

# The Intergenerational Transmission of Gender Attitudes and Women's Labor Force Participation:

## A Review of Recent Evidence and Measurement

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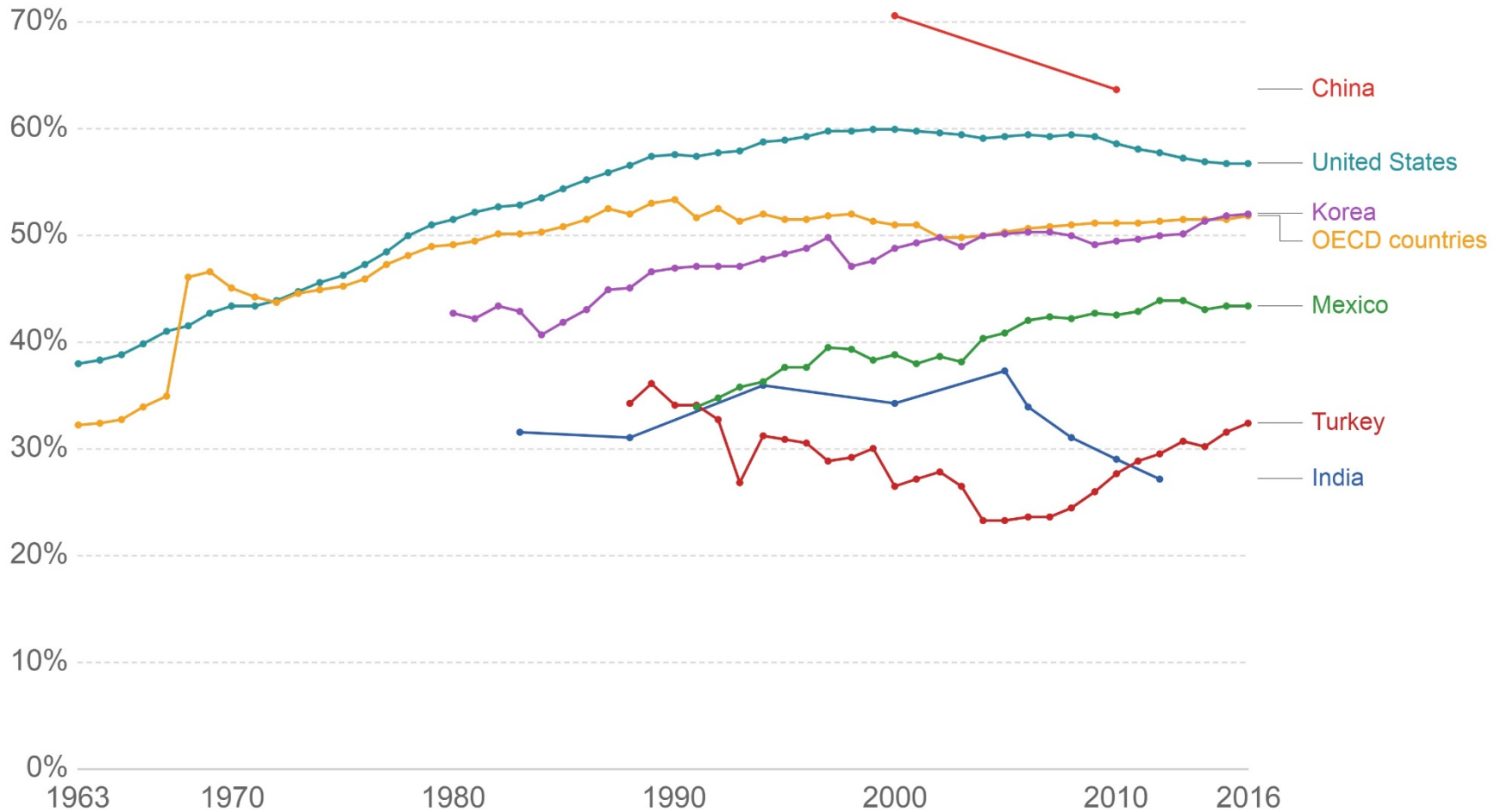
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# Overview of argument

- Focus on women's labor force participation
  - Studies of men's social mobility often examine income or occupational mobility
  - For women in developing countries, employment itself is an important outcome
  - In addition, women's LFP goal of organizations, empowers women, increases family welfare
- Focus on IGT gender attitudes as key determinant of women's LFP
  - In line with recent research on "culture," independent of usual economic determinants
  - Research mostly in industrialized countries and women's LFP in the 20<sup>th</sup> century
- *IGT of gender attitudes could also help explain more puzzling trends in women's LFP in developing countries*
  - *Low participation, some declines*
  - *India as an example*

# Long-run perspective on female labor force participation rates

Proportion of the female population ages 15 and over that is economically active. Data is available for OECD member countries, as well as for non-member countries publishing statistics in OECD.stats.



