

PUBLIC OPINION AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTION

ON WORK, FAMILY, AND GENDER, 1945-1990

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ABSTRACT: There have been tremendous changes in congressional debate and federal policy focusing on work, family, and gender since the end of World War II. This paper considers how Congress defined and redefined the "problem" of work, family, and gender; the policies it considered; and how policy changed in response to public opinion and the internal logic of the policy process. Congressional action generally moved together with public opinion, as both became more "liberal" and egalitarian over time. But critical aspects of congressional action depended on how Congress happened to view the problem and possible solutions at times when action of some kind seemed relatively urgent. Congressional action stimulated evaluation of current policies and proposals for policy innovation, by women's organizations, intellectuals, federal bureaucrats, and members of Congress, and these evaluations led to calls for further action. Changing views of pregnancy played a key role in moving policy debates from a focus solely on the workplace to a broader focus on how both men and women can balance the competing obligations of work and family.

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World War II brought dramatic change to women's opportunities and roles in the labor market and at home. By pulling millions of men out of the civilian labor force and into the military, while at the same time demanding huge amounts of war materiel, the war created a shortage of male labor so acute that employers were led--almost forced--to hire women for jobs normally reserved for men. Even the military brought women into its ranks, creating special women's units in each branch of the service. And with so many of the men in the military taken far from their homes for long periods of time, their wives often became, in fact if not in name, heads of households, taking on responsibilities which custom would have assigned to their husbands in time of peace.

The end of the war brought millions of men back home and, along with them, a backlash against women occupying non-traditional roles at work and in the home. Women were forced out of many traditionally male jobs--often their work, praised during the war, was described in retrospect as inadequate--and faced a great deal of pressure not only to start families but to leave the labor force altogether and become full-time wives and mothers. Public and private calls for a return to "separate spheres"--men in the labor force as breadwinners, women at home as wives and mothers--were frequent and intense.

This return to separate spheres was in no way impeded by public policy; indeed, some policies encouraged it. No laws prohibited employers from discriminating against women. Protective labor legislation, ostensibly shielding women from the harshest aspects of employment, actually prohibited employers from treating women the same as men, under some circumstances. The continued existence of the women's units of the armed services was

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in doubt. Many employers fired women who became pregnant. So strong was the belief that married women belonged at home that many school systems would hire women as teachers only if they were single and fired them if they married.¹

The end of the war also saw, however, a first, very modest attack in the U.S. Congress on the ideology of separate spheres. It had long been seen as reasonable that men be paid more than women, even when they were doing the same work; men, after all, had families to support, while women did not. The sponsors of the bill entitled "The Equal Pay Act of 1945," however, wanted pay to be based on performance, not family status; the bill would have prohibited employers from paying women less than men when they were doing the same work (Harrison 1988:39).

The bill did not pass; indeed, it would be 18 years before Congress would enact even a weakened version of it. Under those circumstances, no one in Congress, and surely almost no one outside it, could have guessed where that modest attack on separate spheres might lead. But by the early 1990s, federal policy had been transformed: employers were prohibited from discriminating against women not only in pay for doing the same work, but in hiring, promotion, firing, and many other terms and conditions of employment; the women's units of the armed services had been eliminated, not to end women's participation in the military but to integrate them into the regular services in a range of specialties and command positions that would have seemed astonishing in 1945; protective labor legislation and marriage bars had been legally abolished; not only were employers prohibited from discriminating against women who married, but from discriminating against women who were pregnant as well; and many employers were required to provide leave (albeit limited and unpaid) to employees who needed to care for newborns, older children, other dependents, and parents--not only women employees, but men as well.

What caused this transformation in public policy? In this paper, we examine how the transformation was related to three factors: (1) the way the "problem" of work, family, and gender was defined by members of Congress; (2) the alternative policies they could select to address the problem; and (3) public opinion on work, family, and gender.

Our approach is based on Kingdon's work (1984) and on recent work on public opinion and public policy. In Kingdon's view, the federal policymaking process is essentially "organized anarchy" (1984:92; this is a characterization of its inherent organizational properties, not a criticism). Those who make policy confront a complex environment; they are bombarded by far more demands and information than they can process satisfactorily; they are urged to address problems which have no obvious solution. In such an environment, Kingdon argues, policymaking proceeds in three "streams": (1) the stream of problem definition, in which particular conditions come to be seen as problems potentially amenable to solution by government; (2) the stream of policy creation, in which alternative policy proposals are developed and refined; and (3) the stream of politics, in which public opinion, election campaigns, interest groups, and other forces push the government to act.

Although one could imagine the three streams neatly related to each other--for example, the public could see a problem and demand congressional action, and Congress acts after carefully examining alternative policy proposals--in fact the streams often move quite independently. Groups struggle to get the public and policymakers to define some condition as a problem in a particular way; those who have developed policies seek problems to apply them to (as, for example, those who favor "deregulation" try to find more policy domains to deregulate); and pressures on government rise and fall, sometimes according to predictable timetables (for example, the electoral cycle) and sometimes influenced by less-predictable events (an international crisis, a plane crash, a March on Washington). Significant policy

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change comes about most often when the three streams are joined--for example, when a crisis attracts public attention, some groups manage to get the public to see the problem a particular way, the public demands government action, and Congress turns to the apparent solution which is most readily available. There is a great deal of order to the process (it is organized anarchy); some groups have more of the resources helpful in winning public attention, some policy proposals can be expected to seem plausible to most people while others will seem outrageous, changes in the party balance will often affect policy outcomes, and so on. But there is a great deal of randomness as well (it is organized anarchy); unpredictable events may have major consequences.

Public opinion plays an equivocal role in Kingdon's approach. No theory of democratic politics--indeed, no serious discussion of democratic politics--can ignore public opinion, because the institutions of democratic politics were designed to give the public substantial influence over public policy. Yet the complexities of mass politics raise doubts about the magnitude of the public's influence. Unlike some social scientists and much of the public, Kingdon sees politicians as very sensitive to public opinion (1984:68-71, 217). Public opinion can force the government to take up certain issues and sometimes causes government to adopt particular policies. More often, however, public opinion only prevents government action; it does not cause it. Because the public is not concerned about most issues, policymakers have considerable freedom of action, but they also know that there are many policies the public would not accept; they "sense some boundaries that are set on their actions by the mood of the mass public...and believe they must operate within them" (1984:217).

Other social scientists have higher expectations. While acknowledging the complexities of mass politics highlighted by Kingdon, they argue that public opinion often does cause policy change. Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson (1995:543) argue that American politics is

characterized by what they call "dynamic representation," "that public opinion moves meaningfully over time, that government officials sense this movement, and that...those officials alter their behavior in response to the sensed movement;" and their view is echoed by many others (e.g., Arnold 1990; Erikson, Wright, and McIver 1993; Jones 1994; Page and Shapiro 1983).

What of federal policy on work, family, and gender? We have learned something about how Congress defined the "problem" of work, family, and gender (Burstein and Bricher 1997) and about the policy alternatives developed by members of Congress (Burstein, Bricher, and Einwohner 1995). But no one has systematically examined the relationship between public opinion and policy change or shown how the three streams of problem definition, policy creation, and politics came together to transform public policy.² That is what we propose to do. Our approach is not comprehensive, most obviously because we do not consider how non-governmental organizations influenced policy; but we do describe the roles of some key factors in the policy process.

