), multiracial (five percent), Asian (one percent), or another race (three percent). Roughly half (52 percent) of workers are between the ages of 25 and 44, and 37 percent are between the ages of 45 and 64. Relatively few workers are under 24 (six percent) or over 65 (six percent).

Approximately one-third (32 percent) of workers have a high school diploma or less and one in five (21 percent) has a master's degree or higher. Table 1 shows the full range of household income response categories but when broken into approximate quartiles, the distribution was such that 26 percent of respondents reported less than 48,000 USD, 29 percent of respondents reported between 48,000 and 89,000 USD, 33 percent reported between 90,000 and 179,000 USD, and 11 percent reported household incomes of 180,000 USD or higher. Among workers, seven percent were immigrants themselves and another 10 percent reported that their parents were immigrants.

Table 2 describes the sample by variables of interest related to faith and work, including employment status, number of jobs worked, and organizational position, as well as religious identity, frequency of attending religious services and prayer, and strength of religiosity. Among the full sample of respondents, 56 percent are employed full-time, 12 percent are employed part-time, and 32 percent are not employed. This unemployed group is comprised of people who are looking for work (four percent), but most unemployed respondents (28 percent) are not employed and are not looking for employment. This latter category represents a diverse group of individuals including, but not limited to, those who are retired, students, or full-time homemakers.

Among workers, a large majority (85 percent) are employed at only one job but a sizable minority (12 percent) work two jobs and three percent work three or more jobs, perhaps revealing the presence of the gig economy. On average, full-time workers report 46 h of paid labor per week and part-time workers report 23 h per week.³ When asked to reflect on their position within the organization,⁴ 17 percent identify as being at the top, 45 percent say they are in the middle, and 38 percent report being at the bottom of the organization.

When it comes to workers' religious identities, 59 percent identify as Christian, comprised of 25 percent Evangelical Protestant, 16 percent Mainline Protestant, 16 percent Catholic, and two percent Other Christian.⁵ Additionally, eight percent of workers identify as a religious minority,⁶ 31 percent do not identify with any religion, and two percent responded with "Don't Know." Religious practice is measured by attendance at religious services and frequency of prayer. Religious attendance among workers ranges from those who never attend (29 percent) to those who attend every week or more (24 percent). The practice of prayer aligns fairly closely with religious attendance, with 30 percent of workers reporting that they never pray and 33 percent saying that they pray daily. Finally, a self-reported measure of religiosity indicates that 32 percent of workers report not being religious at all, while 68 percent report being religious to some extent.

3.2. Work as a Spiritual Calling

As displayed in Table 3, most workers (58 percent) do not see their work as a spiritual calling but one in five (20 percent) agree that it is. A higher proportion of some demographic subgroups report seeing their work as a spiritual calling. For example, a higher proportion of Black workers see their work as a spiritual calling (31 percent) than Hispanics (21 percent) and Whites (18 percent). A higher proportion of women (24 percent) agree that their work is a calling relative to men (17 percent). There is

³ 'Work hours' was capped at 100 h per week and respondents who reported more than 100 h (0.2 percent of workers) were recoded as working 100 h per week.

⁴ Organizational position is asked separately from income as the two are considered to be measuring distinct constructs. For example, a pastor might be at the top of the church organization but may still have a modest income compared to a CEO of a private company. To be sure, the correlation between organizational position and household income was statistically significant but substantively weak (Pearson $r = 0.27$, $p < 0.001$).

⁵ Religious identity was asked of all respondents and a follow-up question about 'Congregation type' was asked among Christians to discern evangelical or mainline affiliation. In this analysis, individuals who reported affiliations of Evangelical, Fundamentalist, or Charismatic were coded as "Evangelical" and individuals who reported affiliations of Mainline or Liberal were coded as "Mainline." Respondents who selected multiple congregational affiliations (e.g., Liberal and Charismatic) were coded as "Other Christian."

