

## Married women, work, and values

*Working women appear to have a personal-value structure different from that of nonworking women; economic and political values are more prominent among women who work, while social and religious values play a greater role for women who stay at home*

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An examination of the relevant data shows a continuing secular increase in the labor force participation of married women—a phenomenon Ralph Smith called a “subtle revolution” two decades ago.<sup>1</sup> However, this growth has slowed down in recent years and has at times been interrupted by factors such as increased educational investment among married women, the recession of the early 1990s, a rising birthrate, and a slowdown in women’s return to work after giving birth.<sup>2</sup> The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that by the year 2008, women will form 48 percent of the labor force, compared with 46 percent in 1998.<sup>3</sup> Women in their forties who are not in the labor force mostly are taking care of their family (58 percent) or are retired (29 percent).<sup>4</sup>

Cross-sectional studies usually have supported the idea that the higher the husband’s income, the lower is the labor force participation rate of his wife. This relationship is just what the theory of the backward-bending supply curve would predict—a strong inverse relationship, other things being equal, between husbands’ income and women’s participation rate. A wife’s freedom from the labor market is looked at as a normal good. So, accordingly, only “poor” women work out of economic necessity. Husbands with higher incomes would

tend to have a smaller proportion of wives in the labor force, because they could afford the luxury of stay-at-home wives and the wives could be relieved of the stress of contributing to the family income. However, considering the rise in real income that, in general, has taken place over time, the increase in labor force participation of wives in recent years generates some doubt about the presumptive relationship. The need for money to help make ends meet seems to be one of the most popular explanations of wives working, but that can hardly be the reason for the rapid rise in married women’s participation rate,<sup>5</sup> because wives stayed home in earlier decades, when their husbands were earning less. Needing money seems to be a universal and constant factor and thus cannot explain the increasing labor force participation of women.<sup>6</sup>

The theory of labor supply, which relies on the income and substitution effects of a change in the wage rate, views the demand for leisure as a consumption good. However, women are faced with a three-way model of choice when making labor market decisions. The choices are leisure, paid work, and unpaid work in the home. As the wage rate changes, income, the price of leisure, and the monetary value of the productivity of work time in the market compared

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with time spent at home change for women. This scenario helps explain why the labor force participation of women is increasing in spite of the increasing real incomes of husbands.<sup>7</sup>

Studies have shown that the labor force participation rate of wives whose husbands' incomes were in the top half of the income distribution has been rising more than the rate of wives whose husbands' incomes were in the lower half. Higher earning husbands tend to have higher earning wives, so surely, other, nonpecuniary factors are involved that make the participation-income relationship less negative.<sup>8</sup>

The labor force participation of married women has increased sharply since 1960. Studies have shown that some other factors besides their husbands' income influence women's participation.<sup>9</sup> Among these factors are an increase in the amount of the wives' education, an increasing wage rate, the changing economic position of women and the character and conditions of their work, declines in the male-female earnings gap and in sex discrimination, lower fertility, a larger interval between marriage and the birth of the first child, the use of birth control, the development of time- and labor-saving capital-intensive devices (household technology), a secular decline in the length of the workweek, increasing urbanization, the unemployment and inflation rates, and, finally, government laws and practices.

According to so-called push-and-pull theories, the factors influencing women's decisions whether to participate in the labor force can be subdivided into those external to the household and those internal to the household.<sup>10</sup> External factors, based on supply and demand in the labor market, will pull women from home into the workforce as a response to excess demand. Internal factors, related to the characteristics of the individual and the household, will push women out of home into the labor market.

Some attribute a portion of the increasing labor force participation of wives to "women's increasing perception of market work and careers as sources of rewards (psychic as well as financial) that can be complementary to rather than substitutable for careers in the home."<sup>11</sup> Today, the traditional family model of husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker holds only for a very small proportion of couples. Dual-earner families are a major and growing segment of the labor force, and increasing numbers of earners in such families are taking second jobs. A 1997 *Monthly Labor Review* article states that, in 1996, the multiple-jobholding rate for women was 6.2 percent, slightly higher than the 6.1-percent rate for men, and that women accounted for 47 percent of all multiple jobholders that year.<sup>12</sup>