WHAT CONGRESS WAS DOING: CONCEPTS AND DATA

We are interested in public policies regulating relationships among work, family, and gender in the United States. We cannot study all such policies; it is simply impractical to analyze the several potentially relevant areas of the law (including labor and family law) at the state and local levels for all of American history. Instead, we focus strategically on how members of Congress proposed, between 1945 and 1990, to regulate how work organizations--private employers, government agencies, and labor unions--are to address gender issues and family roles. We focus on Congress because of its central role in American politics; on regulation of the labor market (rather than family law) because it has been a major focus on federal

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policymaking; on the period since 1945 because it has been a time of great change which is better-documented than earlier periods; and on congressional proposals, and not just laws, because it seems important to analyze how changes in public opinion were related to the growth of support in Congress for new policies--that is, we are concerned about the process of policymaking, and not only its results.

What's the Problem?

In the 1945 congress there were no bills proposing to prohibit gender discrimination in the labor market (beyond equal pay) or to require employers to provide family and medical leave, as we understand those terms today, for a simple reason: the problems such bills would address--gender discrimination broadly defined, and men and women juggling obligations to job and family--did not exist.

This is not to say that employers treated men and women the same way, or that it was easy to balance the demands of job and family. Obviously, neither was the case. Rather, the problems did not exist in the sense that the difficulties people faced were not viewed as public problems--as conditions the government could, and should, do something about. (In current terminology, a "difficult condition" becomes a problem only when people think something can be done about it, and a public problem when they argue that the government should do something; see Kingdon 1984:115). Public problems are socially constructed--and many of the problems whose existence we take for granted hadn't been constructed yet. (This section draws heavily on Burstein and Bricher 1997.)

If we want to understand the transformation of federal policy on work, family, and gender, we have to learn how Congress defined the "problem" of work, family, and gender. If most members of Congress do not see any public problem associated with work, family, and

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gender, Congress will not act. If they do see (or are convinced to see) a problem, the action they take will be influenced by how the problem is defined. Although the connection between problem and solution is often rather loose, Congress is likely to respond quite differently if its members see the problem as women neglecting their families when they work outside the home, as opposed to seeing the problem as women being denied job opportunities because of discrimination by employers.

Of course, there is no reason to expect that all members of Congress will define the problem the same way. In fact, competition among problem definitions often plays a critical role in policy change. As Weiss (1989) has written, competition "...lays the fundamental groundwork for the ensuing struggle over the construction of useful policy alternatives [and] authoritative adoption of a policy choice." The victory of a particular definition "shapes the ensuing action [and]...legitimizes some solutions rather than others." So important is the competition that "much policymaking, in fact, is preoccupied with whose definitions shall prevail" (pp. 97-98).

In Congress, the key locus of problem definition is the congressional committee. The committees decide which of the thousands of bills introduced during each congress will win a hearing, decide who will have the opportunity to present their views formally, and gather and organize the evidence for and against competing proposals. Although committees draw heavily on ideas provided by others (most immediately, by sponsors of bills), it is they who define the problems Congress is to address, propose particular solutions, and channel the debate.

To describe how congressional committees defined the problem of work, family, and gender, we draw on work which content-analyzed all reports on work, family, and gender issued by House and Senate committees between 1945 and 1990--69 reports in all.³ We focus Burstein/Wierzbicki, 6/97, p. 7

on two key aspects of how the committees defined the problem: the harm they identified and its cause (Stone [1989] and Weiss [1989] provide much of the basis for this discussion).

On the basis of prior work and a preliminary reading of the reports, five types of harm which committee members might plausibly have associated with work, family, and gender were identified (more than one of which could have been identified in any given report): harms stemming from (1) women not fulfilling their "traditional" roles; (2) inequality in sex-segregated contexts (such as the military, where sex segregation was long taken for granted, but concerns could be raised about how women were treated anyway); (3) minors being insufficiently protected from the working of labor markets (as addressed in child labor laws); (4) unequal treatment by gender, broadly construed; and (5) difficulties balancing obligations to home and work. Every committee report--meaning the report supported by a majority of the committee--was read to determine how the particular committee, at the particular time, had seen the harm associated with work, family, and gender. The 51 minority reports which accompanied the committee reports were read as well (some committee reports were accompanied by more than one minority report).

The harms could have been attributed to seven different causes (possibly more than one cause in any given report): (1) innate differences between men and women (most likely, biological); (2) decisions by individual women (in what might be an individualistic, free-market view of the harm); (3) decisions by individual men; (4) economic organizations (businesses, unions); (5) the federal government; (6) other organizations; and (7) macro-level social change.

Thus, the range of possible problem definitions was considerable. Committee members could have seen women causing harm by neglecting their traditional roles, as the result of their own decisions; women suffering from employment discrimination by employers; families being damaged by the difficulties parents were having trying to balance work and family

responsibilities, with the difficulties stemming from broad patterns of social change; and so on.

How the committees actually defined the problems, and how the definitions changed over time, will be addressed below.

What's the Solution?

How did members of Congress propose to deal with the problems defined by the congressional committees? What alternative policies did they consider?

For members of Congress, policy alternatives are embodied in bills. To analyze what Congress proposed to do about work, family, and gender, therefore, we analyzed all bills and joint resolutions introduced between 1945 and 1990 in which members of Congress proposed to regulate how organizations in one sphere--the paid workplace--are to treat individuals as they are defined in the other sphere, in terms of family status and gender--as men, women, minor children, parents or potential parents (pregnant women and those seeking to adopt), and spouses.

Virtually all such bills were one of three types (this section draws heavily on Burstein et al. 1995). Separate spheres bills propose to limit the opportunities available to women and children, or maintain the physical separation of home and workplace. Essentially, their goal is to keep women and children out of the paid labor force or restrict them to subordinate positions.⁴ Examples of separate spheres bills include "protective" labor bills, which limit women's hours or access to jobs; bills providing leave for mothers to care for newborns, but not for fathers; and bills keeping children out of the labor force. Some separate-spheres bills, especially those limiting child labor, are customarily seen as progressive, but they did often have the effect of limiting mothers' opportunities to work outside the home.

Equal opportunity bills challenge limitations on women's opportunities in the public

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sphere by requiring employers to employ and evaluate women in the labor force on the same terms as men, or at least to move in that direction. They reduce the separation between home and work by making it easier and more rewarding for women to enter the paid labor force, but do not directly address men's or women's family responsibilities.⁵ Examples include bills mandating equal pay for men and women doing the same jobs, equal access for men and women to certain positions in the military, and general equal employment opportunity bills.

Work-family accommodation bills narrow the separation between home and paid work by requiring employers to take employees' family responsibilities into account without making any distinctions on the basis of gender. Thus, they go beyond equal opportunity bills, by requiring equal treatment not only with regard to job performance, but with regard to family obligations as well. Often this means enabling men and women workers to meet family obligations during hours they would normally devote to paid work; many such bills go beyond requiring equal treatment in the labor force to encouraging, or at least facilitating, a more equal division of labor in the home.⁶ Examples of work-family accommodation bills include bills requiring employers to provide leave to employees to care for newborn babies or sick family members, bills subsidizing employer-provided child care, and bills prohibiting employers, when determining benefits, from penalizing employees who take time off when children are born.

