Attitudes Toward Women's Work and Family Roles in the United States, 1976–2013

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Abstract

We examine time period and generational differences in attitudes toward women's work and family roles in two large, nationally representative U.S. samples, the Monitoring the Future survey of 12th graders (1976–2013) and the General Social Survey of adults (1977–2012). Twelfth graders became more accepting of working mothers and equal roles for women in the workplace between the 1970s and the 2010s, with most change occurring between the 1970s and the late 1990s. Acceptance of dual-income families and fathers working half-time or not at all (stay-at-home dads) also increased. Thus, for the most part, Millennials (born 1980s–1990s) have continued trends toward more egalitarian gender roles. However, slightly more 12th graders in the 2010s (vs. the late 1990s) favored the husband as the achiever and decision maker in the family. Adults' attitudes toward working mothers became more egalitarian between the 1970s and the early 1990s, showed a small "backlash" in the late 1990s, and then continued the trend toward increased egalitarianism in the 2000s and 2010s. In hierarchical linear modeling analyses separating the effects of time period, generation/cohort, and age, trends were primarily due to time period with a generational peak in egalitarianism among White women Boomers (born 1946–1964). Policy makers should recognize that support for working mothers is now a solid majority position in the United States and design programs for working families accordingly.

Keywords

working women, sex role attitudes, family, family–work relationships, generations, cultural change

The last 40 years have produced enormous changes in women's work and family roles in the United States. For example, young women began entering graduate and professional schools in larger numbers during the 1970s, and more women began to engage in paid employment after marrying and having children (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2011; U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). Cultural products such as books demonstrate women's increasing prominence: In the 1960s, U.S. books used four male pronouns for every one female pronoun, but this ratio shrunk to 2:1 by 2008 (Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012). However, this rise in women's prominence has been accompanied by some ambivalence about, and even hostility toward, women's roles as well, especially in balancing work and family (e.g., Faludi, 1991; Sandberg, 2013; Slaughter, 2012). Thus, it is less clear how attitudes toward women's roles—particularly their career and family roles—have changed over time. More women have entered careers, and women are more prominent in society, but is the average U.S. resident now more accepting of married women and mothers working and if, so, how much?

In this article, we explore, in nationally representative surveys, how attitudes toward women's work and family roles have changed in the United States since the 1970s. We have three main goals: (a) to explore trends in attitudes toward women's roles between the 1970s and the 2010s (including whether these trends are linear or curvilinear); (b) to explore moderators of the trends (e.g., gender, race, and socioeconomic status [SES])—whether all demographic groups, or only some, changed in their attitudes; and (c) to determine if these trends are due to time period, generation/birth cohort, or age. To best meet these goals, we analyze data from two of the largest nationally representative surveys conducted over time: the Monitoring the Future survey of U.S. 12th graders (MtF; 1976–2013, $N = 571,040$) and the General Social Survey of U.S. adults (GSS; for the gender roles items, 1977–2012, $N = 25,278$). MtF holds age constant, thus allowing the examination of time period and cohort effects separate from age effects. It includes 22 items on attitudes toward women's

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roles including 12 items on men's family roles. The GSS included only 3 items on women's roles during most years. However, as a multi-age sample, the GSS allowed us to separate the effects of time period (change over time that affects all generations equally), generation (birth cohort, or year of birth), and age (people changing as they grow older; Schaie, 1965) using recently developed hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) techniques (Yang, 2008). Overall, we aim for a comprehensive view of trends in attitudes toward women's and men's work and family roles in the United States.

Trends in attitudes toward women's work and family roles may or may not be linear, and whether and when any "backlash" occurred has been debated. Faludi (1991) argued that the 1980s saw a backslide into traditional attitudes toward women after the progress of the 1970s. More recently, observers have theorized that U.S. adults and youth became less supportive of working women during the late 1990s (Cotter, Hermsen, & Vanneman, 2011; Warner, 2013) or at least showed signs of stalled progress in the recent years (Sandberg, 2013; Spar, 2013). Their arguments suggest that Millennials (born 1982–1999) may actually be less supportive of working mothers and more supportive of traditional patriarchal ideas than the Boomer generation (born 1946–1964) was when they were young in the 1970s or Generation X (born 1965–1981) was in the 1980s and 1990s. It is possible that the Boomers advanced the feminist agenda in the 1970s, but later generations "turned back the clock" toward less egalitarian attitudes. If this were true, younger generations such as the Millennials would have significantly less egalitarian attitudes than Boomers did at the same age.

Several explanations seem plausible for why later generations (e.g., Millennials) may be more or less supportive of working mothers than previous generations. One argument for decreased support is that later generations may have experienced having a working mother as children and found this to be a negative experience (e.g., perhaps they wished their mother was around more often than she was). As a result, younger generations may have more negative attitudes towards mothers who work outside the home. Although most studies find that maternal employment has little impact on children's academic and social development (e.g., Goldberg, Prause, Lucas-Thompson, & Himsel, 2008; Lucas-Thompson, Goldberg, & Prause, 2010; Milkie, Nomaguchi, & Denny, 2015), college women tend to overestimate the negative impact of maternal employment on child outcomes (Goldberg & Lucas-Thompson, 2014). Another explanation for reduced egalitarianism is that GenXers and Millennials have become complacent about the gains that previous generations achieved in combining work and family roles. With the median age at first marriage rising, and childbearing increasingly occurring outside of marriage (Martin, Hamilton, Ventura, Osterman, & Mathews, 2013), Millennials may view marriage as a more traditional choice and thus favor more traditional attitudes for wives.

Alternatively, perhaps respondents whose mothers worked are actually more supportive of working mothers because their mothers served as uplifting role models for them and, as a result, they absorbed their parents' attitudes towards mothers' employment (e.g., Goldberg, Kelly, Matthews, Kang, Li, & Sumaroka, 2012; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). In addition, GenXers and Millennials experienced the changes in women's roles during the 1970s–1990s as children, suggesting these events shaped their fundamental gender-role values and expectations (Zucker & Stewart, 2007). Following this logic, GenXers and Millennials would not turn back the clock toward more traditional attitudes.

Demographic factors (e.g., gender, ethnicity, and SES) may moderate trends in attitudes over time. For example, perhaps women became more supportive of working mothers while men did not. Another potentially important moderator is ethnicity. Many feminist scholars have pointed out that the majority of Black women have always worked and thus did not shift in their attitudes as much as White women did (e.g., Landry, 2000) or that racially distinct stigmas may exist towards women's work (Boustan & Collins, 2013). SES could also affect changing attitudes over time. For example, intensive mothering, which may suggest less egalitarian attitudes, is more prevalent among middle-class families than poor or working-class families (Lareau, 2003). Finally, whether or not one's own mother worked outside the home could influence perceptions and attitudes towards working mothers (Goldberg et al., 2012; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004).

Gender-role attitudes predict a variety of important outcomes for women and men. For example, young women who support egalitarian roles are more likely to enroll in school, be employed full-time, and live independently; they are also more likely to marry later and have children later (Cunningham, Beutel, Barber, & Thornton, 2005). Couples with more egalitarian attitudes report more stable relationships and higher marital and sexual satisfaction (Cooper, Chassin, & Zeiss, 1985; Rudman & Phelan, 2007), and their daughters express greater interest in working outside the home (Croft, Schmader, Block, & Baron, 2014). Countries with more negative stereotypes around women's abilities in science have larger sex differences in science and math achievement (Nosek et al., 2009). Male managers with less egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles are more likely to deny promotions to qualified female employees (Desai, Chugh, & Brief, 2012). Additionally, sexist ideologies have been shown to predict societal-level gender inequities, such as lower representation of women in high-powered business and political roles and lower earned income in a society (Brandt, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 2001).

