



Parenthood and Men's and Women's Gender-Role Attitudes: Does Child's Gender Matter?

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A more recent version of this paper was published as Perales F, Jarallah Y and Baxter J. (2018) Men's and Women's Gender-Role Attitudes across the Transition to Parenthood: Accounting for Child's Gender. Social Forces, 97(1), 251-276

No. 2016-12

June 2016



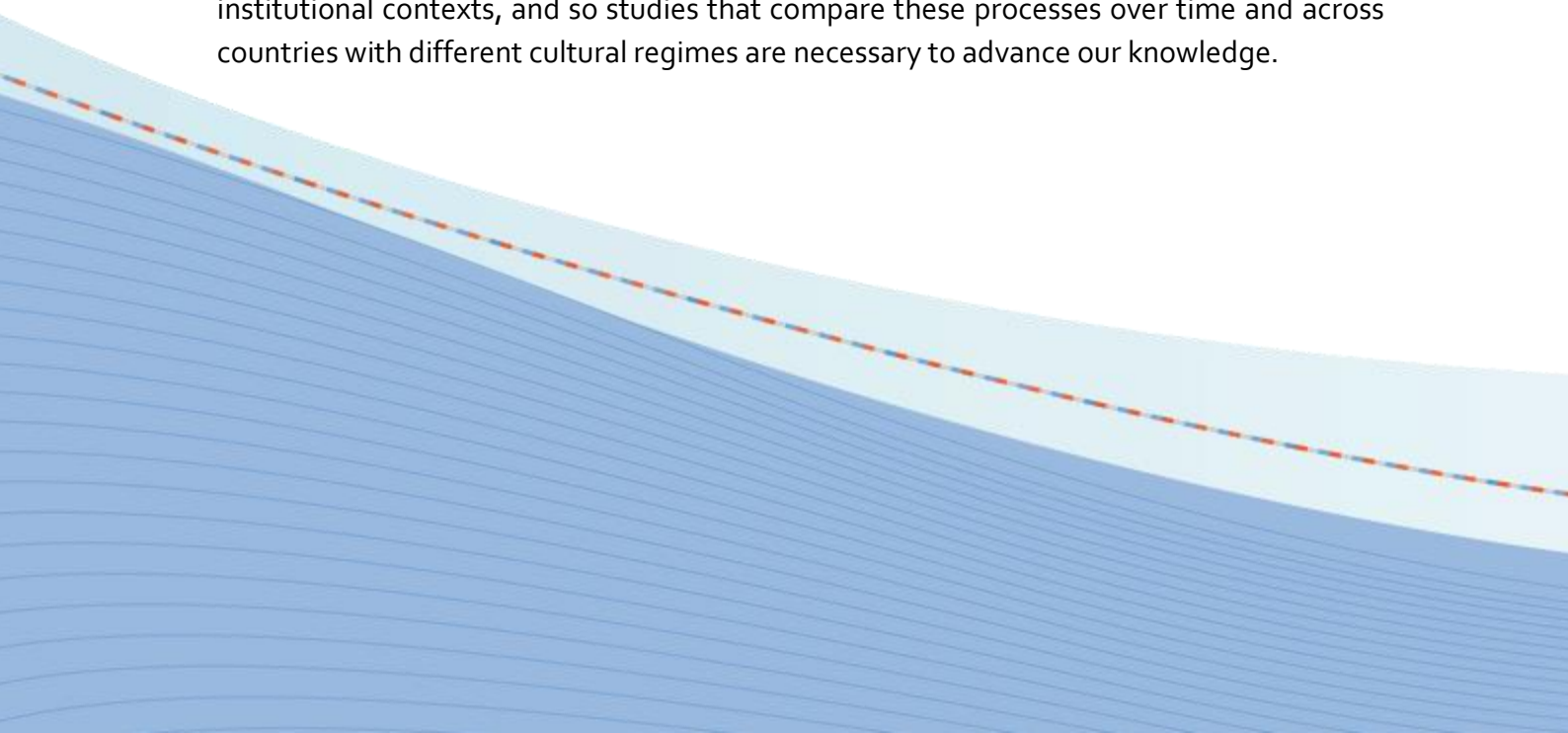
NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

Gender-role attitudes capture individuals' degree of support for traditional divisions of paid and domestic work in which men act as 'breadwinners' and women as 'homemakers' or 'secondary earners'. These attitudes are important, because they influence the decisions men and women make about how to organise housework and childcare responsibilities, as well as decisions about who in the household engages in paid employment. Therefore, it is important that we understand what factors predict individuals' support (or lack of support) for traditional gender-role attitudes.

Becoming a parent is a life-changing event, and previous research has demonstrated that it can lead men and women to alter their previous gender-role attitudes. However, the existing evidence has largely overlooked a potentially important aspect in this process: the gender of the newborn child. 'Exposure-based' theories of attitude change suggest that parents of girls will face situations that expose them to discriminatory behaviour towards their daughters, while 'interest-based' theories highlight how parents of girls benefit more from a gender-egalitarian society in which their daughters are treated fairly. As a result, we expect that people who become parents of girls will shift their attitudes and express stronger support for gender egalitarianism.

We examine this proposition using high-quality, longitudinal data from 14,439 individuals covering the years 2001, 2005, 2008 and 2011. These data come from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey. We find that men's and women's gender-role attitudes become more traditional when they become parents, but we find no evidence that the gender of their children matters.

