Effects on Occupational Interests and the Compatibility of Family and Career

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Introduction

Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000)
- The division of men and women into different social roles is a basis for gender roles and stereotypes.
- Gender roles and stereotypes further produce gender differences in behavior.

Sex differences in social roles
- Sex segregation of employment: Women and men are differentially distributed into different occupations (U.S. Department of Labor).
  - Division of labor: Women and men are and have been differentially distributed to homemaker and employer roles (Shelton & John, 1996).

Gender roles and stereotypes
- Gender roles and stereotypes encompass traits that are in line with the social roles in which women and men prevail (Deaux & Lewis, 1983; Fennig, 1998; Hall & Carter, 1998).
  - The female gender role is associated with a higher family role salience and a lower career role salience whereas the reverse holds for the male gender role (Edelstein et al., 2006).

Role behavior or interests
- Gender roles and stereotypes function as normative pressures and are reflected in individuals’ self-concepts. As a consequence women and men show behavior and preferences in line with gender stereotypes and roles (for a review see Claus, 1993).

Changes in Social Roles and Stereotypes

Changes in social roles
- Sex segregation of employment: Since the 1970’s a moderate increase of women in male-dominated occupations can be observed, whereas men’s advancement into female-dominated occupations remains rare (Reiss, 1993).
  - Division of labor: Since 1950 the percentage of women, who are employed, has increased from 34% to more than 75% (U.S. Department of Labor, 1999).
  - Women still do the majority of housework (Shelton & John, 1996) and part-time work. Thus women can be seen in dual roles. Non-traditional roles for women include family and career roles.

Changes in gender roles and stereotypes
- In the increased sex segregation conditions were:
  - Women’s career role is lower when they perceive occupational roles to be less traditional as opposed to more traditional.
  - Men’s advancement into female-dominated occupations remains rare.

The Current Study

Method

Participants:
- N = 54 female and 44 male students

Procedure:
- Participants were given the description of 6 occupations (3 female-dominated, 3 male-dominated) including bogus statistics about the percentage of women in each occupation.

Obligations were selected on the basis of national survey data and pre-testing:
- Female-dominated: counselor, psychologist, social worker
- Male-dominated: architect, detective, lawyer

Sex segregation manipulation
- Actual statistics about the percentage of women (U.S Department of Labor, 2004):
  - In the increased sex segregation conditions were:
    - 15% higher for female-dominated occupations and 15% lower for male-dominated occupations.
  - In the decreased sex segregation conditions:
    - 15% lower for female-dominated occupations and 15% higher for male-dominated occupations.

Example:
- Sex Segregation
  - Family Role Salience (Fam) .14 .15 .15
  - Seg x Fam .04 .23 .02

Dependent Variables:
- Family and career role salience:
  - Degree of agreement to three items each assessing family† and career role salience (Edelstein et al., 2006).
  - e.g., “I will be very much involved personally in my family [career].” (scale 1-7; α = .87, .97)

Results

Family and Career Role Salience

Women’s Career Role Salience as a Function of Sex Segregation and Family Role Salience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex Segregation (Seg)</td>
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<td>.13</td>
<td>-18</td>
<td>.001</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Role Salience (Fam)</td>
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<td>.15</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seg x Fam</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *p = .05, **p = .01

Men’s Career Role Salience as a Function of Sex Segregation and Family Role Salience

<table>
<thead>
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<th>B</th>
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<th>p</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Family Role Salience (Fam)</td>
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<td>.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seg x Fam</td>
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<td>.23</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: *p = .05, **p = .01

Coding: increased Seg (1), decreased Seg (1), Fam was centered at M = 6.39

Discussion

Family and career role salience:
- A compatibility of family and career roles was shown under decreased sex segregation conditions whereas an incompatibility of both roles was found when the observed sex segregation was increased.
- These effects were shown for women and men. However, the effects for men haven’t produced satisfactory levels of statistical significance.

Occupational interests:
- Overall women expressed a greater interest in all occupations than men.
- This effect varied across conditions of sex segregation.
- The sex segregation manipulation showed an overall increase of interests in occupations under decreased sex segregation conditions.
- These questions and the possible explanations should be addressed in future studies.

Theoretical Implications
- Women’s gender role specific self-concepts with regard to family and career roles vary by traditional vs. non-traditional perceptions of the sex segregation of employment.
- (Non-)traditional perceptions of women’s and men’s roles in the workplace instigate (non-)traditional self-concepts.

Results

Obligations by Sex Segregation and Occupation Label

Occupational Interest by Sex Segregation and Occupation Gender

Family and Career Role Salience
- Factors such as sex segregation and occupation gender influenced family and career role salience.
- Women’s interest in the employer role is higher when they perceive occupational roles to be less traditional as opposed to more traditional.

Coding: increased Seg (1), decreased Seg (1), Fam was centered at M = 6.39

Limitations and Future Directions

Open questions:
- Why does the difference in occupational interests between decreased and increased sex segregation vary by occupational label independent of the labels’ sex type and independent of participants’ gender?
- Possible the variation is due to the educational level or status of the occupation. In fact, the lowest differences between sex segregation conditions were found for higher status occupations, i.e., architect, lawyer, and psychologist. A generally high interest in these occupations might have overridden the effect of the manipulation.

- Why do women show higher occupational interests for some of both, male-dominated and female-dominated occupations?
- A possible explanation is the higher status associated with male-dominated occupations (Cejka & Eagly, 1999). Consequently, female-dominated occupations under decreased sex segregation conditions might have been perceived as higher in status and therefore more favorable.

- These questions and the possible explanations should be addressed in future studies.
- Specifically, perceived occupational status should be assessed as an additional dependent variable.