



15 MAY 2015 RESEARCH & IDEAS

Kids Benefit From Having a Working Mom

by Carmen Nobel

Women whose moms worked outside the home are more likely to have jobs themselves, are more likely to hold supervisory responsibility at those jobs, and earn higher wages than women whose mothers stayed home full time, according to research by **Kathleen McGinn** and colleagues.



©iStockphoto

Here's some heartening news for working mothers worried about the future of their children.

Women whose moms worked outside the home are more likely to have jobs themselves, are more likely to hold supervisory responsibility at those jobs, and earn higher wages than women whose mothers stayed home full time, according to a new study. Men raised by working mothers are more likely to contribute to household chores and spend more time caring for family members.

“THERE ARE VERY FEW THINGS ... THAT HAVE SUCH A CLEAR EFFECT ON GENDER INEQUALITY AS BEING RAISED BY A WORKING MOTHER”

The findings are stark, and they hold true across 24 countries.

"There are very few things, that we know of, that have such a clear effect on gender inequality as being raised by a working mother," says Kathleen L. McGinn, the Cahners-Rabb Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School, who conducted the study with Mayra Ruiz Castro, a researcher at HBS, and Elizabeth Long Lingo, an embedded practitioner at Mt. Holyoke College.

McGinn's previous research, with Katherine Milkman of Wharton Business School, found that female attorneys are more likely to rise through the ranks of a firm (and less likely to leave) when they have female partners as mentors and role models. McGinn, Castro, and Lingo wondered how nontraditional role models influenced gender inequality at home—both in terms of professional opportunities and household responsibilities.

"The link between home and the workplace is becoming more and more critical as we have two-wage-earning families," McGinn says. "We tend to talk more about inequality in the workplace, and yet the inequality in the home is really stuck."



In developed countries, employed women in two-parent households report that they spend an average of 17.7 hours per week caring for family members, while employed men report devoting about 9, according to the researchers. At the same time, women report spending an average of 17.8 hours per week on housework, while men report an average of 8.8 hours.

The Global Effect Of Working Moms

To gauge the global effect of working moms, the researchers dug into data from the International Social Survey Programme, a global consortium of organizations that conduct social science research, and studied 2002 and 2012 responses to a survey called "Family and Changing Gender Roles." They supplemented these data with data on employment opportunities and gender inequality across countries.

The survey included several pages of questions related to gender attitudes, home life, and career path. The researchers were primarily interested in the answer to one key question: Did your mother ever work for pay, after you were born and before you were 14?

"It didn't matter to us if she worked for a few months one year, or worked 60 hours per week during your whole childhood," McGinn says. "We weren't interested in whether your mom was an intense professional, but rather whether you had a role model who showed you that women work both inside and outside the home. We wanted to see how that played out."

The research team aimed to find out whether growing up with a working mom influenced several factors, including employment, supervisory responsibility, earnings, allocation of household work, and care for family members.

Survey respondents included 13,326 women and 18,152 men from 24 developed nations. The researchers based their analyses on responses collected from the 2002 and 2012 surveys. They categorized the countries by their attitudes toward gender equality, both at home and in the workplace.

"Liberalizing Egalitarians" were those countries where respondents' attitudes toward gender were already egalitarian in 2002 and became even more so over the following decade (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, France, Germany, and Slovenia). "Stagnating Moderates" leaned slightly egalitarian in 2002 and remained stagnant in the following decade (Israel, the United States, Great Britain, Spain, Australia, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Switzerland, Austria, Japan, and Taiwan). "Stagnating Conservatives" started off with conservative attitudes toward gender roles in 2002 and stayed that way (Chile, Latvia, Mexico, Philippines, and Russia.)

Men tended to report more conservative gender attitudes than women—with the exception of Mexico, where women were more conservative than men, McGinn says.

The researchers controlled for factors including: age; marital status; religion; years of education; urban versus rural dwelling; average Female Labor Force participation in the respondent's home country during the years the respondent was 0 to 14 years old; Economic Freedom Index in the respondent's home country during the survey year; Gender Inequality Index in the respondent's home country; and Gross Domestic Product in the respondent's home country. Stripping those things away, they focused on the effects of being raised by a mother who worked outside the home. "The direct effects are significant across the board," McGinn says.

The data showed that men were just as likely to hold supervisory jobs whether or not their moms had worked outside the home. But women raised by working mothers were more likely to supervise others at work.