These findings can be read in a positive light: a lack of difference in gender-attitude change between parents of girls and parents of boys may indicate that in contemporary Australia gender does not play such a significant role in shaping individuals' behaviours and outcomes. This may not be the case in other societies with different cultural and institutional contexts, and so studies that compare these processes over time and across countries with different cultural regimes are necessary to advance our knowledge.



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: This research was supported by the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence for Children and Families over the Life Course (project number CE140100027). This paper uses unit record data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey. The HILDA Project was initiated and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) and is managed by the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (Melbourne Institute). The findings and views reported in this paper, however, are those of the authors and should not be attributed to either DSS or the Melbourne Institute.

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Abstract

Gender-role attitudes refer to individuals' levels of support for a division of labour based on the notion of separate spheres and are closely connected to prevailing gender inequalities at home and at work. Previous research has established that life course transitions are related to within-individual over-time change in gender-role attitudes. Most importantly, becoming a parent is associated with shifts towards more traditional gender-role attitudes. Exposure- and interest-based theories of gender-attitude change suggest that the gender of children should influence the pattern of attitude shifts that accompany parenthood, but few studies have investigated this. We do so using Australian panel data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (n=14,439 individuals) and panel regression models. We find that men's and women's gender-role attitudes become more traditional when they become parents, but find little evidence of variations depending on the gender of their children.

Keywords: gender, life events, transition to parenthood, life course

Introduction

Gender-role attitudes capture individuals' degree of support for traditional divisions of paid and domestic work and have been linked to the production and reproduction of gender inequality in different social spheres. This is because such attitudes influence the organisation of domestic work and childcare responsibilities within households, and shape employment pathways and career aspirations in gendered ways (see Davis & Greenstein, 2009 for a review). It is therefore important that we understand the factors associated with variations in individuals' support for gender-egalitarian attitudes. Indeed, the trends in and determinants of gender-role attitudes at the micro and macro levels have been the subject of much social science research by sociologists, psychologists and political scientists since the middle of the 20th Century.

Research on changes in gender-role attitudes has chiefly examined long-term trends in societal levels of gender egalitarianism (Cotter et al., 2011; Van Egmond et al., 2010), differences across cohorts (Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Ciabattari, 2001), and the relative contributions of cohort-replacement and intra-cohort ageing in producing attitude change at the aggregate level (Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Danigelis et al., 2007). A more recent and smaller pool of studies have begun to shift attention to whether and how gender-role attitudes change within individuals over their life courses (Baxter et al., 2015; Evertsson, 2013; Moors, 2003; Schober & Scott, 2012). These studies have provided compelling evidence that key life course events and transitions are associated with within-individual changes in gender-role attitudes. These include the attainment of educational qualifications (Cunningham et al., 2005), relationship entry and breakdown (Cunningham & Thornton, 2005), changes in employment status (Berrington et al., 2008) and, especially, entry into parenthood (Baxter et al., 2015; Evertsson, 2013; Schober & Scott, 2012).

The transition to parenthood has been subject to a great deal of attention in this literature. Most recently, Baxter et al. (2015) found that, in Australia, becoming a parent was associated with the traditionalization of men's and women's gender-role attitudes, an effect attributed to changes in identity that accompany the experience of becoming a parent. However, studies examining the effect of parenthood on within-individual changes in gender-role attitudes have not fully addressed whether or not the gender of children influences the direction and stability of change. This possibility is nevertheless embedded in dominant theories of gender-attitude change. Exposure-based theories, for example, suggest that individuals who become parents of girls will likely face,

or anticipate, situations that expose them to unfair, discriminatory behaviour towards females, which may lead them to question their gender beliefs. They will also be likely to be exposed to behaviours of their daughters that challenge deep-rooted gender assumptions about girls and femininity. Similarly, interest-based theories of gender-attitude change lead to the prediction that individuals who become parents of girls will benefit more from a gender-egalitarian society in which their daughters are treated fairly and granted access to a wider range of opportunities. As a result, the worldviews and gender-role attitudes of these individuals might shift towards stronger support for gender egalitarianism.

Existing evidence on whether and how child's gender affects gender-attitude change is nevertheless limited and mixed. Cross-sectional studies in the US and Canada have shown associations between children's gender and parents' gender-role attitudes. Warner (1991) found that men and women with daughters are more supportive of feminism than men and women with sons, while Downey et al. (1994) found that women with sons report more traditional gender-role attitudes than women with daughters. In a more recent US study using panel data, Shafer & Malhotra (2011) found that having a daughter (relative to having a son) reduces men's but not women's support for traditional gender roles.

In this paper, we examine whether the well-established traditionalizing effect of parenthood on the gender-role attitudes of men and women varies with the gender of the newborn child, considering all permutations of parents' and child's gender. To do so, we leverage panel data from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey and deploy fixed effects panel regression models. We add to previous literature by more explicitly theorising the mechanisms that may connect child's gender and parental gender-role attitudes; testing these relationships using large, nationally-representative longitudinal data; extending previous evidence to a new national context, Australia; and examining gender-role attitude trajectories after childbirth. Our findings are consistent with earlier studies finding that men's and women's gender-role attitudes become more traditional when they become parents, but provide little evidence that such changes are moderated by the gender of their first-born children.

