ECONOMIC AND FAMILIAL ROLES OF WOMEN IN ISRAEL

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This paper discusses the determinants of labor force participation, role division in the family, and attitudes toward appropriate economic and familial roles of women in Israel. The data are based on interviews with 1754 married Jewish women living in urban parts of Israel. Multiple regression is used to analyze the relative importance of education, age, number and ages of children, birth in Israel, age at immigration, ethnic background, religiosity and socio-economic status. The findings show that education influences each of the dependent variables, that number and ages of children are related to role behavior but not attitudes, while immigrant status and religiosity are related to attitudes toward appropriate roles but not actual behavior. Most of the ethnic differences observed in women's roles can be controlled by the other variables in the analysis, as can the differences in role behavior of immigrant and native-born women.

This paper is concerned with married women's roles in Israel. It considers the participation of women in the labor force, as well as their roles in the family, and their attitudes toward both familial and nonfamilial roles. Because the data base is a representative sample of 1754 urban married Jewish women, the analysis is able to take into account many explanations of the variations in behavior and attitudes found among the women surveyed.

Previous studies in Israel have shown that, as in other industrialized countries, female labor force participation is strongly related to marital status, education and number of children at home, especially young children (Efroni, 1976; Gronau, 1973; 1978). Further, women of European, Anglo-Saxon (American, Australian, Canadian), and Israeli origin participate more in the labor force than do women of Asian or African origin, and among Israeli-born women, those of European, Anglo-Saxon or Israeli parentage participate more than those of Asian or African parentage (Ben-Porath, 1970; Gronau, 1973; M. Hartman, 1974). Differences are especially striking for married women.

The fact is, of course, related to different patterns of behavior of women in the various countries of origin. In the North African and Asian countries, female participation in the labor force is considerably lower than in Israel and women's roles are confined primarily to the familial sphere (Patai, 1970). The labor force participation of women in European and Anglo-Saxon countries is at least as high as in Israel (Padan-

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Eisenstark, 1973), and women have a greater option to choose nonfamilial role activities than in North African and Asian countries. These differences are reflected in Israel in the fact that immigrants from African and Asian countries ("AA") have larger families, fewer total years of work experience and less education, and their mothers are less educated. As can be seen in Table 1, these differences persist among women born in Israel to parents of various origins. Further, AA women tend to have lower socio-economic status (a greater proportion of their husbands work in less prestigious occupations) (see also Smooha, 1978).

Table 1. Differences between Ethnic Groups of Women in Israel: Immigrants and Israeli-born.

	Country of Origin			
	Asia-Africa		Europe-America	
	Immigrant	Israeli-born	Immigrant	Israeli-born
Mean age**	38.98	31.13	43.06	33.24
Mean age at immigration*	16.13	—	19.49	—
Mean number of years of education*	7.10	9.54	10.58	12.54
Mean years of education of mother**	2.72	3.35	7.62	8.91
Mean number of children**	4.03	2.57	2.13	2.26
Mean years ever worked**	5.8	6.0	9.1	7.3
% husbands are unskilled laborers**	22.2	12.9	11.9	9.8
% husbands are professionals**	14.7	14.3	30.2	45.3
(N)	(581)	(151)	(590)	(432)

* Difference in means significant at $\alpha = .05$

** Difference in means of immigrants significant at $\alpha = .05$.
Difference in means of Israeli-born significant at $\alpha = .05$.

While many of the ethnic differences in labor force participation of women have been explained by differences in education and fertility (AA women having less education and more children than women of EA – European or Anglo-Saxon background), some residual difference remains. While time in Israel is expected to reduce the ethnic differences in women's roles, some ethnic differences have been found to persist among the children born in Israel to immigrant parents (M. Hartman, 1974).

While previous studies have inferred that the ethnic difference is due to a difference in the value of the woman's time at home or in the workplace (e.g. Gronau, 1973), direct measurement of attitudes toward women's roles has been studied only for relatively small samples (e.g. Bar-Yosef, 1973b; Steinmann, 1974). Study of active role behavior in the family has shown that women of European and English-speaking background spend less time on household activities than do women of Asian and African background, and that the latter are less likely to share their household roles with others (cf. Bar-Yosef, 1973a). However, these studies have not separated out the effects of differential education, socio-economic status and family size, which overlap with ethnic differences in Israel.