Effects On Income

The data also showed that while being raised by a working mother had no apparent effect on men's relative wages, women raised by working moms had higher incomes than women whose moms stayed at home full time. The one exception: women who reported conservative attitudes toward gender equality. "It's only for earnings that having conservative gender attitudes reduces the effect of a working mom," McGinn says. "For all of the rest of them, having had a non-traditional role model at home has a direct effect on the outcomes, regardless of attitudes."

As for men whose moms ever worked outside the home, they were more likely to contribute to household chores and spent more time caring for family members. "Growing up, what was being modeled for sons was the idea that you share the work at home," McGinn says.

Women spent about the same amount of time caring for family members, regardless of whether their moms worked outside the home. However, "When we segmented just for people who have children at home, we found that women who are raised by a working mom actually spend more time with their kids," McGinn says, adding that this includes women who grew up to become working moms themselves.

"There's a lot of parental guilt about having both parents working outside the home," McGinn says. "But what this research says to us is that not only are you helping your family economically—and helping yourself professionally and emotionally if you have a job you love—but you're also helping your kids. So I think for both mothers and for fathers, working both inside and outside the home gives your kids a signal that contributions at home and at work are equally valuable, for both men and women. In short, it's good for your kids."

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COMMENTS

 **A cough** 396 days ago


The bottom line is that the child needs to be receiving care, this shouldn't be about already debunked theories or even facts. It doesn't matter if the mother or the father is raising the child. The only thing that matters is the child is cared for. We shouldn't be disputing garbage like this and pay attention to the real problem.

Like - Reply 0

 **Sheetal** 468 days ago


I beg to differ a child needs one of the parent specially.mother until the age of 3 or 2 to.teach discipline n I don't agree tht men raised by working woman r better I believe they r more likely to search their mother in all.woman's as tht void of being loved by their mom is.always bothering them...who will teach them how to.behave with other woman.. I have seen children's have both working parents they have disciplinary issues ..why bring a child into the world when parents cannot spend time with them...at least in initial stages of their lives..how would we feel not seeing mom n dad being with a stranger ...??? No child would like tht..

Like - Reply 0

 **José Luján** 532 days ago


I'm father and husband, if my kids claims for me when I'm in working hours, I can't imagine how they will be claim for her mother when she returns to her work.
To be mom, is a hardest and underrated work. Congratulations to all of them who enjoy your kids

Like - Reply 0

 **Neha Saxena** 659 days ago


As a working mom, I was always troubled by the fact that I am not spending enough time with my child. Sandwiched between my work and personal life, I struggled to find time. I am sure there are many parents out there, who feel guilty about not spending enough time with their children and wondering if this will lead to developmental problems. Thank you for this blog. I think you have conclusively proven that children have a lot to gain by having a working mother. I recently read a blog <https://iraparenting.com/toddler/importance-talking-children-developmental-milestones/> which claimed that children of parents who are more educated tend to have better vocabularies even in early childhood and that translates into life-long benefits. I was wondering if there is a correlation between working moms and their education levels? If there indeed there is such a correlation (Working Moms->Higher Education level of Mother->Better vocabularies of young children), it would explain a lot. Any thoughts on this?

Like - Reply 0

 **Jerisa** 660 days ago

That parental guilt,more specifically, mother guilt , can contribute to excessive permissiveness and over indulgence. Very often, the kids are in no hurry to leave home and have no problem returning if life sours in the real world.

Like - Reply 0


 **MaternityMaster** 662 days ago

So a Mum at home isn't a working Mum, sad to still see this bias in the 21st Century.

A working Mum in the home is far more difficult position.


Thumbs down!

Like - Reply 0

 **Kallol Kar** 813 days ago


Below standard research work. When man and woman decide to start a family the unit becomes an alloy and u cannot segregate the duties in terms of manhours

Like - Reply 0

 **Mcz** 877 days ago

I am grateful to the author and those who conducted this study.
As a teen I decided that logically made sense to pursue professional passions to model this to my children.
Yes, this article helps address the guilt.

