

Gender Role Attitudes in Youth

Nicole Ann Bazik

American University

Professor Noemi Enchautequi de Jesus

Spring 2010

General University Honors

### **Abstract**

The role of women in America has changed dramatically over the past sixty years. Compared to the 1950s, today's young women have many more choices in terms of their education, family and professional lives. Using data from the 2008 study, "Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth," this quantitative study analyzes predictors of gender role attitudes in high school students. An individual's gender role attitude is their set of beliefs regarding the appropriate role for men and women in society. This dependent variable is defined on a continuum from traditional to egalitarian. Traditional beliefs regard women's appropriate role as homemakers and men's as breadwinners. On the other hand, egalitarian attitudes refer to a more equal distribution of professional and family life responsibilities between men and women. There are three categories of independent variables: demographic (age, gender and race), parental (paternal and maternal educational attainment and maternal employment) and civic life (political affiliation, religious attendance and GPA). This study also discusses general trends about today's youth such as overall levels of egalitarianism and the extent of maternal employment during childhood. Finally, this paper analyzes the effect of childbirth on attitudes about work arrangements.

## **Literature Review**

### *Introduction*

Over the past forty years, there has been much research in the area of adolescent and adult gender role attitudes. An individual's gender role attitude is their set of beliefs regarding the appropriate role for men and women in society. Generally, these attitudes are categorized as being either traditional or nontraditional, also called egalitarian. Researchers in the field have analyzed trends in gender role attitudes over time. They have also developed theories as to why people make the family and work role decisions that they do. Many variables have also been tested by researchers to see if they are significantly related to gender role attitudes. This literature review will provide an overview of the current trends, theories and significant variables in the field.

Gender role attitudes are a complex and multifaceted concept. They can refer to many topics such as stereotypes about both genders, equality of opportunity in schooling and employment, proper roles in the family, division of household and childcare labor and acceptance of macro-level social change. Responses to survey questions about these topics are categorized as traditional or egalitarian based on one of two continuums. These are referred to as the inequality-equality continuum and the gender differentiation and typing continuum. In the first one, the belief that men and women should be treated equally is considered egalitarian. In the second one, the rejection of gender as a differential marker for role assignment is considered egalitarian (Osmond & Martin, 1975). This paper will focus on the inequality-equality continuum. However, before analyzing why individuals hold traditional or egalitarian attitudes, it is first important to understand how men and women came to be viewed differently and unequally in society.

*History*

Bernard's (1981) review of the history of gender role attitudes indicates that throughout the majority of history women were seen as men's equal. In ancient hunter-gatherer societies, both men and women were responsible for providing for their tribe. In fact, women provided four-fifths of the food whereas men only contributed one-fifth. In subsistence economies, both genders took equal care of the home, fields and family business. Through the colonial era, women were employed in many occupations such as running shops, working the land, and producing clothes and other household necessities (Bernard, 1981).

Women were not considered inferior to men until the change from a subsistence economy to a money-based economy around the 1830s. At this point, men began to seek outside employment while women stayed at home. The introduction of the factory during the Industrial Revolution further separated the genders. As a result, men had less time to spend on household chores and childcare leaving the women with increased responsibilities. During this period, gender became synonymous with both type of work and work site. In other words, maleness came to be associated with business in the public sphere and femaleness with home and family in the private sphere. Gender-based division of labor persisted from the 1830s to the 1970s. While men were considered the breadwinner of the family or the "good provider," women's work was never taken seriously because it did not provide financially for the family. However, the male breadwinner, female homemaker model was no longer financially feasible for most families after inflation rates soared in the 1970s (Bernard, 1981).

In the decade prior to this shift, the women's rights movement had been gaining momentum across the country. *The Feminine Mystique*, published by Betty Friedan in 1963, raised awareness among women about the inequalities they faced in everyday life. The first

women's rights organization, National Organization for Women (NOW), was founded in 1966. Gloria Steinem's *Ms. Magazine* was the first feminist magazine published in the country in 1971 (Cushman, 2001).

During this time period, laws were created to protect women in both schools and the labor force. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 made it illegal for any school receiving federal funding to discriminate on the basis of gender. The Equal Pay Act, enacted in 1963, made it illegal for employers to pay women less than men if their jobs were considered equal. In 1964, Title VII extended protection of women's pay in cases where no man held an equal job position. It also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to handle pay disputes. In 1967 President Johnson signed Executive Order 11375, requiring the federal government to take affirmative action to bring more women into its labor force (Cushman, 2001).

Regardless of the consciousness-raising efforts of feminist groups and federal laws requiring equal pay and affirmative action for female employees, many women still could not enter the labor force because they lacked access to contraception and abortions. Employers were unlikely to hire women because they could become pregnant at any time. Pregnancy meant that employers would need to find and train new employees which was both costly and time-consuming. As a result, employers preferred to hire males. It was not until the Supreme Court's decision in *Griswold vs. Connecticut* (1965), that contraception sale and usage became legal. In 1973, the Supreme Court went one step further by legalizing abortions in *Roe vs. Wade*. The legalization of contraception and abortion gave women much more control over their own bodies. Previously, a woman could not control if and when she became pregnant. As a result, women were unable to pursue careers because there was always a chance they may become

pregnant. In fact, employers could refuse to hire and fire women for the sole reason of pregnancy until the passage of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978 (Cushman, 2001).

Despite the many successes of the feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s, women still faced much discrimination in society. Though more women pursued advanced degrees and entered the labor force, few were able to acquire leadership positions, such as partners in law firms and CEOs in businesses. This phenomenon is typically referred to as women's inability to shatter the glass ceiling. Another obstacle women face is the pay gap which refers to women making less money than men do for similar work. One potential explanation that has been given for the pay gap is that females are less likely to argue for pay raises than men. Women need assertiveness training courses so that they can successfully negotiate fair pay for their work (Cushman, 2001).

Nonetheless another explanation for women's inability to acquire leadership positions and to make as much money as men is the legislative and judicial failures of the women's rights movement. Though the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) was passed by Congress in 1972, it did not become law because an insufficient number of states ratified it. If passed the ERA would have added to the Constitution, "Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of gender." Furthermore, despite concerted attempts by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), the Supreme Court has never considered sex under the standard of strict judicial scrutiny. Instead, sex-based laws are considered under the lower standard of intermediate scrutiny. The intermediate scrutiny standard, which requires a state to show a "substantial relationship" between a law that discriminates on the basis of sex and an "important governmental objective," was created in *Craig vs. Boren* (1972) (Cushman 2001).

*Trends*

As a result of the many successes of the feminist movement, more and more women were able to pursue advanced degrees and enter the labor force over the past forty years.

Consequently, researchers have documented a liberalizing trend in gender role attitudes during this time period. On a whole, the population is exhibiting more egalitarian beliefs today than they did in previous eras (Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Bolzendahi & Myers 2004). Yet, individuals have been found to have relatively stable gender role attitudes over time. In other words, someone who is a traditional adolescent will not become more egalitarian than a nontraditional adolescent as they age. However, this does not mean that an individual's gender role attitude is static. Rather, it only means that they follow a stable pattern throughout the life course (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Fan & Marini, 2000). Events like marriage, childbirth and entering and exiting the labor force are life course events which may affect gender role attitudes. There has been some debate as to whether males' and females' gender role attitudes follow the same pattern throughout the life course. Some researchers find that male and female gender role attitudes follow a parallel path (Bolzendahi & Myers 2004, Davis & Pearce 2007). However, other literature finds that males become more egalitarian with age than females (Fan & Marini, 2000). Perhaps, this is because females start off with more egalitarian attitudes and thus are less able to become more egalitarian as they age.