The present study measures the attitudes toward women's roles in the economy and within the family, as well as their actual role behavior in both spheres. The size and representativeness of the sample allow us to analyze the extent to which the variation found in each of these variables is related to ethnic differences *per se*, the extent to which length of residence in Israel affects these variables, and the extent to which the more conventionally-considered effects of education, socio-economic status and child-care burden explain variations in women's roles in Israel. Measurement of religiosity allows the consideration of another explanatory variable, which is particularly salient in the Israeli setting.

Since many of these variables overlap in Israel, multivariate regression analysis is utilized to determine the net effect of each of the explanatory variables when the other effects are controlled.

DATA

Data for the present paper were collected in 1975 as part of a larger study on the fertility and labor force participation of married women in Israel[1]. The population of the study consisted of currently married Jewish women of age 55 or less, living in urban areas of Israel (in 1975, these areas included over 83% of the Jewish population of Israel). A total of 1754 women were interviewed.

MEASURES

The behavioral indicators used for women's roles are labor force participation and the division of labor in the home. Labor force participation was defined as part- or full-time work for wages, or unpaid work in a family business, at the time of the survey. The average number of hours per week spent working at the current job determined the extent of the woman's labor force participation ("job size").

The division of labor in the family was measured by the responses to the question, "Who usually does the following household tasks? " (Daily shopping, laundry, small household repairs, cleaning, washing dishes, cooking, taking care of the children and disciplining the children were specified.) A Guttman scale was formed to show the amount of household work for which the woman herself was primarily responsible. (Possible responses were, "Usually I do," "Usually my husband," "I and my husband," "Hired help," or "Other.")[2]

Attitudes toward women's roles were measured by two indices. The first measured attitudes toward married women's work and was created from the factor loadings on a factor analysis of over ten relevant items. The four items on which the index is based are: 1) A woman's place is in the home; 2) When the wife works outside the home, the family suffers; 3) Working women cannot be good mothers; and 4) A married woman should not plan a career for herself, since this will keep her from being a good mother to her children. (Respondents could agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly with each of the statements.)

Attitudes toward family roles were measured by a Guttman scale of the responses to the question, "Who, in your opinion, should do the following tasks? " The tasks (and possible responses) were the same as those specified *vis a vis* the actual division of labor in the home.

Ethnic differences between the women were measured by the country of origin for the first-generation immigrants to Israel, and by father's country of origin for the Israeli-born. The women were divided into those with Asian and African backgrounds ("AA") and those with European and Anglo-Saxon backgrounds ("EA."). The Israeli-born whose fathers were born in Israel were classified as "EA" since the majority of the early settlers were European in origin.

Other independent variables introduced to explain the variation in women's roles include: the woman's age; childcare burden, indicated by number of children, age of youngest child, presence of a child under 2 at home, and presence of a child aged 3 - 5 at home; the woman's years of formal education; socio-economic status, indicated by the husband's income and occupational prestige (measured by an index developed for Israel by M. Hartman, 1979); mother's years of formal education (an indicator of the role model to which the woman was exposed). Another variable was religiosity, measured by a Guttman scale indicating the commitment of the woman to religion through various ritual activities, and by her own ranking of herself as religious (the measure is described in detail in M. Hartman, 1984).

FINDINGS

Labor Force Participation

A multiple regression analysis of the extent of labor force participation of the women in the sample shows significant positive effects of education, mother's education, age at immigration, and significant negative effects of age, number of children, and presence of a baby (under age 2) at home. Ethnicity, birth in Israel, the two indicators of socio-economic status and religiosity have no significant effects.

Table 2. Beta Coefficients Resulting from Multiple Regression Model. Dependent Variable: Job Size[a]

Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient
Age	-.22053 *
Years of schooling	.13909 *
Mother's years of schooling	.07274 *
Family income (minus wife's)	-.04337
Husband's occupational prestige	.04223
Number of children at home	-.05235 *
Age of youngest child	-.08961
Having 0 - 2 year old at home	-.13959 *
Having 3 - 5 year old at home	-.06423
Religiosity	-.03743
Ethnic origin (high value = being EA)	.00932
Birth in Israel	.06996
Age at immigration	.08726 *
Multiple R	.31901

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$

[a] 0 - 99 hours of work per week (as explained in text).

The influence of education on labor force participation is well-known: more-educated women are able to find positions which are both more remunerative and more intrinsically satisfying. Their years of formal education also reflect an investment in preparing for an economic role, and they usually acquire attitudes associated with sex-role egalitarianism because of the stress on non-ascriptive achievement in education. The effect of mother's education indicates the effect of the female role-model as well as probably higher socio-economic status in the family of origin.