Background

Life-Course Attitude Change and Child's Gender

Two theoretical perspectives are typically used to explain life-course (i.e. intra-cohort) gender-attitude change: interest-based theories and exposure-based theories. These explanations are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive. Interest-based theories rest on the assumption that individuals' interest structures (e.g. the goals they strive for) are the driving force behind their gender beliefs (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Krosjka & Elman, 2009; Pampel, 2011). This perspective has been used to explain why women's gender attitudes are more egalitarian than men's across societies and time periods: women benefit more than men from gender equality, and so have a stronger interest in achieving it (Barnett & Rivers, 2004; Davis & Greenstein, 2009). It follows that, if individuals' interest structures change, their gender-role attitudes should change in response. For instance, if a man's wife enters the workforce, he might benefit more from gender equality (e.g. his household income would be higher in the absence of gender pay gaps) and change his attitudes towards more gender-egalitarian beliefs as a result (Cha & Thébaud, 2009).

Exposure-based theories, on the other hand, argue that gender beliefs are rooted in ill-founded, stereotypical assumptions about women's (and men's) capabilities and the nature of femininity (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Gender-role attitudes can thus change if individuals become exposed to circumstances, situations and experiences that challenge such assumptions (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Vespa, 2009). For example, men may change their perceptions about women being ill-suited to undertake certain jobs if they meet successful women at the workplace (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Similarly, women who enter the workforce might become more gender egalitarian as they meet and interact with successful female colleagues (Rhodebeck, 1996). Participation in higher education can also lead to the emergence of more egalitarian gender-role attitudes through individuals being exposed to new ideas that challenge the notion of 'separate spheres' (Kane, 1995).

Interest-based and exposure-based explanations for gender-attitude change can be used to make predictions about how child's gender may affect gender-role attitudes across the transition to parenthood. Interest-based explanations suggest that men and women who become parents of a girl should benefit more from a gender-egalitarian society in which their daughters are treated fairly and permitted to enjoy the full range of opportunities. For example, it would be in the best

interest of parents of daughters to live in a gender-egalitarian society in which intimate partner violence against women is not tolerated, or in which there are no gender pay gaps. Hence, the interest structures of parents of girls should become more closely aligned with the goal of gender equality than the interest structures of parents of boys and, as a result, their gender-role attitudes should become comparatively more egalitarian.

Similarly, exposure-based theories of gender-attitude change lead us to predict that individuals who become parents of girls will likely face or anticipate situations that expose them to unfair, discriminatory behaviour towards females. For example, parents may witness their daughters being denied access to clubs or societies such as sporting clubs, and as such being deprived of the skill development prospect of competitive sports and the positive sense of agency that is nurtured by outdoor pursuits (Kane, 2012). They might also witness their daughters being tracked into gender-stereotypical play groups and educational pathways (e.g. home economics lessons) with limited exposure to activities that promote mechanical and scientific aptitude, or being the subject of the ‘male gaze’ and inappropriate sexual comments. These experiences and circumstances should make parents of girls more aware of structural inequalities unfavourable to women that emerge due to traditional gender ideologies, and should in turn lead them to question and reassess their own gender-role attitudes. This idea resonates with evidence showing that fathers with first-born adolescent daughters are less likely to take part in activities that are perceived as exploitative of women, such as paying women for sex (Weitzman, 2015). Additionally, children tend to relate more closely to other children of the same gender (Shrum et al., 1988), and so parents of daughters should be more exposed to other girls through the female-dominated friendship and social networks of their daughters. Witnessing non-gender-traditional behaviours by their daughters or their female friends (e.g. displaying innate ability in male-typed activities) will have the potential to challenge parents’ gender assumptions and shift their gender-role attitudes towards more egalitarian viewpoints (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Reingold & Foust, 1998).

These theoretical postulations lead us to predict that:

Hypothesis 1: Men and women with first-born daughters will experience less traditionalization in their gender-role attitudes after the transition to parenthood than men and women with first-born sons.

Note however that some explanations for the traditionalizing effect of parenthood on gender-role attitudes in previous studies are independent of child's gender. These include the emergence of more unequal household divisions of labour after childbirth and women's adoption of more traditional attitudes to reduce cognitive dissonance (Baxter et al., 2015). Any effects of child's gender on gender-role attitudes after parenthood will therefore be net of its otherwise traditionalizing effect. Hence, we do not expect that having a daughter will offset the traditionalizing effect of parenthood on gender-role attitudes, so that parents of daughters become more egalitarian after birth. Instead, we predict that they will become less traditional than they would have been, had they had a son.

In addition, it is possible that the combination of parent's gender and child's gender is important in determining the intensity of change in gender-role attitudes accompanying the transition to parenthood. First, we have established that having a first-born daughter relative to a first-born son is more likely to lead to the emergence of comparatively egalitarian gender beliefs after parenthood. Second, psychological research has demonstrated that parents develop closer emotional bonds and spend more time with children of the same gender: men relate more to their sons, while women relate more to their daughters (Harris & Morgan, 1991; Rossi & Rossi, 1990). The strongest emotional attachment of all parent-child gender dyads has been reported to be that between mothers and daughters (Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Third, mothers are more likely than fathers to have experienced negative consequences associated with others holding traditional gender-role attitudes, including prejudice and discrimination on the basis of their gender (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). Taken together, these three points lead us to further predict that:

Hypothesis 2: Women with first-born daughters will experience the least traditionalization in their gender-role attitudes after the transition to parenthood.

This literature does not clearly lead to hypotheses about the relative changes in gender-role attitudes of parents in the remaining parent-child gender combinations (mothers with sons, fathers

with daughters, and fathers with sons). Nevertheless, in our empirical analyses we also pay attention to this possibility.