In fact, many researchers document that males generally hold more traditional gender role attitudes than females (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Fan & Marini, 2000). Males feel uncomfortable taking care of household and childcare responsibilities because they are seen as feminine tasks (Bernard, 1981). Though girls hold higher educational aspirations than boys, they are more

likely to see early childbirth as a hindrance to their education and consider their work and home roles less compatible (Mahaffy & Ward, 2002). These beliefs make intuitive sense considering that boys feel uncomfortable and are less willing to handle these private sphere tasks. Thus, girls are generally right in assuming that the majority of household and childcare responsibilities will fall on their shoulders, making attaining their education even more difficult.

### *Theories*

Some of the literature has attempted to create socialization theories to explain why individuals hold the gender role attitudes that they do. Two of these theories relate specifically as to why boys generally have more traditional attitudes than girls. Biddle, Bank and Marlin (1980) find that parents influence adolescents through norms and peers influence adolescents through modeling. These two figures, along with teachers and guidance counselors, are powerful socializing forces in an adolescent's life. Parents tell their children how they should and should not act. Peers either reinforce or weaken parents' messages by their display of behavior.

Galambos, Almeida, and Peterson (1990) took this argument one step further by looking at the role puberty plays in gender identification and intensification among adolescents. They found that boys become more masculine and traditional in their attitudes from sixth through eighth grade. On the other hand, girls become more egalitarian but do not become more feminine than boys during these formative years. These researchers argue that there is more pressure on boys to exhibit manly traits than there is on girls to exhibit feminine traits. Socializing forces, such as parents and peers, exert a stronger influence on boys because masculine traits are more valued in society than feminine traits. As a result, females are less pressured to behave in a gender stereotyped manner. Puberty plays an essential role in signaling to socializing forces to begin exerting pressure on adolescents to conform to their gender roles.

Other researchers have come up with theories to explain career choices. They have found that choosing a job is not an isolated decision. Rather, it is part of a complex process of balancing work and family desires as well as considering the costs and benefits of the field. Corder and Stephen (1984) created a two-stage model to explain career choices among males and females. In the first step, adolescents decide how they want to combine both work and family in their lives. Potential careers are limited based on adolescents' decisions in this first stage. In the second step, males and females choose a career that will fit their work and family goals. In a similar vein, Morgan and Walker (1983) argue that individuals make their career choices based on exchange theory. Individuals weigh both the costs and benefits of staying at home or becoming employed. For example, the soaring inflation rates of the 1970s made remaining a homemaker too costly an option for many women.

Nevertheless, the constraints and stereotypes of gender do not disappear when a woman enters the workforce. Bernard (1981) theorizes that men feel emasculated when their wives become working women. He argues that this is because a man's masculinity is tied to his success as the breadwinner. Having a working wife is a sign to others that a man has failed at being the sole provider for his family. Even if men come to accept this new role for their wives, women continue to be judged on the basis of gender in the professional world. Ridgeway and Correll (2004) believe that gender is an institutionalized system in the United States. They argue that hegemonic gender beliefs are present as background characteristics in almost all situations. Though an individual's skills, abilities and identity are considered more strongly, gender can become a powerful factor if it becomes significant. In fact,

...they bias the extent to which a woman, compared to a similar man, asserts herself in the situation, the attention she receives, her influence, the quality of her performances, the way she is evaluated, and her own and others' inferences about her abilities for the tasks that are central to the context (p. 519).

For example, if a woman's gender is made salient before she takes a math test, it has been found that her performance will suffer. Thus, gender acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy whereby females perform as they are expected to in the workplace.

### *Variables*

Now that the theories explaining differences in gender role attitudes have been examined, significant variables will be considered. Researchers have studied many potential factors that could be significantly related to gender role attitudes in both adults and adolescents. Some variables have always been found to be significant or not significant. However, there are quite a few variables that have received mix support in the literature. First, variables that have always been found to be significant will be discussed. Then, variables that have only been found to be significant by one researcher will be examined. Finally, those variables whose significance is ambiguous will be presented. Please note that only those variables that will be examined in this particular study will be examined from the previous literature.

*Significant Correlates of Gender Role Beliefs.* Many of the researchers have found a statistically significant relationship between gender role attitudes and two variables, age and African American race. In general, being younger is associated with more egalitarian gender role attitudes (Thornton, Alwin & Camburn 1983, Morgan & Walker, 1983). Being younger is also associated with a greater shift to egalitarian attitudes over the life course (Fan & Marini, 2000, Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Being African-American is associated with egalitarian attitudes on females' employment and traditional attitudes on females' role in the family (Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009).

*Variables Found To Be Significant Once.* Other variables have been found to be statistically significant by only one researcher. These variables include: Hispanic race,

childbirth, GPA, and political identification. Both being Hispanic and having a child have been found to be related to more traditional gender role attitudes (Fan & Marini, 2000). Having a higher GPA is associated with more egalitarian attitudes (Davis & Pearce, 2007). Liberal political identification also is related to egalitarian gender role attitudes (Bolzendahi & Myers, 2004).

*Ambiguous Variables.* Quite a few variables have received mixed support from the academic community. The following variables have been found to be statistically significant by some researchers and not statistically significant by others: mother's educational attainment, father's educational attainment, religious attendance, and mother's employment during childhood. Having parents with high degrees has generally been associated with nontraditional gender role attitudes in adolescents. The majority of studies have found that the higher the mother's educational attainment, the more egalitarian her children's attitudes will be (Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Fan & Marini, 2000, Cunningham, 2001, Davis & Pearce, 2007). However, Blee and Tickamyer (1995) found that maternal education had no effect on their sons' gender role attitudes. Most studies have also found that the higher the father's educational attainment, the more egalitarian his children's attitudes will be (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Fan & Marini, 2000, Cunningham, 2001). One study found that the fathers' educational attainment was only associated with their sons' gender role attitudes (Mahaffy & Ward, 2002). Another study found that the father's education was not statistically significant (Davis & Pearce, 2007).

Religion has been a highly contested variable in the literature. Davis and Pearce (2007) found that both religious attendance and identification were significantly related to an individual's gender role attitudes. Higher religious attendance is linked to higher educational

aspirations. However, this effect is most pronounced in Mainline Protestants who expect to attend college at a 50% higher rate than more conservative Protestant faiths. Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) similarly found that religious attendance was significantly related to gender role attitudes. Higher attendance of religious services was related to more traditional gender role attitudes. However, other researchers have found that religion has no effect on gender role beliefs (Fan & Marini, 2000, Cunningham, 2001).

In general, researchers have found that maternal employment during childhood is not significant (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Davis & Pearce, 2007). However, one study found that maternal employment was associated with shifts to more egalitarian gender role attitudes throughout the life course (Fan & Marini, 2000). Another study found that maternal employment is most significant when it occurs during a child's adolescent years. The same study found that a mother's educational attainment was more strongly related to a child's gender role attitudes than her employment (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988). Now that the many variables that have been studied have been discussed, common methods in the literature will be discussed.