Previous Research on Changes in Attitudes Toward Women's Roles

Several studies explored changes in attitudes toward women's roles between the 1970s and the 1990s, generally finding

increases in egalitarian attitudes (Blozendahl & Myers, 2004; Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Spence & Hahn, 1997; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001; Twenge, 1997). However, trends since the 1990s—and thus over the last two decades—have rarely been examined. To our knowledge, changes in attitudes toward women's roles in MtF have not been examined since the 1990s, and analyses of these data from the 1970s to the 1990s did not report effect sizes (Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). Cotter, Hermsen, and Vanneman (2011) examined 4 GSS items assessing attitudes toward women's roles up to 2008, concluding that attitudes did not change since the mid-1990s. However, this study did not fully separate the effects of time period, generation, and age using the latest HLM techniques; it did not examine the 9 additional items on women's roles asked in fewer years of administration of the GSS; it did not include the 2010 and 2012 GSS surveys; and it did not examine the MtF data, which asks many more questions on women's and men's roles than the GSS.

The Present Study

We aim to examine trends in attitudes toward women's roles in two large, nationally representative samples. First, we examine the responses of 12th graders between 1976 and 2013. The 12th-grade survey includes 22 items on women's and men's roles, ranging from basic questions about attitudes toward family and workplace roles to opinions on specific work–family arrangements for couples with and without children. The survey also asks respondents if his or her mother worked when she or he was growing up, providing a view of actual family situations. With its time-lag design, this database allows researchers to examine cultural change disentangled from age: Because respondents are the same age but responding in different years, any differences are attributed to time period or generation. However, the inclusion of only one age-group limits the generalizability of the findings to other age-groups and does not allow the separation of time period from generational effects. Fortunately, the GSS of U.S. adults, a multi-age sample collected between 1972 and 2012, consistently asked three questions on women's roles similar to those used in MtF as well as 9 additional items in fewer years. We employ new HLM techniques (Yang, 2008) that allow the separation of time period, generation, and age effects. We also examine gender, race, SES, and (in the 12th-grade sample) mother's employment as possible moderators.

Method

Sample 1: MtF

MtF (Johnston, Bachman, O'Malley, & Schulenberg, 2014) has surveyed a nationally representative sample of high school seniors (12th graders) every year since 1976. High schools and the students within those schools are chosen using a multi-stage, stratified random sampling procedure to represent a cross section of the population in terms of region, gender, race, and SES. Similar schools are replaced

for those that decline to participate. The school participation rate is between 66% and 80%, and between 79% and 83% of students at participating schools choose to participate and complete the survey (Johnston et al., 2014). For the current study, data were available from 1976 to 2013, though the 1990 data file was missing from the online archive for Form 2.

The MtF survey includes 22 items on women's roles. MtF asks different questions (called forms) of subsamples of participants, so the number of participants varies (see Table 1 for *n*s). Four items ask about general attitudes toward women's work and family roles: "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work," "A preschooler is likely to suffer if the mother works," "It is usually better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the family and the woman takes care of the home and family," and "The husband should make all the important decisions in the family." Response choices were *disagree* (1), *mostly disagree* (2), *neither* (3), *mostly agree* (4), and *agree* (5). We combined the first 3 items into a composite ($\alpha = .69$); the fourth was asked on a different form and thus cannot be combined.

Participants are also asked about their attitude toward gender roles in two different situations. "Imagine you are married and have no children ... how would you feel about each of the following work arrangements?" and "Imagine you are married and have one or more pre-school children." Each was followed by the items "Husband works full-time, wife doesn't work," "Husband works full-time, wife works about half-time," "Both work full-time," "Both work about half-time," "Husband works about half-time, wife works full-time," and "Husband doesn't work, wife works full-time." Response choices were *not at all acceptable* (1), *somewhat acceptable* (2), *acceptable* (3), and *desirable* (4).

Participants answered five questions about educational and workplace gender equality and independence: "Parents should encourage just as much independence in their daughters as their sons," "Men and women should be paid the same if they do the same amount of work," "Women should be considered as seriously as men for jobs as executives or politicians," "A woman should have exactly the same job opportunities as a man," and "A woman should have exactly the same educational opportunities as a man." Response choices were *disagree* (1), *mostly disagree* (2), *neither* (3), *mostly agree* (4), and *agree* (5).

MtF also asks whether the respondent's mother worked: "Did your mother have a paid job (half-time or more) during the time you were growing up?" Response choices were *no*, (coded 1), *yes, some of the time when I was growing up* (2), *yes, most of the time* (3), and *yes, all or nearly all of the time* (4).

We used father's educational completion (college degree completed vs. not) as a proxy for SES (Marks, 2011), as the survey does not include income. For race, only Black and White respondents had sufficient *n*s to be compared; MtF did not include other racial groups as response categories until 2000.

Table I. U.S. Adolescents' Attitudes Toward Women's Family Roles, Monitoring the Future 12th-Grade Survey, 1976–2013.