The gender of the firstborn child might not lead to changes in parents' gender-role attitudes because of heterogeneity in parental gender preferences and experiences (Lee & Conley, 2015). Parents might prefer children of a certain gender and as a result devote more time and experience greater exposure to children of their preferred gender. Prior research has shown fathers to display preferences for sons (Dahl & Meretti, 2008; Lundberg, McLanahan, & Rose, 2007). Therefore, men with first-born daughters might not be as exposed to situations that prompt them to change their gender-role attitudes –because they do not spend a great deal of time with their daughters. For women, having a first-born daughter might not translate into new information that results in attitude reassessing, as they themselves may have already been exposed to discriminatory behaviour growing up as women and daughters. Hence, women might maintain their gender-role attitudes irrespective of the gender of their first-born child.

Existing Empirical Evidence

A growing sociological and demographic literature is concerned with the associations between children's gender and individual and family processes (see Raley & Bianchi, 2006 for a review). For example, there are reported links between the gender of children and marital stability (Morgan et al., 1988), parenting practices (Lytton & Romney, 1991), the allocation of household labour (Bianchi & Robinson, 1997), educational investments in children (Freese & Powell, 1999) and parental employment patterns (Lundberg & Rose, 2002). In economics and political science, studies have revealed associations between children's gender and individual partisanship (Conley & Rauscher, 2013), CEO's wage policies (Dahl et al., 2012), approval of military interventions (Urbatsch, 2009), and support for the conservative party (Oswald & Powdthavee, 2010). As an exception, a cross-national comparative analysis of 36 countries by Lee & Conley (2015) found no effects of the gender of the first-born child on political ideology.

Specific studies on the relationship between the gender of children and parental gender-role attitudes are however scarce. A pioneer study by Warner (1991) using cross-sectional data from individuals in Detroit and Toronto (n=1,808) found that men and women with first-born daughters were more supportive of feminism and more likely to repudiate traditional gender roles than men

and women with first-born sons. This association was apparent for Canadian but not American men. Similarly, Downey et al. (1994) used cross-sectional data from mothers in two cities in Indiana (n=228) and found that women with first-born sons were more likely to support traditional gender roles than women with first-born daughters. These studies relied on non-probability, non-nationally-representative, and relatively small samples, and so their findings are not generalizable to the broader population.

Conley & Rauscher (2013) used representative data from the 1994 US General Social Survey (n=1,051) and found no evidence that having a first-born daughter relative to a first-born son is associated with gender-role attitudes (or attitudes towards abortion or teen sex). However, this and the previous studies rely on cross-sectional data to document a process (attitude change) that is inherently longitudinal, which limits their ability to assess over-time change. They are now also quite old. A more recent study using US panel data on a single cohort from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 (n=3,145 individuals) was undertaken by Shafer & Malhotra (2011). They found that having a first-born daughter (relative to having a first-born son) reduces men's support for traditional gender roles, but has no effect on women's support for such roles.

In addition to this small pool of studies on gender-role attitudes, there is also evidence in cognate areas of inquiry that having a son relative to having a daughter has independent effects on other gender-related behaviours and opinions. For example, Pollmann-Schult (2015) found that in Germany, having a first-born daughter relative to a first-born son is associated with the emergence of a more traditional division of labour within the household, while Warner & Steel (1999) found greater support for gender-equity policies amongst parents of first-born daughters than parents of first-born sons in Oregon and Washington. Similarly, judges and legislators with daughters in the US are more likely to vote in favour of women's rights legislation than those with sons (Glynn & Sen, 2015; Washington, 2008).

The Current Study

Our paper builds on this literature in several ways. First, we examine the effect of child's gender on gender-role attitudes within individuals over time using nationally-representative panel data. This enables us to compare the same individuals before and after the transition to parenthood. Second, we examine gender-attitude trajectories over time since entry into parenthood. This

enables us to provide a more granular picture of the ways in which attitudes change over the transition to parenthood. Specifically, analyses of these trajectories shed light on whether or not individuals revert to their pre-parenthood gender-role attitudes over time. They also provide indication of whether attitude change is driven by exposure or interest mechanisms. If the mechanism of change is exposure, then it may take some time for parental experiences to alter attitudes. In contrast, interest-based explanations suggest more immediate gender-attitude reassessments –arguably individuals’ reassessments of their worldviews towards ideals that ensure the best outcomes for their female children should happen soon after they become parents. Third, unlike previous studies, we measure gender-role attitudes with respect to seven different dimensions, which provides insights as to whether or not any differences in gender-attitude change by child’s gender are confined to attitudes pertaining to specific situations. Fourth, while most previous studies have been restricted to the analysis of US data, we focus on a different country: Australia. The Australian context is distinct from the US context in important ways and there are substantial socio-demographic differences concerning the transition to parenthood; in Australia maternal age at first birth is higher, marriage and divorce rates are lower, mothers spend a longer period of time off work following childbirth, and their part-time work rates are much higher (Baxter et al., 2015; Rose, Hewitt, & Baxter, 2011). Compared to the US there is also higher levels of institutional support for mothering in the form of family tax benefits for stay-at-home mothers and during most of the period under investigation here, paid maternity leave for 12 weeks for all employees in the public sector. In 2011 parental leave opportunities were greatly extended when the government introduced a government funded paid parental leave scheme providing eligible parents with up to 18 weeks of paid leave at the national minimum wage (approximately \$AUD 18 per hr in 2011) following the birth of a child. Part of the rationale underlying the scheme was an attempt to encourage mothers to return to work, but also to improve maternal and child health rates and to support gender equity goals. Hence, our findings add to existing evidence by beginning to tease out the importance of the institutional context and the universality of processes that so far have only been examined in the US, a country which is quite unique in terms of the absence of parental leave rights for new parents. Altogether, our paper complements the pioneer longitudinal work of Shafer & Malhotra’s (2011) using US panel data by extending their analyses to a different country (Australia), considering a wider set of gender-role attitudes (several dimensions and a

composite scale), and using a more recent sample (2001-2011) with a greater variety, and more frequent, attitude measures (four measures, three/four years apart).