In most economic models, economic agents are assumed to be in some sense rational. As consumers, they maximize expected utility, and as producers, expected profit. As rational agents, they choose, among alternative courses of action, the one that, on the average, will leave them best off. In the language of the utilitarian, they maximize that expected util-

ity which is the subjective value of perceived possible outcomes. According to some researchers, people seem to be maximizing expected utility rather well.<sup>13</sup>

Besides economic factors, *personal values* could explain the differences in the decisionmaking behavior of different groups of people. Personal values are ideas about what is desirable in situations in which there are alternative courses of action. Personal values are believed to be stable and, according to Edward Spranger, may be classified as theoretical, economic, aesthetic, social, political, and religious.<sup>14</sup>

In this article, particular attention is given to the concept of personal values and to their structure in different individuals in order to examine the possible effect of those values on labor market-related decisions of married women. The purpose of the article is twofold: (1) to examine the effect of the personal-value structures of a group of women, some who work and some who do not, on their decisions regarding labor force participation and (2) to test the truth of the statement that both socioeconomic and sociopsychological factors affect the labor market-related decisions of women. As the discussion up to now has indicated, much of the literature from the 1960s on down through the 1980s has focused on *external* factors in explaining women's increasing labor force participation. Even a very recent source—the December 1999 issue of the *Monthly Labor Review*, devoted entirely to women in the workforce—concentrates almost exclusively on extrinsic influences on women's connection to the labor force. But a tradition dealing with *internal*, or intrinsic, aspects of women's decisions to go to work—a tradition that coexisted with the external-factors explanation during the 1960s through 1980s—deserves some attention as well. It is this tradition into which a personal-value account of women's increasing labor force participation falls.

## Personal values

Half a century ago, Clyde Kluckhohn defined *value* as "a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action."<sup>15</sup> In two separate works, one by Anthony G. Athos and Robert E. Coffey and the other by Karl E. Scheibe, the authors describe personal values as ideas and questions about what is good, desirable, or preferable for individuals in situations in which they are faced with alternative courses of action.<sup>16</sup> According to Milton Rokeach, values are "abstract ideas, positive or negative, not tied to any specific object or situation, representing a person's beliefs about modes of conduct. . . . [They are] "standards of oughts and shoulds."<sup>17</sup> In this respect, George W. England observes that a person's value structure is "a relatively permanent perceptual framework which shapes and influences the general nature of an individual's behavior. Values are similar to attitudes but are more ingrained, permanent, and stable in nature."<sup>18</sup> Rokeach, too, states that values are deeper and

broader than attitudes and are determinants, rather than components, of attitudes.<sup>19</sup> Values inform behavior standards, goals, one's assessment of how attractive outcomes, events, and objects are, and, in the end, one's motivation to do all sorts of things.<sup>20</sup>

## Classification of personal values

In his book *Types of Men*, Spranger classified people into six major groups on the basis of their value orientations:

1. *The theoretical.* This type of person's primary interests are the discovery of truth and the systematic ordering of knowledge. To pursue his or her goals, the theoretical person will take a "cognitive" approach, will look for identities and differences, will disregard the beauty or utility of objects in judgments, and will seek only to observe and to reason. The theoretical individual is an intellectual with empirical, critical, and rational proclivities; examples are scientists and philosophers.
2. *The economic.* The economic person is mainly interested in utility, self-preservation, the practical affairs of the business world, production, marketing, consumption, the use of economic resources, the elaboration of credit, and the accumulation of tangible wealth. Thus, his or her decisions are dominated by the expected economic and practical results. This type of individual is thoroughly practical and represents the stereotype of the American businessperson.
3. *The aesthetic.* Interested primarily in the artistic aspects of life, the aesthetic person values form and harmony, judges events in terms of grace, symmetry, or harmony and fitness, and enjoys events for their own sake.
4. *The social.* This type of person loves people and has an altruistic or philanthropic outlook on life. Viewing other people as ends, the social individual tries to be kind, sympathetic, and unselfish. He or she looks at theoretical, economic, and aesthetic people as having rather cold and inhuman orientations. The social person values love as the most important component of a human relationship and has an attitude toward life that approaches that of the religious type.
5. *The political.* This type of person's main interest is power in all activities (not just politics). Often, political individuals are leaders in many areas, seeking personal power, influence, renown, and recognition.
6. *The religious.* The religious person is mystical and seeks to relate, in a meaningful way, to the cosmos as a whole. His or her mental activity is constantly directed toward cre-

ating the highest and most satisfying values in experience.