Survey item	n	76–79 mean (SD)	80–84 mean (SD)	85–89 mean (SD)	90–94 mean (SD)	95–99 mean (SD)	00–04 mean (SD)	05–09 mean (SD)	10–13 mean (SD)	d
General attitudes toward women, work, and family										
Working mother good relationship with children	105,731	3.24 (1.52)	3.45 (1.46)	3.53 (1.42)	3.65 (1.40)	3.77 (1.34)	3.77 (1.32)	3.80 (1.29)	3.89 (1.26)	.46
Preschool child will suffer if mother works	105,883	3.51 (1.43)	3.29 (1.44)	3.13 (1.42)	2.90 (1.40)	2.70 (1.39)	2.63 (1.35)	2.54 (1.31)	2.42 (1.28)	−.78
Better for man to work and woman to tend home	105,574	3.24 (1.45)	2.95 (1.45)	2.63 (1.44)	2.43 (1.43)	2.45 (1.42)	2.60 (1.40)	2.67 (1.37)	2.75 (1.36)	−.35
Composite of 3 items	105,442	2.83 (1.15)	3.07 (1.14)	3.26 (1.12)	3.44 (1.10)	3.54 (1.08)	3.52 (1.05)	3.53 (1.02)	3.58 (.99)	.67
The husband should make all the important decisions	97,155	2.37 (1.38)	2.28 (1.34)	2.16 (1.30)	2.07 (1.27)	1.99 (1.42)	2.08 (1.25)	2.10 (1.23)	2.22 (1.26)	−.11
Views of specific work–family arrangements										
Without children: Husband works full-time, wife doesn't work	103,484	2.21 (.93)	2.23 (.93)	2.14 (.93)	2.06 (.92)	2.02 (.92)	2.02 (.91)	2.03 (.91)	2.01 (.89)	−.22
Without children: Husband works full-time, wife works about half	103,460	2.90 (.75)	2.87 (.73)	2.79 (.74)	2.73 (.75)	2.68 (.75)	2.69 (.74)	2.72 (.72)	2.72 (.72)	−.24
Without children: Both work full-time	103,044	2.65 (1.01)	2.74 (.95)	2.87 (.90)	2.99 (.87)	3.00 (.86)	2.97 (.85)	2.94 (.87)	2.98 (.88)	.35
Without children: Both work about half-time	102,467	1.82 (.96)	1.90 (.96)	1.98 (.97)	2.08 (.98)	2.19 (.99)	2.23 (.98)	2.30 (.96)	2.30 (.93)	.51
Without children: Husband works about half-time, wife works full	103,185	1.53 (.81)	1.65 (.85)	1.81 (.88)	1.96 (.90)	1.99 (.89)	1.97 (.88)	1.97 (.87)	1.97 (.84)	.53
Without children: Husband doesn't work, wife works full-time	103,189	1.25 (.67)	1.31 (.71)	1.39 (.77)	1.46 (.83)	1.47 (.84)	1.46 (.83)	1.44 (.80)	1.43 (.78)	.25
With children: Husband works full-time, wife doesn't work	103,427	3.12 (.91)	3.02 (.94)	2.86 (.97)	2.74 (1.00)	2.67 (1.01)	2.69 (.99)	2.70 (.97)	2.64 (.96)	−.52
With children: Husband works full-time, wife works about half-time	103,408	2.53 (.90)	2.67 (.83)	2.75 (.79)	2.77 (.78)	2.78 (.76)	2.78 (.75)	2.80 (.75)	2.82 (.76)	.34
With children: Both work full-time	103,061	1.48 (.85)	1.64 (.92)	1.79 (.96)	1.95 (1.01)	1.99 (1.01)	2.02 (1.01)	2.02 (1.02)	2.14 (1.05)	.71
With children: Both work about half-time	102,811	1.73 (.90)	1.84 (.90)	1.98 (.93)	2.08 (.94)	2.17 (.95)	2.20 (.93)	2.25 (.92)	2.26 (.91)	.59
With children: Husband works about half-time, wife works full	103,165	1.36 (.72)	1.51 (.79)	1.70 (.85)	1.87 (.86)	1.94 (.88)	1.94 (.88)	1.95 (.87)	2.00 (.87)	.82
With children: Husband doesn't work, wife works full-time	103,106	1.29 (.71)	1.40 (.79)	1.54 (.88)	1.66 (.95)	1.70 (.96)	1.71 (.95)	1.69 (.94)	1.68 (.92)	.49
Views on gender and work										
Parents should raise independent daughters	105,887	4.10 (1.21)	4.18 (1.16)	4.24 (1.12)	4.25 (1.13)	4.30 (1.07)	4.20 (1.09)	4.20 (1.08)	4.19 (1.07)	.08
Men and women should get equal pay for equal work	106,650	4.69 (.77)	4.68 (.77)	4.67 (.82)	4.68 (.82)	4.71 (.79)	4.68 (.82)	4.66 (.83)	4.67 (.83)	−.03
Equal consideration for leadership jobs	106537	4.27 (1.13)	4.36 (1.06)	4.42 (1.03)	4.55 (.93)	4.59 (.89)	4.56 (.89)	4.52 (.93)	4.53 (.91)	.25
Equal job opportunities	105,917	3.99 (1.30)	4.09 (1.23)	4.25 (1.34)	4.38 (1.07)	4.45 (1.00)	4.45 (.991)	4.43 (.995)	4.43 (.99)	.37
Equal educational opportunities	106,012	4.81 (.614)	4.82 (.58)	4.83 (.59)	4.84 (.55)	4.84 (.56)	4.82 (.60)	4.83 (.583)	4.82 (.61)	.02
Mother's work experience										
Mother had a paid job during childhood	571,040	2.13 (1.09)	2.32 (1.13)	2.51 (1.14)	2.69 (1.15)	2.87 (1.14)	2.97 (1.13)	3.01 (1.12)	3.05 (1.10)	.84
Moderators of 3-item index										
Young men	49,465	2.44 (1.04)	2.67 (1.06)	2.84 (1.06)	3.01 (1.08)	3.11 (1.06)	3.12 (1.04)	3.17 (1.01)	3.24 (.98)	.79
Young women	52,437	3.20 (1.13)	3.48 (1.06)	3.69 (1.00)	3.86 (.95)	3.95 (.93)	3.89 (.92)	3.88 (.90)	3.91 (.88)	.68
White	72,144	2.77 (1.14)	3.01 (1.13)	3.21 (1.11)	3.39 (1.10)	3.48 (1.10)	3.47 (1.06)	3.51 (1.03)	3.58 (1.00)	.74
Black	12,808	3.26 (1.15)	3.47 (1.11)	3.68 (1.05)	3.90 (.99)	3.89 (.98)	3.86 (.96)	3.76 (.96)	3.67 (.93)	.39
Father did not complete college	61,670	2.82 (1.16)	3.06 (1.14)	3.26 (1.12)	3.46 (1.09)	3.55 (1.08)	3.55 (1.04)	3.56 (1.01)	3.59 (.97)	.69
Father did complete college	33,670	2.86 (1.13)	3.06 (1.13)	3.25 (1.10)	3.39 (1.11)	3.52 (1.09)	3.47 (1.04)	3.50 (1.04)	3.56 (1.03)	.63
Mother had steady paid job	52,085	3.13 (1.15)	3.34 (1.11)	3.51 (1.08)	3.65 (1.04)	3.74 (1.02)	3.70 (.99)	3.71 (.96)	3.73 (.94)	.59
Mother did not have steady paid job	49,251	2.71 (1.13)	2.90 (1.12)	3.05 d(1.10)	3.19 (1.12)	3.27 (1.12)	3.22 (1.08)	3.22 (1.04)	3.27 (1.01)	.51

Note. d = difference in standard deviations from the first group of years to the last. All *ds* .03 and over significant at *p* < .05; all *ds* .05 and over significant at *p* < .01; all *ds* .07 and over significant at *p* < .001. "The husband should make all of the important decisions" could not be included in the index as it was asked of a different subsample (form) than the other 3 items.

Sample 2: The GSS

The GSS is a nationally representative sample of U.S. adults over 18 years old, collected in most years between 1972 and 2012 ($N = 56,859$; for the questions in the current survey, N ranges from 24,389 to 25,278). The GSS data and codebooks are available online (see Smith, Marsden, Hout, & Kim, 2013). We excluded the Black oversamples from 1982 and 1987 and weighted by the variable WTSSALL, which makes the sample representative of individuals instead of households and corrects for other sampling biases. However, differences between weighted and unweighted analyses were minor.

The 3 GSS items on gender roles asked consistently since the 1970s are very similar to 3 of the MtF items: "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work," "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works," and "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." Response choices for all three were *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *agree* (3), and *strongly agree* (4). As we did for the 3 similar MtF items, we combined these into a composite ($\alpha = .74$). These items were first asked in 1977, and then 1985–2012, when the GSS was administered.

Nine additional items on women's work and family roles were asked beginning in 1988 and in at least 2 additional years. Five are attitude statements: "All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job;" "A job is alright, but what most women really want is a home and children;" "Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay;" "Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person;" "Both the husband and wife should contribute to the household income." Response choices are *strongly disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neither agree or disagree* (3), *agree* (4), *strongly agree* (5), and *can't choose* (we treated "can't choose" responses as missing data). The remaining four questions are asked in a section beginning, "Do you think that women should work outside the home full-time, part-time, or not at all under these circumstances": "after marrying and before there are children," "when there is a child under school age," "after the youngest child starts school," and "after the children leave home." Response choices are *stay home* (1), *work part-time* (2), and *work full-time* (3).

The GSS also collects data on respondents' sex, race, and educational completion. Until 2002, the GSS included specific identifications for only White and Black, coding all other respondents only as "other" race. Thus, we were only able to examine White, Black, and other as moderators across all years of the survey.

Data Analysis Plan

Data collected over time can be analyzed in many ways, including grouping by 20-year generation blocks, by decades, or by individual year. We believe that separating the data into 5-year intervals provides the best compromise between specificity and breadth. We report the effect sizes (d, or difference in terms of standard deviations) comparing the first group of years to the last but also provide (a) tables with the means and *SD*s for the 5-year intervals between these end points, so fluctuations at other times are apparent and (b) figures with the year-by-year results.

We used an item response theory (IRT) graded response model (GRM; Samejima, 1969) to ensure that the main 3 items represented a single latent variable. The GRM estimates a latent variable represented by a set of continuous items controlling for differences in item difficulty and weighing items based on their contribution to the latent variable. This allows for a specific estimate of the underlying factor rather than using simply the average of the items. In order to assess model fit, the item set was analyzed using the χ^2–df ratio. This ratio compares observed and expected responses and identifies values below three as acceptable.

