



## When men lean out: Subtle reminders of child-raising intentions and men and women's career interests



Jennifer N. Gutsell <sup>a,1</sup>, Jessica D. Remedios <sup>b,\*,1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Brandeis University, USA

<sup>b</sup> Tufts University, USA

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Expecting to be primary caretakers of future children, women seek flexible careers.
- Flexible careers are often also low-paying and low-status.
- We tested if child-raising intentions cause women to seek flexible careers.
- Instead, child-raising intentions *increased* men's interest in flexible careers.
- Men encouraged to “lean out” may take on fewer work and more family duties.

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 2 March 2015

Revised 15 September 2015

Accepted 16 September 2015

#### Keywords:

Gender roles  
Careers  
Family  
Sexism

### ABSTRACT

Female-dominated occupations tend to be lower paying, but also less time-consuming and more flexible than male-dominated occupations. Women may pursue occupations with short, flexible workweeks because they expect to be primary caretakers of future children. In a pre-registered study we investigated how subtle reminders of child-raising intentions shape college students' occupational interests. We hypothesized that priming women with child-raising intentions reminds them of future caregiving responsibilities and decreases their interest in high-hour, low-flexibility (HH/LF) occupations. However, women reported less interest than men in HH/LF careers regardless of prime (intentions to raise kids versus have pets). Reminding men of child-raising intentions decreased their interest in family-unfriendly HH/LF occupations, particularly among men low in hostile sexism. The results suggest that, whereas women may link child-raising intentions to occupational pursuits regardless of whether such intentions are made salient, reminders of child-raising intentions raise the awareness of non-sexist men of their future family responsibilities.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

When asked about career plans, a woman seeking a recommendation letter from one of the authors responded, “My father was a doctor and I wanted to be one, too. But, I also want children, so I'll probably choose a less demanding field.” This comment illustrates how intentions to have children in the future influence women's decisions to pursue family-friendly careers in the present. Although men and women report similar commitments to work and family, women are expected by both genders to take on the majority of household duties (Bianchi, 2011). According to social role theory, men and women represent their future selves differently to fit gender roles in society. Women are expected to be primary caregivers, and men are expected to be primary breadwinners (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). These roles are consistent with gender distributions in the current workforce: male-dominated

occupations tend to demand longer and less flexible workweeks than female-dominated occupations (BLS, 2013). Thus, women may pursue occupations perceived as having short, flexible, workweeks because they foresee the need to take time off work for family responsibilities (Baruch & Barnett, 1986). In contrast, men may pursue time-consuming and inflexible careers, which also tend to be lucrative, because they will be expected to provide financially for their future families (Brown & Diekmann, 2010).

However, little is known about how manipulating the saliency of child-raising intentions affects young adults' occupational interests. Asking women if they plan to have kids may heighten the accessibility of their caregiver selves, leading them to emphasize the compatibility of future caretaker and work responsibilities. Consistent with the claim that gender role primes affect self-stereotyping and long-term goals, women who viewed stereotypical depictions of women in commercials activated gender stereotypes and reported less interest in male-dominated careers (Davies, Spencer, Quinn, & Gerhardtstein, 2002). Thus, we hypothesized that women reminded of child-raising

\* Corresponding author at: Tufts University Department of Psychology 490 Boston Avenue, Medford, MA 02155, USA. Tel.: +1 617 627 6090.

E-mail address: [jessica.remedios@tufts.edu](mailto:jessica.remedios@tufts.edu) (J.D. Remedios).

<sup>1</sup> Both authors contributed equally to this work.

intentions would report less interest in inflexible and time-consuming careers than female controls (H1), and that they would include more references to flexibility and low time demands when describing the reasons for their career choices (H2).

In contrast, reminders of child-raising intentions may increase the accessibility of breadwinner selves for men unless they reject the complementarity of gender roles. Because sexism is rooted in a belief in traditional gender roles (Zaikman & Marks, 2014), men who are low in sexism and, thus, who do not expect female partners to take on most caregiving responsibilities may feel more accountable to future family responsibilities when reminded of plans to raise children. We examined hostile and benevolent sexism in the current study. We expected men who were low in either form of sexism and who were reminded of intentions to raise children to report less interest in time-consuming and inflexible careers than other men (H3).

Lastly, we did not expect gender identification to affect women's responses to reminders of child-raising intentions (H4). Despite valuing gender equality more than weakly-gender-identified women (Becker & Wagner, 2009), highly-gender-identified women likely recognize that they cannot eschew future caregiving responsibilities unless their male partners invest less in their careers. Thus, it is important to examine men's, in addition to women's, prospective family roles: When men select occupations allowing shorter, more flexible workweeks, their female partners benefit from greater sharing of family responsibilities and more time to focus on their own occupational pursuits (Croft, Schmader, & Block, 2015).

## 1. Methods

Pre-registered procedures, hypotheses and data analysis plans are available at: [https://osf.io/gq5hp/?view\\_only=48f4cb933f6642c295a2e33c44a43e06](https://osf.io/gq5hp/?view_only=48f4cb933f6642c295a2e33c44a43e06).