According to Spranger, all people have all of these personal values, which form a hierarchy that varies from person to person. Gordon W. Allport, Philip E. Vernon, and Gardner Lindzey offer an empirical design for measuring the relative importance of the six personal values within each individual's personal-value hierarchy.<sup>21</sup>

## Personal values and decisionmaking

The importance of judgment in making decisions has long been recognized, primarily because of the following three major considerations:<sup>22</sup>

1. One cannot physically gather, assimilate, and evaluate all of the information related to the numerous external forces that are operative in any given situation.
2. Whatever amount of information that can be collected and evaluated is frequently imperfect in regard to what it tells us.
3. The large number of variables related to strategic decisions cannot be modeled, in the sense of establishing precise functional relationships that provide a deterministic output or "correct" decisions.

Accordingly, the role of judgment is most significant when rendering a decision depends on evaluating imperfect information. Thus, in these situations, making a decision is not wholly an objective process, and the personal values of decisionmakers play an important role.

Over the years, a number of researchers have examined the influence of personal-value structures on behavior and on the selection of alternative courses of action in making decisions.<sup>23</sup> The general consensus is that values are, or at least become, a part of one's personality that affect an individual's goal-oriented behavior and decisionmaking.

## The study

The study reported in this article required a group of women, some of whom worked and some of whom did not. To provide a specific class with some degree of homogeneity, the wives of all male employees of a certain institution were chosen for the study. Two groups were expected to emerge from this population: working women and nonworking women. To test the hypotheses related to the personal-value differences among the two groups of women, some measure of the relative prominence of the six basic interests or motives constituting personal values was needed.

The data were collected with the use of a questionnaire, the first part of which contained questions related to the

respondent's highest level of educational attainment, employment status, spouse's income and any income other than the respondent's wages, and, finally, number of children under 18 and 6 years old. Then the Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey questionnaire,<sup>24</sup> based on Spranger's book, was administered, with a few changes to make it more applicable to women.

The following null hypotheses were tested:

- (I) The mean scores of personal values do not differ from person to person; that is, all values have the same degree of prominence among all individuals.
- (II) The mean scores of corresponding personal values for the working and nonworking groups of women do not differ; that is, the personal-value structures of the two groups of women are the same.
- (III) For each personal value, the mean scores between individuals do not differ among the two groups of women.

A word of explanation is in order regarding the difference between hypotheses (II) and (III). Hypothesis (II) considers all values at once and tests the overall difference between the personal-value structures of the two groups; hypothesis (III) looks at a personal value at a time. Usually, the first overall difference is tested, and if that is proven to obtain, then more detailed tests are needed to see if *each* of the values is significantly different or if only some of them are. If hypothesis (II) results in no overall differences between the two groups, then no more testing is done.

The purpose in testing these null hypotheses was to see whether personal values have different degrees of relative prominence, whether working and nonworking women have different personal-value structures, and whether economic and political values are higher in the hierarchy of personal values than are social and religious values among working women (because economic and political values might appear more closely tied to work).

Out of all the questionnaires mailed, 69 percent (145 of 211) were completed and returned; the few that were completed incorrectly were excluded from the study, leaving a total of 140 (66 percent) completed questionnaires that were used. The following tabulation shows the employment status of the respondents:

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Works .....	91	65
Does not work .....	49	35

Based on their responses to the different questions in the questionnaire, six scores ranking the personal values were calculated for each of the participants. The scores, as well as the rest of the personal information gathered, were then analyzed

by using the following techniques:

1. The software package SPSSx (Statistical Package for Social Science) was used to analyze the data statistically.<sup>25</sup>
2. Frequency distributions were utilized to observe the distribution of the participants among different subgroupings with respect to their level of education, employment status, husband's income and other incomes, and number of children.
3. Mean scores of the six personal values were computed for all participants and also all subgroupings, in order to compare the rankings of the personal values among the working-nonworking groups and subgroupings.
4. Multivariate analysis of variance was employed to examine the overall differences in personal values among all participants and among working-nonworking groups.
5. Univariate analysis of variance was used to examine differences among working-nonworking groups and subgroupings with respect to each of their personal values.