We gauge support for each type of bill two ways: number of sponsors and enactment. Number of sponsors is a useful indicator of support for proposals that have not reached the floor for a vote. Enactment indicates the greatest support, of course; it requires, in addition to majorities in both houses, either presidential approval or enough support--two-thirds of each House--to override a veto.

We might expect to find any one of a number of patterns of congressional support for
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competing policy alternatives. For example, the conventional wisdom about the postwar period might lead one to expect substantial support for separate spheres bills during the 1940s and 1950s; similarly, there could have been a resurgence of support for separate spheres in recent years, as talk of "family values" has become prominent in congressional debate. There could have been long periods of struggle between proponents of different visions of work, family, and gender, with one view winning over the other only gradually; or dramatic events might have changed the balance of support overnight. The actual patterns of support will be described below.

PUBLIC OPINION: THEORY AND DATA

As noted above, Kingdon has rather low expectations for the impact of public opinion on policy change--he thinks public opinion often prevents congressional action but seldom causes it--while other social scientists believe that public opinion exerts a substantial impact on policy change. The disagreement is more empirical than theoretical, however. Both sides see Congress as sensitive to public opinion; both also agree that Congress often has considerable latitude in what it does because the public cares little about most issues and does not demand that Congress do anything in particular. The disagreements are about just how sensitive Congress is, how often the public may be brought to care about an issue, and how clear and consistent the public's opinions are likely to be. . Congressional responsiveness is not simply a matter of translating majority opinion into public policy. Congress is most likely to respond when the public makes unambiguous and intense demands that the government act.

It is important that public opinion be unambiguous because members of Congress fear that votes out of line with public opinion make them vulnerable to attack; their preference is to avoid acting until the majority favoring one side is large and growing larger.

Demands must be intense because Congress normally delegates much of its work to its committees, which in turn often consult the groups most interested in particular issues and best organized to make their wishes known. This decentralization works well under most circumstances, because it enables Congress to deal with many issues at once and respond to the desires of those who care most about issues; members of Congress try not to antagonize the public unnecessarily, but also know that most people don't care much about most issues. For Congress as a whole to pay acute attention to the public as a whole on a particular issue, many of its members must become convinced that the public cares so intensely about the issue that the issue will play a significant role in the next election.

Finally, it is important that the public not only have opinions on an issue--possibly strong opinions--but that the opinions lead to demands that the government act. Much of the public distinguishes between what it sees as desirable and what it would like the government to act on. For example, during the 1950s a majority of Americans opposed racial discrimination in employment and public accommodation, but also believed that the issues should be dealt with privately and not by the federal government; similarly, millions of the Americans who believe abortion to be morally wrong also believe that it is a matter to be decided by women and their physicians rather than by government (Blendon, Benson, and Donelan 1993).

Thus, to determine congressional responsiveness to public opinion, one should have data on what the public wants (or believes), preferably over fairly long periods of time, how badly it wants it, and whether it wants the government to act. Unfortunately, such data are not available on most issues. There are very few issues on which good public opinion data are available going back to at least 1945, and even fewer on which the public is regularly asked whether they want government action. Data on the intensity of public concern may be said to be available by inference. The Gallup organization has been asking people for more than 50

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years what they see as the most important problems facing the country; few issues are mentioned often enough to be reported, so the many others may be assumed relatively unimportant (or at least not "most important") to the vast majority of Americans.

The lack of data means that virtually any analysis of public opinion and public policy must rest on far less evidence than would be desirable. But public opinion is so central to theories of democratic politics that it must be taken into account as much as possible in any serious analysis of policy change. Data for this analysis come from Gallup polls from 1945 through the 1970s, the General Social Survey, the National Election Studies surveys, Harris/Virginia Slim polls from the early 1970s, and individual surveys from the 1980s and early 1990s conducted on behalf of ABC News, CBS News, the Washington Post, and the New York Times. Sources for specific questions are presented in the appendix.

FINDINGS

What's the Problem?

How did congressional committees define the "problem" of work, family, and gender? Here we describe what harm they saw themselves addressing and what they saw as its cause.

The conventional view of the immediate postwar period might lead us to expect that the committees would have been very much concerned about harm caused by women's participation in the paid labor force and their neglect of traditional roles as wives and mothers. But that was not the case. In fact, not a single committee report--majority or minority, then or later--proposed congressional action to deal with harm resulting from women not fulfilling their traditional roles (table 1).

table 1

Instead, even in the immediate postwar period, the committees focused on harm imposed on women as the result of their being treated worse than men. During the 1940s and 1950s, two views of gender inequality were on the congressional agenda. In the narrower view, committee members saw harm in women being rewarded less than men of equal rank and experience, but saw no harm in segregating jobs by sex, and, indeed, explicitly favored it (this view was expressed by the armed services committees). In the broader view, committee members saw simply saw harm in unequal treatment of any kind. At first, the narrower view was expressed more frequently (in twelve reports, to eight for the broader view). But then, quite abruptly, it disappeared. Of the 27 reports focusing on unequal treatment issued after 1960 (26 focusing on unequal treatment alone, and one on unequal treatment together with competing obligations), not a single one took the narrower view. This is not to say that committee members have always viewed sex discrimination the way we do today; probably no member of Congress (and few people outside it) in the 1940s, 1950s, or 1960s could even have imagined how ideas about sex discrimination would change in subsequent decades. But their focus on unequal treatment by gender (and their proposals to do something about it) was a clear conceptual break with the doctrine of separate spheres, and redefined the "problem" of work, family, and gender in a way which led to today's views.

From the early 1960s to the mid-1980s, the harm of greatest concern to the committees was that associated with unequal treatment by gender. Then a new concern won committee attention: committees first recognized harm caused by the difficulties meeting competing obligations to family and paid work in 1985, and addressed it in reports issued in that congress and every subsequent one. The "new" problem did not displace the old; there is no necessary contradiction between concerns about equal opportunity and about work-family contradiction, Burstein/Wierzbicki, 6/97, p. 14

and both have been the ongoing focus of committee activity.

What did the committees identify as the causes of the harms they identified? As noted above, the committees could have attributed harm to a variety of causes, including innate biological differences between men and women, and the freely made choice of men and women themselves. It is easy to imagine such attributions being made by committee members during the 1940s and 1950s, and perhaps even by conservatives today.

In fact, however, only one report ever argued that harm was caused by innate differences between men and women, and none suggested that men's or women's choices were responsible (table 2; there are more "causes" in this table than "harms" in table 1 because committees could attribute harms to more than one cause). Instead, the committees see harm as caused mainly by economic organizations, the federal government, and social change not associated with any particular organizations. (Many reports focused on the federal government because they were considering how it treated its own employees, including the military; others were concerned about imperfections or loopholes in existing federal laws.)

table 2 here

Thus, we may say that since 1945 congressional committees never defined the problem of work, family, and gender as one in which harm was being done by women abandoning their traditional roles or as caused by men's or women's innate characteristics or individual decisions. Through the 1950s, two problem definitions competed for dominance on the congressional agenda: a narrower one seeing harm in some types of unequal treatment but not in sex segregation in the labor market, and a broader one simply seeing harm in unequal treatment; from 1960 until the mid-1980s the concern was unequal treatment, broadly defined; Burstein/Wierzbicki, 6/97, p. 15

and since the mid-1980s, the focus has been on the twin problems of unequal treatment and competing obligations to family and paid work.

What's the Solution?