The fact that among women who immigrate at a higher age, a greater percentage work, can best be understood as deriving from economic necessity. People who immigrate at a later stage in their life cycle incur a greater loss in socio-economic status, and one of the responses to this is for the wife to work in an effort to help regain the lost status.[3]

This effect of age at immigration overrides the effect of exposure to Israel at an early age, which presumably would make women more familiar with the labor market conditions in Israel, enabling them to prepare themselves accordingly. It should be noted that the effect of being born in Israel is also not significant when variables explaining the differences between native-born and immigrant Israelis (especially age) are controlled.

The negative effect of having a baby at home is well-documented in other case studies around the world. It is interesting that the number of children at home has an effect on labor force participation independent of having a very young child at home.

The negative relationship between age and labor force participation reflects, in part, decreasing physical capabilities among older women, and also, perhaps more significantly, a gradual change in norms in most industrial countries since the Second World War toward a greater acceptance and expectation that married women, even young mothers, will work (documented most clearly for the United States by Mason *et al.*, 1976).

The regression shows that ethnic origin does not have a significant effect on labor force participation independent of the ethnic differentials in family size, socio-economic status, education and mother's education. This does not mean that AA and EA women have the same rate of labor force participation: we know that this is not so. However, the effect of ethnicity can be explained by differences in education, mother's education, family size, and socio-economic status, i.e., variables controlled in the regression equation.

Attitudes toward Women Working

The multiple regression analysis of attitudes toward women working showed significant positive effects of education, mother's education, family income, birth in Israel and European or Anglo-Saxon background; and significant negative effects of age and religiosity. Number of children, age of the youngest child, husband's occupational prestige and age at immigration have no significant effects (Table 3).

The association of education with greater acceptance of women's participation in the labor force has been documented in studies in the United States and apparently stems from the emphasis on achievement rather than ascriptive criteria in the school

system, as well as from the investment in preparing for a productive role in the economy implied in the years spent in formal schooling. It is interesting that the effect of the mother's education persists for her daughter, either through the role-model she presents, the values on which she raises her daughter, or her encouragement of opportunities for activities which would promote her daughter's later participation in the labor force.

The fact that religiosity is negatively related to approval of married women working is interesting for two reasons: first, the lack of effect of religiosity on actual labor force participation, which we saw above; and second, the lack of an official stand of the Jewish religion on women's roles in the economy[4]. While the family is very important in the Jewish religion, this need not preclude participation of mothers and wives in the labor force, and there is in fact a tendency in many religious families for the husband to continue his religious studies while the wife works to support the family. Further, actually having more children does not significantly affect the attitudes of the women, even though religiosity is associated with larger family size (M. Hartman, 1984). It might be very interesting to study in greater detail the source of this negative relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward married women working.

The zero order correlation between ethnic origin and attitudes was much larger than the beta coefficient ($r = .315; \beta = .081$), but the beta coefficient is still significant at $\alpha = .05$. While education and mother's education explain many of the ethnic differences in attitudes, significant differences between the ethnic groups persist even when the other variables are controlled.

Similarly, birth in Israel continues to exert a significant effect on the attitudes in the direction of increased acceptance of nonfamilial roles for women. This effect is also reduced greatly by the control of education and mother's education. In other words, women born in Israel tend to approve more of women working, partly because of their exposure to Israeli society, partly because of their higher level of education and the fact that they were educated in Israel, and partly because their mothers were more educated and therefore transmitted similar sex-role norms to their children.

Division of Family Labor

In the multiple regression analysis of the division of family labor, the significant influences are age (older women are more likely to receive help with household tasks); number of children (women with fewer children are more likely to share family roles); age of the youngest child (women whose children are older have more help, perhaps from their children as well as their husbands); education (more-educated women share more tasks); and husband's occupational prestige (women with higher socio-economic status have more help, perhaps because they can afford more hired help) (Table 4). Being born in Israel and age at immigration are not significantly related to family division of labor. Similarly, our data show that differences in the family division of labor between women of EA and AA origin can be explained by differences in age, family size, age of children, education, and socio-economic status.

Table 3. Beta Coefficients Resulting from Multiple Regression Model. Dependent Variable: Attitudes toward Married Women Working

Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient
Age	-.081*
Years of schooling	.154*
Mother's years of schooling	.180*
Family income (minus wife's)	.085*
Husband's occupational prestige	.001
Number of children	-.051
Age of youngest child	-.008
Religiosity	-.152*
Ethnic origin (high value = EA)	.081*
Birth in Israel	.088*
Age at immigration	-.038
Multiple R	.540

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$.