⁶ Certain religious minorities (Jews and Muslims) were purposefully oversampled to obtain large enough samples for meaningful subgroup comparisons.

also a relationship between one's position within the organization and the likelihood of seeing one's work as a spiritual calling. A higher proportion of those at the top of their organization agree that their work is a spiritual calling (26 percent), compared with 16 percent agreement among those at the bottom of their organization. Notably, the results are different when looking at socioeconomic class as measured by income, such that a higher proportion of individuals who report lower household incomes see their work as a calling compared with those who report higher incomes. Specifically, workers with incomes under USD 48 thousand (22 percent) and workers with incomes between USD 48-89 thousand (22 percent) were the groups with the highest proportion of individuals who see their work as a calling, compared to those with incomes between USD 90-179 thousand (18 percent), and those in the highest income bracket (USD 180 thousand+; 17 percent). Finally, seeing one's work as a spiritual calling varies according to one's religious identity. Groups that have the highest proportion of respondents who agree that their work is a spiritual calling include Evangelical Protestants (33 percent), other Christians (33 percent), and Muslims (30 percent), followed by Mainline Protestants (26 percent), Catholics (18 percent), and Jews (16 percent). Interestingly, seven percent of individuals who do not identify with any religious tradition also report seeing their work as a spiritual calling.

Table 3. Subgroup analysis: I see my work as a spiritual calling (percentage of sample).

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Chi-Square Test <i>p</i> -Value
Overall *		46	12	22	12	8	-
Gender	Men	48	13	23	11	6	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Women	44	12	20	14	10	
Race	White, non-Hispanic	48	12	22	11	7	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Hispanic	45	13	21	14	7	
	Black	35	14	20	17	14	
	Asian	54	17	12	13	4	
	Other	44	9	29	12	6	
	Multi-racial	47	11	20	12	10	
Household Income †	Less than \$48,000	42	13	23	12	10	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	\$48,000–\$89,999	46	12	21	13	9	
	\$90,000–\$179,000	47	12	23	12	6	
	\$180,000+	52	14	16	11	6	
Organizational Position ‡	Top	40	12	23	15	11	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Middle	44	12	23	12	8	
	Bottom	52	13	19	11	5	
Religious Identity	Evangelical Protestant	26	13	28	18	15	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Mainline Protestant	33	15	25	16	11	
	Catholic	41	16	25	12	7	
	Other Christian	24	19	25	19	13	
	Jewish	55	14	16	12	4	
	Muslim	34	14	22	14	16	
	Other religion	51	13	17	12	7	
	No religion	70	8	14	6	2	
	Don't know	56	12	19	9	4	

Source: Faith at Work: An Empirical Study Survey (2018). * All numbers are percentages and have been weighted to account for probability of selection and nonresponse. † Income categories were collapsed for subgroup comparisons. ‡ Organizational position asked of workers as well as those who were self-employed and retired. Individuals who work multiple jobs were asked to reflect on their overall work experience. Individuals who were retired were asked to reflect on their most recent job.

3.3. Faith at Work Conflict

We also asked respondents to reflect on conflicts they face between their faith and their work. Specifically, as shown in Table 4, they were asked how often⁷ they are expected to act in ways that contradict their religious beliefs. Overall, 20 percent of workers report that they are at least occasionally expected to act in ways that contradict their religious beliefs. Differences emerged between subgroups. For example, a higher proportion of Black respondents (30 percent) report being expected to act in ways that contradict their religious beliefs compared with White respondents (19 percent), suggesting that at least some experiences of faith–work conflict are more common for workers who are Black. There is a small but substantively interesting trend associated with faith–work conflict and income such that those in the lowest income brackets report experiencing faith–work conflict more frequently than those at higher income brackets. Specifically, 21 percent of workers with incomes under USD 48 thousand report experiencing faith–work conflict at some point, whereas a much lower proportion of those in the higher income brackets (USD 180 thousand+) report conflict (18 percent). Finally, Muslims had the highest proportion who experience faith–work conflict (41 percent). Among Christians, for example, 24 percent of Catholics, 27 percent of Mainline Protestants, and 29 percent of Evangelical Protestants say they have ever experienced faith–work conflict. There are no discernable trends by gender or organizational position with regard to faith–work conflict.

⁷ Response options included Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, Very Often, and Not Applicable.