For the GSS sample, we then used a cross-classified HLM to separate the effects of time period, generation, and age. This model accounts for the nesting of individuals of particular ages within birth cohorts as well as survey year (time period). Using the IRT-based estimate of the dependent variable, Y (attitudes towards women's work roles), for every person, i, in each birth year cohort, j, for every survey year, k, we first developed a model that predicted the outcome variable from age:

$$Y_{ijk} = \beta_{0jk} + \beta_{1jk}(Age) + \beta_{1jk}(Age^2) + \beta_{1jk}(Age^3). \quad (1)$$

This model incorporates quadratic and cubic effects of age, denoted by Age^2 and Age^3. Age was standardized using z-scores. Next, a Level-2 model was created in order to separate age effects from the effects of the other two variables of interest (birth cohort and survey year). This model identifies unexplained variance in Y that is systematically attributable to these two variables. The Level-2 model is stated:

$$\begin{aligned}
\beta_{0jk} &= \pi_0 + b_{00j} + c_{00k}, \\
\beta_{1jk} &= \pi_1 + b_{10j} + c_{10k}, \\
\beta_{2jk} &= \pi_2 + b_{20j} + c_{20k}, \\
\beta_{3jk} &= \pi_3 + b_{30j} + c_{30k}.
\end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

The Level-2 model treats each regression coefficient as an outcome variable, b_{0jk} which represents the average of Y across both birth cohorts and survey years at the average age; this mean is partitioned to estimate the effects of birth year/cohort. The deviations from the mean b_{0jk} are partitioned out across "rows," represented by b_{00j}, to estimate the effects for each birth year. Deviations across "columns" from the mean b_{0jk}, based on the survey year, are represented by c_{00k}. Considerable effects for slopes indicate that the linear slope of age in Equation 1 would differ by survey year or birth cohort. The sizes of the row and column effects are then evaluated by

the size of the variance component, χ^2; one for each t and c coefficient in Equation 2.

In addition to estimation of the general model described earlier, we examined the influence of race, sex, and education on attitudes. This was accomplished by adding these variables into the Level-1 equation using dummy variables for race and gender, with White men as the reference group. Education was entered as the z-score for the highest level of education attained by the respondent.

$$
\begin{aligned}
Y_{ijk} = {} & \beta_{0jk} + \beta_{1jk}(Age) + \beta_{2jk}(Age^2) + \beta_{3jk}(Age^3) \\
& + \beta_{4jk}(WhiteWomen) + \beta_{5jk}(BlackWomen) \\
& + \beta_{6jk}(OtherWomen) + \beta_{7jk}(BlackMen) \\
& + \beta_{8jk}(OtherMen) + \beta_{9jk}(Education). \quad (3)
\end{aligned}
$$

Because the intercept of a regression equation (b_{0jk} here) represents the level of Y (attitudes) when all other variables are zero, the intercept, b_{0jk}, for this model would represent the level of attitudes for White male respondents at the average age (45.7 years old, $SD = 17.47$) with an average number of years of education completed (12.75, $SD = 3.18$). Accordingly, the slopes represent the difference between this referent group of respondents and the comparison groups. Thus, b_{4jk} in Equation 2 represents the difference between White women's and White men's level of attitudes, b_{5jk} represents the difference between Black women and White men on these attitudes, b_{6jk} represents the difference between women of other races besides White or Black versus White men, and so on. Thus, if these coefficients are different from zero, it would indicate different overall levels of attitudes compared to White men. Finally, b_{9jk} represents the degree to which those with levels of education different from the average level have different attitudes. By leaving these slopes (b_{0jk} and b_{4jk} to b_{9jk}) free to vary across time period and cohorts (as was done for the age variables in Equation 2), we can also ascertain whether differences in attitudes between genders, races, and educational attainment levels vary as a function of time period and/or cohort.

These analyses were used to determine whether gender, race, and education level moderated time period or generational effects. In this model, the Level-1 effects of these demographic variables represent main effects, whereas the Level-2 model allows us to determine whether a certain gender, race, or educational level shows an interaction with time period or generation effects.

Results

12th Graders (Monitoring the Future)

Compared to their predecessors, 12th graders in the 2010s (2010–2013) were more likely to support equal roles for men and women (see Table 1; we report means and effect sizes in the table and report other information, such as percentage agreement and regressions, in the text). We found that 83%

of effect sizes were larger than the $d = .20$ often used as a guideline for a small effect size in psychology (Cohen, 1988), 39% were between small and medium ($d = .50$), 43% exceeded $d = .50$, and 9% exceeded the $d = .80$ guideline for a large effect size.

In the 2010s, 70% of 12th graders believed working mothers could develop equally warm relationships with their children, compared to 53% in the 1970s and a slight increase since the late 1990s (68%). Only 22% of 2010s students believed that a preschool-age child would suffer if his or her mother worked, down from 34% in the late 1990s and 59% in the 1970s (37 percentage points, or a 63% decrease). Only 32% of 2010s students believed it is best if the man achieves and the woman takes care of the family, down from 51% in the 1970s (a 37% decrease) but up slightly from the late 1990s (29%). Taking a broad view, between the 1970s and the 2010s, egalitarian attitudes toward women moved from a minority or bare majority position to a clear majority position. However, the increases between the late 1990s and the 2010s were smaller than those from the 1970s to the late 1990s, with the possible exception of the item on a preschool child suffering if his or her mother works.

When year (centered) and year (squared) were entered into a regression equation to predict the index of the 3 core items (those that also appear on the GSS: working mothers, preschool children, and the man working while the woman takes care of the family), the linear effect ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$) was stronger than the curvilinear effect ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .001$), $Z = 26.96$, $p < .001$. Thus, for the most part, attitudes have continued to become more egalitarian since the late 1990s, though at a slower pace (see Figure 1). For example, students in the 2010s were less likely than those in the late 1990s to believe that preschool children suffer if their mothers work, $t(15,552) = -11.75$, $p < .001$, $d = -.18$, and more likely to believe a working mother could have just as warm a relationship with her children, $t(15,842) = 5.15$, $p < .001$, $d = .08$, though these shifts were smaller than those between the 1970s and the late 1990s (d's $= -.57$ and .53, respectively).