Like - Reply 0

 **imjustdelaney** 881 days ago

This is a sad article. I have always been a working person and now a mom of 8 and 3 year olds. I've never known anything but working full-time unless I was out on maternity leave. I was married, a single mom, and now I'm remarried. And, for the first time in my life, we are setting up a plan for me to be able to stay home with our kids. My son has mental health issues that seem to be prolific among today's children. Maybe that's perhaps BECAUSE there is a lack of parental involvement at home? We rush to get ready and out of the house in the morning and we rush to get dinner and bed times taken care of in the evening so we can do it all over again the next day. In the meantime, I've missed out on watching my kids grow into the people they're going to become in life. It's not the daycares' job to raise my kids. It's mine. And my husband is supportive of whatever path I take; he just wants me to be happy. If that means downsizing and leaving our dream home and living on a budget so that our

kids can be raised by the people who put them on planet earth, that's worth it. Raising children, especially ones that are outside-the-box kids, is not a science. It's not always about the numbers.

Like - Reply · 1 reply

2



Renea Cloudsley

354 days ago

I agree. Article purports. their offspring also working, or holding more supervisory position, denote success. What about their rates of mental health conditions? What about their own divorce rates? How would they rate their happiness and satisfaction with life? There are a lot more things to consider than whether or not grown children have jobs! Ridiculous.

Like - Reply

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SusanneO

939 days ago

As a working Mum who often feels guilty and worries ate my kids missing out - great to read this articles as the answer is "no!" Thank you

Like - Reply

0



Maria Reyes

973 days ago

Hello everyone, i'm a single mother of three children, I just want to share my experience with everyone. I have been hearing about this blank ATM card for a while and never really paid any interest to it due to my doubts. Until one day I discovered a type of hacking called (SOFTWARE LORD). He is really good at what he is doing. Back to the point, I asked about the blank ATM card. If it works or even exists. He said yes and that the card is programmed to withdrawn money without being noticed and can also be used for free online shopping of any kind. This was shocking and I still had my doubts. Then I tried and asked for the card and we agreed to its terms and conditions. Waiting and praying. I received my card and tried the nearest ATM machine close to me, it worked like magic. I was able to withdraw 3,000. This was amazing and the happiest day of my life. So far I've been able to withdraw a lot of money without any stress. I do not know why I'm posting this here, I just felt that this could help those of us in need of financial stability. this Blank ATM card has really changed my life. If you want to contact the hacker to own a blank ATM card, here is the email address, softwarelord2@gmail.com And I think it will also change your life.

Like - Reply

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Kristalynn

1028 days ago

It is not true to say that children of stay at home moms turn out to be the rejects of society. ALL four of my brothers and my four sisters developed into independent adults with great jobs. I saw my mother work night and day to keep us fed, clean, and healthy while my father, a Korean war veteran, worked as a truck driver to provide for the family. We were not rich but I look back and can remember how much they loved us. Love is what should matter the most and should be more important than money, social status, or climbing the corporate ladder. If you want to do that great, if not, great. Our kids will still be awesome either way!

Like - Reply

1



Vijendra Kumar

1032 days ago

Research also shows that children of working mothers are confident, have positive image and achieves more than the mother as a house wife,

Like - Reply

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Matt

1037 days ago

OK, so kids "benefit" because as adults the girls make more money and have jobs with supervisory responsibilities and the boys spend more time in chores. Looking only at money, being a boss, and household chores, at the exclusion of many other aspects of life seems narrow and even sad. The professor's values are so different from mine. I invite her to consider that life is so much more than more money, being boss, and doing fewer chores. Research including other (and, in my view, more important) aspects of successful adulthood would be welcomed and interesting.

Like - Reply

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StellaFiore

1095 days ago

I would imagine that working part-time would be the best case scenario. Unfortunately there are not a lot of opportunities that come in a part-time package. A mom that works part-time and is home part-time can maintain her skills while being involved with her children's upbringing. The best of both worlds but hard to come by. As a professional in health care I don't understand why there are not more opportunities especially so because my field is predominantly female and so I originally thought with all the maternity leaves there would be an abundance of openings. Not the case. Women today are holding fast onto the working world when children arrive. I think we need to shift the paradigm of the way we are thinking of work and family. I wouldn't mind being part of a collective group of sorts for novel working environments. The time is here.

Like - Reply

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Knowitbetter

1100 days ago

Come on working moms, why do you let the guys get away with spending less than half time than you on children and helping in the house?!

Like - Reply

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Sensei

1107 days ago

I read this quote in some newspaper. "Today's children need full-time mother". If there is no breadwinner in the family except "mother" then there is no choice..she has to go to work and earn. But, if the father is already working outside (doing job) then majority of the people wish that, their children has to be taken care by their mothers and not by day care people. Helping family economically is a never ending cycle. Money comes and goes but the kids, children are missing their mothers love, affection, care. This is making this generation kids think like robots and mechanical. I do not agree that "men and women are equal". We should not compare because "Women are always higher and better than men in every aspect". Women are always superior than men in every aspect. It does not make sense making irrational statements like

There should be gender equality etc...Women should always be given first preference everywhere and let us not degrade value of women by comparing with men.