### *Previous Methods*

There is little consistency in the type of data analyzed in the gender role attitude field. One area that the studies differ in is whether the data were collected from a geographically isolated area or is representative of the nation. Half of the researchers focused on geographically limited samples (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Biddle, Bank & Marlin, 1980, Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Galambos, Almeida, & Peterson, 1990, Cunningham, 2001, Lupart, Cannon & Tefler, 2004, Cunningham, 2008). The other half used national samples (Morgan & Walker, 1983, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Blee &

Tickamyer, 1995, Fan & Marini, 2000, Correll, 2001, Mahaffy & Ward, 2002, Bolzendahi & Myers 2004, Davis & Pearce 2007, Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009).

The literature also differs in who is asked each of the survey questions. A few researchers have looked solely at adults (Morgan & Walker, 1983, Bolzendahi & Myers 2004, Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009). However, many other researchers have looked solely at adolescents (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Biddle, Bank & Marlin, 1980, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Galambos, Almeida, & Peterson, 1990, Fan & Marini, 2000, Correll, 2001, Mahaffy & Ward, 2002, Lupart, Cannon & Tefler, 2004). To better understand the way parents influence their children's gender role attitudes, some of the samples include both parent and adolescent information (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Cunningham, 2001, Davis & Pearce 2007, Cunningham, 2008).

Yet another difference is whether the data spans many years or just one occasion. The majority of data is longitudinal in nature (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Galambos, Almeida, & Peterson, 1990, Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Fan & Marini, 2000, Correll, 2001, Cunningham, 2001, Mahaffy & Ward, 2002, Lupart, Cannon & Tefler, 2004, Davis & Pearce 2007, Cunningham, 2008). Nonetheless, some of the data was collected on just one occasion (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Biddle, Bank & Marlin, 1980, Morgan & Walker, 1983, Bolzendahi & Myers 2004, Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009).

Finally, there is much variation in the era when the data was collected from the 1960s up to present day. Most of the data is quite out of date because it was collected before 1990 (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Biddle, Bank & Marlin, 1980, Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Morgan & Walker, 1983, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Kiecolt & Acock,

1988, Galambos, Almeida, & Peterson, 1990, Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Fan & Marini, 2000, Cunningham, 2001, Mahaffy & Ward, 2002, Cunningham, 2008). Nonetheless, a few of the most recent studies used current data from 1990 to present (Correll, 2001, Bolzendahl & Myers 2004, Lupart, Cannon & Tefler, 2004, Davis & Pearce 2007, Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009).

Beyond these differences in samples, each paper differed in many other aspects as well. One major area of variation was the content of variables studied. There was great inconsistency in which variables were studied, which were found to be significant and for which subsection of the population. Furthermore, some of the studies focused on predictors of gender role attitudes, while others considered the effects various gender role attitudes have on individuals. As previously mentioned, much of the research focused on adolescents considering how they might someday balance work and family life. However, some of the studies focused on adults who had already made these decisions. Other studies considered how parents' education, employment and attitudes affected their children. Another variation in the data is whether it focused on shifts in attitudes over the life course or an individual's beliefs at one particular point in time.

### *Problems*

The studies in this field have quite a few potential problem areas. One general area of concern is whether respondents' answers are truthful. Over the course of longitudinal studies in particular, respondents may learn to give socially desirable answers. Another area of concern in the literature is random measurement error. In particular, the geographically limited surveys may not be representative of national trends in gender role attitudes. Yet another potential problem is that much of the data was collected prior to 1990 making it outdated. One other potential issue is that the surveys rarely considered the timing, extent and job status of working mothers during adolescents' lives. A related area of concern is that most studies did not consider

the extent of each parental figure's involvement in their children's lives. Knowing the full extent of maternal employment and parental involvement would help clarify the results in previous research. Future longitudinal studies may want to lengthen the period of adolescence studied. This would be especially helpful in studying puberty's effect on gender role attitudes as the onset of puberty can vary drastically in adolescents.

Finally, one general area of caution for this entire field is the inherent value bias that it makes in viewing achievement from a male perspective. Women's achievements may be shortchanged by considering only educational attainment and employment as success. A broader definition of achievement would provide less biased results. Examples of broader forms of achievement may include success of one's children or the extent of one's participation in various organizations. Future studies may want to consider data sets that assess all areas of potential achievement for the sexes (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

### *Conclusion*

This study will add to the body of knowledge in the gender role attitude field in two ways. First, it will utilize data from a much more recent, national sample of adolescents. The data set to be analyzed is called "Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth," from 2008. One problem in the literature is that most of its data was collected prior to 1990. Based on the date of this set's collection, the respondents, high school seniors, were likely to have been born in the early 1990s. These students have never known a time in which the majority of women did not work. Their parents came of age during the women's rights movement. As a result, it is expected that this generation's mothers are more likely to be highly educated, employed and hold egalitarian attitudes.

Second, this study will help clear up some of the inconsistencies in the literature. Many variables will be analyzed to see if they have a statistically significant relationship with gender role attitudes. Respondents' age, gender, race, political affiliation and GPA have consistently been significant in the literature. However, political affiliation and GPA have only been studied one time in all of the previous literature. Furthermore, the following variables to be studied have had mixed results in previous studies: educational attainment of both parents, maternal employment during childhood and religion. While the inconsistencies in this field cannot be entirely cleared up by this one study, it will help by providing support to some of the findings.

### **Study Design**

#### *Hypotheses*

This study will analyze the relationship between students' gender role attitudes, the dependent variable, and an assortment of factors, the independent variables. Gender role attitudes will be defined on a scale of egalitarian to traditional beliefs. The many independent variables will be broken down into three categories. The first category, defined as demographic variables, will include students' age, gender and race. The second category, defined as parental variables, will include the highest level of education attained by the mother and father and maternal employment during the students' childhood. The third category, defined as civic life variables, will include students' GPA, political affiliation and attendance at religious services. The effect of these independent variables will be tested on the dependent variable through statistical analysis.

There will be three hypotheses for this study. The first, demographic hypothesis is that, in comparing high school students, those who are female and/or African American, will be more likely to have egalitarian gender role attitudes than will those who are male and/or White or

Hispanic. The second, parental hypothesis is that, in comparing high school students, those having parents with advanced educational degrees and/or mothers who worked during their childhood, will be more likely to have egalitarian gender role attitudes than will those having parents with lower educational attainment and/or mothers who did not work during their childhood. The third, civic life hypothesis is that, in comparing high school students, those who have a high GPA, liberal political affiliation and/or attend religious services rarely, will be more likely to have egalitarian gender role attitudes than those who have a low GPA, conservative political affiliation and/or attend religious services regularly.

Many of these hypotheses were chosen because they are supported by findings in the literature. The following will explain the rationale for the hypotheses about the demographic independent variables. Females will hold more egalitarian views than males because they are more personally affected by these views than men. Gender role attitudes determine the appropriate role for women in society, whereas men's role is typically not in question (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Thorton, Alwin & Camburn, 1983, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Galambos, Almeida & Petersen, 1990 and Fan & Marini, 2000). African Americans will hold more egalitarian views than Whites and Hispanics because black females have been members of the labor force for far longer than the other two races (Fan & Marini, 2000, Correll, 2001, Davis & Pearce, 2007). In particular, African American females hold the most egalitarian views because they have often been single mothers forced to solely support their families (Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009). Hispanics will hold more traditional views than Whites and Blacks because of their stronger religious identification (Fan & Marini, 2000). No hypothesis has been made about age because of the limited variability in this sample (high school students). Thus, age is not expected to be significantly related to gender role attitudes.