What did members of Congress propose to do about work, family, and gender? To some extent, we would expect the bills they introduce to propose solutions to the problems defined in the committee reports. Yet, as Kingdon points out, the link between "problems" and "solutions" may not be as tight as we might expect intuitively. Individual members of Congress may introduce any virtually bill they like; they need not define the problem the way the committees do, and indeed may be trying to influence the committees' view of the problem.

In a general way, the pattern of support for separate spheres, equal opportunity, and work-family accommodation bills, as gauged by sponsorships, is quite consistent with the pattern of problem definition by committees (figure 1; the nature of the data did not permit us to distinguish between bills addressing inequality in a sex-segregated context from those directed at unequal treatment more broadly; both are treated as equal opportunity bills). Equal opportunity bills got far more support than the other types (2,310 sponsorships out of 3,560); work-family accommodation bills suddenly got a great deal of support beginning in the mid-1980s, just before the committees began to define competing obligations to family and paid work as a problem (the timing suggests that sponsorships led to committee action rather than the reverse); and work-family accommodation and equal opportunity bills are on the agenda simultaneously beginning in the mid-1980s.

figure 1 here

There is one significant way in which support for bills diverges from the pattern of problem definition by committees. Although no committee defined threats to traditional gender roles as a problem, a fair number of separate spheres bills were introduced by individual members of Congress. Indeed, until the end of the Eisenhower administration, separate spheres and equal opportunity bills competed for support, with the former winning a majority of sponsors in some congresses and the latter in others. And there has been some support for separate spheres bills in most congresses since then, with a small upsurge in 1983-84 associated with child-labor legislation. This support for separate spheres is perhaps more in line with the conventional wisdom about the immediate postwar period than the committee problem definitions were; we can't help thinking there must have been some support for separate spheres, and the data on sponsorships show that there was. Nevertheless, support for separate spheres was never very strong, and over the entire period less than ten percent of sponsorships were of separate spheres bills.

It is also worth noting that the number of sponsorships can be quite volatile, far more volatile than either committee reports or changes in public opinion (see below) would suggest. Most often, rapid changes in the number of sponsors is associated with specific events in what Kingdon would call the stream of politics. The dramatic peak in support for equal opportunity bills in 1977-78, for example, was the congressional response to a 1976 Supreme Court decision declaring that differential treatment on the basis of pregnancy did not constitute sex discrimination (more on this below). Enactment of laws reflects both committee concerns and sponsorships. Only one separate spheres bill was enacted between 1945 and 1990 (H.R. [House of Representatives bill number] 5856, in 1949), and it tightened the child labor

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law--a way of maintaining separate spheres, but not a major assault on equal opportunity. In fact, no separate spheres bill has made it out of committee since 1956 (and again, the ones that did dealt with child labor, not explicit support for traditional roles).

By way of contrast, 31 equal opportunity bills were enacted, at least one during every presidential term between 1945 (Roosevelt and Truman) and 1984 (the first Reagan term). Up through 1960, all the laws were directed at giving women more and better opportunities in the military. The breakthrough to greater gender equality in the civilian labor force came with adoption of the Equal Pay Act in 1963. This rather narrow bill, mandating only equal pay for men and women doing the same jobs, was followed just a year later by enactment of the law ushering in what we may think of as the modern era in the legal treatment of gender in the labor market: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited sex discrimination in hiring, promotion, discharge, and many other aspects of employment as well as pay.

Title VII immediately became the focus of efforts to expand opportunities for women in the civilian labor force. (Congress also continued to address the issue of gender equality in the military.) At first, the fight was to strengthen Title VII in ways affecting women and minorities the same way. The prohibition of sex discrimination had been adopted unexpectedly and with little debate--it was added during floor debate to a bill originally directed at discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and national origin--and for a decade almost no attention was devoted to considering what differences there might be between sex discrimination and discrimination against minorities.

This changed in a crucial way in the mid-1970s, as the issue of pregnancy entered the ongoing debate about equal employment opportunity. Traditionally, one of the key tenets of the ideology of separate spheres was that bearing children made women marginal members of the labor force; although women might be in the labor force when young and childless, the
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arrival of children required them to leave the labor force and devote themselves full time to their families. Employers could give practical force to this view--and many did--by firing pregnant employees, refusing to hire women who were pregnant or the mothers of young children, or treating pregnant women less well than other employees.

Did Title VII prohibit employers from treating pregnant women less well than other employees? Title VII prohibited sex discrimination, but did not mention pregnancy, so the legal question was one of definition: Was differential treatment on the basis of pregnancy a form of sex discrimination? When the Supreme Court was asked to answer this question, its answer, in 1976, was no: such treatment did not distinguish between men and women--that would be sex discrimination--but rather between pregnant and non-pregnant persons.

The Court's reasoning might have seemed plausible to most people in 1964, when Title VII was adopted, but by 1976 it seemed absurd to those favoring equal opportunity for women. So strong was the reaction that Congress overruled the Court by amending Title VII (in the Pregnancy Discrimination Act [PDA] of 1978) to define differential treatment on the basis of pregnancy as sex discrimination.

Although the PDA was ostensibly only a small amendment to a major law, it may be seen in retrospect as a breakthrough of tremendous importance, because it brought a key element of women's role in the family--as prospective mothers--into discussions of equal employment opportunity. It was the PDA which first linked work, family, and equal employment opportunity in American law. Even if employers believed in traditional gender roles, it said, even if they wanted to maintain separate spheres by pushing women out of the labor force when they were about to become mothers, they could not legally act on their beliefs; women about to become mothers had the same right to employment as any other adult.⁷

The PDA ratified and possibly accelerated a decades-long trend: Women were
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becoming increasingly likely to return to the labor force soon after having a child; for example, in 1948, 10.8 percent of married women with spouse present and children under six were in the civilian labor force, and by 1987 the percentage had risen to 56.8 (Edwards 1997). This increasingly common pattern of departure-and-reentry led to further legal and personal problems that became, in turn, political issues for Congress.

The legal problem was this: during the 1970s, Congress began to regulate not only how employers dealt with pregnancy, but with how they dealt with pensions as well, in the Employee Retirement and Income Security Act--ERISA. Soon the departure-and-reentry pattern of so many women raised a question for those implementing ERISA: how to deal with "breaks in service" associated with having and caring for children when calculating eligibility for, and the amount of, pensions. The response--in a context becoming more favorable to women's working for pay even when they had children (more on this below)--was a law (the "Retirement Equity Act of 1984," Public Law 98-397, 1984) requiring employers to preserve pension rights for employees who take some time off for childbirth and child-rearing and to provide partial credit toward pensions for time taken off for that purpose.

Again there was a situation in which a seemingly modest change in current law--supported by many conservatives interested mainly in resolving unanticipated inconsistencies between laws--actually represented an important shift in public policy. With passage of the Retirement Equity Act, employers were required not only to provide equal opportunity regardless of pregnancy, but to take some employees' family situation into account on an ongoing basis as well. The next, and much better known, movement in this direction, began in 1985 with the introduction of the first family and medical leave bills.

