

SELF-ACTUALIZATION AS A TEST OF EQUALITY CHANGING SOCIAL NORMS AND DEMOGRAPHICS WITH THE CHANGING GENDER WORKFORCE: A STUDY OF FORTUNE 100 EXECUTIVE ATTITUDES

A. Otjen

Assistant Professor

Montana State University-Billings

Don Larsen

Assistant Professor

Montana State University-Billings

***ABSTRACT:** In measuring self-actualization as a test of equality, this study uses the workplace as a laboratory to study gender's attitudes towards traditional roles of caregiver and breadwinner. Marketers and policy makers often assume that gender greatly impacts attitudes affecting behavior or beliefs. "The Woman Vote" or "The Soccer Mom" are common terms today. These gender biased attitudes have been long entrenched in society and could be considered as Social Norms in Fishbein's theory of Reasoned Behavior or as an impact on a consumer's behavior. The results of this study may conclude that gender does not greatly impact attitudes towards traditional roles of caregiver and breadwinner, or that other variables have more impact. Thus, the possible managerial implications are that some traditionally understood homogeneous clusters should not be gender based.*

SOCIAL NORMS AND REFERENCE GROUPS

Marketers search for the homogeneous cluster of consumers as a segment to target most effectively both in terms of message and profit. People of the same age group, or gender might be in the same homogeneous cluster simply based on age and gender issues such as going bald or becoming pregnant. But lifestyle experiences also affect how people can be clustered such as people who work in the same industry or people who raise children. We rely not only on demographics but also on psychographics driven by cognitive and affective processes often determined by the consumer's reference groups. Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Behavior is clear in that the element of Social Norm is critical in determining a part of the motivation in a consumer's behavior. Personal values and goals and lifestyle make up what and how people are influenced by others, or their subjective norm. Normative beliefs about what others expect of them and their motivation to comply combine to form the Social Norm. Fishbein says Social Norms impact the consumer's behavioral intentions at varying levels depending on their attitude and salient beliefs of engaging in a behavior, such as purchasing a certain product (Peter 2004).

This study specifically looks at possible homogeneous attitudes among corporate executives. First, by determining their levels of self-actualization and if there are significant variances based on gender, whether their spouse works away from the home, and whether there are children at home. It then tries to determine if there is a difference in traditional attitudes of gender roles at work and at home and if there is a significant difference based on gender, whether their spouse works away from the home and whether there are children at home. If there are homogeneous attitude clusters, these clusters may provide us some insight into the Social Norm of these subjects. These subjects that are of different genders, but we believe have achieved equality.

GENDERS AT WORK

Only recently have men and women participated at an equal level of achievement in the workplace, providing us with a laboratory of study of attitudes for both genders. Charles Stangor found that “women and men are perceived similarly if they have the same occupational role, that is if both are homemakers or both are employees (Stangor 2000).” He emphasized that gender roles were changing and the experience of the individuals is the key to removing stereotypes. “Daily life provides abundant direct experience with women and men. Therefore, efforts to remove gender stereotypes educationally may have relatively little impact, compared with actual changes in the distribution of sexes into social roles (Stangor 2000).” It is thus more difficult to understand the impact of gender as a part of Social Norms in the Fishbein equation of consumer behavior. As a result, it has been difficult for marketers to place gender correctly as demographic in homogeneous segments.

The view that gender roles are rooted in the division of labor and gender hierarchy implies that these roles should change if these features in social structure change . . . Attitudinal changes congruent with actual changes in the roles of men and women have been documented in the form of increasingly less approval of the traditional system of divergent roles and responsibilities for women and men (R.J. Harris & Firestone 1998; Loo & Thorpe 1998; Sherman & Spence 1997) (Eckes 2000).

A focus of this study is to measure attitudes toward traditional gender roles in the workplace. However, it is important to first understand if our workplace laboratory of study is producing a condition of equality or at least near equality.

Regardless of the status of scientific evidence on the convergence of the sexes, perceivers believe that men and women are becoming more similar . . . Path analyses suggested that perceivers function like implicit role theorists by assuming that, because of the roles of women and men have become more similar, their attributes converge. The demise of most sex differences with increasing gender equality, a proposition that thus fits popular beliefs about the characteristics of women and men, is a prediction of social role theory that will be more adequately tested as more societies produce conditions of equality or near equality (Eckes 2000).