In the literature, parents' educational attainment and maternal employment history have found varied support. The hypotheses about the parental variables were chosen on the following rationale. Since pursuing one's education is associated with more egalitarian beliefs, parents who have higher educational degrees will hold more egalitarian attitudes than parents with less educational degrees. Likewise, being a member of the labor force is linked to more egalitarian beliefs in women. This study proposes that these parental egalitarian beliefs, the result of parents' higher education and employment history, will be transmitted to youth. Some researchers have found support for maternal employment (Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, and Fan & Marini, 2000), maternal educational attainment (Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Fan & Marini, 2000, Cunningham, 2001 and Davis & Pearce, 2007) and paternal educational attainment (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Fan & Marini, 2000 and Cunningham, 2001). However, other researchers have not found these variables to be significant.

High GPA, liberal political affiliation and low attendance of religious services are expected to be positively related to egalitarian views based on the following logic. In the literature, the more educated an individual was the more egalitarian he or she was. Students with high GPAs are more likely to advance their educational attainment and thus become more egalitarian than their peers with lower GPAs (Morgan & Walker, 1983, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Fan & Marini, 2000, Bolzendahi & Myers, 2004, and Cunningham, 2008). Additionally, liberal students will hold more egalitarian views because liberal political beliefs more closely align with progressive views on women such as pro-choice on abortion (Bolzendahi & Myers, 2004). Finally, students who regularly attend religious services will be more traditional because religions generally define women's proper role as homemaker and caretaker of the family. Students who do not attend religious services regularly will be more egalitarian because they are

not exposed to these traditional views on women (Thornton, Alwin & Camburn, Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004, and Davis & Pearce, 2007). Though the significance of both religious affiliation and attendance find mixed support in the literature, this study sides with those who do find a significant relationship between religion and gender role attitudes for the aforementioned reasons.

### *Data Set*

Data for this study will come from the survey, “Monitoring the Future: A Continuing Study of American Youth” which includes 1,400 questions asking high school students about their behaviors, attitudes and beliefs regarding a range of topics. Though this survey is administered on a regular basis, this particular study will utilize the 2008 version because it is the most recent survey available. The 2008 version of this study divides the overall sample of students into six subsamples of approximately 2,430 students each. All six subsamples were asked demographic and drug-related information. However, each of the six subsamples was then asked completely different questions for the remainder of the survey.

This particular study will utilize data from the third and fourth subsamples because both ask questions about students’ demographic information and gender role attitudes. Since every data set asks students the same demographic questions, the independent variables will be defined by responses to the same questions in each data set. However, since the gender role attitude questions in data sets three and four differ, the dependent variable’s definition will vary based on which subsample is being analyzed. This is important to keep in mind when considering the operationalization of the variables.

### *Independent Variables*

The first category of independent variables, demographic, will be defined as follows. To determine the age variable, students were asked in what year and month they were born. Their answers to these questions were coded as either older or younger than eighteen years of age. Students were also asked about their gender with two possible answers, male or female. Finally, students were asked about their racial identity. The survey recoded their answers into three categories, African American, White and Hispanic. These three variables are nominal level.

The second category of independent variables, parental information, will be measured as follows. Two questions will define parents' educational attainment. The first question asks students' about their father's highest level of schooling completed. The second question is exactly the same but addresses the mother's schooling experience. There are six possible responses to each of these two questions. These answers are: (1) completed grade school or less, (2) some high school, (3) completed high school, (4) some college, (5) completed college, and (6) graduate or professional school after college. The question, "Did your mother have a paid job (half-time or more) during the time you were growing up?" will be used to measure the second independent variable, maternal employment. There are four potential answers to this question: (1) no, (2) yes some of the time, (3) yes most of the time, and (4) yes all of the time. These two variables are ordinal level.

Civic life variables, the third category of independent variables, will be measured as follows. Students were asked to describe their average grade so far in high school. This will form the GPA variable. The nine possible responses are (9) A, (8) A-, (7) B+, (6) B, (5) B-, (4) C+, (3) C, (2) C- and (1) D. The variable political preference will be defined by students' responses to a question about their political beliefs. The five potential answers to this question are (1) very conservative, (2) conservative, (3) moderate, (4) liberal and (5) very liberal. Finally,

the religion variable will be defined by students' responses to a question about their attendance at religious services. There are four possible responses to this question: more than once a week, once a week, once a month or once a year or less. All three of these variables are ordinal level.

#### *Operationalization of the Dependent Variable*

The dependent variable, gender role attitudes, will be measured differently in the two subsamples of the data set. In the third data set, two Likert scales will be created to measure gender role attitudes on work and childcare arrangements. The work arrangement scale will include responses to questions about the acceptability of various working arrangements with and without kids. The working situations to be included are husband works full time and wife does not work, the traditional response, and husband and wife both work full time, the egalitarian response. The second scale will be defined by responses to questions about the acceptability of various childcare arrangements assuming the husband works full time and the wife doesn't work. The two childcare situations to be included are wife does all the childcare, the traditional response, and husband and wife share the responsibility equally, the egalitarian response. Each potential working or childcare arrangement is rated in one of the following four ways: not acceptable, somewhat acceptable, acceptable and desirable. These gender role attitude variables are all ordinal level. However, since they will be combined into Likert scales, they will be treated as interval level variables.

In the fourth data set, gender role attitudes will be measured through a Likert scale combining students' responses to three questions. Each of these three questions asks students how much they agree or disagree with a specific statement. The five potential answers to each of these statements are: disagree, mostly disagree, neither, mostly agree, and agree. The first statement is, "It is usually better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the

home and the woman takes care of the home and family.” The second statement is, “A preschool child is likely to suffer if the mother works.” The third statement is, “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.” The third statement’s responses will be recoded so that the directionality of responses matches the first two statements. Thus, an answer of agree on the first two statements and an answer of disagree on the third statement are all considered traditional responses. These five points will be used as a scale of responses from most traditional to most egalitarian. This variable is interval level.

### *Statistical Tests*

The statistical tests used to analyze the relationship between the three categories of independent variables and the three composite dependent variables, gender role attitudes, vary based on what type of data the independent variable is. The demographic independent variables are nominal level, while the parental and civic life independent variables are ordinal. Thus, independent samples t tests will be used for the demographic variables and correlation tests will be used with the parental and civic life variables. However, since race has three potential responses rather than two, one way ANOVA tests will be used to analyze its relationship to gender role attitudes. Frequencies tests will be run to assess the extent of maternal employment during childhood, overall levels of egalitarianism and the change in work arrangement attitudes after the birth of hypothetical child.

## **Results**

### *Distribution of Variables*

Before delving into the results of the statistical tests, it is first important to know the distribution of the independent variables to gain a fuller picture of the respondents, all high

school seniors. The third and fourth data sets are very similar in their composition, so they will be discussed together. There are approximately 2,340 students in each data set. On the whole, respondents are slightly more likely to be categorized as eighteen years of age or older (56.1% and 58.4% in data sets three and four, respectively). Males and females are pretty evenly represented, with female participation slightly higher (51% and 51.3%). While more than two-thirds of respondents are White, Blacks and Hispanics are also well-represented. The mean educational attainment for respondents' mothers and fathers is some college. However, the mode for mothers and fathers differs. The mode for mothers is college graduate, whereas the mode for fathers is high school graduate. Half of the respondents report having a mother who worked all the time when they were a child. Less than one in five says that their mother never worked. On the whole, respondents lean towards mild Democratic Party affiliation. Most respondents rarely attend religious services, but a sizeable group (29.4% and 28.7%) attends once a week or more. Finally, the average GPA for the respondents is a B.