Family and medical leave bills address one of the most fundamental problems stemming from women being in the labor force even when they have young children: With Burstein/Wierzbicki, 6/97, p. 20

mothers as well as fathers in the labor force, there is no one at home to care for children. This is a serious problem under ordinary circumstances because good child care is expensive and often hard to find; but it far more serious when a child is newborn, ill, or injured, and is seen as requiring parental care. Traditionally, mothers would have been expected to quit their jobs to care for their children under such circumstances, and might have been pressured to do so by employers who became aware of the problem. Such expectations and pressures become less tenable as the idea of gender equality becomes more deeply embedded in law and economic institutions, and women win access to better jobs--but the needs of the children remain. Family and medical leave bills proposed to address this problem by requiring employers to provide time off to care for newborns and sick or injured children--and, in a true break with tradition, to provide such time to men and women equally.

The issue of caring for family members was most obvious, and most clearly linked to prior changes in the law, with regard to newborns; but of course others sometimes need care as well. By the time the Family and Medical Leave Act was signed into law, in 1993, it required employers to provide employees time off to care for adopted as well as biological children, dependent parents, and spouses.

Although the major impetus for work-family accommodation has been change in ideas about women's labor force participation--particularly the belief that having children required them to leave the labor force--it has had another source as well: the economic consequences of divorce. Along with the dramatic increase in divorce in recent years has come an increase in the number of non-custodial parents (most of them fathers) failing to provide for their children financially. Concerned that some such failures were forcing women onto welfare and thereby increasing government expenditures, Congress in the 1970s adopted a law mandating that states seek out the non-custodial parents of children on welfare and, if they were behind on

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court-ordered child-support payments, require employers to withhold part of their wages for that purpose. In 1983, members of Congress proposed for the first time that states and employers do this for all custodial parents--not just those on AFDC--requesting help in getting child-support payments. The proposal won immediate support, and was enacted into law (Public Law 98-378) without opposition (the vote was 413-0 in the House and 99-0 in the Senate) in 1984. Employers were thus required, under some circumstances, to take account of family circumstances (as non-custodial parents behind in support payments) in their treatment of employees.

It can easily be argued that at this point much of what Congress was doing was stimulated by the consequences of its own prior actions and the actions of other governmental institutions (including the Supreme Court). The prohibition of sex discrimination was bound to lead eventually to questions about pregnancy. Once the PDA was adopted and women were, in essence, granted the right to remain in their jobs through pregnancy, Congress was, arguably, bound to find itself dealing with the implications of women remaining in the labor force continuously, with only relatively short breaks for childbirth and caring for infants and toddlers (Edwards 1997).

This does not mean that there was any inevitability to the questions Congress wound up asking, or to the answers it reached. What the questions were at any given time was a function of previous decisions; and what the decisions were depended on how problems were defined, which solutions seemed plausible, and what circumstances were in what Kingdon calls the "political stream," that set of forces which determines whether Congress will act. Among the potentially important forces was public opinion, and it is to that which we now turn.

Public Opinion and Congressional Action

Separate Spheres. Congressional support for separate spheres was greater in the immediate postwar period than it has ever been since, yet, in contrast to what we might have expected, it was not very strong even then (table 3 summarizes some key congressional actions). Why so little congressional support for separate spheres? Could congressional inaction have been consistent with public opinion? What was public opinion on work, family and gender right after World War II, when congressional support for separate spheres was at its peak? And what were the trends thereafter?

table 3 here

It would probably be fair to say that in the years just after the War, the public favored men and women occupying separate spheres; they certainly did not see men and women participating in the labor market on equal terms. Most people--76 percent in 1945--did think that women doing the same work as men should be paid the same amount, in principle (see table 4). But support fell to 66 percent when the question asked was whether a young, single woman should be paid the same as a married man with children, and in 1946 over two-thirds thought that if women were being paid less than men for doing the same job, there was often a good reason for it. Moreover, the proportion thinking that women would, or should, be doing the same work was probably small. Women's very participation in the labor force was seen as a function of their marital status and their husband's ability to earn a living. Although 79 percent of the public felt (in 1949) that it was all right for women to work during the first few years of married life if that were necessary to make the marriage feasible, less than half (39 percent in 1946) approved of a woman "earning money in business or industry" if she had a

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husband capable of supporting her. And those women in the labor force could expect difficulties if they aspired to supervisory positions: three quarters of men and over half of women preferred that a boss in a new job be a man (in 1953).

table 4

The public also saw women's potential role in the military as limited and stereotyped. A large majority could imagine drafting women to fill critical, stereotypically female positions during wartime--three-quarters approved of drafting nurses when Congress was thinking of doing so early in 1945--and almost half favored drafting women to fill typing and clerical jobs in wartime (48 percent in 1951). But when asked about "military training" rather than specific jobs, only a fifth of the public favored drafting women, a third as many as favored drafting men, even when the question specified that women would serve in women's branches of the armed forces. Barely half the public favored providing women with the opportunity to enlist in the military--in women's (that is, sex-segregated) units.

Willingness to vote for a woman for president has often been seen as an indicator of a more general openness to women in untraditional roles. In the years just after the War, a growing minority of the public expressed a willingness to do so, and substantial minorities--with regard to voting for a woman for governor, a small majority--were willing to accept women in other important public roles.

Unfortunately, there are no data on trends in public opinion on separate spheres for the entire period between 1945 and 1990. Trend data are available since the early 1970s, however, on two questions which ask relatively directly whether people believe women should play an important role in the public sphere, or confine their activities mainly to the home: one asks
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whether women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country to men, and the second asks whether women's place is in the home, as opposed to having a role equal to men's in business, industry, and government (table 5).

table 5

Both trends show the public increasingly willing to see women occupying important roles in the public sphere. If we were to extrapolate the trends back to the 1940s--a plausible procedure but not one to place great reliance on--it would probably be fair to guess that a majority of the public then saw women's place as primarily in the home. The actual data, though, may provide some idea why separate spheres proposals have not gotten very far in Congress since the early 1970s; at that time, approximately half the public opposed limiting women to the domestic sphere, and the proportion has been increasing fairly steadily ever since (data are provided through 1994, when available, to add credibility to the trend line).

Probably none of this mattered a great deal to most people. The "most important problem" question does set a high threshold--"most important." Had many people considered work, family, and gender issues important, however, it seems likely that enough would consider them "most important" to show up in the Gallup's published reports--but they never did. No doubt many people were concerned about men's and women's roles, but other issues had higher priority.

So was Congress responding to public opinion when it did little to preserve separate spheres? Perhaps it is fair to say that had Congress done more, the public would not have objected; support for equal opportunity was weak. But there is not much evidence to show that the public wanted more congressional action, either.

There is much less data on public opinion than we might like. Yet it is important to keep in mind that the lack of data meant that Congress, too, was operating in an environment of uncertainty. Had the public been demanding more action, polling organizations would probably have sensed that the preservation of separate spheres was a major issue, and therefore have asked more questions. Our inability to find much evidence of public demand for the preservation of separate spheres suggests that Congress did not see itself confronting demands for action; and, in the absence of a clear message from the public, Congress is not likely to do much to respond to it. Perhaps the most plausible conclusion is a weak one: Congress was not being unresponsive to the public when it failed to do much to preserve separate spheres.

Equal Opportunity. As we know, congressional action on work, family, and gender focused on equal opportunity almost exclusively between the early 1960s and the mid-1980s. Was this what the public wanted? Unfortunately, as with separate spheres, the data needed to address this question directly and comprehensively do not exist. But there are enough data to provide a fairly clear picture of the broad trend in the public's attitudes.