## Results

The results of the study may be summarized as follows (see table 1 for the mean scores of personal values):

1. According to the frequency distributions and cross tabulations of the participants, working wives and nonworking wives have a high degree of similarity with respect to factors such as other income besides the wife's wages and salaries, level of education, and number of children.
2. For the overall population of the study, a group of personal values with different degrees of relative importance was observed. These personal values are rank ordered and could be presented in a hierarchy of priorities based on the degree of the relative importance (mean score) attached to each of them. Accordingly, null hypothesis (I) is rejected.
3. For the population as a whole, the ranking of personal values is, from highest to lowest, religious, aesthetic, social, theoretical, political, and economic.
4. Working and nonworking wives had similar rankings of personal values, except that the aesthetic and social values were inverted between the two groups.
5. The degrees of relative importance of the six personal values differ significantly for the two groups of women. Accordingly, null hypothesis (II) is rejected.

**Table 1.** Personal-value hierarchies of the whole population, working women, and nonworking women, ranked by mean score

Rank	Whole population		Working women		Nonworking women	
	Personal value	Mean score	Personal value	Mean score	Personal value	Mean score
1 .....	Religious	34.93	Religious	33.66	Religious	37.28
2 .....	Aesthetic	32.63	Aesthetic	32.64	Social	32.70
3 .....	Social	31.91	Social	31.48	Aesthetic	32.60
4 .....	Theoretical	30.35	Theoretical	30.75	Theoretical	29.61
5 .....	Political	25.81	Political	26.58	Political	24.40
6 .....	Economic	24.38	Economic	24.90	Economic	23.41

- 6. Religious value is the dominant personal value for the whole population. But it has a higher degree of relative importance for nonworking women than for the working group.
- 7. Social value is more important to nonworking women than to working women.
- 8. Economic and political values are more important to working women than to nonworking women.
- 9. Theoretical value and, even more so, aesthetic value are similar in importance to both groups of women.
- 10. In accordance with items 6, 7, and 8, null hypothesis (III) is rejected for most of the personal values, except for the theoretical and aesthetic.

IN THIS ARTICLE, THE PERSONAL-VALUE STRUCTURES OF WOMEN HAVE BEEN EXAMINED TO ASCERTAIN WHETHER THEY HAVE ANY EFFECT ON THE WOMEN’S LABOR MARKET-RELATED DECISIONS. WOMEN’S PERSONAL

values appear to have different degrees of relative importance and are ranked by each individual. The hierarchy of personal values of working women appears to be different from that of nonworking women.

When the two groups of women are broken down further into subgroups, significant differences are still observed among some personal values. However, the hierarchies do not differ as strongly as in the more aggregated groups. This phenomenon could be explained by the fact that, as the groups are disaggregated, the personal-value hierarchies of the members of a subgroup become more similar.

The mean scores for the personal values of working women and nonworking women, as well as the mean scores of other subgroupings, indicate that economic and political values have a greater relative importance for working women than do social and religious values, which are relatively more important for nonworking women. A followup study might be conducted with a larger group of women in a larger geographic area where the participants are not as homogeneous. In all likelihood, even more significant dissimilarities between the personal values of working and nonworking women will be found. □

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Ralph E. Smith (ed.), *The Subtle Revolution: Women at Work* (Washington, DC, The Urban Institute, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Aaron Bernstein, “Workers May Get Scarce, But Nobody’s Scared,” *Business Week*, July 11, 1994, pp. 95–98; Howard V. Hayghe and Suzanne M. Bianchi, “Married mothers’ work patterns: the job-family compromise,” *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1994, pp. 24–30.

<sup>3</sup> Howard N Fullerton, Jr., “Labor force projections to 2008: steady growth and changing composition,” *Monthly Labor Review*, November 1999, pp. 19–32; see also “Labor Force,” special issue of *Occupational Outlook Quarterly*, winter 1999–2000, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> *Work and Family: Women in Their Forties* (Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Victor R. Fuchs, *How We Live* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1983).

<sup>6</sup> Nathan Keyfitz, “Population Appearances and Demographic Realities,”

*Population and Development Review*, March 1980, pp. 47–64.