On the whole, respondents tend to give slightly more egalitarian answers than traditional answers on the dependent variable scales. In the third data set, there are two scales, work and childcare arrangements. Each scale is distributed from one to four, with higher numbers representing more egalitarian attitudes. On the work arrangement scale, the mean response is 2.59. On the childcare arrangement scale, the mean response is 3.02. Thus, on the whole, respondents have more egalitarian attitudes about childcare than work arrangements. In the fourth data set, there is only one scale distributed from one to five. Here also, a higher score indicates more egalitarian attitudes. The mean response is 3.54, which is leaning just slightly to egalitarianism.

*Findings: Demographic Variables*

To analyze the demographic variables, independent samples t-tests and one way ANOVA tests were used. Since age and gender only have two potential responses, independent samples t-tests were used. In the third data set, only gender is statistically significant. In the fourth data set, both age and gender are statistically significant. Since race has three potential responses, a one way ANOVA test was used. In both fourth data set and on the working arrangement scale, race is statistically significant. However, the White/Hispanic relationship is not statistically significant in both cases. Race is not significant in regards to childcare arrangements.

The first hypothesis is mostly supported by the results of this study. Females did display more egalitarian attitudes on all three scales than did males. In the third data set, the females' mean response is 2.66 for work arrangements and 3.14 for childcare arrangements, compared to the males' mean response of 2.52 and 2.91, respectively. In the fourth data set, females' mean response is 3.91 compared to the males' mean response of 3.16. As for race, African Americans do hold the most egalitarian attitudes on two of the three scales. The only exception is on the childcare arrangement scale, where Hispanics are the most egalitarian. In fact, Hispanics are unexpectedly more egalitarian than Whites on every scale. On the work arrangement scale of the third data set, the mean response is 2.76 for Blacks, 2.60 for Hispanics and 2.55 for Whites. On the childcare arrangement scale of the third data set, the mean response is 3.02 for Hispanics, 3.02 for Whites and 2.99 for Blacks. However, this scale is not significant. In the fourth data set, the mean response is 3.78 for Blacks, 3.53 for Hispanics and 3.50 for Whites. Age was not expected to be a significant variable based on the small age range of the sample. However, it is significant on one of the three scales.

*Findings: Parental Variables*

Correlation tests were used to test the relationship between the parental variables and the three egalitarianism scales. This is because the independent variable, parental information, is ordinal level, whereas the dependent variable, egalitarianism, is interval level. Father's and mother's educational attainment are both significant but the size of the correlation is very small. However, maternal employment is statistically significant on all three scales. The Pearson Correlation is 0.270 in the fourth data set, 0.264 on the work arrangement scale, and 0.096 on the childcare arrangement scale.

The results from this study somewhat support the second hypothesis. Having a mother who worked is significantly related to more egalitarian attitudes. This is especially true in the fourth data set and on the work arrangement scales. On both of these scales, maternal employment can explain more than a quarter of the variance in students' responses. Maternal employment has a much weaker, positive relationship with childcare arrangements. As for parental education, the results are less clear. While mother's education has a weak, positive relationship with egalitarianism in the fourth data set, it is not significant elsewhere. On the other hand, father's education appears to have a weak, negative relationship with egalitarianism. However, this relationship is not found on two of the three scales.

*Findings: Civic Life Variables*

To measure the relationship between the civic life variables and egalitarianism, correlation tests were used. Political preference is statistically significant on all three scales. On the work arrangement scale the Pearson Correlation is 0.161, on the childcare arrangement scale it is .102 and in the fourth data set it is 0.296. Religious attendance is also statistically significant on all three scales. On the work arrangement scale, its Pearson Correlation is -0.060.

On the childcare arrangement scale, its Pearson Correlation is 0.263. In the fourth data set, its Pearson Correlation of -0.067. Average GPA is statistically significant on two out of the three scales. On the childcare arrangement scale, its Pearson Correlation of 0.048. In the fourth data set, average GPA has a Pearson Correlation of 0.067.

The third hypothesis is somewhat supported by the results of this study. Leaning more towards the Democratic Party is significantly related to more egalitarian attitudes. Between one-tenth and nearly one-third of variance in students' responses can be explained by political affiliation. Religious attendance has a mixed effect on gender role attitudes. In regards to work arrangements, higher religious attendance is weakly related to more traditional attitudes. However, in regards to childcare arrangements, religious attendance is strongly related to egalitarian attitudes. More than one-quarter of the variation in students' responses on the childcare arrangement scale can be explained by religious attendance. Finally, higher GPA is related to more egalitarian attitudes as expected. However, this relationship is weak, explaining less than one-twentieth of students' responses.

#### *Additional Findings*

Some other interesting findings were discovered in addition to the initial three hypotheses. The first finding is that both sexes shift towards more traditional gender role attitudes after the hypothetical birth of a child. Respondents were asked about the acceptability of various work arrangements both without kids and with one or more pre-school aged children. While these high school students had yet to actually give birth, the change in their responses to the hypothetical birth of a child is still noteworthy. Gender is significantly related to changes in attitudes on work arrangements before and after kids. The p-value is 0.020. The mean change

for males is -0.8834. For females, the mean change is -0.9849. Thus, females shift more strongly towards traditional gender role attitudes after the birth of a child than do males.

Another noteworthy finding from this study is that the majority of today's current youth grew up with working mothers. In both data sets three and four, 49.3% of respondents reported that their mothers worked all the time during their childhood. Only 14.6% in data set three and 13.2% in data set four responded that their mothers never worked during their childhood. The rest of the respondents explained that their mothers worked either some or most of the time they spent growing up. This lends support to one of the primary reasons for undertaking this study. Today's youth are significantly different than youth who came before them. The vast majority grow up with working mothers which has a significant effect on their gender role attitudes, particularly in the area of work arrangements.

Likewise, today's youth generally hold more egalitarian attitudes. The mean response for each of the three scales was closer to the egalitarian end of the spectrum than the traditional end. This is especially true in regards to childcare arrangements. The mean response is 3.0223 on a one to four scale where higher responses represent more egalitarian attitudes. Both young males and females are more likely to prefer an equal division of childcare responsibilities. What is especially interesting about this finding is that the question presupposes that the man has a full time job and the female does not work outside the home. If the work arrangements were more egalitarian (e.g. both sexes work full time), then young males and females might exhibit even more egalitarian attitudes about childcare arrangements. As for work arrangements, young men and women find full-time employment for both sexes more acceptable than full-time employment only for the man. Finally, young are more likely to have neutral or egalitarian feelings about the following three statements. "It is usually better for everyone involved if the

man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family,” “A preschool child is likely to suffer if the mother works,” and “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.”

### *Conclusion*

Therefore, the results of this study generally support the three hypotheses. Being a Black female with Democratic Party leanings, a high GPA, low religious attendance and a well-educated mother who worked during one's childhood is most strongly linked to egalitarian gender role attitudes on work arrangements. Additionally, being a female with Democratic Party leanings, a high GPA, and high religious attendance is most strongly linked to egalitarian gender role attitudes on childcare arrangements. On the other hand, attending religious services regularly is weakly related to more traditional gender role attitudes on work arrangements.