Methodology

Data and Sample

We are interested in examining whether the gender of newborn children affects parental gender-role attitudes. To test this, we use data from the HILDA Survey covering years 2001, 2005, 2008 and 2011. The HILDA Survey is a household panel survey which, since 2001, tracks individuals living in the same households in Australia, and is largely representative of the Australian population in 2001 (see Summerfield et al., 2014 for more details). Our analytical sample comprises 28,858 observations from 14,439 individuals aged 18-50 years.

Dependent Variables

We capture respondents' gender-role attitudes using their degree of agreement with the following statements: (1) *"Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children"*, (2) *"If both partners in a couple work, they should share equally in the house-work and care of children"*, (3) *"Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother"*, (4) *"Mothers who don't really need the money shouldn't work"*, (5) *"Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children"*, (6) *"As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week"*, and (7) *"A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay"*. Response options range from (1) *"strongly agree"* to (7) *"strongly disagree"*, and where necessary they were recoded so that high values always represent more traditional views about gender roles. We also constructed an additive scale by summing the scores of the 7 items (Cronbach's Alpha=0.6). For ease of interpretation, we rescaled the resulting variable so that it ranges from 0 to 100.

Independent Variables

Our key independent variables combine information on the birth of the first child, the gender of the first child, and the gender of the parents. We collectively refer to these variables as parent-child gender variables. The first of these variables, ‘male parent with daughter’, is a dummy variable taking the value one if the respondent (i) is male, (ii) has been observed to have his first-born child during the life of the panel, and (iii) has a first-born girl. The second variable, ‘female parent with daughter’ is a dummy variable taking the value one if the respondent (i) is female, (ii) has been observed to have her first-born child during the life of the panel, and (iii) has a first-born girl. The third variable, ‘male parent with son’ is a dummy variable taking the value one if the respondent (i) is male, (ii) has been observed to have his first-born child during the life of the panel, and (iii) has a first-born boy. The fourth and final variable, ‘female parent with son’, is a dummy variable taking the value one if the respondent (i) is female, (ii) has been observed to have her first-born child during the life of the panel, and (iii) has a first-born boy. For each of these variables, individuals who do not satisfy the criteria score zero in all survey waves. Since we use a fixed effects model estimated using change over time, these individuals do not contribute to the estimation of the regression coefficients on the parent-child gender variables. In our HILDA Survey sample, 1,205 men and 1,357 women become parents for the first time. Of these, 586 men and 661 women have a first-born son, and 619 men and 696 women have a first-born daughter. As is common practice in studies of the effects of children’s gender, we focus exclusively on first births. This minimizes selection bias due to ‘endogenous stopping rules’ arising from differential fertility choices and preferences for children of either gender (Dahl & Moretti, 2008; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011). We do not consider cases in which first births were twins (n=102 pairs).

Estimation Strategy

We model the relationships of interest using linear fixed effects models. These are estimated by regressing deviations from individuals’ person-means in the dependent variable on deviations from their person-means in the independent variables (Allison, 2009). The first set of models examines the effect of parenthood on gender-role attitudes of each of our ‘parent-child gender’ variables. These models take the form:

$$(GRA_{it} - \overline{GRA}_i) = (PCG_{it} - \overline{PCG}_i)\beta + (X_{it} - \overline{X}_i)\gamma + (\varepsilon_{it} - \overline{\varepsilon}_i) \quad (1)$$

where i and t denote individual and time, GRA stands for gender-role attitudes, PCG is a set of variables representing the four different parent-child gender combinations, X is a vector of time-changing control variables, β and γ are model coefficients, and ε is a random error term. The variables in the X vector include marital status, highest educational qualification, religiosity (using an 11-point Likert scale), and respondent's age.

A second set of models examines gender-role attitude trajectories for each of the different parent-child gender variables as first-born children age. To do so, we interact each of the parent-child gender variables with a variable capturing the number of years since the first birth (YSB). These models take the form:

$$(GRA_{it} - \overline{GRA}_i) = (PCG_{it} - \overline{PCG}_i) * (YSB_{it} - \overline{YSB}_i)\beta + (X_{it} - \overline{X}_i)\gamma + (\varepsilon_{it} - \overline{\varepsilon}_i) \quad (2)$$

We also tried interactions with a quadratic and a cubic version of this variable to capture non-linear trends, but found no evidence of these. Table 1 shows means and standard deviations for model variables.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for model variables