However, the 2 items on the husband's role both showed roughly equal linear and curvilinear effects (see Table 1 and Figure 1; these 2 items were asked of different subsamples and thus cannot be combined). These attitudes became more egalitarian between the 1970s and the 1990s and then became less egalitarian from the 2000s to the 2010s. The decline from the mid-1990s (1995–96, when these attitudes were the most egalitarian) to 2010–13 was significant for both items: for the man working and the woman taking care of the family, $t(15,954) = 13.11$, $p < .001$, $d = .24$, and for husbands making the important decisions, $t(11,096) = 10.63$, $p < .001$, $d = .24$. While 27% agreed in 1995–96 that it is best for the man to work and the woman to take care of the family, 32% agreed in 2010–13. The percentage agreeing that the husband should make the important decisions also increased, from 14% in 1995–96 to 17% in 2010–13. Thus, 12th
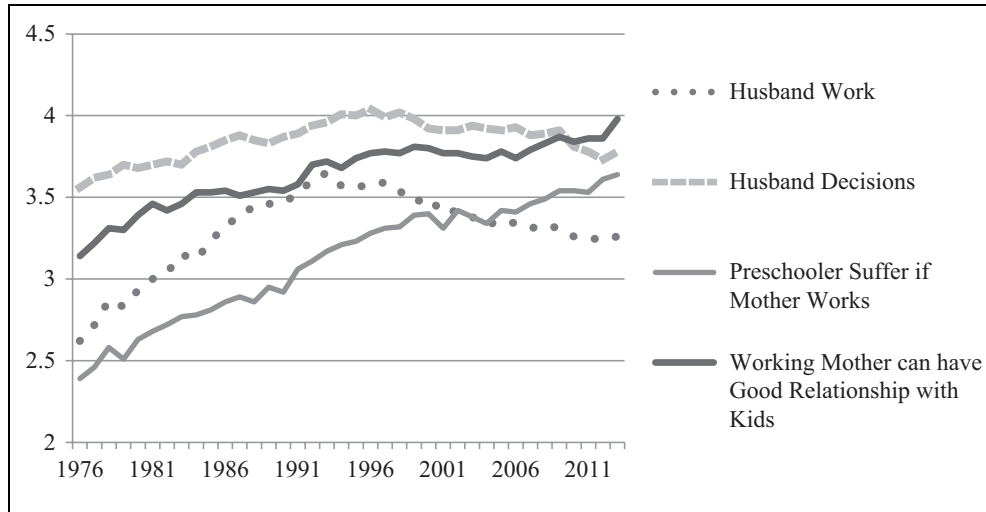
Figure 1. Attitudes toward women's work and family roles, U.S. 12th graders, 1976–2013. Higher scores indicate more egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles on all items ("husband work," "husband decisions," and "preschooler suffer" are reverse coded).
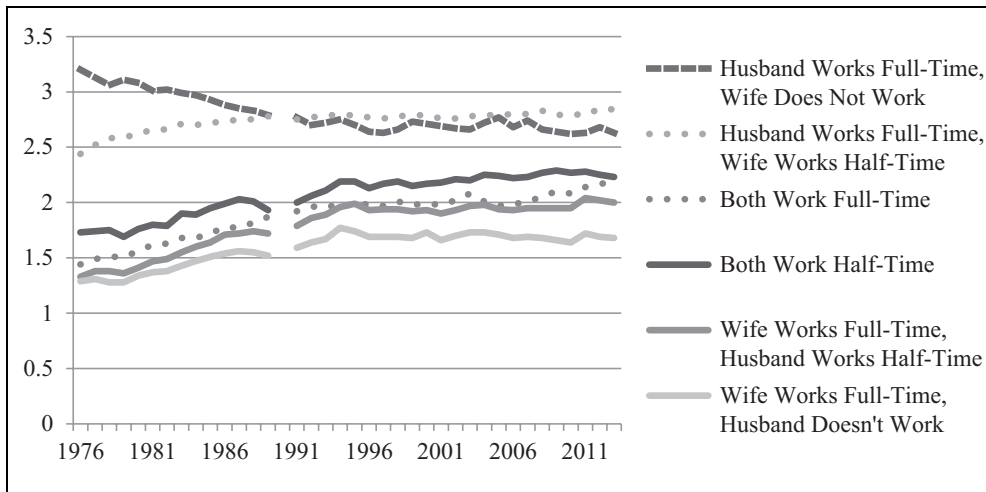

Figure 2. Approval of work arrangements in a household with children, U.S. 12th graders, 1976–2013. The data files for 1990 for this form are not available, resulting in the gap in the line. Higher scores indicate more approval.

graders' attitudes toward marital roles have become slightly more traditional since the mid-1990s.

When asked to consider specific work–family arrangements, 12th graders in the 2010s were more supportive of wives and mothers working than 12th graders in the 1970s, but once again, most of the change occurred between the 1970s and the late 1990s (see Table 1 and Figure 2). In a marriage without children, 28% fewer high school students supported the idea of the man working while the woman does not (29% in the 2010s compared to 40% in the 1970s and 32% in the late 1990s). Twenty-four percent more students in the 2010s supported the husband and wife both working full-time (supported by 77% of 2010s respondents compared to 62% in the 1970s and 79% in the late 1990s). Seventy-one percent more students in the 2010s supported the idea of the

wife as the sole provider though support was still low (12% in the 2010s vs. 7% in the 1970s and 14% in the late 1990s).

Many of the same trends appeared in attitudes toward work arrangements in a marriage with a preschool child. Twenty-three percent fewer high school students supported the idea of the husband as sole provider (60% in the 2010s compared to 78% in the 1970s and 62% in the late 1990s). Overall, more than twice as many respondents supported both parents working full-time (15% in the 1970s, 32% in the late 1990s, and 38% in the 2010s). More than twice as many students in the 2010s endorsed the idea of the wife as the sole economic provider in a house with children (9% in the 1970s, 23% in the late 1990s, and 22% in the 2010s).

In addition, students in the 2010s (vs. the late 1970s) were significantly more supportive of husbands working half-time

or not at all in families with children. In fact, the growth in support for husbands working half-time yielded the largest change in effect size (see Table 1). Support for a husband working half-time more than doubled from the 1970s to the 2010s, from 25% to 66% (a 164% increase). Support for stay-at-home dads also more than doubled, from 17% in the 1970s to 41% in the 2010s (a 141% increase). Thus, one of the largest changes was 12th graders becoming more supportive of fathers working fewer hours outside the home.

For all of these items, the linear effect was stronger than the curvilinear effect, with the egalitarian shift usually continuing since the 1990s. However, the mean change since the late 1990s was small compared to the change between the 1970s and the late 1990s. For example, the decrease in the acceptability of the husband as the sole provider was $d = -.46$ between 1976–78 and 1995–99 and $d = -.03$ between 1995–99 and 2010–13. For both husband and wife working full-time, the increase was $d = .55$ between 1976–78 and 1995–99 and $d = .15$ between 1995–99 and 2010–13. The acceptability of the wife as sole provider (with the husband not working) has not changed significantly since the late 1990s.

Support for equal pay for equal work has not changed since the 1970s, perhaps due to a ceiling effect. However, recent students are slightly more likely to support considering women as seriously as men for executive or political positions (89% compared to 84% in the 1970s). Additionally, 11% more students endorsed the idea of women having the same job opportunities as men. For all of these items, the linear effect was stronger than the curvilinear effect.

Respondents also reported whether their mothers worked while they were growing up, providing a view of maternal behavior. More than twice as many students now report that their mother worked most of the time or all of the time when they were growing up (33% in the 1970s, 61% in the late 1990s, and 68% in the 2010s). The norm has shifted from "yes, some of the time" to "yes, most of the time." The linear effect was stronger than the curvilinear effect for this item as well ($\beta = .27$, $p < .001$ for linear, $\beta = -.06$, $p < .001$ for curvilinear), with significant change since the late 1990s, $t(127,770) = 28.34$, $p < .001$, $d = .16$.

Moderators. Young men showed no change since the 1970s on the item regarding equal education opportunities; however, in every other domain, men's responses became significantly more egalitarian. Young men's attitudes changed more than young women's over this time period (see bottom of Table 1). Black students already held more egalitarian attitudes in the 1970s and thus did not change their attitudes as much over time. Egalitarian attitudes did not differ much by SES nor was this variable a moderator of the change over time. Students whose mothers worked regularly during their childhood held significantly more egalitarian attitudes than students whose mothers did not maintain steady employment, although both groups changed about the same amount over time.

Adults (GSS)

U.S. adult attitudes toward women's roles grew significantly more egalitarian between 1977 and 2012, including since the late 1990s (see Table 2 and Figure 3a). All 3 of the individual items shifted more than $d = .50$ (a medium effect), and the composite shifted more than $d = .80$, often considered a large effect size in psychology. Adults in their 60s shifted $d = 1.40$ (nearly twice the guideline for a large effect) between the late 1970s and the 2010s, as respondents in their 60s shifted from those born in the 1910s to those born in the 1940s. In 1977, 68% believed that "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works;" this decreased to 35% in 2012 (a 33 percentage point decrease, or 51% fewer, and also lower than 1998, when it was 42%). Two thirds (66%) of respondents in 1977 agreed that "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," declining to 32% by 2012 (a 34 percentage point decrease, or 48% fewer, and also lower than 1998, when it was 34%). In 1977, 49% agreed that "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work." By 2012, 72% agreed (a 23 percentage point increase, or 47% more, and also slightly more than the 68% who agreed in 1998). Thus, in each case, egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles went from being the minority opinion to the majority opinion among U.S. adults between the 1970s and the 2010s.