Table 4. Beta Coefficients Resulting from Multiple Regression Model. Dependent Variable: Family Roles[a]

Independent Variable	Beta Coefficient
Age	.218*
Years of schooling	.093*
Mother's years of schooling	.040
Family income (minus wife's)	.022
Husband's occupational prestige	.051
Number of children at home	-.086*
Age of youngest child	.185*
Having 0 - 2 year old at home	.033
Having 3 - 5 year old at home	.017
Religiosity	.032
Ethnic origin (high value = EA)	-.007
Birth in Israel	.026
Age at immigration	-.018
Multiple R	.220

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$.
a Index described in text.

Attitudes toward Family Roles

While constraints such as the woman's physical ability (indicated by age), the number of children present in the home and their ages, and the ability to afford hired help and/or obtain worthwhile employment appear to be the major influences on women's family role behavior, we would expect the woman's desired division of labor within the home to be much more highly influenced by cultural and value orientations.

If the woman's role in the home is held in high regard, she would be more likely to place value on that role and not desire to deviate from it. On the other hand, if the family role is a constant source of conflict with valued nonfamilial roles, the women would be more likely to wish that it were less demanding. Since AA men tend to disapprove of women working outside the home (Weller *et al.*, 1976), they are more likely to place high expectations on the AA woman's role in the home, and we expect the AA wife to evaluate her role similarly. Therefore, we expect ethnicity to have a more direct effect on attitudes toward the family division of labor than it did on family role behavior.

According to the multiple regression model predicting desired division of labor in the family, the significant effects are education, birth in Israel and religiosity. More-educated women desire a more equitable division of labor in the home, as do less religious women and women born in Israel (as opposed to immigrants). Differences in the desired division of labor between ethnic groups can be explained by differences in age, education, socio-economic status, number of children and the other independent variables; when these variables are controlled, ethnic differences are not significant.

Table 5. Beta Coefficients Resulting from Multiple Regression Model. Dependent Variable: Desired Division of Labor in the Family

Independent Variables	Beta Coefficient
Age	.088
Years of schooling	.184*
Mother's years of schooling	.001
Family income (minus wife's)	.044
Husband's occupational prestige	-.015
Number of children at home	-.042
Age of youngest child	.102
Having 0 - 2 year old at home	-.015
Having 3 - 5 year old at home	-.040
Religiosity	-.070*
Ethnicity (high value = EA)	.044
Generation in Israel	.105*
Age at Immigration	.037
Multiple R	.302

* Significant at $\alpha = .05$.

The fact that a woman is born in Israel does not affect her actual behavior in the family or in the economy; however, Israeli-born women display more favorable attitudes toward married women working and egalitarian roles in the family. Similarly, religiosity affects expressed attitudes but not the actual behavior in the family or in the economy.

It might also be noted that many more women are interested in sharing their responsibilities for household tasks than actually do so (Table 6). Of those women who share only the responsibilities for childcare, child discipline and minor household repairs (categories 1, 2, and 3 of the actual division of labor), 70-80% desire a more equitable division of labor. In the other categories of the division of [illegible], there is

greater satisfaction with the actual division of labor, but among women who are not satisfied in the middle categories (4 - 6), the majority desire more participation by others in household activities. In households which display the most egalitarian division of labor (categories 7 - 9), on the other hand, women did not express the desire to receive more help with household tasks, but rather the wish to take on more responsibilities themselves. In fact as the actual division of labor becomes increasingly egalitarian, or modern, more of the women are willing to accept even greater responsibilities than they currently shoulder. Perhaps this reflects a tendency to want to resemble the "normal" division of familial labor as they perceive it. This would also explain why there is a greater desire for less responsibility at the traditional end of the actual division of labor scale.

Table 6. Desired Division of Familial Labor by Actual Division of Familial Labor

	Actual Division of Familial Labor[a]					
	(Traditional		----------			Modern)
	1 - 2	3	4	5	6	7 - 9
% desiring actual division of labor	20.0	27.9	45.5	57.2	32.5	67.2
% desiring less responsibility[b]	80.0	69.6	44.6	30.3	40.0	—
% desiring more responsibility[c]	—	2.5	9.9	12.5	27.5	32.8
Total %	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
(N)	(426)	(391)	(225)	(287)	(136)	(131)

Missing cases = 158

[a]Index described in text.

[b]Score on "desired family roles" index (described in text) higher than score on "actual family roles" index.

[c]Score on "desired family roles" index lower than score on "actual family roles" index.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that some variables consistently explain some of the variations in women's role orientations, whether behavior or attitudes, whereas other variables are related either to behavior or to attitudes, and some variables do not show a significant relationship when intervening variables are controlled.