The focus of equal opportunity bills is equal opportunity in the labor force. What we want, therefore are public opinion data which ask only about the labor force, and not about home and family. It is important to keep this in mind because questions often thought of as tapping attitudes about women in the labor force actually make their labor force participation contingent upon their family status--for example, the question, "Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?" (emphasis added).

Since the 1940s, the public has moved consistently toward greater acceptance of women taking on a wider variety of roles in both the civilian labor market and the military, and toward

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greater willingness to see women as just as competent as men (stretching the definition of "labor market" a bit to include the presidency; see tables 6 and 7). The public has become more willing to vote for a woman for president, have a woman as a boss, and agree that women can run most businesses as well as men. Rates of change vary over time and for different questions, but there are no reversals, no movement away from egalitarian attitudes.

tables 6 and 7

These findings are not trivial. Although claims that there was a major "backlash" against women in the 1970s or 1980s cannot be substantiated on the basis of these data, there is no reason to think that attitudes about gender in the labor market inevitably move only one way. While there need not be a perfect correlation between the attitudes of the general public and the attitudes of employers setting women's wages, it is plausible that there is some connection between the two; and there is considerable evidence that sex discrimination in wages increased substantially between roughly 1900 and 1940 (Goldin 1990). If attitudes about women in the labor market can move in both directions, it means something that, since World War II, they have moved in only one.

Trends in attitudes about women in the military are harder to gauge than attitudes about women in the civilian labor market, because there do not seem to be any questions asked of the public repeatedly over substantial periods of time, and no questions at all between the mid-1950s and late 1970s. Nevertheless, the trend does seem to be toward acceptance of women playing a larger part in the military, in a wider range of roles.

At the end of World War II, the public saw women's potential role in the military as limited and stereotyped. As already noted, a majority of Americans could imagine drafting
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women to fill critical, stereotypically female positions during wartime, but most opposed drafting women for "military training" more generally, and barely half favored women enlisting even in sex-segregated units.

There are some real uncertainties involved in trying to compare attitudes about women in the military in the 1940s and 1950s to the attitudes expressed when again asked about the issue, beginning in the late 1970s. Although the Cold War was still on in the late 1970s, questions about drafting women may not have had the same meaning for people then as they had earlier, because the draft no longer existed and war did not seem as likely. Nevertheless, it would be difficult to argue that the data do not suggest a substantial change in attitudes. In 1945, about a fifth of respondents favored drafting women once the War was over; in 1979-80, about two-fifths did, and one-fifth favored drafting them for combat roles--something that was not even suggested in earlier questions. In the early- to mid-1980s, a third of Americans wanted to see more women in the military and a fifth thought increasing their number would raise the military's effectiveness. It is easy to imagine almost everyone approving of women typists in the Pentagon in the late 1940s, as they did in 1992; but it is very difficult to imagine that Americans in the late 1940s would have had the same distribution of preferences as in 1992 on other military roles for women: 71 percent approving of women as transport pilots, 61 percent of women as fighter pilots, 57 percent of women commanding large military bases.

Our data on public opinion tell a consistent story, albeit one without much detail. At the end of World War II, most Americans probably felt that women's major commitment should be to the home and men's to the paid workforce--they supported separate spheres of activity for men and women. There was some support for gender equality, but with limits so much taken for granted that they were not even discussed--people favored equal pay for the same work, but not equal treatment in hiring or promotion.

But the distribution of views was not static. Every time series we have, and every inference we can make, suggest that the public's attitudes about women in the labor force were becoming more egalitarian.

Congressional action was consistent with this trend. Although it might be argued that there was some competition right after the War between the proponents of separate spheres and the proponents of equal opportunity--both kinds of bills got roughly comparable numbers of sponsors, both were the subject of hearings, and both led to the passage of laws--the contest was over by the second Eisenhower administration. As the public became more egalitarian, members of Congress defined unequal treatment as a problem, sponsored more equal opportunity bills, and enacted some into law. It would be difficult to argue that congressional action was being propelled by intense public demands for action; but it does seem to be true that, in a general way, Congress and the public were moving in the same direction.

Work-Family Accommodation. Family and medical leave bills differ from equal opportunity bills in two fundamental ways: they require employers to take cognizance of employees' family responsibilities, and forbid them from acting on the presumption that women alone bear the responsibility for taking care of family members--that is, the employers have to make leave available to women and men equally. One can readily hypothesize that such bills would receive little support unless people were willing to imagine women and men being equal at the workplace and in the home, committed to independent careers and sharing responsibilities for the care of family members.

Trends in attitudes on careers and family responsibilities are similar to trends on equality in the workplace, and consistent with increasing support for work-family accommodation. Increasing proportions of Americans approve of wives taking on roles traditionally assigned to husbands, and of husbands taking on roles traditionally assigned to

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wives: they increasingly approve of a married women earning money (even) if she has a husband to support her, devoting herself to her own career rather than her husband's, achieving outside the home as well as caring for her family, and sharing household responsibilities (table 8). They have also collectively changed their minds about one of the strongest normative impediments to a woman remaining in the workforce once she has a child--the belief that by returning to the workforce a mother harms the child; increasing proportions believe that "a working mother" can have a warm relationship with her child, and that the child need not suffer if his or her mother works (table 9). It is easy to imagine Americans wanting to guarantee that women who have to care for family members should be able to do so without losing their jobs, and even wanting to provide men the same right--though it would be far better if we had data on whether they wanted federal legislation on these issues.

tables 8 and 9

The trends in congressional action are thus consistent with the trends in public opinion. One thing the changes in opinion do not tell us, however, is why Congress shifted its attention to work-family accommodation when it did and in the way it did--quite abruptly in the mid-1980s. It is at this point that we have to consider how the three streams of problem definition, policy alternatives, and public opinion interacted prompt particular actions by Congress.

CONCLUSIONS: PROBLEMS, SOLUTIONS, PUBLIC OPINION, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Was Congress responding to public opinion when it transformed federal policy on work, family, and gender in the decades after World War II? In general, it was, but indirectly. The Burstein/Wierzbicki, 6/97, p. 30

public was not clamoring for federal legislation specifically on work, family, and gender, although the outcry after the Supreme Court's decision on pregnancy discrimination shows that the public was not indifferent either. Still, even when the public called for a policy change, it tended to have no opinion--it could not be expected to have any opinion--on most aspects of most bills. Instead, as the public moved toward more egalitarian views of men's and women's roles in the labor market and at home, Congress enacted laws to mandate equal treatment and require employers to make some accommodation to the needs of working parents. To return to Stimson, MacKuen, and Erikson's view that American politics is characterized by "dynamic representation," we can say that with regard to work, family, and gender, "public opinion move[d] meaningfully over time... government officials sense[d] this movement, and... those officials alter[ed] their behavior in response to the sensed movement" (1995:543).

The specific form of the response, however, was strongly influenced by what had been occurring in the "streams" of problem definition and policy alternatives as well as by public opinion. When something happened which seemed to require Congress to act, what it did was very much a function of how the issue was viewed, what policy proposals seemed most plausible, and what public opinion seemed to demand, or at least permit.