Like - Reply

1



belu

1142 days ago

the only downside i can possibly think of is while working mom and dad- their kids actually begin to behave like the maid or nannies who are taking care of them ; i knew this since i was very young - where my moms friend was working at office and left that kids and guess how their behaviour traits are like of the maids - exactly behave like them and whatever, so my preference is to keep kids close monitoring until they are old enough

Like - Reply

0



Parker

1143 days ago

Valuable research. What about expanding the discussion beyond heteronormative frame and gender binary? Thank you. Working mom is a redundant term.

Like - Reply

0



Parker

1143 days ago

Working mom is redundant.

Like - Reply

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Ijeoma Agbasi Anusim

1156 days ago

This is an interesting research. The work place is getting increasingly fluid with the raise of internet entrepreneurs. People can basically work out of anywhere. Is this research based on only women that work out of the house or women that work in general.

Is this about working women(including people that have office jobs and people that own their and own businesses and perhaps work from home) versus unemployed or full time moms?

I believe any woman that works either from home or not and truly loves what they do as against enduring work that they hate(this is true for almost 80% of workers according to research) is a true role model to her children. The children are inspired by her ability to lead life at her own terms.

A balanced, happy and productive woman will be a better mum and a better human being compared to a tired, overworked and burnt out mum.

I will really like to know if this study includes mums working from home.

Like - Reply

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Anne

1161 days ago

An interesting study for sure - "Homelife", however isn't always a perfect picture as you might portray. They seemed to have forgotten about or failed to include in your study those unfortunate children who had to grow up without a mother or father. Your study reflects only the perfect family situation what about those unfortunate children who had to grow up without a mother or father because of unforeseen circumstances - my mother passed away when I was 6 years old and my father had to raise all eight of us for the duration of our school years on his own. I would say we had to learn many life lessons at an early age and all had to work very hard to keep our homelife together. I didn't feel anything less as a child growing up until I had my own children and realized how much of a hero my father really was keeping it all together.

May I end with, thank goodness you had a mother to support you in any way!

Like - Reply

0



Epicram

1249 days ago

There are some advantage and limitations of it. But my favor is in more disadvantages for child because child doesn't have much time to spend with mom. If you looking to get enough earning then ty Commodity tips from Epic Research.

Like - Reply

0



kim

1274 days ago

It's clear having one oater that home is best. That's usually the mom.

Like - Reply

0



Give

1302 days ago

It's clear having one oater that home is best. That's usually the mom.

Like - Reply

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Polin Tp

1313 days ago


I remember as a child I always wanted my mother to work. While I respected everything she did for the family, my needs were beyond a clean house, cute room and warm food. I always admired smart working mom who had successful careers. On the other hand, my friends who had working moms always complained that their parents never had time and energy for them. I think it's all about balance.

Like - Reply

0

Tiger W

1316 days ago

 With my respect to the Harvard business School and the researcher of this study Mrs McGinn and her colleagues, I have to say that the title of this study is not appropriate and does not match with the content of the study. First of all, the title indicates that having a working mother is beneficial for all kids regardless of their gender "Kids Benefit From Having a Working Mom", whereas the study found that it is only benefit female kids in their future careers and has no effect on male kids.

Secondly, the word "benefit" is also not an appropriate word to use in the title of this study, what are benefits that the kids are getting? The only benefit is that they are more likely to work or having a higher salary within their employment. Using the word "benefit" generate confusion for the readers and also make unsuitable propaganda that working mothers in the families are essential and necessary for kids.

thirdly, according to McGinn, "But what this research says to us is that not only are you helping your family economically—and helping yourself professionally and emotionally if you have a job you love—but you're also helping your kids. So I think for both mothers and for fathers, working both inside and outside the home gives your kids a signal that contributions at home and at work are equally valuable, for both men and women. In short, it's good for your kids".

How will it help the kids? the statistics in this study indicates that "In developed countries, employed women in two-parent households report that they spend an average of 17.7 hours per week caring for family members, while employed men report devoting about 9, according to the researchers. At the same time, women report spending an average of 17.8 hours per week on housework, while men report an average of 8.8 hours". In average, working mothers (women) still spend more time caring for the family member and also on housework compared to fathers (men).