## **Discussion**

### *Summary of Findings*

To summarize, the three initial hypotheses were generally supported by statistical analysis. The first demographic hypothesis projected that females and African Americans would hold more egalitarian attitudes than males and Whites or Hispanics. Indeed, females did have more egalitarian attitudes. Except for the childcare arrangement scale, African Americans also held significantly more egalitarian attitudes. However, Hispanics were found to have more egalitarian attitudes than Whites. Though age was not projected to be significant, it was found to be so on one of the egalitarian scales.

The second parental hypothesis projected that the children of working mothers and parents with high educational degrees would be more egalitarian. Having a working mother was significantly related to more egalitarian attitudes. However, parental education did not follow

the expected pattern. Both were either not significant or only weakly so. Surprisingly, father's education was found to be slightly related to more traditional attitudes.

The third civic life hypothesis projected that students with high GPAs, liberal political affiliation and minimal attendance of religious services would be more egalitarian. As expected, higher GPAs and liberal political preferences were significantly related to egalitarianism. However, religious attendance had more mixed results. Higher attendance was related to more traditional attitudes on work arrangements, but to more egalitarian attitudes on childcare arrangements.

The statistical tests also yielded three other interesting findings. One, both sexes shift towards more traditional gender role attitudes after the hypothetical birth of a child. This shift is more pronounced among females than males. Two, the majority of today's youth grew up with working mothers making them significantly different than generations that came before them. Finally, today's youth generally hold more egalitarian than traditional gender role attitudes.

#### *Integration with Previous Literature*

Many of the findings generated from this study support previous results in the literature. However, other findings either contradict or lend support to only one faction of researchers. The findings from the three demographic variables, gender, race and age, generally support previous research findings. In the literature, males were found to hold more traditional gender role attitudes than females (Osmond & Martin, 1975, Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Corder & Stephen, 1984, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Fan & Marini, 2000). In this study, females did hold more egalitarian views than did males.

The results for race were less clear cut than gender. Previous researchers have found that African Americans hold egalitarian attitudes on employment, but traditional attitudes on family

life (Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Carter, Corra & Carter, 2009). This study came to exactly the same conclusion, as African Americans displayed egalitarian attitudes on the work arrangement scale and traditional attitudes on the childcare arrangement scale. As for Hispanics, Fan and Marini (2000) found that they hold more traditional gender role attitudes than other races. However, this study found that it was actually Whites who hold the most traditional gender role attitudes. In fact, Hispanics held the most egalitarian attitudes on childcare arrangements.

As for age, previous studies had found that being younger was significantly related to more egalitarian attitudes over the life course (Thornton, Alwin & Camburn 1983, Morgan & Walker, 1983). This study did not expect to find such a relationship based on the small age range available. However, the findings from this study support the literature.

The statistical analysis of parental variables did not as strongly support previous literature findings. Most researchers found no significant relationship between maternal employment during childhood and egalitarianism (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Blee & Tickamyer, 1995, Davis & Pearce, 2007). However, this study found that maternal employment was strongly related to egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Likewise, high paternal education has generally been linked to more egalitarian gender role attitudes in youth (Thornton, Alwin, & Camburn 1983, Fan & Marini, 2000, Cunningham, 2001). However, this study found that paternal education was either not significant or weakly related to traditional attitudes. No studies have found that more advanced paternal education was related to traditional attitudes. Only one other study found that paternal education was not a significant variable (Mahaffy & Ward, 2002).

As for maternal education, most studies found that it was strongly linked to more egalitarian attitudes in youth (Tallichet & Willits, 1986, Kiecolt & Acock, 1988, Fan & Marini,

2000, Cunningham, 2001, Davis & Pearce, 2007). However, this study found that it was either not significant or only weakly related to egalitarian attitudes. Blee and Tickamyer (1995) were the only researchers who did not find maternal education to be a significant variable.

Two of the three civic life variable findings, on GPA and political affiliation, strongly support previous literature. Though GPA has only been tested in one previous study, it was found to be significantly related to gender role attitudes (Davis & Pearce, 2007). This study also found that higher GPAs were linked to more egalitarian gender role attitudes. Previous studies have found that higher educational attainment is linked to more egalitarian attitudes. Perhaps, students with high GPAs would be the most likely to pursue advanced degrees (Morgan & Walker, 1983, Tallichet & Willits, 1986).

Likewise, political affiliation has only been studied once in the previous literature. However, when it was tested a significant relationship was found between it and gender role attitudes (Bolzendahi & Myers, 2004). This study also found political affiliation to be a statistically significant variable. Liberal political affiliations were linked to egalitarian attitudes.

However, this study's findings on religious attendance both support and contradict the previous literature. Davis and Pearce (2007) and Bolzendahi and Myers (2004) found that higher religious attendance rates were significantly related to more traditional gender role attitudes. However, Fan and Marini (2000) and Cunningham (2001) did not find religious attendance to be a significant variable. In this study, religious attendance was a significant variable on all three scales. Though religious attendance was linked to more traditional attitudes on work arrangements, it was actually linked to more egalitarian attitudes on childcare arrangements.

Some of the additional findings from this study were also supported by previous literature. This study found that students shifted their attitudes away from egalitarianism with

the hypothetical birth of a child. This finding was more pronounced with females. Mahaffy and Ward (2002) found that girls were more likely to see childbirth as a hindrance to their education and consider their work and home roles less compatible. Perhaps the girls in this study shifted their responses because of similar expectations about childbirth acting as a hindrance.

This study also documented that students generally held egalitarian gender role attitudes and that the majority had working mothers. These findings are supported by previous literature. Tallichet and Willis (1986) and Bolzendahi and Myers (2004) documents a liberalizing trend in gender role attitudes over the previous forty years. Since this study took place in 2008, students would be expected to hold more egalitarian gender role attitudes. Likewise, it makes sense that the mothers would have worked while raising young children. The liberalizing trend reflects the fact that more women pursued advanced degrees and entered the labor force over the past forty years. Indeed, more than half of the mothers worked full time while raising young children and the most common maternal educational attainment was college graduation.

#### *Potential Explanations*

The following will provide some potential explanations for the findings in this study. Females held significantly more egalitarian gender role attitudes than males. This was expected because females are more personally affected by these questions than are males. It is their role as student, worker, wife and mother that is in question, not the males' role. Women are the ones who will experience discrimination based on their gender from their early days in school through their time as employees. They are the ones who stand to benefit from more egalitarian attitudes.

Socioeconomic status can also make gender role attitude questions a more salient topic. For example, individuals with low SES may not have the luxury of a women staying at home to raise her children. In fact, most families need to have both parents working full time to

financially provide for their children. However, this burden falls hardest on minority families. This explains why African Americans hold very egalitarian attitudes about work arrangements. African American females have been in the labor force for a much longer time than have Whites. Likewise, Hispanics may hold more egalitarian attitudes than Whites because they also are less likely to have the economic security to only have one working parent. Nonetheless, African Americans maintain traditional gender role attitudes in regards to family roles because women are seen as the primary provider and caretaker for children. This is because many African American households are headed solely by the mother. Therefore, African Americans hold contradictory views of women. They must be responsible both for full-time employment and full-time childcare because of economic and personal necessity.