In this study, we look at Maslow’s self-actualization as a measurement for reaching equality for both genders. Yet, we hypothesize that there will be a variance in our sample based on other attributes, primarily the presence of deficit needs. Maslow’s theory considers deficit needs of love and recognition from others that have to be satisfied before they can reach the need of self-actualization, and we believe that our sample will be affected if they have children at home or if their spouse does not work outside the home, making them the sole provider.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Each gender’s satisfaction may be related to the pressures of the expectations of Social Norms. Quoting a study by Reed Larson, “Fathers reported more ‘positive emotional states’ at home while mothers more positive emotional states at work (Baruch 1987).” Larson reported that both genders were more at ease when involved in doing tasks requiring less obligation-- for men, work, for women, family.

Hochschild said that often “working parents feel more at home at work because they come to expect that emotional support will be more readily available there (Hochschild 1997). When employees were asked, “where do you have the most friends?” Forty-seven percent answered “at work”; 15 percent, “in the neighborhood”; and 6 percent, “at my church”. Women were far more likely than men to have the most friends at work.

The above mentioned type of social interaction is a way of providing for love and esteem from others. This type of satisfaction is a deficit-need and in the middle of Maslow's pyramid. Self-actualization is above that or the being-need. The difference between these deficit-needs and the being-need is explained as follows. Deficit-needs ask the question "what do other's think of me?" or similar to Fishbein's normative belief. The being-need asks the question "what do I think of myself"? It is possible that by being very self-actualized, consumer's are less motivated to comply with the expectations of others, minimizing the level of impact of Social Norms on consumer behavior. However, this study is more interested in self-actualization as a measurement of the laboratory's state of equality among genders. In Habits of the Heart, (Bellali 1989) regarded work as an avenue to find such meaning.

Though the idea of a calling is closely tied to the biblical and republican strands in our tradition, it has become harder and harder to understand . . . our society has become more complex and utilitarian and expressive individualism more dominant . . . With the coming of a large-scale industrial society, it became more difficult to see work as a contribution to the whole and easier to view it as a segmental, self-interested activity . . . however we define work, it is very close to our sense of self. What we "do" often translates to what we "are".

Maslow described self-actualizers as needing self-sufficiency, meaningfulness, completion, necessity, and uniqueness. He also described them as problem-centered or solution oriented. These self-actualizer needs are consistent with what are found in the work environment at the executive level. (Maslow 1998). Thus, it seems that one contemporary opportunity to become self-actualized is in part linked to the opportunity to become an executive, an achievement that is relatively new to women.

TRADITIONAL ATTITUDES OF GENDER ROLES

These executives probably still have very different lifestyles and values even though they have reached equality in the workplace. Some have children at home, some are divorced, some are older, younger, many are working couples. A few have a spouse that doesn't work outside the home. These elements could be critical in making up their values and attitudes towards Social Norms. We want to know how these elements cluster into homogeneous segments, if they do. Marketers have traditionally used gender as an essential demographic in clustering target audiences. As genders reach equality in the workplace and begin to share roles across environments, it will be more and more interesting to see if marketers find clusters based on other dimensions such as liberal or conservative attitudes toward traditional roles of caregiver and breadwinner. Our hypotheses attempt to find dimensions that determine these attitudes other than just gender. Dimensions such as marriage, or working spouse, or the presence of children may play a more critical role in the development of attitudes leading to Social Norms.

HYPOTHESES

To test if the workplace is a good place to measure equality of genders, we propose the following hypotheses:
Hypothesis 1a: Individuals with no children at home will be more self-actualized than those with children at home.

Hypothesis 1b: Individuals whose spouse works outside the home will be more self-actualized than those whose spouse does not work outside the home.

Hypothesis 1c: Both genders will be self-actualized.

To look for clusters of traditional attitudes of gender roles for caregiver and breadwinner, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 2a: Individuals with no children at home will have more liberal attitudes toward traditional gender roles than those with children at home.

Hypothesis 2b: Individuals with spouses that work will have more liberal attitudes toward traditional gender roles than those with spouses that do not work outside the home.