Table 4. Subgroup analysis: at work, I am expected to act in ways that contradict my religious beliefs (percentage of sample).

		<i>I Do Not Have Religious Beliefs</i>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Chi-Square Test <i>p</i> -Value
Overall *		26	53	13	6	1	1	-
Gender	Men	27	52	14	5	1	1	<i>p</i> = 0.07
	Women	26	55	13	6	1	1	
Race	White, non-Hispanic	28	53	13	5	1	0	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Hispanic	26	54	13	5	1	1	
	Black	14	56	19	8	2	1	
	Asian	37	46	12	5	0.0	0.4	
	Other	29	50	9	8	0.2	4	
	Multi-racial	27	52	11	8	0.5	0.4	
Household Income †	Less than \$48,000	26	53	13	6	1	1	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	\$48,000–\$89,999	26	52	15	6	1	1	
	\$90,000–\$179,000	27	54	13	5	1	0.5	
	\$180,000+	30	53	12	5	0.0	0.3	
Organizational Position ‡	Top	21	61	12	4	1	1	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Middle	26	53	14	6	1	0.5	
	Bottom	30	50	13	6	1	1	
Religious Identity	Evangelical Protestant	2	69	20	8	1	1	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Mainline Protestant	3	71	18	7	1	1	
	Catholic	4	72	15	6	1	1	
	Other Christian	1	62	26	10	0.4	0.0	
	Jewish	14	65	14	6	0.4	1	
	Muslim	4	55	28	11	1	2	
	Other religion	14	57	15	12	1	2	
	No religion	74	21	4	2	1	0.2	
Don't know	28	57	12	3	1	0.0		

Source: Faith at Work: An Empirical Study Survey (2018); * All numbers are percentages and have been weighted to account for probability of selection and nonresponse; † Income categories were collapsed for subgroup comparisons; ‡ Organizational position asked of workers as well as those who were self-employed and retired. Individuals who work multiple jobs were asked to reflect on their overall work experience. Individuals who were retired were asked to reflect on their most recent job.

3.4. Religious Discrimination

A substantial minority of our respondents have experienced some form of religious discrimination at work and some groups are more likely to experience frequent discrimination, as reported in Table 5. Among workers, 29 percent report experiencing some level of religious discrimination. Race and religion overlap in experiences of religious discrimination. White and Hispanic workers have similar levels, with 30 percent and 29 percent, respectively, of reporting having ever experienced religious discrimination. There are some racial differences, however, with a slightly lower proportion of Black respondents (26 percent) saying they experience religious discrimination when compared to other groups. A slightly higher proportion of men relative to women report ever experiencing religious discrimination (30 percent vs. 27 percent). Looking to socioeconomic class, 30 percent of individuals whose household income is less than USD 48 thousand reported having ever experienced religious discrimination compared to 25 percent of respondents reporting household incomes over USD 180 thousand.

The most substantial differences emerged across religious identities. Overall, 21 percent of Catholics, 22 percent of Mainline Protestants, and 33 percent of Evangelical Protestants reported having ever experienced religious discrimination. Religious discrimination was most frequently reported among Jews (54 percent) and Muslims (62 percent). Muslims, in particular, report the most discrimination: only 31 percent have *never* experienced religious discrimination, 46 percent experience it rarely or sometimes, and 16 percent experience religious discrimination often or very often. This is the highest proportion of any religious subgroup in this study. For example, only three percent of Evangelical Protestants, two percent of Mainline Protestants, two percent of Catholics, and three percent of Jews report experiencing religious discrimination often or very often.⁸

⁸ Interestingly, a higher proportion of those who identify as “Other Christian” reported having ever experienced religious discrimination (55 percent). This includes Mormons and others who may not identify within Mainline and Evangelical traditions, but overall this group makes up a very low proportion of the sample (3 percent). Nevertheless, their experiences seem to depart from Evangelical and Mainline Christians in notable ways.

Table 5. Subgroup analysis: throughout your lifetime, how often have you felt that you have been treated unfairly in the context of your work because of your religion or non-religion? (percentage of sample).