### 1.1. Participants

We decided a priori to collect data from 200 participants (100 women), or until June 30th 2015. We were able to sample 201 participants but excluded 10 participants from further analysis because of missing data ( $n = 3$ ), because they did not self-identify as women or men ( $n = 5$ ), and because they acceded our predefined age cut-off of 25 years ( $n = 2$ ). Consequently we included 191 participants in the final analysis. Participants were undergraduate students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19.24$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ; 103 women, 88 men) from Brandeis University ( $n = 88$ ) and Tufts University ( $n = 103$ ) who participated for course credit or monetary compensation.

### 1.2. Procedure

The study had a 2 (Participant Gender: male, female)  $\times$  2 (Prime: kids, pets)  $\times$  2 (Work Hours: high, low)  $\times$  2 (Work Flexibility: high, low) mixed design with repeated measures on the last two factors. Participants were randomly assigned to either the kids prime condition or the control condition, during which they either had to answer the question: "Do you have any kids or are you planning to have kids in the future?" or the control question: "Do you have any pets or are you planning to have pets in the future?"<sup>2</sup> This questionnaire also included additional filler demographics and preference questions (e.g., age, favorite television shows).

Following, participants rated the desirability as a future career of 20 different professions (see Appendix A) that varied in how time-

consuming and flexible they seemed to a separate pilot sample of 36 participants (see supplementary material for pilot study details). Stimuli came from a list of 49 professions sourced from a web search for diverse and popular occupations. Participants responded to the question: "Please rate the following professions in regards to how desirable they are for you as a future career" using a 7-point scale (1 = not at all, 7 = extremely). Participants also wrote short essays explaining why they desired their top 3 careers. Finally, participants completed the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), which assesses hostile and benevolent sexism, and two measures of gender identification: The identity subscale of the Collective Self-Esteem Scale (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992) and an Inclusion of Gender in the Self scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; see supplementary material).

## 2. Results

To test the effects of the kids versus pets prime on career preferences, we followed our pre-registered analysis plan and also conducted exploratory post-hoc analyses.

### 2.1. Pre-registered planned analyses

We submitted career desirability ratings to a 2 (Participant Gender: male, female)  $\times$  2 (Prime: kids, pets)  $\times$  2 (Work Hours: high, low)  $\times$  2 (Work Flexibility: high, low) mixed model ANOVA with repeated measures on the last two factors (see Fig. 1). We originally predicted a significant 4-way interaction (H1) which was not confirmed by the current analysis,  $F(1, 187) = .82$ ,  $p = .37$ . Instead, the analysis revealed significant main effects for gender, flexibility and hours (see Table 1), which were qualified by a significant 2-way Hours  $\times$  Gender interaction,  $F(1, 187) = 6.57$ ,  $p = .01$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .03$ , and a significant 2-way Flexibility  $\times$  Hours interaction,  $F(1, 187) = 15.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .08$ . No other effects were significant (all  $ps > .20$ ).

Although we did not find the predicted 4-way interaction, we conducted a series of planned comparisons that followed our analysis plan. Contrary to our predictions, this analysis did not reveal a significant effect of condition on women's career evaluations (all  $ps > .45$ ). Interestingly, however, we did find a marginally significant condition effect for men's evaluations of low hours, low flexible (LH/LF) careers,  $F(1, 187) = 3.00$ ,  $p = .087$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .02$ , such that men in the kids prime condition ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) rated these professions significantly lower than men in the pets prime condition ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = .98$ ). Please note, however, that this condition effect was limited to LH/LF professions, and did not extend to the least family-friendly HH/LF careers, suggesting that men might particularly care about flexibility, rather than number of hours, when reminded of their child-raising intentions.

Providing additional evidence that condition affected the gender gap in career preferences, men in the pet prime condition ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) rated HH/LF careers (the most family-unfriendly occupations) as significantly more desirable than women ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ;  $F(1, 187) = 5.19$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $\eta^2_p = .027$ ). In contrast, men who were primed with kids ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) rated HH/LF careers equally low as their female counterparts ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = .85$ ;  $F(1, 187) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .11$ ).

### 2.2. Additional exploratory post-hoc analyses

To follow up on the finding that condition affected LH/LF rather than HH/LF professions we decided to isolate the unique effects of hours from flexibility by unpacking the non-significant Gender  $\times$  Prime  $\times$  Flexibility interaction and the non-significant Gender  $\times$  Prime  $\times$  Hours interaction. Prime did not affect men or women's ratings of HH or LH jobs (all  $ps > .21$ ). In contrast, prime did affect preferences for careers varying in flexibility, but again, only for men: Although the simple effect of condition on men's career choices was not significant  $F(1, 187) = 2.37$ ,  $p =$

<sup>2</sup> Most participants in the kids prime condition indicated that they were planning to have children in the future ( $N_{\text{men}} = 41$  out of 49  $N_{\text{women}} = 42$  out of 52). All reported significant and non-significant results remain so even when those participants who indicated "no" in response to the kids-prime question are excluded. Thus, all participants, independent of their responses to the kids-prime question, were included in all analyses.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5045746>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5045746>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)