I think working mothers in a family may have disadvantages and advantages for the kids,

For boys the disadvantages may be more than advantages, the son may take his mother as a role model rather than his father, which may also lead to change to his masculine behaviour and the risk of becoming homosexual in some particular situations. For the girls, it may have some advantages as this study found but it may also have the indirect effect on some other unusual patterns among girls such as the increase of their masculine behaviour and attitude.

More to the point, other studies found that children from working mother family are more likely to do worse at school, become unemployed and to suffer mental stress than youngsters whose mothers stay at home to bring them up.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-30342/Working-mothers-risk-damaging-childs-prospects.html>

To conclude, the benefit of the working mothers is limited for the female kids only and this type of benefits may be merely limited to their future employment. Furthermore, this employment benefits that female kids get because of having working mothers may have other unbeneficial consequences in other aspects of their life which should take into consideration for future studies.

Like - Reply


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 **Sick Of Gender Bias Against Men** 1326 days ago

"The Global Effect Of Working Dads" - we have cars, the internet, technology, planes, ships, houses, farming equipment, MRI devices, paintings, music, drawings, poetry, meat, plumbing, gadgets, adventure, BBQs...A FREE AND DEFENDED COUNTRY...the list goes on...(this comment represents only my personal opinion).

Like - Reply

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 **rshelley** 1339 days ago

To Kris's comment and those like it, just know that this article does a great job of expressing what value a working mother contributes to her children instead of what it takes away. It is not an argument that women should work, rather an argument that working women should take consolation in the knowledge that their need to work is not without its benefits despite less time spent in the home. I have always had a conservative view of women and yet I am a full-time working mother. While I still desire to spend every hour at home caring for my family, I am also blessed to be able to contribute in a way that provides my family the extra income to achieve and do things they otherwise would not have the option of doing. Of course, I should also say that I have plans on living that dream again when the time comes. Good luck.

Like - Reply

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 **rshelley** 1339 days ago

Great article. My mother worked small jobs transcribing audio to text for physicians for a few years and did medical emergency deliveries when I was a child for extra income. I went on to serve in the military for eight years, earn the rank of Staff Sergeant, and then separated and finished my second degree, a bachelors. Now, I hold a salaried position as a Leadership and Development Professional for a technology firm in the NW. I have one daughter who is in grade school and she is already talking about owning her own business, what she wants to study in college etc. I feel guilty about not being at home like my mom was or being able to find work at home, but I am blessed I can give her a private education and a role model that shows her that women are incredibly valuable in the workplace and dare I say, necessary. She is provided structure and more than enough love.

Like - Reply

0

 **look2leaders** 1345 days ago

my daughter agreed and she has a doctorate and has a supervisory position and my son does share more than his dad ever did at home. still felt guilty working but reading the article, less so

Like - Reply

0


 **nazmulh100** 1393 days ago

How to plan a Business Trip with Children- <http://www.usebusinesstips.com/how-to-plan-business-trip-with-children/>

Like - Reply

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Kris 1394 days ago

 I think this article only contributes to the divide between stay at home moms and working moms. It's a choice that I think should be supported either way and we need to stop making moms feel guilty for their choices.

Like - Reply

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 **Taroona Sharma** 1394 days ago

Hi ... I want to know if there were any results for the mothers who have a full time "work from home" provision by their employers. They are working still but from a home office. Thanks

Like - Reply


0

 **Jon** 1413 days ago

I respect all Mothers who have to work outside the home! I don't really believe that statistic is true.
<http://ruralhealth.stanford.edu/videos/patient-stories/can-we-talk/#idc-cover>

Like - Reply

0

 **aMom** 1413 days ago

Working or not working comes with ones own choice. Whether it is to support your family's financial load or its for your own ambitions, they are all valid. There is no right or wrong in it. As a working mom of 2 and as a daughter of a working mom, I am no less caring and loving to my children than other moms. I grew up with a feeling of pride and honour just because my Mom was working and I see the same in my children too. Not going too much into the survey talk, personally I feel it gives your child a sense of responsibility to work towards success just as your parents did. About the parental guilt, I guess it is upto one to find ways to balance and devote enough time with your child to nurture an overall personality growth.