Hypothesis 2c: Both genders have will have more liberal attitudes toward traditional gender roles.

To look for changing attitudes towards traditional attitudes of gender roles for caregiver and breadwinner, we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 3a: Individuals with no children at home will have changed attitudes toward traditional gender roles more than those with children at home.

Hypothesis 3b: Individuals with spouses that work will have changed attitudes toward traditional gender roles more than those with spouses that do not work outside the home.

Hypothesis 3c: Both genders will have changed attitudes toward traditional gender roles about traditional gender roles in terms of caregiver and breadwinner.

RESEARCH METHODS

Sample

A quantifiable survey was distributed via intranet to the entire population of 394 executives of a Fortune 100 company, of whom 86 are Vice Presidents or higher. Of the entire group, 23.6 percent were women. The total number of respondents was 142 resulting in a response rate of 36 percent. Twenty-six percent of the participants were women or only a slightly higher percentage than in the executive population (23.6 percent of 394), and thus it was not necessary to do a weighted adjustment based on gender.

Forty-four women and 98 men responded to the survey. Thirty-four percent of the women were single/divorced/widowed, and 11 percent had home spouses. Eleven percent of the men were single/divorced/widowed, 35 percent had working spouses and 43 percent had spouses at home. Women had a relatively higher experience of being on their own as 20 percent of women were divorced versus seven percent of men. This could mean that the women of the study were working more out of necessity than choice, much like a married man with a family. Working out of necessity would imply the need to satisfy deficit-needs and thus limit the opportunity to satisfy being-needs.

The overall spouse demographics included six percent single, 43 percent with a working spouse, 33 percent with a spouse at home, and 12 percent widowed or divorced. Fifty-five percent of married men versus 11 percent of married women had home spouses indicating that relatively more of the men in the study had responsibilities for family. The women had relatively less responsibility in terms of children as 43 percent of women versus 19 percent of men had no children at home. In general, the women in the survey had higher rates of having working spouses or no children. Thus, the women had relatively less home or children responsibilities. This could mean that it is easier for these women to satisfy the being-need of self-actualization, than it is for men with families to support. Overall, 27 percent had no children at home and 74 percent had children at home.

Ages ranged from 50 percent of respondents being younger than age 40, 44 percent respondents between the ages of 40 and 50, to 4 percent respondents over 50. The over 50 years of age, and the single groups, were the smallest sub-groups and thus present some difficulties in analysis for the variables of older age and single status.

Measures

Demographic data. Several self-report demographic data items were collected from respondents. The existence of children at home (coded 1=children at home, 2=no children at home), spouse work status (coded 1=spouse is homemaker, 2=spouse works outside home), and gender (coded 1=female, 2=male)

Self-actualization. Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven-point Likert scale the degree to which they agreed (1=strongly agree 7=strongly disagree) with nine statements used to translate a measured state of self-actualization (e.g., I generally feel fulfilled and satisfied with my job; At work I am able to find meaningful solutions to important problems; etc.) ($\alpha = .73$). The scale included statements utilizing Maslow's own words defining being needs, such as "complete" and "self-sufficient" in contrast to the importance of money and family responsibilities, or deficit-needs.

Liberal attitudes toward gender roles. Liberal attitudes were measured via four variables (conservative attitudes, company family policy attitudes, liberal work attitudes, liberal family attitudes) using a seven-point Likert scale on which respondents indicated the degree to which they agreed (1= strongly agree 7=strongly disagree) with statements. Conservative attitudes ($\alpha = .68$) was measured with three statements assessing traditional attitudes toward gender and work (e.g., I would prefer if my spouse stayed home with the family while I worked; Women would still rather be at home than work; etc). Family policy attitudes ($\alpha = .66$) was measured with three statements assessing attitudes toward company family policy and its effect on women (e.g., Unlike men, women have familial responsibilities that inhibit their ability to advance in the workplace; Taking advantage of family policies tends to hold people back in their careers; etc). Liberal work attitudes ($\alpha = .65$) was measured with three statements assessing attitudes toward women's opportunities at work (e.g., I think there is now greater equality between men and women than 30 years ago; Changes are still needed in corporate America to enable more women to become executives – reversed scored; etc.). Liberal family attitudes ($\alpha = .96$) was measured with two statements assessing attitudes toward gender duties in the home (Once women entered the workplace, their spouses should have picked up the slack at home; Once women became executives, their spouses should have picked up the slack at home).

