Attitudes Toward Women in the Workforce: The Impact of Maternal Employment in Adolescence

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Attitude Towards Women Working

1 STRONGLY DISAGREE
2 DISAGREE
3 AGREE
4 STRONGLY AGREE

(1) A WOMAN'S PLACE IS IN THE HOME, NOT IN THE OFFICE OR SHOP.

(2) A WIFE WHO CARRIES OUT HER FULL FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES DOESN'T HAVE TIME FOR OUTSIDEEMPLOYMENT.

(3) A WORKINGWIFE FEELS MORE USEFUL THAN ONE WHO DOESN'T HOLD A JOB.

(4) THE EMPLOYMENT OF WIVES LEADS TO MORE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.

(5) EMPLOYMENT OF BOTH PARENTS IS NECESSARY TO KEEP UP WITH THE HIGH COST OF LIVING.

(6) IT IS MUCHBETTER FOR EVERYONE CONCERNED IF THE MAN IS THE ACHIEVER OUTSIDE THE HOME ANDTHE WOMAN TAKES CARE OF THE HOME AND FAMILY.

(7) MEN SHOULDSHARE THE WORK AROUND THE HOUSE WITH WOMEN, SUCH AS DOING DISHES, CLEANING, ANDSO FORTH.

(8) WOMEN AREMUCH HAPPIER IF THEY STAY AT HOME AND TAKE CARE OF THEIR CHILDREN.

A factor analysis revealed congruency among the four questions highlighted in white. A composite scale (0-12) was developed for the dependent

BACKGROUND

- More mothers are entering the workforce than in previous eras
- The mother is a critical agent in the formation of her child's views on gender
- Gender role attitudes form during the early stages of human development, particularly in adolescence
- Child attitude formation about women depends on several variables including:
  - parental views about women
  - parental educational level
  - child-rearing style
  - maternal employment
- For females: maternal employment is generally positively associated with liberal attitudes towards women in the workforce and own lifestyle choices
- For males: maternal employment is not associated or only slightly positively associated with liberal attitudes towards women in the workforce

Limitations of Past Research Examining Maternal Employment Effects on Attitude Formation

- Retrospective designs
- Most studies were cross-sectional
- Many studies used small sample sizes
- Few studies included male attitudes
- Many only recruited college students as sample group

STUDY AIM

To examine the relationship between a person's attitude towards women in the workforce and maternal employment status during his or her adolescence.

We address past limitations by:

- Using a large national sample
- Using multiple time-points from a longitudinal dataset
- Controlling for a various confounders

METHODS

Data Source

- National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY79)
- Conducted in the United States by the Bureau of Labor Statistics
- Nationally representative sample of 12,686 young men and women living in the United States, aged 14 to 22 years old in 1979
- Data collected in 1979 (adolescence), 1987 (young adult), and 2004 (middle age)

Mother's Employment (Independent Variable)

(1) Did Not Work Any Part of Year
(2) Part-Year Work
(3) Full-Year Work

Data Analysis

- Pooled cross section
- T-tests for continuous variables
- Chi-square tests for categorical variables
- Multivariate Regression

RESULTS

Maternal Employment Status

- Across life stages and between genders, maternal employment is associated with more liberal attitudes, holding other variables constant.
- Respondents whose mothers worked the full-year expressed more liberal attitudes than those whose mothers worked only part of the year or not at all.

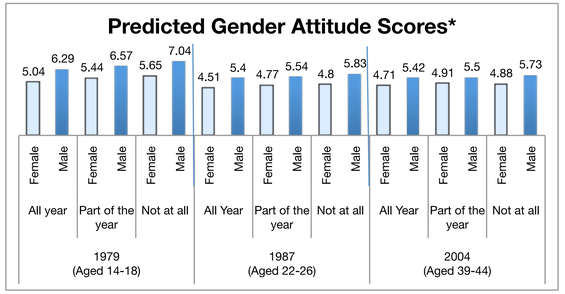
Life Cycle Trends - Changes between 1979, 1987 and 2004

- Respondents expressed their most liberal attitude when in their twenties (i.e. in 1987).
- Respondents expressed their most conservative attitudes during adolescence (in 1984)

Independent Variable	*b*	*Robust se*	*p-values*
Intercept	7.04	.14	.000***
Mother's Work Status in 1979 (Reference group: Not at all)			
All year	-.75	.08	.000***
Part of the year	-.47 9	.10	.000***
Gender (Reference group: Male)			
Female	-1.39	.08	.000***
Year (Reference group: 1979)			
1987	-1.21	.09	.000***
2004	-1.31	.10	.000***
Year x Work Interactions (Reference group: 1979 and Not Working)			
1987xAllYear	.32	.10	.001***
1987xPartYear	.18	.11	.120
2004xAllYear	.44	.10	.000***
2004xPartYear	.24	.13	.057*
Female x Work Interactions (Reference group: Male and Not working)			
FemaleXAllYear	.14	.08	.091*
FemaleXPartYear	.26	.10	.009***
Female x Year Interactions (Reference group: 1979 and Male)			
FemaleX1987	.36	.08	.000***
FemaleX2004	.54	.09	.000***
R^2		.1755	
N		14,231	

*marginally significant at 10%
**significant at 5%
***significant at 1%.

This model controls for poverty status, educational levels, family structure, race, paternal work status, religiosity, maternal educational levels, paternal educational levels, urban/rural status, marital status, hours employed.



DISCUSSION

Summary

- Maternal employment exhibits long-term associations with more liberal gender attitudes
- Women expressed more liberal attitudes than men
- Men whose mothers worked expressed more liberal attitudes then those whose mothers did not work

Limitations

- Limited measurement of independent variable - maternal employment was limited to all, part, or none during the year
- Additionally, maternal employment was only captured in 1979
- Important mediators were not measured including child-rearing style and gender attitudes of the mother

Implications

Identifying maternal employment as a mechanism for more liberal gender attitude formation can inform

(1) the ongoing discussion around employment incentives for mothers
(2) the creation of child-friendly and female-friendly work environments
(3) the development of family leave policies

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