Like - Reply


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 **Chris** 1415 days ago

Not all working mothers parent successful children, just like not all "stay at home" mothers do. What I didn't see in the article were the numbers of mothers of children who did not excel. The difference is in the parenting, which hopefully responders to this article and the women/men who would read such an article, are interested in most. I hear this article giving a bravo to all of the working mothers/fathers who have invested in the education, well being and lives of their children, at a level which lets their kids know for certain that they,, the kids, are more important than the careers their parents chose. These parents love unconditionally and their kids grow up to be responsible loving personally successful members of society. I worked full time, was criticized for it, until my daughters told me that when they grew up they wanted to be mommies with careers because "that really seems to be a great way to live a satisfying life". God bless you each and everyone!

Like - Reply

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 **faithfulparent** 1415 days ago

Lastly, that "parental guilt." Guilt is product of our conscience to alert us that we are doing something wrong. Society today has basically dispensed with all guilt. We have to start listening to our consciences again... Staying at home with your kids (most parents only have two kids, max) is a maybe a 5-7 year sacrifice until they are in school. But the emotional/psychological benefits are lifelong. I

Like - Reply

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 **faithfulparent** 1415 days ago

Basically a piece of research designed to rationalize a decision to work outside the home. No once can tell me that dropping your kid at a daycare when they are three-months old and heading back to work - when the child is only beginning to get to know mom - is good for the psychologically or emotionally. I believe the overwhelming number of child behavioral disorders are the direct result of this kind of soft neglect by parents - all in the name of them seeking their own personal, professional gratification.

Like - Reply

0

 **faithfulparent** 1415 days ago

Does anyone actually think an article published by a women in HBS forum would come to any other conclusion????

Like - Reply

0

 **Harish Nair** 1422 days ago

A thought provoking article. I recommend all working moms and their partners must read this carefully.

Like - Reply

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 **Liz** 1429 days ago

Interesting read and thought provoking, as are the comments. To declare my balance, I am a working mum. My own mum worked part-time once I was school age.

My general view is that this is a personal choice. I have happy, balanced, achieving kids, and our work/life mix has worked out well. I choose to work, which I realise is a privileged position, but I also take my role as a mum very seriously. As does their Dad, who I think has had much more involvement in their care, as a two-career family.

I applaud those who choose a different mix and make it work, but I do get frustrated with the 'Stay at home mum is best' lobby. Best for some mums, best for some kids, best for some dads. But not all.

Can we not just support each other in our choices? The we will genuinely move gender stereotyping on.

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- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **ramu** 1471 days ago
- Great article.
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **Liz** 1477 days ago
- Cognitive consistency. Working moms agree and stay at home moms don't The more things change the more they stay the same. I'm a working mom btw:)
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **Anonymous** 1481 days ago
- Though the study is somewhat true. But it's a perspective and how one looks at it differs. The sample size is too less to even enforce the theory. It doesn't take into account mothers who have given up their jobs to raise their kids and have excellently maintained an environment equality. It also depends on ones idea of who defines what success is for an individual. Absolutely, not the last study but need to have more angles to it. There are also evidences where working parents have irresponsible kids. So, a small sample does not represent the universe
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **Phyllis Harvard Business School** 1506 days ago
- I was born in 1964 and raised by a working Mother. I have 2 Sisters, all RN's who have excelled in our profession but more importantly know who we are and what we want as women. I felt a great deal of guilt leaving my kids to work but I now have a Daughter who is self assured, educated and equal to any man. I have a Son who is caring, warm and respects women.... progress x
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **Guntur Srinivas** 1513 days ago
- It has been observed in India that children of working moms were less capable of handling there family affairs and taking care of there children and their own parent in their old age.
- Like - Reply 0
-
- Linda D. Griffith, PhD, RD** 1517 days ago
- My pediatrician many years ago said it is the quality of care not whether moms work or not. Many stay at home mom's don't interact with kids and produce the reduced quality of care whereas mom's who want to work are stimulated mentally and are excited to spend time with their kids. I worked most of the time and my kids are grown now. Very successful in their academics and careers. Never any behavior problems and my home was usually the camp ground for all the kids on the weekend. I couldn't be happier for their success. One of my kids works for Harvard HBS.
- Like - Reply 0
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-  **Grazyna** 1521 days ago
- One recurring issue I continue to see in the whole debate is how things are phrased as a reflection of "normality". For example, why does the author say that "men contribute to the household chores" rather than "doing their share of the household chores" or as bluntly as "pulling their weight"? And why is women's salary considered as "helping" the family economically rather than being an important income source? All the research and efforts towards equality are great, but being cautious about how we phrase our thoughts around it to make a change.
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **Margaret** 1581 days ago
- It is a really interesting research for global women!
- I know that most of Chinese women work outside of home after they have kids, because it is relatively easier to find helper for their kids and housework. In US there are really more women choose to stay at home with kids, but I think kids can benefit from their mom stay more time with them together.
- If there is no economic issue, I believe all the global women can choose their own life, no matter work or stay at home, happiness is the key issue.
- Of course I know most of working moms are struggling everyday, it is no better way to balance kids and work, do what you want to do is the smart way.
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **Jyoti** 1583 days ago
- Fully agree with the outcome. Have been a working professional for more than 20 years. My grown up daughters, one of which has already started working in managerial capacity and the other going to join soon in managerial capacity, have always thanked me that I was a working mom. They say that they are more responsible, capable of handling varied tasks at home and more mature as compared to their peers whose mom was not working.
- Regards. Jyoti Sharma, Mumbai, India
- Like - Reply 0
-
-  **LJB** 1632 days ago