Attitude change. Respondents were asked to indicate on a seven-point Likert scale the degree to which they agreed (1=strongly agree 7=strongly disagree) with two statements assessing attitude change toward traditional gender roles ($\alpha = .79$) (My attitudes about gender roles at home have changed dramatically in the last twenty years; My attitudes gender roles in the workplace have changed dramatically in the last twenty years).

RESULTS

Correlations

Table 1 shows the zero-order correlations between the variables in question in this study.

T-Tests

The hypotheses were tested using paired t-tests (see Table 2 for a summary of results). Support was found for hypothesis 1a and 1c. Executives with no children at home indicated being slightly more self-actualized at work than those with children at home (see Table 2). As shown in Table 2 below, there is not a significant difference based on gender or based on whether a spouse stays at home or works. In terms of absolute differences, 43% of the women in the sample do not have children at home and thus women in the sample are slightly skewed to be more self-actualized. Also in absolute values, twice as many divorced or widowed people seemed more highly self actualized, again because of a lack of family. Where nineteen percent of men with a *home* spouse strongly disagree, only three percent of men with a *working* spouse strongly disagree that "without their career, they would feel incomplete." In general executives are self-actualized as 40 percent of the overall sample, sometimes as many as 80 percent, agreed with most of the self-actualization statements in general.

Some support was found for hypothesis 2a, hypothesis 2b, and hypothesis 2c (see Table 2). Regarding hypothesis 2a, those with children at home appear to agree women have more opportunity at work. Concerning hypothesis 2b, executives with spouses as homemakers appear to have more conservative

attitudes about traditional gender roles at home and agree that women have more opportunity at work, more than do those with spouses who work outside the home. Regarding hypothesis 2c, differences were found between genders on conservative attitudes, family policies and liberal work attitudes.

Overall, the sample was split pretty much in the middle on Conservative Attitudes with a mean of 4.1. There was a significant difference between gender and those with working and non-working spouses for conservative attitudes in Table 2 below. Men and those with non-working spouses agreed much more with conservative attitudes towards traditional roles at home. When looking at absolute values, men with spouses at home are five times more likely than men with working spouses to believe that women should be the primary caregiver and the male should be the primary breadwinner. Men with children are 23 percent more likely to believe this than men without children. This possibly supports a new hypothesis that married men with home spouses and children have the most conservative attitudes of all the respondents. Women without children were three times as likely to have conservative attitudes as women with children. Though these results seem like an anomaly, they might indicate that working women's attitudes are based on their experience. Those without children assume children need a home parent, whereas those with children may well come to conclude through experience that children are fine without a home parent.

The overall results for Family Policy are slightly on the agreement side with a mean of 3.8. There was a significant difference in attitudes towards family policies at work based on gender and spouse employment in Table 2 below. Women and those with working spouses agreed more with the need for family policies at work.

Overall there was slightly more agreement for Liberal Work Attitudes with a mean of 3.4. There was a significant difference based on gender, working spouse and children at home in terms of liberal attitudes at work in Table 2 below. Women, those with working spouses, and those with children had the most liberal attitudes at work. There were no significant differences in liberal attitudes at home based on our measured demographics, using our Liberal Attitude Variables but there was overall agreement with a mean of 2.9.

Overall, there was no real support for hypotheses 3a through 3c. In Table 2, there are no significant differences based on our measured demographics. When looking at absolute values of statements not included in the correlated variable, there was a 40 percent change with attitudes for men (65 and 61 percent to 19 and 18 percent) compared to just over 10 percent for women (19 and 16 percent to two and five percent). The overall mean was 3.5 agreement with change.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

There was overall agreement with self-actualization with most of the sample. Our hypothesis that executives offer a laboratory of study for gender equality is at least valid in that there is not a significant difference for genders. We also were able to confirm our hypothesis that those with children (an assumed deficit need) at home agreed slightly less with self-actualization than those without. However, it did not seem to make a difference if a person had a working or a non- working spouse in agreement with self-actualization.

