Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Due to macro-level changes in society, gender role attitudes in 1980 will be more traditional than gender role attitudes in 2000.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who divorce will report more egalitarian attitudes when they are divorced compared to their gender role attitudes reported in their first marriage. This is based on the premise that divorce is a period of transitions and “re-doing gender” (Walzer, 2008) and is congruent with cross sectional findings.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals who divorce and remarry will report more egalitarian attitudes in their remarried relationship when compared to their attitudes in their first marital relationship based on findings from retrospective and qualitative studies (Sakradzija, 2005).

Hypothesis 4: Our central hypothesis is that the experience of marital status change will be related to greater gender role malleability, such that those who experience marital status change (the divorced/not remarried and the remarried groups) will demonstrate significantly less traditional gender role attitudes across time compared to the relative stability expected for individuals who remain in first marital relationships.

Results

Table 1. Gender role attitude traditionalism scale mean scores by marital status group with significant between-groups analysis of variance noted (N = 590).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Full Sample (n = 590)</th>
<th>Continuously Married (n = 488)</th>
<th>Remarried (n = 54)</th>
<th>Divorced (n = 48)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>2.16*</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Higher scores reflect more traditional gender role attitudes (scale ranges from 1 to 4); differences in superscripts by year indicate statistically significant mean differences between the groups when controlling for sex, age, race, education, and children. *p = .05; **p = .01.

Figure 1. Gender role attitude traditionalism scores between 1980 and 2000 based on marital status histories accounting for sex, age, race, education, and children (N=590).

Summary of Findings & Discussion

- To test hypothesis one, a mixed between-within subjects repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to evaluate period effects represented by the change in gender role attitudes for the entire sample between 1980 and 2000. As predicted, there was a statistically significant main effect for time. Mean differences from 1980 to 2000 suggest that on average, the entire sample reported more egalitarian attitudes in 2000 compared to 1980.

- To test hypothesis two, a mixed between-within subjects repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess whether divorced individuals (n = 48) in 2000 would report statistically significantly different mean level gender role attitude scores during divorced singlehood compared to their reported gender role attitudes when they were in first marital relationships. As predicted, there was a statistically significant main effect for time. Mean differences from 1980 to 2000 suggest that on average, divorced individuals reported more egalitarian attitudes compared to their earlier reports when married. The calculated effect size indicated a large shift in gender role attitudes (Cohen’s d = 0.77). Hypothesis two was supported.

- To test hypothesis three, a mixed between-within subjects repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to assess whether individuals in remarital relationships (n = 54) in 2000 reported statistically significantly different gender role attitudes in their remarital relationship compared to their reported gender role attitudes when they were in first marital relationships in 1980. As predicted, there was a statistically significant main effect for time. Evaluation of the mean scores indicate that attitudes shifted towards slightly more egalitarian attitudes between first marriages (M = 2.24, SD = .50) and remarriages (M = 2.11, SD = .39). The calculated effect size indicates a modest shift (Cohen’s d = .38).

- To test hypothesis four, a mixed between-within subjects repeated measures analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to assess group differences in gender role attitude malleability across time among the three categories of participants based on marital experiences. Age, race, education, and children were entered as covariates. A significant time x marital status experience interaction effect was found, controlling for all else in the model, Wilks’s Lambda = .97, F(2, 585) = 9.56, p < .001 (see Table 2). Hypothesis four was partially supported; changes over time were as expected for the divorced group, but not for the remarried group as noted in the post hoc comparisons.

- At time one (1980), there were no significant differences across groups.

- At time two (1988), the continuously married group was significantly higher (i.e., more traditional) than the remarried group; the remarried and divorced groups did not differ. Participants were categorized as “remarried” based on their marital status in 2000; therefore, we examined the actual marital status in 1988 of members of this group. Forty-four percent were still in first marital relationships; 26% were divorced; and 30% were remarried. An additional means comparison was conducted within this group, and controlling for all other factors, there were no statistically significant differences in gender role attitudes among members of the remarried group based on their marital status in 1980. F(2, 53) = 1.24, p = .30.

- At time three (2000), the mean score for the continuously married group was significantly higher than the divorced group’s mean score, but was not significantly different from the remarried group’s mean score.

- While the shift in gender role attitudes between first marriage and second marriage was documented, it is clear that the magnitude of change was modest compared to the change in gender role attitudes for those who were in their first marriage in 1980 and subsequently divorced and remained single. This provided an indication that differential patterns of change could be uncovered across time between those who remarried and those who remained single and divorced. When all three groups were examined simultaneously across the three time points, those who divorced and remained single showed a steeper and consistent decline in traditional gender role attitudes. A pattern across time of a significant, albeit modest, shift toward more egalitarian gender role attitudes, followed by a shift toward more traditional gender role attitudes in 2000 was evident for those in remarital relationships. Those who remained continuously married showed a slight, but steady decline in traditional gender role attitudes across time.
Gender Role Attitudes During Divorce & Remarriage: Plastic or Plaster?
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