To take a key example: the public was not demanding in 1964 that Congress prohibit sex discrimination in employment. It was, however, demanding that Congress act against discrimination against minorities, and public discourse (outside the South) was filled with powerful arguments about the evils of discrimination and the moral necessity of federal action to ensure equal treatment (Burstein 1985). And then, as Congress debated bills which would ban discrimination on the basis of race, religion, and national origin, a representative moved that sex discrimination in employment be prohibited as well. At this point, the three streams came together. Had members of Congress not seen sex discrimination as a problem, the

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amendment surely would have failed. But congressional committees had been defining sex discrimination as a problem for a long time, and had been providing evidence of its seriousness in their reports; they had not been thinking of sex discrimination defined as broadly as in the bill being debated, but nevertheless their orientation was toward seeing unequal treatment as a problem. Had there been no obvious legislative solution to the problem, no law would have been adopted; but the bill potentially being amended was seemingly such a solution. Had the public opposed the amendment, it might very well have been defeated; but the public was moving toward becoming more egalitarian. Thus, problem, solution, and public opinion joined--and Congress prohibited sex discrimination in employment.

Once it did so, the policy process in this area developed its own logic. A plausible scenario: the passage of Title VII raised the expectations of women who had been working for equality (in the fight for passage of the Equal Pay Act, for example); their disappointment at the failure of the newly created Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to take sex discrimination seriously led to the formation of the National Organization for Women and other groups; intellectual developments prompted by the resurgence of the women's movement led to the development of new policy proposals and new arguments about sex discrimination and gender roles (on these points, see Harrison 1988); these new arguments won enough acceptance so that when another potentially key moment arrived (such as the 1976 Supreme Court decision on pregnancy), Congress found relevant problem definitions and policy proposals readily available; women's continuing entry into the labor market and their increasingly continuous participation in it led to pressure for new definitions of the problem of work, family, and gender, and for new policy proposals; and in a climate of public opinion (possibly itself influenced by past policy changes) becoming increasingly egalitarian, policy proposals favoring equality in the labor market and at home became the seemingly obvious

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ones to support. By the mid-1980s, 20 years after the adoption of Title VII and just a few after adoption of the Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the time was ripe for work-family accommodation--and when work-family accommodation proposals were made, they rapidly won support.

With all the discussion in Congress, the conservative press, and elsewhere of the virtues of the traditional family and of "family values," some may wonder whether the time is ripe to turn back the clock. But this would ignore the difference between individual beliefs that are vociferously expressed and the aggregate that makes up public opinion. For there is no organized support in Congress for work-family legislation intended to get women out of the labor market and back into the home or to get men to relinquish their family involvement for single-minded devotion to jobs. Why not? It is always difficult to explain why things don't happen, but it is reasonable to think that no one in Congress is trying to define equality (as opposed to inequality) defined as a problem when public opinion has moved a long way toward an acceptance of gender equality.

Endnotes

Many districts did eliminate such "marriage bars" during World War II, but Goldin (1990) estimates that even after the war about 18 percent of school districts would not hire a married woman and 10 percent would not keep a single woman who married. It should be kept in mind that under the American legal doctrine of "employment at will," employers have the right to hire and fire for any reason, except when specifically prevented from doing so (in union contracts or civil service regulations, for example). Neither men nor women had many rights vis-a-vis employers.

There have been many studies of public opinion on issues related to work, family, and gender, and some on the determinants of such opinion; but none of these relate public opinion to policy change. See, e.g., Erskine 1971; Ferree 1977; Berlin and Walters 1981; Mason, Czajka and Arber 1976; Mason and Lu 1988; Schreiber 1978; Spitze and Huber 1980; Arntson and Freedman 1979; Wilcox 1993; and Wilkie 1993.

The committee reports are based on hearings held to consider bills on work, family, and gender. The bills themselves are described in the next section. Because the introduction of bills precedes the hearings, it might seem reasonable to describe the bills first and committee reports second. We proceed in the reverse order because logically it makes sense to describe the problems before proposed solutions. The bills obviously influence committee action, but it is really the committee reports that prompt serious consideration of the problem and trying to show how it will be mitigated by a particular bill, which prompt serious consideration in the House and Senate. Congressional activity is reported by "congress," not by year, because congressional activities are organized around the two-year period between elections.

Specifically, they propose that the federal government do any of the following: restrict access to jobs or occupations, or require or permit differential rates of pay or compensation on the basis of family status or gender; require or permit differential time at work on the basis of family status or gender, singling out women, children, or men for special treatment; require that family ties be eliminated from or discouraged in the workplace (e.g., an anti-nepotism rule); limit paid work

home (thereby requiring the geographical separation of work and family).

Specifically, equal opportunity bills propose that the federal government do any of the following: require or permit equal opportunity for jobs or occupations, require equal pay or compensation, or require equal time at the workplace regardless of family status or gender.

Specifically, such bills propose that the federal government: permit differential time at paid work for parents or for both men and women, treating both sexes identically; give employees some control over their own daily work schedules; give employees control over time at work explicitly so they can care for their children, without regard to the worker's sex; require employers to take employees' family circumstances into account in other ways; permit or require the presence of family in the workplace; or permit paid work in the home.

This is not to claim that there was no resistance to the PDA, that employers did not fight to keep its scope as narrow as possible, or that its consequences were foreordained; with regard to work and family, the PDA was a beginning, not a culmination. See Edwards 1996 for a broad discussion of pregnancy discrimination litigation.

APPENDIX: DATA SOURCES

Tables 1-2: Burstein and Bricher 1997.

Figure 1 and table 3: Burstein and Bricher 1997; Burstein, Bricher, and Einwohner 1995.

Table 4: Gallup 1972 and Erskine 1971.

Table 5: Gallup 1982; National Election Studies; Harris 1971.

Table 6: "Woman for president": Gallup 1972, 1982, General Social Surveys; "boss's gender makes no difference," "women run as well," "equal pay for same work": Gallup 1972, 1982; General Social Surveys; Simon and Landis 1989.

Table 7: questions from 1945 through 1980, Gallup 1972, 1982; from 1982-1992, General Social Surveys.

Table 8: "Approve women earning": Erskine 1971, Gallup 1972, General Social Surveys; "Husband's career," "Not better if man the achiever," "Spouses share responsibilities": General Social Surveys.

Table 9: General Social Surveys for years included.

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Table 1: What Harm is Identified by Committee Majorities and Minorities?^a

Congresses	Women not tradi- tional	Inequality in sex-seg- regated context	Unequal treatment	Competing obligations	Treatment and com- peting obligations	Minors not pro- tected	Other ^b	No prob- lem ^c	Total
1945-1960	0	12	8	0	0	3	1	1	25
1961-1984	0	0	22	0	0	3	7	3	35
1985-1990	0	0	4	5	1	0	0	4	14
Total	0	12	34	5	1	6	8	8	74

^aCells represent the number of committee majority and minority reports referring to the various harm categories. Tables 1-2 report on majority and minority reports together.

^bIncludes other harms to children and spouses.

^cThis means that no problem is identified, not that there is an explicit denial that a problem exists.

Table 2: What Causes the Harm?^a

Congresses	Federal govern- ment	Macro- level change	Economic organi- zations	Macro & federal gov.	Econ. orgs. & gov.	Macro & econ. orgs.	Macro, econ. orgs., & gov.	None mentioned	Total
1945-1960	18	1	3	2	0	0	0	8	32
1961-1984	11	5	6	3	2	0	1	6	34
1985-1990	2	9	1	0	2	2	2	1	19
Total	31	15	10	5	4	2	3	15	85

^aCells represent the number of committee majority and minority reports referring to the various causes. "Macro-level change" refers to macro-level economic, political, or social change not attributed to specific groups. "Economic organizations" are businesses and unions. In addition to the categories in the table, one report (issued in 1963) argued that the harm was caused by innate differences between men and women, and one (issued in 1975) argued that political parties caused the harm.