There was basic agreement with a liberal attitude toward work and general agreement with a change in attitudes towards traditional roles. Gender (men) and a non-working spouse were significant variables when it came to having conservative attitudes towards traditional gender roles. In this case, our hypothesis about having a working spouse is confirmed but our hypothesis about having children is not confirmed. In fact, the reverse seems to be true.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is possible to posit that A Social Norm cluster could be developing in two distinct areas for marketers and policy makers. The first is for men with non-working wives. This cluster tends to have very traditional values. It would be interesting to compare these values to those of non working women or the wives married to these men. This study was only conducted for working executives and thus the attitudes of non-working women or men is not available here.

The second cluster would be for working women and men with working spouses. This group seems to have more liberal attitudes in general as well as liberal values at home and at work. Thus, it is working status and as well and the working status of your spouse that has more to do with values and attitudes than gender, or at least gender alone.

Overall our hypothesis that both genders attitudes are changing is somewhat confirmed, but men with non-working spouses seem to be changing less than men with working spouses. Consistent with this change of attitudes, we caution marketers to note the many statistics available showing workforce growth trends of decreasing rates for the first cluster above and increasing for the second cluster.

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND ZERO-ORDER CORRELATIONS

Variable ^a	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Self actualization	2.61	0.76	----								
2. Sex ^b	1.69	.046	.09	----							
3. Children ^c	1.73	0.44	*.71	** .25	----						
4. Spouse employed ^d	1.57	0.49	-.07	** -.40	-.18	----					
5. Conservative attitude	4.11	1.26	-.03	** -.52	-.11	** .48	----				
6. Family policy	3.86	1.26	*.18	*.17	.06	* -.21	.04	----			
7. Liberal family attitude	2.91	1.20	.13	.10	.08	-.05	-.14	** .34	----		
8. Liberal work attitude	3.46	1.04	.06	** -.41	* -.19	*.23	** .22	** -.25	-.16	----	
9. Attitude change	3.51	1.69	.02	-.14	-.02	-.11	*.19	** .25	.08	-.11	----

^a values of n range from 104 to 142

^b sex coded as 1 = female, 2 = male

^c children coded as 1 = no children at home, 2 = children at home

^d spouse employed coded as 1 = work at home, 2 = work outside home

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

TABLE 2
T-TEST RESULTS

Variable	Grouping	n	Mean	S.D.	t-score
Self actualization	no children at home ^a	38	2.39	0.80	* -2.05
	children at home	104	2.68	0.73	
	spouse at home ^c	46	2.69	0.66	0.67
	spouse employed	60	2.59	0.82	
	female ^b	44	2.51	0.78	-1.03
	male	98	2.65	0.76	
Conservative attitude	no children at home	37	4.33	1.18	1.311
	children at home	103	4.02	1.28	
	spouse at home	45	3.42	1.02	*** -5.56
	spouse employed	60	4.67	1.23	
	female	44	5.06	1.14	*** 7.13
	male	96	3.66	1.06	
Family policy	no children at home	38	3.74	1.06	-0.71
	children at home	104	3.91	1.33	
	spouse at home	46	4.24	1.33	* 2.23
	spouse employed	60	3.68	1.25	
	female	44	3.53	1.28	* -2.07
	male	98	4.01	1.24	
Liberal family attitude 0.958	no children at home	37	2.75	1.13	-
	children at home	103	2.97	1.22	
	spouse at home	45	3.00	1.25	0.51
	spouse employed	60	2.87	1.29	
	female	44	2.73	1.13	-1.17
	male	96	2.99	1.23	
Liberal work attitude	no children at home	38	3.78	0.98	* 2.24
	children at home	104	3.34	1.05	
	spouse at home	46	3.12	0.97	* -2.38
	spouse employed	60	3.59	1.04	
	female	44	4.09	1.05	*** 5.24
	male	98	3.18	0.92	

Attitude change	no children at home	35	3.57	1.57	0.23
	children at home	103	3.50	1.73	
	spouse at home	45	3.73	1.77	1.12
	spouse employed	59	3.34	1.80	
	female	42	3.86	1.94	1.59
	male	96	3.36	1.57	

^a sex coded as 1 = female, 2 = male

^b children coded as 1 = no children at home, 2 = children at home

^c spouse employed coded as 1 = work at home, 2 = work outside home

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

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