	Women		Men	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Gender-role attitudes				
Scale	40.49	15.14	44.84	14.07
Item 1	3.08	1.68	3.48	1.57
Item 2	1.79	1.14	2.28	1.31
Item 3	5.39	1.79	5.07	1.74
Item 4	3.17	1.89	3.52	1.81
Item 5	2.48	1.49	2.79	1.50
Item 6	4.82	1.85	4.89	1.71
Item 7	3.28	1.79	3.80	1.74
Parent-child gender				
Female parent with daughter	0.06			
Male parent with daughter			0.06	
Female parent with son	0.06			
Male parent with son			0.06	
<i>Control variables</i>				
Marital status				
Married	0.49		0.47	
Cohabiting	0.18		0.18	
Divorced, separated, widowed	0.09		0.05	
Single	0.25		0.30	
Educational qualifications				
Degree or higher	0.28		0.23	
Certificate	0.25		0.36	
Secondary education	0.21		0.19	
Lower than secondary education	0.26		0.21	
Religiosity (0-10)	3.36	3.50	2.56	3.25
Religion-missing flag	0.14		0.15	
Age in years	34.56	9.49	34.54	9.56
Years since first birth*	3.27	2.82	3.32	2.85

Notes: HILDA Survey data. n(observations)=28,858; n(individuals)=14,439. * Only for individuals who experienced a first birth over the life of the panel. Item 1: “Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children”. Item 2: “If both partners in a couple work, they should share equally in the housework and care of children”. Item 3: “Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”. Item 4: “Mothers who don't really need the money shouldn't work”. Item 5: “Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children”. Item 6: “As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week”. Item 7: “A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay”.

Results

Tables 2 and 3 present the results of linear fixed effects models of gender-role attitudes. In these models, the estimated beta coefficients give the effect on the dependent variable associated with a within-individual one-unit increase in the independent variables. Positive coefficients on the independent variables indicate that the variables are associated with more traditional gender-role attitudes, whereas negative coefficients on the explanatory variables indicate that the variables are associated with more egalitarian gender-role attitudes. Since the child-parent gender variables are dichotomous, their estimated coefficients give the average difference in gender-role attitudes across all the observations before and after the experience of parenthood.

The analyses in Table 2 show the effect of the different parent-child gender variables on gender-role attitudes. Results for the overall scale indicate that, all else being equal, the experience of parenthood increases men's and women's support for more traditional gender-role attitudes. All the coefficients on the parent-child gender variables are positive and statistically significant, which indicates that a move towards more traditional gender-role attitudes occurs irrespective of the gender of the first-born child. On a scale from 0-100, having a first-born daughter is associated with an increase in support for traditional gender-role attitudes of 3.07 units ($p < 0.001$) amongst men and 2.31 units ($p < 0.01$) amongst women. Results from Wald tests reveal that changes amongst men are not statistically different to changes amongst women ($p > 0.1$). Having a first-born son is associated with an increase in support for traditional gender-role attitudes of 2.11 units ($p < 0.01$) amongst men and 1.48 units ($p < 0.05$) amongst women. Again Wald tests indicate that the gender difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.1$). Of particular interest is whether having a daughter relative to having a son has a differential effect on attitude shifts across the transition to parenthood. The effect on support for traditional gender-role attitudes of having a first-born daughter is greater ($\beta_{\text{men}}=3.07$; $\beta_{\text{women}}=2.31$) than the effect of having a first-born son ($\beta_{\text{men}}=2.11$; $\beta_{\text{women}}=1.48$). However, these differences are small in magnitude and, according to Wald tests, statistically insignificant ($p > 0.1$ in both cases).

We also examined how the experience of parenthood changes agreement with specific gender-attitude items. Results revealed substantial heterogeneity in the degree to which parenthood affects different gender-attitude items, but few differences in the direction of effects based on child's gender. After they become mothers, the gender-role attitudes of women with first-born daughters

become more traditional concerning three of the seven gender-attitude items: *“Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”*, *“Mothers who don’t really need the money shouldn’t work”*, and *“As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week”*. On the other hand, mothers of first-born daughters become more egalitarian concerning the statement: *“Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children”*. Men with first-born daughters change their views with parenthood so that they become more traditional concerning the following four statements: *“Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”*, *“Mothers who don’t really need the money shouldn’t work”*, *“As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week”*, and *“A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay”*. Women with first-born sons become more traditional in two gender-attitude items: *“Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”* and *“As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week”*, but more egalitarian concerning whether *“A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay”*. Finally, men who become parents of first-born sons only become more traditional in that they more strongly support that *“Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”*.

Table 2. Predictors of gender-role attitudes, parent-child gender effect

	Scale	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
Parent-child gender								
Female parent with daughter	2.31**	-0.24*	0.02	0.78***	0.22*	0.08	0.25*	-0.14
Male parent with daughter	3.07***	-0.06	0.11	0.45***	0.25*	0.02	0.25*	0.26*
Female parent with son	1.48*	-0.13	0.02	0.58***	0.13	-0.06	0.27**	-0.18(*)
Male parent with son	2.11**	0.14	0.14	0.50***	0.15	-0.02	-0.03	0.03
Marital Status (ref. married)								
Cohabiting	-0.27	-0.03	-0.01	-0.05	-0.02	0.01	-0.00	-0.02
Divorced, separated, widowed	-0.75	-0.02	-0.09(*)	0.01	-0.03	0.10(*)	-0.19**	-0.09
Single	-0.29	0.00	0.08(*)	-0.12(*)	-0.05	0.10(*)	-0.07	-0.06
Education (ref. secondary)								
Degree	-0.49	-0.01	-0.20***	-0.00	0.09	-0.11(*)	-0.11	0.13(*)
Certificate	-0.35	0.01	-0.14*	-0.08	-0.04	-0.01	0.09	0.02
Lower than secondary education	-0.34	0.06	-0.01	-0.11	-0.01	-0.02	0.03	-0.07
Religiosity								
Age	0.16**	0.01	-0.00	0.02***	0.02**	0.01	0.01	-0.00
Age	-0.32***	-0.02***	0.03***	-0.03***	-0.03***	0.00	-0.04***	-0.04***
R^2 (within)	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01
Prob (F)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.00	0.00
Wald test (p)								
β Female parent with daughter = β Male parent with daughter	0.47	0.18	0.39	0.02	0.85	0.57	0.99	0.01
β Female parent with son = β Male parent with son	0.54	0.05	0.27	0.56	0.92	0.75	0.04	0.16
β Female parent with daughter = β Female parent with son	0.43	0.43	0.95	0.13	0.53	0.16	0.91	0.80
β Male parent with daughter = β Male parent with son	0.35	0.16	0.82	0.78	0.47	0.73	0.06	0.12