However, the change in egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles was not linear (see Figure 3a). Attitudes plateaued from approximately 1988 to 1991; became more egalitarian from 1991 to 1994, $t(2,823) = 3.66$, $p < .001$, $d = .15$; decreased between 1994 and 1996, $t(4,155) = 3.14$, $p < .01$, $d = -.10$; stayed the same between 1996 and 1998, $t(4,064) = 1.60$, $p = ns$, $d = .04$; and decreased from 1998 to 2000, $t(3,518) = 3.64$, $p < .001$, $d = -.08$. This represents a net decrease of $d = -.14$ from 1994 to 2000. However, egalitarian attitudes increased from 2000 to 2012 ($d = .26$). In addition, egalitarian values were significantly higher in 2012 than the previous peak in 1996, $t(3,570) = 5.27$, $p < .001$, $d = .09$. Thus, unlike the 12th graders, a substantial amount of the increase in egalitarian attitudes among adults occurred since 2000.

Was the dip in support from 1998 to 2000 due to young women finding it difficult to balance work and family or to another factor? If the former were driving the effect, it would appear primarily among the age-group most likely to have small children at home: those under age 40. However, this was not the case. The difference in attitudes from 1998 to 2000 was not significant among respondents under 40, $t(1,539) = 1.32$, $p = ns$, $d = -.06$. However, it was significant among those over 40, $t(2,007) = 3.37$, $p = .001$, $d = -.16$. Thus, it appears that a backlash occurred not among those with young children but among those whose children were older or grown.

Table 2. U.S. Adults' Attitudes Toward Women's Family Roles, General Social Survey, 1977–2012.

Survey Item or Groups	n	77–79 Mean (SD)	80–84 Mean (SD)	85–89 Mean (SD)	90–94 Mean (SD)	95–99 Mean (SD)	00–04 Mean (SD)	05–09 Mean (SD)	10–12 Mean (SD)	d
Working mother good relationship with children	25,341	2.47 (.95)	—	2.76 (.89)	2.83 (.84)	2.83 (.86)	2.76 (.90)	2.89 (.85)	2.95 (.83)	.55
Preschool child will suffer if mother works	25,040	2.85 (.80)	—	2.52 (.81)	2.42 (.78)	2.43 (.79)	2.44 (.80)	2.35 (.79)	2.27 (.78)	−.74
Better if man works and woman tends home	25,056	2.79 (.81)	—	2.40 (.85)	2.26 (.82)	2.25 (.84)	2.31 (.89)	2.27 (.86)	2.20 (.84)	−.71
Composite of 3 items	24,470	2.27 (.70)	—	2.61 (.70)	2.72 (.67)	2.72 (.68)	2.67 (.68)	2.76 (.66)	2.83 (.64)	.85
Age-groups = generation + time period										
18–29	5,553	2.50 (.63)	—	2.79 (.61)	2.90 (.58)	2.89 (.58)	2.82 (.59)	2.86 (.61)	2.90 (.61)	.65
30–39	5,250	2.50 (.74)	—	2.81 (.69)	2.88 (.64)	2.79 (.66)	2.77 (.67)	2.78 (.66)	2.92 (.63)	.63
40–49	4,910	2.23 (.74)	—	2.67 (.70)	2.78 (.66)	2.77 (.70)	2.71 (.70)	2.84 (.64)	2.86 (.65)	.93
50–59	3,674	2.14 (.66)	—	2.44 (.67)	2.63 (.65)	2.70 (.67)	2.65 (.68)	2.73 (.71)	2.80 (.64)	1.02
60–69	2,679	1.93 (.62)	—	2.35 (.65)	2.48 (.62)	2.46 (.64)	2.45 (.68)	2.67 (.67)	2.82 (.64)	1.40
Over 70	2,404	1.91 (.55)	—	2.15 (.62)	2.25 (.62)	2.26 (.63)	2.30 (.63)	2.48 (.62)	2.56 (.62)	1.09
Generation groups = age + time period										
Greatest generation and before (born < 1924)	2,431	1.99 (.62)	—	2.23 (.62)	2.26 (.61)	2.21 (.60)	2.20 (.65)	—	—	.33
Silent (1925–1942)	4,587	2.28 (.73)	—	2.47 (.67)	2.58 (.65)	2.50 (.66)	2.43 (.66)	2.56 (.66)	2.62 (.63)	.49
Boomer (1943–1960)	8,732	2.52 (.66)	—	2.80 (.69)	2.82 (.66)	2.76 (.68)	2.68 (.69)	2.73 (.70)	2.81 (.63)	.45
GenX (1961–1981)	7,541	—	—	2.80 (.58)	2.89 (.58)	2.86 (.61)	2.80 (.65)	2.81 (.64)	2.87 (.64)	.11
Millennials (1982 +)	1,120	—	—	—	—	—	2.81 (.53)	2.89 (.58)	2.91 (.61)	.17
Moderators of 3-item index										
Men	11,056	2.17 (.65)	—	2.50 (.65)	2.59 (.62)	2.58 (.64)	2.55 (.65)	2.62 (.62)	2.68 (.61)	.82
Women	13,415	2.36 (.73)	—	2.71 (.72)	2.82 (.69)	2.83 (.69)	2.77 (.69)	2.87 (.67)	2.95 (.64)	.85
White	19,774	2.26 (.71)	—	2.60 (.71)	2.71 (.67)	2.70 (.69)	2.66 (.70)	2.77 (.67)	2.85 (.64)	.88
Black	3,069	2.41 (.66)	—	2.72 (.66)	2.79 (.62)	2.83 (.62)	2.73 (.62)	2.86 (.62)	2.87 (.61)	.74
Other	1,628	2.19 (.62)	—	2.57 (.59)	2.61 (.67)	2.67 (.65)	2.69 (.59)	2.56 (.68)	2.65 (.62)	.74
No college degree	18,981	2.23 (.70)	—	2.57 (.68)	2.68 (.65)	2.69 (.67)	2.63 (.68)	2.70 (.64)	2.76 (.62)	.81
College degree	5,442	2.58 (.65)	—	2.79 (.69)	2.86 (.66)	2.81 (.70)	2.81 (.70)	2.92 (.63)	3.02 (.64)	.69

Note. d = difference in terms of standard deviations from the first group of years to the last. All ds significantly different at p < .001.

The GSS questions asked in fewer years also showed evidence of more egalitarian attitudes over time, with a few exceptions (see Table 3). Effect sizes were smaller, perhaps due to the shorter range of years; 67% of effect sizes were less than $d = .20$ and 33% were between $d = .20$ and $d = .50$. In 1988, 35% agreed that family life suffers when the woman works full-time, which decreased to 28% in 2012. A majority (55%) in 1988 thought a woman with a preschool child should not work, but only one third (34%) believed this by 2012. Thirteen percent thought a woman whose youngest child was in school should stay at home in 1988; that dropped to 5% by 2012. The preferred option for women with school-age children shifted from part-time work in 1988 (52%) to full-time work in 2012 (55%). Beliefs about women wanting a home and children and whether being a housewife is fulfilling did not differ by year.

Latent variable analyses. Next, we determined if the 3 core items tapped an underlying latent variable. The results showed that they did, as the GRM indicated good model-data fit. For each of the items, χ^2–df ratios were below the cutoff of 3, ranging from 0.07 to 1.04. Global fit indices also suggested good model-data fit, $G^2(51) = 2,816.50$, $p < .001$, root mean square error of approximation = .03. As model fit for all items fell within the expected range, this suggests one underlying latent attitude variable is present and that item and persons parameters are interpretable.

HLM analyses. We then examined whether the trends were due to time period (survey year), generation (birth cohort), or age (see Figure 3). To separate these effects, we performed cross-classified HLM analyses on the latent variable for the 3-item composite. First, linear, quadratic, and cubic effects were included in the model to analyze any incremental gains in model-data fit. Once both age and generation were accounted for, there was a clear increase in egalitarian attitudes toward working women from 1977 to 2012, $\chi^2(17) = 902.85$, $p < .001$, variance component .025.