Source: Our World In Data based on OECD (2017) and Long (1958)

Note: For some observations prior 1960, the participation rate is taken with respect to the female population 14 and over. See sources for details.

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# Definitions of gender attitudes and norms

- Individuals' beliefs about the appropriate roles and responsibilities of men and women in society
  - Continuum ranging from traditional to egalitarian
  - Traditional attitudes =
    - Belief in gendered “separate spheres”
    - Men and women possess separate, innate responsibilities for work and family, respectively
  - Egalitarian attitudes =
    - Expect and accept men's and women's equal roles in work and family life
- “Gender attitudes” are characteristics of individuals, “gender norms” are group or societal level

# Studies using proxies for gender attitudes

- Use women's LFP in previous generation as proxy for gender norms
  - Transmitted to daughters, which affects their LFP
  - Higher % women's LFP, higher LFP of daughters
- Use maternal work status as proxy for gender attitudes
  - Transmitted to daughters, which affects their LFP
  - Transmitted to sons, which affects their marriage market decisions and LFP of daughters-in-law
  - If mother worked, higher LFP of daughters and daughters-in-law
- Studies in industrialized countries
  - One study in Turkey

# Direct measures of gender attitudes

- Create index using survey data
- Use responses to statements about gender roles and responsibilities
  - “A man’s job is to earn money, a woman’s job is to look after the home and family.”
  - “If a husband and wife both work full time, they should share the housework equally.”
  - “A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works.”
- Sum egalitarian responses to create index of gender attitudes

# Studies using direct measures

- IGT of attitudes, particularly mothers to children
  - Socialization and time spent with children
- Mothers' attitudes affect LFP of daughters and daughters-in-law in adulthood
  - More egalitarian gender attitudes, higher LFP of daughters and daughters-in-law
- Women's own gender attitudes (formed in youth) affect own LFP
- Primarily in industrialized countries
  - One study in Turkey



# Conclusions thus far

- Gender attitudes are passed down from mothers to children
- Gender attitudes and norms have significant effects on next generation of women's LFP
- Gender attitudes independent of other economic determinants
  - Some claim causality using instruments, temporal ordering of attitudes, controlling for family income, etc.
- Few data sets in developing countries



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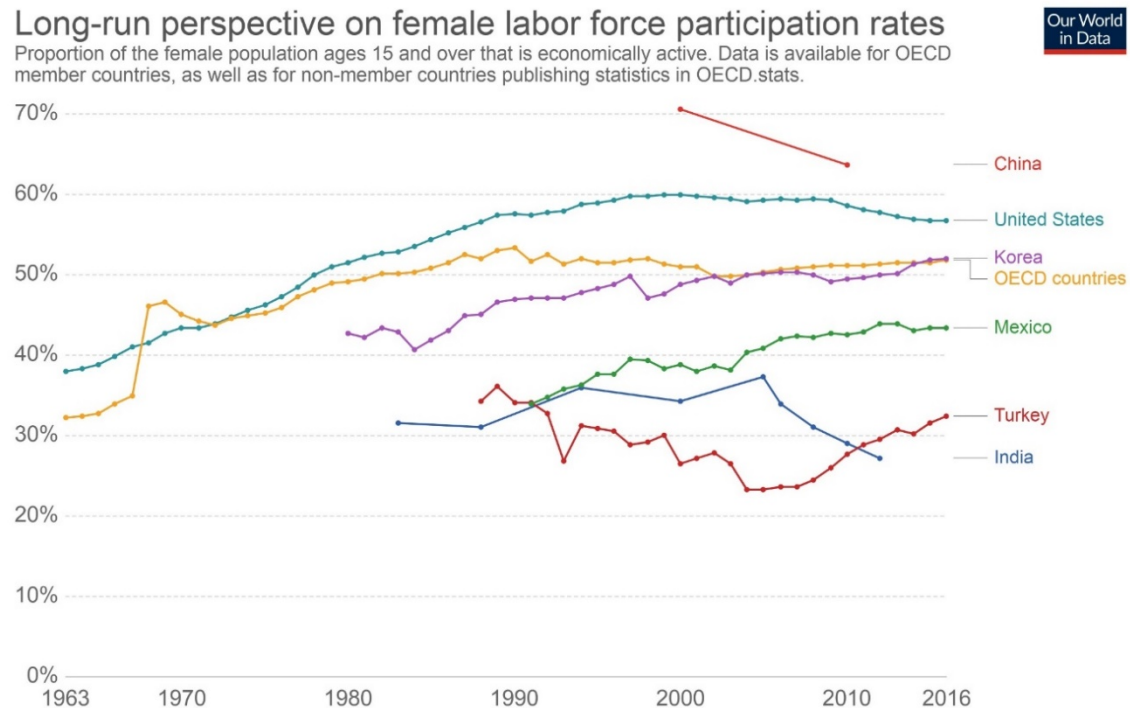
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# Application: Women's low (and declining) LFP in India