<sup>7</sup> Jacob Mincer, “Labor Force Participation of Married Women: A Study of Labor Supply,” in *Aspects of Labor Economics*, Conference of the Universities, report of the National Bureau of Economic Research, New York (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 63–105.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Ryscavage, “More wives in the labor force have husbands with ‘above-average’ incomes,” *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1979, pp. 40–42.

<sup>9</sup> Mincer, “Labor Force Participation of Married Women”; see also Cynthia B. Lloyd and Beth T. Niemi, *The Economics of Sex Differentials* (New York, Columbia University Press, 1979).

<sup>10</sup> Alfreda P. Iglehart, *Married Women and Work* (Lexington, MA, Lexington Books, 1979).

<sup>11</sup> F. L. Mott and D. Shapiro, “Complementarity of Work and Fertility Among Young American Mothers,” *Journal of Population Studies*, July 1983, pp. 239–52.

<sup>12</sup> John F. Stinson, Jr., "New data on multiple jobholding available from the cps," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1997, pp. 3–8.

<sup>13</sup> Ward Edwards, "Decision Making; Psychological Aspects," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 4, edited by David L. Sills (New York, Macmillan and Free Press, 1968), pp. 34–42.

<sup>14</sup> Edward Spranger, *Types of Men* (Halle, Germany, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1928); translation by Paul J. W. Pigors (New York, Johnson Reprint Company, 1966). Note that economic personal values are different from the external economic factors, such as the unemployment rate and the inflation rate, that may influence a person's decisionmaking. Spranger's classification and the questionnaire based on it, though dating from 1928, are still being used and cited in the literature. For example, references to *Types of Men* appear in Lawrence J. Axelrod, "Balancing Personal Needs with Environmental Preservation: Identifying the Values That Guide Decisions in Ecological Dilemmas," *Journal of Social Issues*, fall 1994, pp. 85–104; H. T. Hunt, "Triumph of the Will: Heidegger's Nazism as Spiritual Pathology," *Journal of Mind and Behavior*, fall 1998, pp. 379–414; and S. S. Bubnova, "Value Orientations of Personality as a Multivariate Non-linear System," *Psikologicheskii Zhurnal*, Sep.–Oct, 1999, pp. 38–44. The questionnaire has many multiple-choice questions that are highly general and still relevant today. Examples of such questions are "Which area of study do you think is more important?" and "What type of news do you read first?"

<sup>15</sup> Clyde K. Kluckhohn, "Values and Value Orientations in the Theory of Action," in Talcott Parsons and Edward A. Shils (eds.), *Toward a General Theory of Action* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1951); quote from p. 395.

<sup>16</sup> Anthony G. Athos and Robert E. Coffey, *Behavior in Organizations: A Multidimensional View* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice-Hall, 1968); Karl E.

Scheibe, *Beliefs and Values* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970).

<sup>17</sup> Milton Rokeach, "The Role of Values in Public Opinion Research," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 32, 1959, p. 124; and "Some Unresolved Issues in Theories of Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values," *1979 Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, vol. 27 (Lincoln, NE, University of Nebraska Press, 1980), pp. 261–304; quote from p. 272.

<sup>18</sup> George W. England, "Personal Value Systems of American Managers," *Academy of Management Journal*, March 1967, pp. 53–68.

<sup>19</sup> Rokeach, "Some Unresolved Issues."

<sup>20</sup> N. T. Feather, "Values, Valences, and Choice: The Influence of Values on the Perceived Attractiveness and Choice of Alternatives," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, June 1995, pp. 1135–51.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon W. Allport, Philip E. Vernon, and Gardner Lindzey, *A Study of Values* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1960).

<sup>22</sup> Robert C. Shirley, "Values in Decision Making: Their Origin and Effects," *Managerial Planning*, January–February 1975, pp. 1–5.

<sup>23</sup> See William D. Guth and Renato Tagiuri, "Personal Values and Corporate Strategy," *Harvard Business Review*, September–October 1965, pp. 123–32; England, "Personal Value Systems," and "Organizational Goals and Expected Behavior of American Managers," *Academy of Management Journal*, June 1967, pp. 107–17; and Shirley, "Values in Decision Making."

<sup>24</sup> Allport, Vernon, and Lindzey, *A Study of Values*.

<sup>25</sup> SPSS, Inc., *SPSSX User's Guide* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983).