The analyses for the unique effects of generation showed that the Boomer generation was the most egalitarian in their attitudes toward women's roles (see Figure 3b), $\chi^2(106) = 222.02$, $p < .001$, variance component .003. Generations preceding and following the Boomers, including the Silent Generation (born 1925–1945), GenX (1965–1981), and the
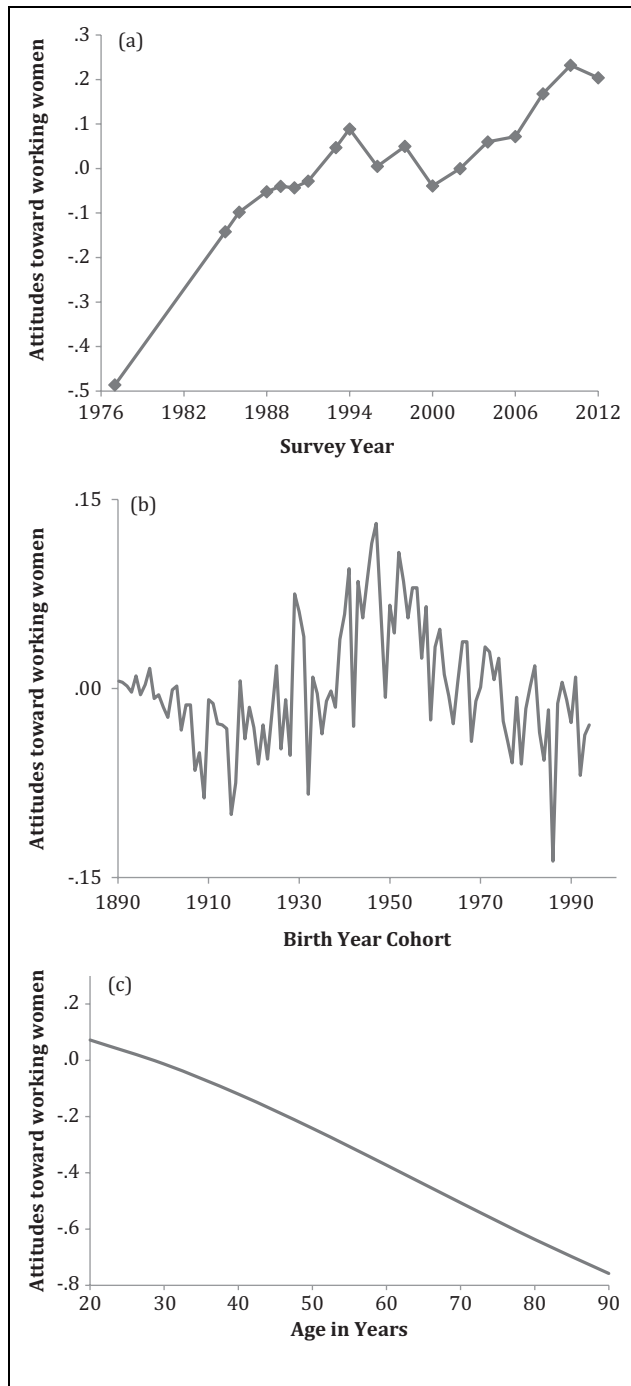
Figure 3. Attitudes toward women's roles by (a) time period (survey year), (b) generation (cohort), and (c) age, General Social Survey of U.S. adults. Higher scores indicate more egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles.

Millennials (1982–1999), did not differ significantly from the generational mean. Figure 3c demonstrates an essentially linear negative relationship between respondent age and attitudes toward women's roles, π_{1jk}, zAge $= -.24$, $t(25,294) = -19.44$, $p < .001$.

Moderators. The generational effect only appeared among White women, $\sigma^2 = .005$, $\chi^2(71) = 114.24$, $p < .001$, and not among White men, Black women, or Black men (see Tables 4 and 5). Thus, the Boomers' unusually egalitarian attitudes were driven entirely by White women. In contrast, gender, race, and education did not moderate the time period effects.

Discussion

Attitudes toward women's and men's work and family roles became more egalitarian between the 1970s and the 2010s in nationally representative samples of U.S. 12th graders and adults. U.S. high school students and adults became more supportive of mothers working and became more likely to believe that children and family life will not suffer from this arrangement. They were also more likely to support fathers who choose to work half-time or not at all. Most of these trends continued in the recent years, with U.S. adults embracing more egalitarian attitudes in the 2010s compared to the late 1990s. For high school students, the recent changes were smaller than the more substantial increases between the 1970s and the 1990s. For adults, a backlash against egalitarian attitudes occurred in the late 1990s, but gains between 2000 and 2012 erased those losses so that adults held significantly more egalitarian attitudes in the 2010s than they did in the late 1990s. Over the entire time period, 85% of the effect sizes exceeded $d = .20$, and 52% exceeded $d = .50$; thus, most of the effects were medium to large. The largest effects (e.g., $d = 1.40$) appeared in the comparisons between the Silent (and older) and Boomer generations.

HLM analyses on the GSS sample showed that these trends are primarily due to time period, with a smaller generational trend exclusively among White women. The results suggest that all generations became more egalitarian in their views of women's and men's roles as time went on, with White female Boomers making the only significant break from the trend driven by year. Thus, some individuals likely changed their views over time, but White female Boomers arrived in the survey already more egalitarian in their attitudes. Overall, however, these data do not support the view that GenXers and Millennials have turned back the clock on attitudes toward working mothers. Instead, these generations continued the more egalitarian attitudes pioneered by the Boomers, as predicted by theories suggesting that gender-role attitudes and values form in childhood (e.g., Zucker & Stewart, 2007). In fact, as reflected in the time period trend, Millennials have significantly more egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles than Boomers did at the same age in the 1970s. Millennials did not break new generational ground in attitudes toward women as Boomers did, but they have continued the trend toward more egalitarian attitudes although—at least in the high school sample—at a slower pace than Boomers in the 1970s and GenXers in the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 3. Changes in U.S. Adults' Attitudes Toward Women's Family Roles, Items Asked in Fewer Years, General Social Survey, 1988–2012.

Item	n	1988	1991	1994	1998	2002	2012	d
A job is the best way a for a woman to be independent	3,943	3.14 (1.12)	—	3.18 (1.14)	—	3.30 (1.41)	—	−.13
Both husband and wife should contribute to the family income	4,206	3.41 (1.03)	—	3.63 (0.96)	3.84 (1.01)	—	—	.42
Family life suffers if the woman works full-time (reverse; higher = disagree)	7,816	3.23 (1.25)	3.24 (1.25)	3.23 (1.25)	3.30 (1.31)	3.23 (1.50)	3.45 (1.19)	.18
Being a housewife is as fulfilling as paid work (reverse; higher = disagree)	5,109	2.60 (1.13)	—	2.54 (1.11)	—	2.40 (1.34)	2.54 (1.07)	−.05
A job is alright, but what most women really want is a home and children. (reverse; higher = disagree)	5,148	3.09 (1.15)	—	3.17 (1.15)	—	3.14 (1.42)	3.09 (1.10)	.00
Should a wife work after marriage and before kids?	3,490	2.71 (0.57)	2.82 (0.45)	—	—	2.78 (0.46)	—	.13
Should a woman with a preschool child work?	4,557	1.56 (0.68)	1.57 (0.69)	—	—	1.69 (0.70)	1.82 (0.71)	.37
Should a woman work after her youngest child is in school?	4,588	2.23 (0.66)	2.29 (0.62)	—	—	2.35 (0.60)	2.49 (0.59)	.42
Should a woman work after the kids leave home?	3,396	2.68 (0.58)	2.78 (0.47)	—	—	2.72 (0.52)	—	.07

Note. d = difference in terms of standard deviations. At most levels, $d = 2r$. All ds above .10 significantly different at $p < .01$; those greater than .15 significantly different at $p < .001$.

Table 4. Regression Coefficients of Level-1 Age and Demographic Predictors and Their 95% Confidence Intervals, T-ratios, dfs, and p Values, General Social Survey of U.S. Adults.