Notes: Linear fixed effects models using HILDA Survey data. n(observations)=28,858; n(individuals)=14,439. Item 1: “Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children”. Item 2: “If both partners in a couple work, they should share equally in the housework and care of children”. Item 3: “Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”. Item 4: “Mothers who don’t really need the money shouldn’t work”. Item 5: “Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children”. Item 6: “As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week”. Item 7: “A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay”. Models also control for missing information on religion. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ (*) $p < 0.1$.

Results from a first set of analyses in Table 2 provided evidence that men and women change their gender-role attitudes when they first become parents, but did not support the notion that they do so at different rates depending on the gender of their first-born child. It is nevertheless possible that, while there are no average differences, trends in gender-role attitudes after parenthood differ depending on the gender of the child or the combination of the parent's and child's genders. Table 3 presents the results of models to examine men's and women's gender-role attitude trajectories after the birth of their first child. To do so, we focus on the estimated coefficients on the interactions between each of the parent-child gender variables and the variable capturing the number of years since the birth of the first child.

For the overall scale, each year after the birth of the first-born child brings about a small (though statistically insignificant) move towards gender egalitarianism for three of the subgroups of interest: fathers of first-born daughters ($\beta=-0.03$; $p>0.1$), mothers of first-born daughters ($\beta=-0.04$; $p>0.1$), and mothers of first-born sons ($\beta=-0.09$; $p>0.1$). For the remaining subgroup, fathers of first-born sons, the trend is positive though again not statistically significant ($\beta=0.04$; $p>0.1$). Results from associated Wald tests reveal that the gender-attitude trajectories for the different subgroups are not statistically different from each other.

Trajectories in specific gender-attitude items after the birth of the first child are statistically insignificant in most cases. There are however some exceptions. Men with first-born sons progressively develop more egalitarian views concerning the statement "*Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children*", whereas women with first-born sons become progressively more egalitarian concerning the statements "*Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children*" and "*A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay*". Results from Wald tests for the most part reject the existence of differences in trajectories across parent-child gender groups in the different gender-attitude items, with a few exceptions marked in bold in Table 3.

Altogether, these analyses yield little evidence of trends towards more or less egalitarian gender attitudes after parenthood. They also suggest that the way in which gender-role attitudes evolve after first births is independent of the parent's or the child's gender.

Table 3. Predictors of gender-role attitudes, trajectories since childbirth

	Scale	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Item 6	Item 7
Parent-child gender, main effect								
Female parent with daughter	2.41**	-0.20(*)	-0.01	0.77***	0.26*	0.07	0.21(*)	-0.09
Male parent with daughter	3.13***	-0.07	0.08	0.47***	0.30**	0.01	0.31**	0.21(*)
Female parent with son	1.73*	-0.14	0.05	0.51***	0.14	0.04	0.22(*)	-0.09
Male parent with son	1.98*	0.05	0.09	0.48***	0.13	-0.03	0.07	0.04
Parent-child gender, trajectory								
Female parent with daughter	-0.04	-0.02	0.01	0.00	-0.02	0.00	0.01	-0.02
Male parent with daughter	-0.03	0.01	0.02	-0.01	-0.02	0.00	-0.02	0.01
Female parent with son	-0.09	0.00	-0.01	0.03	-0.00	-0.04*	0.02	-0.04(*)
Male parent with son	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.00	-0.04(*)	-0.01
Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
R^2 (within)	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.01	0.00	0.02	0.01
Prob (F)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.19	0.00	0.00
Wald test (p)								
β Female parent with daughter, trajectory = β Male parent with daughter, trajectory	0.95	0.44	0.39	0.67	0.91	0.87	0.16	0.23
β Female parent with son, trajectory = β Male parent with son, trajectory	0.48	0.35	0.18	0.43	0.77	0.13	0.05	0.33
β Female parent with daughter, trajectory = β Female parent with son, trajectory	0.78	0.45	0.28	0.37	0.71	0.07	0.89	0.66
β Male parent with daughter, trajectory = β Male parent with son, trajectory	0.74	0.39	0.87	0.67	0.48	0.99	0.67	0.49

Notes: Linear fixed effects models using HILDA Survey data. n(observations)=28,858; n(individuals)=14,439. Control variables as in Table 2. Item 1: “Many working mothers seem to care more about being successful at work than meeting the needs of their children”. Item 2: “If both partners in a couple work, they should share equally in the housework and care of children”. Item 3: “Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother”. Item 4: “Mothers who don't really need the money shouldn't work”. Item 5: “Children do just as well if the mother earns the money and the father cares for the home and the children”. Item 6: “As long as the care is good, it is fine for children under 3 years of age to be placed in childcare all day for 5 days a week”. Item 7: “A working mother can establish just as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work for pay”. Models also control for missing information on religion. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.001$ ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$ (*) $p < 0.1$.