		<i>Not Applicable</i>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very Often	Chi-Square Test <i>p</i>-Value
Overall *		10	61	16	11	2	1	-
Gender	Men	10	60	17	11	2	1	<i>p</i> < 0.01
	Women	10	63	15	10	2	1	
Race	White, non-Hispanic	9	61	16	11	2	1	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Hispanic	10	60	16	11	1	1	
	Black	10	64	12	9	2	2	
	Asian	17	55	19	6	1	3	
	Other	17	59	12	8	2	1	
	Multi-racial	13	57	14	12	2	1	
Household Income †	Less than \$48,000	11	58	15	12	2	2	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	\$48,000–\$89,999	11	59	16	10	2	1	
	\$90,000–\$179,000	9	63	16	10	1	1	
	\$180,000+	8	67	15	8	1	1	
Organizational Position ‡	Top	8	64	16	11	1	1	<i>p</i> < 0.001
	Middle	10	62	15	10	2	1	
	Bottom	12	58	16	11	2	1	
Religious Identity	Evangelical Protestant	5	62	18	13	2	1	<i>p</i> < 0.0001
	Mainline Protestant	6	72	14	6	1	1	
	Catholic	7	73	14	6	1	1	
	Other Christian	2	43	32	16	3	4	
	Jewish	3	43	30	21	2	1	
	Muslim	7	31	15	30	7	9	
	Other religion	10	54	18	14	2	2	
	No religion	19	53	14	11	2	1	
Don't know	20	61	10	6	1	1		

Source: Faith at Work: An Empirical Study Survey (2018); * All numbers are percentages and have been weighted to account for probability of selection and nonresponse; † Income categories were collapsed for subgroup comparisons; ‡ Organizational position asked of workers as well as those who were self-employed and retired. Individuals who work multiple jobs were asked to reflect on their overall work experience. Individuals who were retired were asked to reflect on their most recent job.

4. Discussion

We have presented initial descriptive analysis from the largest and most nuanced study to date on how people understand the relationship between their faith and their work. Drawing on novel survey data from “Faith at Work: An Empirical Study,” we have begun to address this gap by highlighting how views of the work–faith interface vary not only across lines of religious difference, but also by social location.

About one fifth of U.S. workers see their work as a “spiritual calling.” Seeing work as a spiritual calling (Dik and Duffy 2009) is not tied to a single religious tradition but seems to resonate with a diverse cross-section of the U.S. workforce. Furthermore, seven percent of “religious nones” described their work as a calling. In particular, we find that seeing one’s work as having sacred significance is more common among people of color and women compared to Whites and men, respectively. Such groups are overrepresented in many religious traditions (Pew Research Center 2015) and underrepresented in workplace power positions (Stainback and Tomaskovic-Devey 2009), suggesting that work is a source of meaning in addition to power for many disadvantaged groups. Conversely, it is possible that those who have relatively less power or income may look to other factors in their work to provide them with validation and an experience of meaning.

We also find notable differences across religious traditions in views of work–faith integration and conflict. Those who identify as Evangelical Christians and Muslims are the most likely to see their work as a spiritual calling. Conversely, less than one in five Jews and Catholics report seeing their work as a calling. Such findings not only suggest that views of the sacred significance of work differ across religious traditions (Park et al. 2016), but also that particular religious groups hold to different paradigms of faith–work integration. While the language of work as a “calling” resonates among Evangelical Christians, in particular, it finds less resonance in other religious traditions, including other Christian traditions. As such, there is only partial support for H1 that Christians will have different views from other religious traditions about seeing work as a spiritual calling, although the data paint a more complicated picture since there are differences within Christian denominations as well as across religious traditions and people without a faith tradition.

Our findings demonstrate differences in the extent to which social groups experience conflict because of their religious commitments. Twenty percent of workers report that at some point they have been pushed at work to act in ways that contradict their religious beliefs. Such instances of conflict might disproportionately disadvantage certain demographic groups in terms of workplace mobility. For example, individuals in lower income brackets are more likely than individuals in higher income brackets to report experiencing faith–work conflict on the job.