Fixed Effect	Coefficient	95% CIs Low	95% CIs High	T-ratio	df	p
π_{0jk}	−0.171	−0.237	−0.104	−5.020	24,446	<.001
β_{1jk}, z_{Age}	−0.206	−0.228	−0.184	−18.834	24,446	<.001
β_{2jk}, z_{Age}^2	−0.018	−0.032	−0.004	−2.582	24,446	.010
β_{3jk}, z_{Age}^3	0.005	−0.004	0.014	1.081	24,446	.280
β_{4jk}, White women	0.315	0.287	0.343	21.692	24,446	<.001
β_{5jk}, Black women	0.412	0.368	0.456	18.511	24,446	<.001
β_{6jk}, Other women	0.121	0.038	0.203	2.856	24,446	.004
β_{7jk}, Black men	0.158	0.104	0.212	5.677	24,446	<.001
β_{8jk}, Other men	−0.128	−0.215	−0.041	−2.893	24,446	<.004
β_{9jk}, Education	0.046	0.041	0.050	20.850	24,446	<.001

Note. CIs = confidence intervals.

Signs of Backlash?

In an exception to the general trend, we found a brief and small decrease in egalitarian attitudes among adults over 40 in the early 2000s and, for 12th graders between the mid-1990s to the 2010s, a steady increase in the endorsement of men's patriarchal role within the family ("It is usually better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the family and the woman takes care of the home and family" and "The husband should make all the important decisions in the family").

Some have mused that the decline in support for women combining work and family in the late 1990s to early 2000s occurred because women in their 30s were finding it difficult to perform both roles adequately (Warner, 2013). However,

the decline in egalitarian attitudes toward women's roles from 1998 to 2000 occurred primarily among those over 40, a group less likely to have preschool children. Perhaps the Silent and Boomer respondents over 40 in 2000 were disagreeing with their own children's choices around work and family—a "grandparent effect." Or perhaps they were regretting their own choices once their children were grown. Cotter et al. (2011) theorized that this shift was due to an emphasis on intensive mothering and a new standard of egalitarian essentialism, a concept combining the feminist rhetoric of choice for women and traditional attitudes supporting a return to traditional gender roles (e.g., mothers choosing to leave careers to stay home with children). However, our results differ from Cotter and colleagues, as we find that, by 2012, attitudes toward women's roles were more

Table 5. Variance Components for the Effect of Birth Cohort Level-1 Regression Coefficients for Demographic Variables, General Social Survey of U.S. Adults.

Random Effect	Variance Component	χ^2	df	p
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{0jk}), White men	<0.001	81.39	71	.187
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{4jk}), White women	0.004	102.85	71	.008
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{5jk}), Black women	0.001	71.97	71	.446
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{6jk}), Other women	0.016	92.29	71	.045
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{7jk}), Black men	<0.001	46.14	71	>.500
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{8jk}), Other men	0.013	76.35	71	.311
Birth Cohort, b_{00k} (π_{9jk}), Education	<0.001	72.46	71	.430

egalitarian than they were in the mid-1990s. In addition, high school students' attitudes toward working mothers have continued to become more egalitarian since the late 1990s.

However, high school students have become more likely to support a more patriarchal role for husbands since the late 1990s. Thus, Millennials hold more traditional views of gender roles within marriage than GenXers did in the 1990s. Perhaps students are more accepting of mothers working, but a growing minority believe that men should be the rulers of the household or more believe that women should work, but still have less power at home. This trend is particularly surprising given the legalization of same-sex marriage over this time period, which challenges traditional gender-based views of marriage. However, marriage might now be seen as a more traditional choice among straights, as more young couples build families without marriage. The percentage of babies born to unmarried mothers in the United States rose from 18% in 1980 to 41% in 2011 even as the teen birth rate declined (Martin et al., 2013), and the marriage rate in the United States reached a 93-year low in 2014 (Bedard, 2014). It is difficult to discern whether less egalitarian attitudes toward marriage caused more young people to eschew marriage, or if the general trend away from marriage caused attitudes toward marriage to become less egalitarian. Either way, our result is consistent with a recent cross-cultural study finding that nations with more economic and educational opportunities for women show more support for mothers' employment but _less_ support for gender equality within the home (Yu & Lee, 2013). Thus, modern attitudes may paradoxically promote more support for women working outside the home but favor more traditional attitudes inside the home.

Rejection of feminism might also explain the increased support for patriarchy among today's generation. Women in the recent years seem to identify with some feminist principles but not others (Aronson, 2003; Farmer, 2008). This is reflected by an ambiguous and often negatively charged view of what it means to be a feminist; many women reject the label of feminist, yet selectively retain certain aspects of feminism (Twenge & Zucker, 1999). Future research might investigate whether attitudes toward feminism contribute to the attenuation of some egalitarian ideas and not others.

Practice Implications

Previous research found that young people's attitudes toward women's work and family roles predicted their school enrollment, full-time employment, and later marriage and parenthood (e.g., Cunningham et al., 2005). This suggests that the next decade should see more women enrolling in college and more continuing to work full-time after they have children. They will likely marry later and have children later. However, if they marry, these women may also be slightly more likely to concede more power and status in the household to their husbands. The decline in support for equal roles for women in marriage since the 1990s suggests that we will continue to need research examining gender stereotyping and prejudice (e.g., Good & Rudman, 2010; Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002). The relatively slower increase in egalitarian attitudes in the high school sample suggests that the trend toward egalitarianism since 2000 in the adult sample may continue to slow in the coming years. Although support for stay-at-home dads more than doubled between the 1970s and the 2010s, almost all of the increase took place before the mid-1990s, suggesting that Millennial men may not be expected to become stay-at-home dads any more than GenXers.

The results suggest that policy makers and companies should continue to examine solutions for work–life balance for working parents. U.S. teens have become more supportive of working mothers since the 1990s and more likely to approve of both married parents working full-time. However, these attitudes may shift as they enter adult roles and encounter practical constraints, such as inflexible job schedules and the cost of childcare. The increased support for working mothers with young children suggests that programs such as state-sponsored preschool will continue to garner widespread support and that subsidized childcare for younger children eventually may win favor as well. Policy makers should recognize that support for working mothers is now the clear majority position in the United States and design programs for working families accordingly. Our results suggest that U.S. young people expect that women will "lean in" (Sandberg, 2013) by working when their children are young but still retain traditional notions of gender roles within marriage. The trends regarding gender roles in marriage, along with previous data on the growth of unmarried parenthood, suggest that organizations promoting marriage may be fighting an uphill battle with the Millennials.

Limitations

One limitation of the current analysis is that the HLM coefficients were based on the available data. Those born in the 1920s and before were already in their 40s and older when GSS data collection began in the 1970s. Similarly, as of 2012, those born in the 1980s had not yet reached their late 30s or beyond, and those born in the 1950s had not yet reached their mid-60s. Thus, it is possible that the apparent decline in egalitarian attitudes with age may be partially due to generation, as Boomers, GenXers, and Millennials have not yet reached older ages. If the age trajectory of egalitarian attitudes is different for these groups, then future analyses incorporating more comprehensive life-span data may find that generation explains more of the increase in egalitarian attitudes than suggested here.

Our conclusions are necessarily limited to the context of the United States. However, both samples are nationally representative, suggesting the results can be generalized to U.S. 12th graders (MtF) and U.S. adults (the GSS). Most of the questions focus on attitudes instead of behaviors, although the questions on specific scenarios in MtF are analogous to the choices high school students will make in the future, when facing issues of balancing work and family. In addition, the item asking students whether their mothers worked is a behavioral indicator and shows change over time similar to, if not stronger than, the attitude items.

Conclusions

In two nationally representative samples, attitudes toward women's roles have, for the most part, become steadily more egalitarian. Thus, although some backlash occurred in the recent years, especially around gender roles in marriage, the majority of U.S. adults and high school students now accept the idea that women will work even when they have young children. This suggests a continued, urgent need for programs to help working families.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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