Discussion and Conclusion

A large body of research documents that men's and women's gender-role attitudes become more traditional when they become parents. In this paper we have examined the possibility that this effect is moderated by the gender of the first-born child, using panel data from a large and nationally-representative household panel survey in Australia and fixed effects panel regression models.

Our base results were consistent with findings from previous studies: becoming a parent shifts individual's gender-role attitudes towards more traditional views (Baxter et al, 2015; Evertsson, 2013; Schober & Scott, 2012). This pattern is apparent for both men and women (with no significant gender differences), for parents of sons and daughters, for the overall gender-attitude scale, and for selected gender-attitude items. These findings extend the previous evidence base by demonstrating that the traditionalizing effect of parenthood on gender beliefs remains after accounting for the gender of first-born children. For the overall gender-attitude scale, the magnitude of the effects is relatively small, equivalent to 10 to 22 percent of the variable's standard deviation. Such effects are nevertheless seemingly larger than those of other discrete variables, including educational level and partnership status.

Concerning the specific gender-attitude items, across the transition to parenthood some of our subgroups of interest became more likely to agree that motherhood is women's most important role in life, mothers should stay home if they do not need the money, young children should not be enrolled in full-time day care, and working mothers cannot have as good a relationship with their children as stay-home mothers. In two instances, attitudes changed towards more egalitarian viewpoints: mothers with daughters became less likely to agree that working mothers care less about their children than stay-home mothers, while mothers with sons become more strongly supportive that a working mother can bond with their children as much as a stay-home mother.

Using interest-based and exposure-based theories of within-individual attitude change, we developed a first research hypothesis. This stated that men and women with first-born daughters should experience less traditionalization in their gender-role attitudes across the transition to parenthood than men and women with first-born sons. Our results provided little evidence in favour of this hypothesis, as there were no statistically significant differences in the effects of parenthood on the gender-role attitudes of men with daughters, men with sons, women with

daughters, and women with sons. In fact, the non-statistically-significant differences that we observed pointed towards the reverse: having a son was associated with a slightly smaller traditionalizing effect of parenthood on the gender-role attitudes of both men and women. It is possible that the interest and exposure arguments outlined above may not influence men's and women's gender-role attitudes until their daughters are older. For example, concerns about equal access to educational opportunities, gender-pay gaps and domestic violence, may not influence parent's beliefs until their daughters are old enough to have either experienced, or successfully avoided, some of these inequalities. Consistent with this argument, Weitzman (2015) finds that the effects of the first-born child's gender on father's behaviours are limited to the stage when the child has reached adolescence.

Analyses of the after-birth gender-attitude trajectories did not yield any evidence consistent with our first hypothesis either. Gender-attitude trajectories after parenthood were not statistically significant for any of the parent-child gender combinations, and neither were differences in the trajectories of the different subgroups. The finding of no trends in parental gender-role attitudes after birth indicates that attitude shifts accompanying the transition to parenthood are long-lasting: individuals' attitudes do not revert back to their pre-birth views over time, at least to the extent that we can observe. This is consistent with results in Shafer & Malhotra (2011), who found no significant interaction effects between child's gender and child's age. Of course, the associations may change as children grow older.

Using psychological theory on parent-child attachment, our second hypothesis proposed that women with first-born daughters should experience the least traditionalization in their gender-role attitudes after the transition to parenthood. As can be inferred from the above discussion, this hypothesis was not supported in the data either. In fact, women who gave birth to first-born daughters experienced the strongest shift towards traditional gender-role attitudes of all groups, though the difference was not statistically significant.

Taken together, our results provide little evidence that in Australia the gender of first-born children affects their parents' gender-role attitudes. This pattern of results is inconsistent with that reported by Shafer & Malhotra (2011) for the US, who found that having a daughter (relative to having a son) reduced men's (but not women's) support for traditional gender roles. These differences across studies may emerge because the analyses in Shafer & Malhotra (2011) relate to a single and

older cohort and their attitude measures are less frequent (there is a 17 year gap between their 2004 panel and its previous panel). Alternatively, they may suggest that the degree to which the gender of children affects changes in gender-role attitudes across the transition to parenthood depends on the institutional and ideological context. For example, cross-national differences may be driven by factors such as the degree of societal gender essentialism (i.e. cultural beliefs about innate and/or fundamental differences between males and females), gender-based discrimination during childhood, and segregation of boys and girls across social spheres.

While our use of longitudinal data and methods enabled us to provide a better picture of over-time change in gender-role attitudes than most previous studies, our analyses are not without shortcomings. Most importantly, the gender-attitude items in the HILDA Survey spread only over 11 years (2001-2011). Hence, individuals who become parents over the life of the survey can only be subsequently tracked for 1 to 10 years. This means that we can only observe changes in their post-parenthood attitudes for that amount of time. As noted above, it is likely that the influence of sons and daughters in exposing parents to situations that make them question and reassess their gender-role attitudes becomes more pronounced when children are older. We are unable to track such changes, and so further studies in this area should aim to leverage longer panel datasets to track parents' attitudes as their children move into adolescence and young adulthood.

Altogether, the findings in this paper can be read in a positive light: a lack of difference in gender-attitude change between parents of girls and parents of boys may indicate that, in some contexts (such as Australia) and life domains, gender does not play such a significant role in shaping the individuals' behaviours and outcomes. This may not be the case in other societies with different cultural and institutional contexts, and so studies that compare these processes over time and across countries with different cultural regimes are necessary to advance our knowledge on these issues.

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