Table 3: Highlights and Turning Points in Congressional Action

1945-1960: Support for separate spheres, and narrow and broad views of gender inequality

1955, last separate spheres bill reported out

1960, last committee report focusing on inequality in a sex-segregated context

1959-60, last time sponsors of separate spheres bills outnumber sponsors of equal opportunity bills

1961-1982: Equal opportunity dominates congressional agenda

1961-82, 90 percent of sponsorships support equal opportunity bills

1963, enactment of Equal Pay Act (first proposed, 1945)

1964, enactment of Civil Rights Act; Title VII prohibits sex discrimination in employment

1972, enactment of amendments to Title VII, expanding coverage and strengthening enforcement

1978, enactment of Pregnancy Discrimination Act

1983- : Congress adds work-family accommodation to the agenda

1983-84, first congress in which work-family accommodation bills win many sponsors

1984, first work-family accommodation bill enacted

1985, family and medical leave bills first introduced

1986, first committee report on family and medical leave bill

1989, family and medical leave bill passes both Houses, vetoed by President Bush

1990, bill to strengthen Title VII passes both Houses, vetoed by President Bush

1991, bill to strengthen Title VII enacted

1993, Family and Medical Leave Act enacted

Table 4: Public Opinion on Work, Family and Gender, Mid-1940s-early 1950s

Women in the civilian labor force:

Women should be paid same as men for same work, 1945 76%

Young, single women should be paid the same as married man
for same work, 1945 66%

Often a good reason for paying women less than men, same job, 1946
men 65%
women 72%

OK for women to work when first married, 1949 79%

OK for woman to earn money if she has husband
who can support her, 1946 39%

Prefer that boss in a new job be a man, 1953
men 75%
women 57%

Makes no difference whether boss is a man or a woman
men 21%
women 29%

Women in the military:

Approve of drafting nurses, 1945 73%

Favor drafting young single women to fill typing and
clerical jobs in armed forces, 1951 48%

After the war, require one year's military training of:
men: 70%
women, in women's branches of armed forces, 1945 22%

Should be units of armed forces in which women could enlist,
in peacetime, 1947 53%

Women and public office:

Would vote for woman for president, 1945 33%
1949 48%
.....for governor, 1945 56%

Approve of woman in president's cabinet, 1945 38%
on Supreme Court, 1945 47%

Table 5: Should Women Have a Public Role, or Stay Home?

Year	Don't agree that men should run country ^a	Women should have equal role ^b
1971	50%	
1972		
1974	64	46%
1975	64	50
1976		
1977	62	50
1978	68	
1980		57
1982	72	58
1983	77	58
1984		
1985	74	54
1986	76	
1988	79	
1989	80	65
1990	82	
1991	81	
1993	85	
1994	86	

^a"Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Women should take care of running their homes and leave running the country to men." [disagree]
 (con.)

table 5, p. 2

^b"Recently there has been a lot of talk about women's rights. Some people feel that women should have an equal role with men in running business, industry, and government. Others feel that women's place is in the home. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven't you thought much about this?" [categories 1-3, "equal role," on 7-point scale]

Table 6: Trends in Public Opinion on Women in the Civilian Labor Market

Year	Vote for woman ^a	Boss's gender Women	makes no difference ^b e ^b Men	Women run as well ^c	Equal pay for same work ^d
1945	33%				
1949	48				
1953		29%	21%		
1954					87%
1955	52				
1958	52				
1962					90
1963	55				
1969	54				
1970				51%	
1971	66				
1972	73				
1973					95
1974	80				
1975	80				
1976		27	32		
1977	79				94
1978	82				
1982	86	30	46	72	
1983	86				
1985	82				
1986	86				
1987		39	57		
1988	88				
1989	86				
1990	90				
1991	91				
1993	91				
1994	92				

^a"If your party nominated a woman for president, would you vote for her if she were qualified for the job?"

^b"If you were taking a new job and had your choice of a boss, would you prefer to work for a man or for a women?"

^c"Do you think women could run most businesses as well as men, or not?"

^dVariously worded questions asking whether women should be paid the same as men if they are doing the same work.

Table 7: Public Opinion on Women in the Military, 1945-1992

1945:

February
Approve of drafting nurses? 73%

After the war, require one year's military training of:
men (May): 70%
women, in women's branches of armed forces
(February) 22%

1947:

Should be units of armed forces in which women could enlist,
in peacetime 53%

1951:

Favor drafting young single women to fill typing and
clerical jobs in armed forces 48%

1954:

Favor drafting women for non-combat duties if
there's a third world war 55%

<u>1979-80:</u>	1979	1980	
If draft becomes necessary, against drafting women		50%	47%
For drafting women, but not in combat roles	22%	25%	
For drafting women, including for combat roles	19%	22%	

1982:

How has increasing number of women in armed forces affected
effectiveness?
Raised effectiveness 20%
Made no difference 60
Reduced effectiveness 8
Don't know 12

1984:

9 percent of armed forces are women.

Is this too many?	8%
About the right number?	58
There should be more	34

(con.)

Table 7, Women in the Military, continued

1992:

Woman in armed forces should be assigned to this job, assuming she is trained to do it:	
typist at the Pentagon	96%
nurse in a combat zone	92
truck mechanic	82
jet transport pilot	71
jet fighter pilot	61
air defense missile gunner in the U.S.	57
commander of a large military base	57
crew member on a combat ship	55
soldier in hand-to-hand combat	34

Table 8: Trends in Public Opinion on Women, Work, and Husbands

Year	Approve women earning ^a	Husband's career not primary ^b	Not better if man the achiever ^c	Spouses share responsibilities ^d
1938	21%			
1945	18			
1969	55			
1970	60			
1971	64			
1972	68			
1974	69			45%
1975	65			
1976	72			
1977	65	43%	34%	47
1978	72			51
1979				
1980				
1982				
1983	74			
1984	75			
1985				54
1986	84	62	52	
1988	77	64	52	
1989	79	69	58	
	78	72	59	
1990	81	71	60	

^a"Do you approve or disapprove of a married woman earning money in business or industry if she has a husband capable of supporting her?" (approve)

^b"It is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have one herself" (disagree)

^c"It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." (disagree)

^d"In today's society there are many different lifestyles, and some that are acceptable today that weren't in the past. Regardless of what you may have done or plan to do with your life, and thinking just of what would give you personally the most satisfying and interesting life, which one of these different ways of life do you think would be the best as a way of life? [card shown respondent]

...
b. a marriage where the husband and wife share responsibilities more--both work, both share homemaking and childcare responsibilities."

Table 9: Public Opinion on "Working Women" and Their Children

Year	Can relationship be warm? ^a agree ^c	Will preschool child suffer? ^b disagree
1977	49%	33%
1985	61	46
1986	62	49
1988	63	52
1989	64	52
1990	63	51
1991	65	52
1993	67	57
1994	70	58

^a"A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work."

^b"A preschool child is likely to suffer if his mother works."

^c'Agree' includes both 'agree' and 'strongly agree;' 'disagree' includes both 'disagree and 'strongly disagree.'