Our larger data have the potential to disentangle the impact of sociologically central group identities on faith–work relations. Here we find that social class matters. While seeing one’s work as a spiritual calling is positively associated with organizational rank, it is negatively associated with household income. Our findings about the influence of organization rank suggest that seeing one’s work as having sacred significance might be a privilege of the privileged themselves (cf. Sullivan 2006). This provides support for H2 that individuals at the bottom of the organizations and those with lower incomes are different from those at the top or those in higher income brackets. It is notable, however, that these two characteristics appear to be working in different ways. Our future analyses will disentangle the connections between organizational position, income, and the ability to see work as spiritually meaningful. Similarly, and related to H3, there is evidence that the experiences of Christians are different from other religious and non-religious groups when it comes to acting in ways that contradict religious beliefs or experiencing discrimination. Specifically, many Christians disagreed that they had ever had to act in ways that contradicted their beliefs, and also disagreed that they had ever experienced religious discrimination. Again, however, there are notable differences among Christian traditions, which suggests a complicated and nuanced relationship of religious conflict in the workplace. This pattern of findings was different for those from non-Christian faith traditions;

these respondents were more likely to agree that they had acted in ways that contradicted their religious beliefs and more likely to agree that they had experienced religious discrimination.

Our data also shed light on how other aspects of social location shape the ways that workers see faith and occupation. We find that a higher proportion of women than men see their work as a spiritual calling. However, women are no more likely than men to report having to act in the workplace in ways that contradict their faith and a lower proportion report ever experiencing religious discrimination in the workplace. The latter finding is especially curious given that women tend to be more religious than men (Pew Research Center 2015; Putnam and Campbell 2010). One possibility for such a slight disparity is that women and other gender minorities often face multiple types of discrimination in the workplace that might make religious discrimination less salient. This provides partial support for H4 that women report different levels of workplace conflict, although the full complexity of these differences is beyond the scope of this paper and needs to be explored further.

Our data show the workplace challenges that racial and ethnic minority groups may face because of their faith, providing some support for H5. For example, nearly one-third of Black respondents reported being expected to act in ways that contradict their faith at work, compared to only one fifth of White respondents. For Black Americans, such conflicts might serve as a further barrier to upward mobility in the workplace. However, similar to women, we found few differences across racial groups in the proportion reporting ever experiencing religious discrimination in the workplace. Indeed, although a greater proportion of Hispanic and Black Americans are religious when compared to Whites, both groups have a slightly lower proportion than White workers who report experiencing religious discrimination in the workplace. Future research should explore how both gender and race/ethnicity shape perceptions of religious discrimination in the workplace relative to other types of discrimination.

Our findings also add to the small amount of research on U.S. religious discrimination (Ghaffari and Çiftçi 2010; Hammer et al. 2012) by demonstrating striking differences across religious traditions in experiences of workplace religious discrimination. For example, we find that two-thirds of Muslim workers and more than a half of Jewish workers in the U.S. report experiencing religious discrimination in the workplace at some point. The high proportion of Muslim workers who have experienced workplace discrimination provides support for prior work highlighting the challenges facing Muslims in the post-9/11 U.S. political climate (Selod and Embrick 2013). Consistent with prior work (Ghumman and Jackson 2008; Widner and Chicoine 2011), but through use of a much expanded dataset (with the largest oversamples of Muslims and Jews to ever address the topic of religious discrimination at work), we also find that experiences of religious discrimination vary across social groups; the greatest variation is across religious traditions. Such a finding provides initial support for H6 that Muslims will be different from other groups in terms of their experience of religious discrimination.

5. Conclusions

The “Faith at Work” study opens up many new possibilities for mixed-methods research on the important relationships among religion, work, and discrimination. In particular, our future research will further examine how religion intersects with other facets of an individual’s social location to shape experiences of conflict in the workplace. For example, here we highlight the multi-faceted role of social class (income and organizational position have an inverse relationship to viewing work as a spiritual calling). Multivariable analyses using “Faith at Work” data will examine how experiences of workplace religious discrimination compare to race and gender workplace discrimination. Overall, the results presented here—as well as the data from the “Faith at Work” study—have great potential for directing future research for religion, organization, and stratification scholars on the important intersections between religion and work.

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