Younger generations have been found to hold more egalitarian attitudes than those that came before them. This is probably a result of the changing times. Younger individuals grow up in more egalitarian environments than older individuals. Today's youth have never known of a time in which the majority of women did not work. However, this study did not expect age to be a significant variable based on the small variability in the sample. Nonetheless, age was found to be significant on one of the scales. Perhaps, egalitarian attitudes do increase with each new birth cohort so that younger high school students will hold more egalitarian views than do older high school students. Maybe their mother's were more likely to be employed or receive high degrees.

Maternal employment is strongly related to egalitarian attitudes in youth. This is because maternal employment exposes children to the possibility that both men and women have much to contribute outside of the home. It also normalizes the behavior because that is what one is used to seeing. Working mothers have also been shown to have more egalitarian attitudes than non-working mothers. The experience of entering the workforce provides women with new

opportunities and exposes them to new ideas. Egalitarian mothers are more likely to pass on egalitarian beliefs to their children. Youth learn from both their parents' actions and their beliefs. Working mothers transmit egalitarian attitudes both through their actions as employees and their egalitarian beliefs gained from employment.

Likewise, maternal education is linked to egalitarian attitudes in youth. Higher educational attainment is linked to more egalitarian attitudes. Just as maternal employment provided an example to youth so too does high maternal educational attainment. Highly educated mothers show children that it is normal for females to pursue advanced degrees. However, this does not explain why paternal educational attainment was negatively related to egalitarian attitudes. The only explanation for this is that fathers generally hold more traditional attitudes than mothers. Even though they may have more advanced degrees, their overall traditional gender role attitudes dominate. Males do hold more traditional gender role attitudes than do females. So it makes sense that fathers may transmit more traditional attitudes to their children in general. This theoretical explanation would make education a spurious variable. It is actually the father's own gender role attitude that is being passed down. Paternal educational attainment is not the true explanatory variable for youth gender role attitudes.

Education is generally linked to more egalitarian gender role attitudes. The more education an individual receives, the more he or she will see women and men as equals. This may result from more knowledge or from exposure to highly educated members of the opposite gender. Women come to be seen as capable of pursuing advanced degrees and of working outside the home. More educated individuals believe that work and childcare arrangements should be handled equally. Having a higher GPA may make an individual more likely to pursue

an advanced degree. This places them on a track to become more egalitarian individuals as their educational attainment increases.

Political affiliation is significantly related to gender role attitudes because the two political parties hold differing views on the proper roles for men and women in society. Conservatives believe that a woman's main responsibility is to be a wife and mother. Her primary role is in the home. On the other hand, liberals generally hold more egalitarian attitudes. They believe that women should be given equal opportunity to work outside the home. The Democratic Party also holds more progressive views on women's issues such as abortion. Providing women with the option to use contraceptives or have abortions gives them greater control of their own bodies. If women can control if and when they have children, they are better able to pursue their education and employment outside the home. On the other hand, conservatives do not support abortion. They hope to make it illegal again thereby limiting women's choices.

Religious attendance has generally been linked to more traditional attitudes based on the belief systems of the church. In general, religions define the proper role for women as homemaker and caretaker of the family. In many religions, males are held in higher regard than females. From the story of Adam and Eve, women are seen as temptresses of evil. Thus, males hold more powerful positions in Church hierarchies. Likewise, the proscribed role for religious women is different than for males. This argument explains the relationship among religious attendance and traditional work arrangement attitudes. However, religious attendance may make individuals more egalitarian on childcare arrangements because religions generally stress how important it is that parents' actively care for their children. Men are encouraged to be good and

loving fathers for their children. It is not the mothers' sole responsibility to raise the children. Fathers need to take an active role in childrearing.

### *Limitations*

Though the data set used for this study provided many excellent questions to analyze, it still did have some shortcomings which limited the study. For example, this study was not longitudinal in nature. Students were only asked these questions at one time in 2008. There is no follow-up data. Since the respondents were high school students, they still hadn't made many of these major life decisions. As a result, their responses were all based on hypothetical situations rather than reality. A longitudinal study would allow the researcher to examine changes in gender role attitudes over the life course. Another limitation based on the nature of the data set is the low variability in age. Respondents were all high school seniors. Though this study aimed to study gender role attitudes in youth, it could have been helpful to have a larger range of ages to study.

Three other limitations are based on the questions themselves. All of the questions that address childcare arrangements assume that the male works full time and the female does not work. A fuller understanding of students' gender role attitudes could have been achieved if the same questions were asked with different work arrangements (e.g. both parents working full time). Additionally, the maternal employment question does not ask students to describe the age they were when their mothers worked. Nor does the question ask for how many hours the mother worked. This information would allow for a better analysis of the effect maternal employment has on gender role attitude formation. Finally, the religious attendance question does not ask students to name what type of religious services they attend. Religious services can range from very liberal, i.e. Unitarian Universalist, to very conservative, i.e. Jehovah's Witness.

As a result, the impact of regular religious attendance will be different depending on what type of religious service an individual attends. More liberal religions have more egalitarian beliefs about the role of women than do more conservative religions.

### *Future Questions*

This study raised some questions that require future research. While this study provided information on this age cohort's gender role attitudes as youth, future research will need to be conducted on similar individuals as they age. Will these young people continue to display more egalitarian attitudes than older generations? How will typical life course events such as childbirth affect their gender role attitudes? Will they be more likely to choose egalitarian work and childcare arrangements? How will their attitudes affect their future children's beliefs?

Another set of questions that have arisen from this study is the role of family structure on gender role attitudes. Currently, most marriages end in divorce. It is the minority of children who grow up in the nuclear family with both a mother and father. More and more children grow up with only one parent or with step-parents. Future studies will need to investigate the impact that new family structures have on gender role attitudes. African Americans have typically held more egalitarian attitudes on work arrangements because of the economic necessity for single mothers to work. As more and more white and Hispanic females become the sole heads of household, will their gender role attitudes shift towards egalitarianism? How will reconstituted families affect children? Will children reject egalitarianism because they have seen some of its potential negative consequences such as broken homes? Will more females chose the traditional path as homemakers so that their children grow up in intact families?

*Conclusion*

In conclusion, this study has added to the body of literature on gender role attitudes. It has used data from a very recent survey to assess the beliefs of today's youth. The data supports the assumption that these students are significantly different than generations that came before them. The majority had working mothers and the most common maternal educational attainment was college graduation. These variables strongly impacted students' gender role attitudes. As a result, this generation generally holds more egalitarian attitudes regarding males and females.

Furthermore, this study has provided some support and questioned some previous findings in the literature. The variables gender, age, maternal education, political affiliation and GPA were all found to be significant as expected. Being a younger, smart, liberal female with a highly educated mother is linked to more egalitarian attitudes. However, the results for race and religious attendance were more mixed. Hispanics were more egalitarian than previously found and religious attendance was tied to egalitarian attitudes on childcare arrangements. Finally, the findings on paternal education and maternal employment directly contradicted previous research. Paternal education was either not significant or associated with more traditional gender role attitudes. Maternal employment was found to be strongly related to egalitarian attitudes in youth.

Future research will help address new questions that have arisen from this study. Two major questions center on the attitudes of this generational cohort as they age and the impact that family structures have on gender role attitudes. Furthermore, future research could be improved if data collection takes into account the limitations of this study. Longitudinal studies and more detailed questions will allow for richer analysis of gender role attitudes.