- Expect higher women's LFP at level of development and with rising education
  - Multiple explanations for India, labor demand and supply



Source: Our World In Data based on OECD (2017) and Long (1958)  
Note: For some observations prior 1960, the participation rate is taken with respect to the female population 14 and over. See sources for details.

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# New “status hypothesis”

- Explains decreasing levels of women’s LFP with economic development
- Women retreat from labor market, particularly at marriage, due to family status concerns
  - Restrictive attitudes and norms regarding women’s place in the home, intensify with development and Western influence
  - Women key to preserving traditional Indian family, and high value placed on female domesticity and motherhood
  - “Housewifisation”
- Women’s social mobility defined as not working



# Support for status hypothesis

- Status demonstration = with increasing affluence, women disengage from labor market
  - Negative relationship between family income and women's LFP
  - Also by caste, highest castes promote female purity
- Status production = with increasing affluence, women substitute paid labor for status-producing activities
  - Positive relationship between family income and women's time in childcare, social and community events



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# Gender attitudes in India

- Further test the status hypothesis
- If rising affluence produces shifts in beliefs/preferences toward domestic role for women, then we should see:
  - Link between family income and more traditional gender attitudes



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# South India Community Health Study (SICHS)

- Representative survey of 5000 couples and children in Tamil Nadu
- Measurement of gender attitudes: parents and adolescents
  - 12 gender statements to create conventional index
    - Strong IGT between mothers and adolescents
  - Next step: latent class analysis
    - Form clusters or classes of gender attitudes based on individuals' similar response patterns, more nuanced view of types of attitudes
    - “Neo-traditional class”: traditional except for supporting girls' education, which can help increase family status through marriage market or investments in children
- Other variables
  - Family income/wealth, women's time use, caste status, husbands' gender attitudes



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Now I would like to ask what you think about the roles of men and women in the family and society. I am going to read several statements. For each statement, please tell me if you agree or disagree with it.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	Don't know
N7	Men generally make better administrative officers than women.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N8	If both the husband and wife work, they should share equally in the housework and childcare.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N9	Women should be able to go to exactly the same places as men.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N10	Sons should take care of the financial needs of their elderly parents, and daughters should have no financial responsibility.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N11	Women should have the same freedom of action as men.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N12	Women are just as well suited for politics as men.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N13	Fathers should have a greater say than mothers in choosing marriage partners for their children.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N14	Higher education is more important for sons than daughters.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N15	It is better if the husband works outside the home and the wife takes care of the home and family.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N16	Young women should be allowed to stay out late just as young men are.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N17	A child up to age 3 is likely to suffer if his or her mother works outside the home.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N18	Married couples should save for old age so that they are not financially reliant on their children.	1	2	3	4	5	88
N19	Parents should give the same amount of pocket money to their daughters as they give to their sons.	1	2	3	4	5	88

# Conclusions

- IGT of gender attitudes clearly important for women's social mobility independent of economic factors
  - Could help explain recent trends in developing countries
- Potentially negative consequences when attitudes are *traditional*
  - Example: India and LFP declines
- Policies and interventions to change gender attitudes
  - Could be difficult in developing countries, where attitudes are comparatively more traditional and more strongly correlated across generations
- Incorporate gender attitudes into future research

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