Education influences all of the dependent variables considered: more-educated women work to a larger degree in the labor force, practice more equitable division of labor at home, approve more of married women working and desire a more equitable division of labor at home than do less-educated women. Age is associated with both familial and economic role behavior (younger women work more in the labor force but get less help with their family roles than do older women) and approval of married women working.

Not having young children at home facilitates labor force participation and is also associated with having more help with family roles (perhaps because older children are less dependent on the mother and can help more). Similarly, having fewer children facilitates both labor force participation and familial role-sharing. However, neither of the child-related variables are significantly related to attitudes toward women's roles.

On the other hand, religiosity is related only to the attitudinal variables and not to the behavioral indicators. Apparently, the degree of religiosity influences one's perspective on life but other factors are of more importance in determining actual role behavior.

Mother's years of education are related to labor force participation and to an approving attitude to married women working, perhaps because of the role-model established in formative years, or perhaps because this variable indicates the socio-economic status of the family of origin and hence the different opportunities to engage in work-preparatory experiences. It is interesting that the effect of mother's education is not reflected in either family role behavior or desired family roles. Further study of the influence of parental characteristics on role behavior would clarify the effect of this variable and perhaps deepen our understanding of how role orientations are handed down from generation to generation.

The paper has shown that apparent ethnic differences in married women's labor force participation, in family division of labor at home, and in desired family roles can be explained by differences in age, family size, education, mother's years of education and socio-economic status. However, ethnic differences in attitudes toward married women working cannot be completely explained by the controlled variables. Those ethnic differences which do exist tend to be smaller among the Israeli-born than among immigrants, partly because of the greater similarity in education, family size and socio-economic status among the Israeli-born.

Differences between immigrants and the Israeli-born in labor force participation and in division of labor at home were also explained by differences in age, education, family size, socio-economic status, and mother's education. However, differences in attitudes between these two groups were not completely explained by the independent variables measured. Israeli-born women are more accepting of women's work outside the home and also see role-sharing in the home in a more desirable light than many immigrants.

One possible source of such differences is that immigrant women may not be aware of the extent to which family roles and work roles can be integrated in Israel. Perhaps the opportunities for women's involvement in nonfamilial activities should be better brought to the attention of female immigrants. This could be done by pointing out the possibilities for obtaining hired help or childcare facilities, or even by subsidizing such help so as to facilitate the labor force participation of immigrant women who wish to work but are at present hampered by their familial roles.

FOOTNOTES

[1] The study was sponsored by a Ford-Rockefeller Foundation Grant for Research on Population and Development Policy (principal investigator, Moshe Hartman). Details of the sampling procedure and the representativeness of the sample, and more details on the development of the measures used can be found in M. Hartman (1978) and H. Hartman (1983).
In brief, it may be noted that in comparison with Labor Force Survey data of 1975 (the same year as the survey reported on in this paper), the sample includes a distribution of women by age very similar to that in the total population. Israeli-born women and EA immigrants are, however, somewhat overrepresented, even though 1/3 of the sample are AA immigrants. This ethnic bias partially explains a slight overrepresentation of university-educated women and an underrepresentation of families with many children. These biases are controlled in the multiple regression analyses and thus do not affect the conclusions of this paper.

[2] Nine ranks resulted from the Guttman scale, ranging from "all tasks performed mainly by the wife" (6.6%) to "no tasks performed mainly by the wife" (1.6%). In all categories except the latter, cooking was done mainly by the wife (in 98.4% of the cases); in 95.2% of the cases laundry was done mainly by the wife; it was more common for the wife to clean house, wash dishes, and do the everyday shopping (in that order). The activities the wife was least likely to perform alone were taking care of the children, child discipline, and, at the bottom of the list, minor household repairs (66% of cases). The order of activities wives desired to perform alone was the same as the actual reported division of labor, and the Guttman scale categories were the same in both measures (although percentage distribution differed).

[3] As Oppenheimer (1980) has suggested, families use the wife's work as an adaptive strategy to extricate themselves from the "economic squeeze," which occurs "when aspirations, costs and income get out of balance." Other research (Hoffman, 1975) showed that "wives were more likely to enter the working force when their family incomes dropped from their former level than when they remained stable or increased."

[4] There is no official Jewish stand on whether women should work outside the home, but when we asked our sample whether the Jewish religion encourages women to stay at home, 41% replied affirmatively, 33% negatively, and 26% said the religion advocated no definite position. The ambiguity of the official stand is thus reflected in public perception of it.

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