**DATA SET THREE****Demographic Variables**

Work Arrangements Scale (Hi=Acceptability of both spouses working full time and unacceptability of husband working full time and wife not working)

	M, SD	T	df	P-value
Age		0.437	2285	
- <18	2.5978, 0.65199			0.662
- 18+	2.5861, 0.62587			
Gender		-5.236	2201	
- Male	2.5202, 0.65713			0.000***
- Female	2.6610, 0.60550			

	Mean (M)	F	Df	P-value
Race		12.980	2, 1978	0.000***
- Black	2.7657			B>W***, H*
- White	2.5512			W<B***
- Hispanic	2.6010			H<B*

Childcare Arrangements Scale (Hi= Acceptability of husband and wife sharing responsibility equally and unacceptability of wife doing all the childcare, assuming in both that husband works full time and wife is not employed)

	M, SD	T	df	P-value
Age		1.159	2299	
- <18	3.0461, 0.75570			0.247
- 18+	3.0095, 0.75318			
Gender		-7.492	2214	
- Male	2.9129, 0.76448			0.000***
- Female	3.1472, 0.70757			

	Mean (M)	F	Df	P-value
Race		0.252	2, 1991	0.777
- Black	2.9909			
- White	3.0254			
- Hispanic	3.0262			

**Key**

\*\*\* = p-value < 0.0001, \*\* = p-value < 0.001, \* = p-value < .05

**Parental Variables**

Work Arrangements Scale (Hi = Acceptability of both spouses working full time and unacceptability of husband working full time and wife not working)

	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	P-value
Father's Education	-0.053	0.012*
Mother's Education	-0.011	0.592
Maternal Employment	0.264	0.000***

Childcare Arrangements Scale (Hi= Acceptability of husband and wife sharing responsibility equally and unacceptability of wife doing all the childcare, assuming in both that husband works full time and wife is not employed)

	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	P-value
Father's Education	-0.015	0.479
Mother's Education	0.006	0.769
Maternal Employment	0.096	0.000***

**Civic Life Variables**

Work Arrangements Scale

	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	P-value
Political Preference (Hi=Liberal)	0.1616	0.000***
Religious Attendance	-0.060	0.013*
Average GPA	0.016	0.440

Childcare Arrangements Scale

	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	P-value
Political Preference (Hi=Liberal)	0.102	0.001**
Religious Attendance	0.263	0.027*
Average GPA	0.048	0.042*

**Key**

\*\*\* = p-value < 0.0001, \*\* = p-value < 0.001, \* = p-value < .05

**DATA SET FOUR****Results of Analyses of Egalitarian Beliefs Scale**  
(i.e., beliefs about women's family and work roles)**Demographic Variables**

	M, SD	t	df	P-value
Age		3.329	22888	0.001**
- <18	3.6352, 0.99534			
- 18+	3.4938, 1.00509			
Gender		-18.892	2238	0.000***
- Male	3.1696, 1.00419			
- Female	3.9172, 0.86672			

	Mean (M)	F	Df	P-value
Race		9.874	2, 1993	0.000***
- Black	3.7864			B>W***, H*
- White	3.5042			W<B***
- Hispanic	3.5314			H<B*

**Parental Variables**

	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	P-value
Father's Education	0.015	0.464
Mother's Education	0.058	0.006**
Maternal Employment	0.270	0.000***

**Civic Life Variables**

	Correlation coefficient ( <i>r</i> )	P-value
Political Preference (Hi=Liberal)	0.296	0.000***
Religious Attendance	-0.067	0.0068
Average GPA	0.067	0.002*

**Key**

\*\*\* = p-value &lt; 0.0001, \*\* = p-value &lt; 0.001, \* = p-value &lt; .05

## References

- Bernard, J. (1981). The Good Provide Role: Its Rise and Fall [Electronic Version]. *American Psychologist*, 36, 1-12.
- Biddle, B., Bank, B., & Marlin, M. (1980). Parental and Peer Influence on Adolescents [Electronic Version]. *Social Forces*, 58, 1057-1079
- Blee, K. & Tickamyer, A. (1995). Racial Differences in Men's Attitudes About Women's Gender Roles [Electronic Version]. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 57, 21-30.
- Bolzendahi, C. & Myers, D. (2004). Feminist Attitudes and Support for Gender Equality: Opinion Change in Women and Men, 1974-1998 [Electronic Version]. *Social Forces*, 83, 759-790.
- Carter, J., Corra, M. & Carter, S. (2009). The Interaction of Race and Gender: Changing Gender-Role Attitudes, 1974-2006 [Electronic Version]. *Social Science Quarterly*, 90, 196-210.
- Corder, J. & Stephan, C. (1984). Females' Combination of Work and Family Roles: Adolescents' Aspiration. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 46, 391-402.
- Correll, S. (2001). Gender and the Career Choice Process: The Role of Biased Self-Assessments [Electronic Version]. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106, 1691-1730.
- Cunningham, M. (2001). The Influence of Parental Attitudes and Behaviors on Children's Attitudes Toward Gender and Household Labor in Early Adulthood [Electronic Version]. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 63, 111-122.
- Cunningham, M. (2008). Changing Attitudes toward the Male Breadwinner, Female Homemaker Family Model: Influences of Women's Employment and Education over the Lifecourse [Electronic Version]. *Social Forces*, 87, 299-317.
- Cushman, Claire. (2001). *Supreme Court Decisions and Women's Rights*. CQ Press.

- Davis, S. & Pearce, L. (2007). Adolescents' Work-Family Gender Ideologies and Educational Expectations [Electronic Version]. *Sociological Perspectives*, 50, 249-271.
- Eccles, J. (1994). Understanding Women's Educational and Occupational Choices: Applying the Eccles et al. Model of Achievement-Related Choices [Electronic Version]. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 18, 585-609.
- Fan, P. & Marini, M. (2000). Influences on Gender-Role Attitudes during the Transition to Adulthood [Electronic Version]. *Social Science Research*, 29, 258-283.
- Galambos, N, Almeida, D. & Petersen, A. (1990). Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Role Attitudes in Early Adolescence: Exploring Gender Intensification [Electronic Version]. *Child Development*, 61, 1905-1914.
- Kiecolt, K. & Acock, A. (1988). The Long-Term Effects of Family Structure on Gender Role Attitudes [Electronic Version]. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 50, 709-717.
- Lupart, J., Cannon, E., & Telfer, J. (2004). Gender Differences in Adolescent Academic Achievement, Interests, Values and Life-Role Expectations [Electronic Version]. *High Ability Studies*, 15, 25-42.
- Mahaffy, K. & Ward, S. (2002). The Gendering of Adolescents' Childbearing and Educational Plans: Reciprocal Effects and the Influence of Social Context [Electronic Version]. *Gender Roles*, 46, 403-417.
- Morgan, C. & Walker, A. (1983). Predicting Gender Role Attitudes [Electronic Version]. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 46, 148-151.
- Osmond, M. & Martin, P. (1975). Gender and Genderism: A Comparison of Male and Female Gender-Role Attitudes. [Electronic Version]. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 37, 744-758.

- Ridgeway, C. & Correll, S. (2004). Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations [Electronic Version]. *Gender and Society*, 18, 510-531.
- Tallichet, S. & Willits, F. (1986). Gender-Role Attitude Change of Young Women: Influential Factors from a Panel Study [Electronic Version]. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 49, 219-227.
- Thornton, A., Alwin, D. & Camburn, D. (1983). Causes and Consequences of Gender-Role Attitudes and Attitude Change [Electronic Version]. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 211-227.