What I find missing here are the actual results. The assumptions and constraints are listed as well as the sample size and population demographics, but the results are just "more" or "higher". How much more and how much higher? How much less? Raw data and percentages would be more valuable in this report. If the wage difference is 5% higher wages, then the impact of a working mom would be far less important than if the wage difference is 30%. A link to the final report rather than a summary would be a nice way to solve this concern.

Like - Reply

0



Cindy

1646 days ago

I can see both sides of this issue that Joy seems to be up in arms about, because I have been a stay at home mom and now work again since my children are all school-aged.

This study highlights some valid points about working, as children who have working parents must do more for themselves; they have greater responsibilities. Mom is not there to always fold their clothes for them, pack their lunch, ensure they have their homework done on time, as a stay at home parent would be. At the least, a stay at home parent can function more in the role of a micro-manager in ensuring all of this gets done by the kids.

Working parents, on the other hand, are not able to follow up with their children regarding chores to as much of an extent, and their children are forced to be more responsible about getting their work done, or, if they don't, then seeing the direct correlation of no lunch packed to having to eat in school that day, or not being able to find their favorite socks because they forgot to fold and put away their clothes. Children learn good habits of responsibility out of necessity, from a younger age, because they are forced to in a sink or swim environment.

There are, of course, benefits to both sides. I am very glad I stayed home with mine. And now I work in a startup company, from home. For me, this is the best of both worlds, even though it can be challenging to switch modes at home, from mom to worker and back to mom. Not a perfect scenario, but I don't suffer from the mom-guilt that I had when I was working away when my first was born.

I like the results of this study, and can really see why they would prove to show conclusive results for children being able to successfully handle more or less responsibility as adults.

The responsibility factor is an important life lesson: forcing kids to make decisions about their work that will have a direct effect on things in their lives either being better for them (found socks, packed lunch) or choosing not to do the work and seeing the negative impact it has on their daily life. This is good, and as a stay at home mom I had a more difficult time stepping back, not being a micro-manager, and letting my kids face the consequences of their poor decisions. Now, sometimes, they lose their socks :)

Like - Reply

0



Joy White

1655 days ago

I wonder if this research takes into account the women who had stay at home moms, who CHOOSE to follow in their mother's footsteps and stay at home themselves. My guess is that it doesn't. Women who had a stay at home mom growing up are more likely to desire to be a stay at home mom when they are adults---hence, this one thing alone could throw off this entire study.

Who cares if more adult women are employed if they had working moms vs. stay at home moms if the only reason this statistic is true is because women who had stay at home moms don't desire to work outside the home and would rather emulate their mom's who stayed home.

For what it is worth, I am a highly educated woman who chooses to stay home. Could I get a job? Yes, definitely. But instead, I choose to stay home spending extra time investing in the lives of my children. This is my choice, and I deem it a worthy investment, and one I am confident will pay large dividends in their lives.

Like - Reply

0

HILLARY PASTOR WIFE MOTHER, TEACHING FOR LIFE MINISTRIES

I think the final resolution on the outcome of the research is shallow. I understand women should not feel guilty for having to work outside the home and that's important because I had to do that for a while but we should not underestimate the value of a full-time mom or part-time mom. Part-time moms value themselves more and feel less guilty for working outside the home because they are contributing to their own self-worth through work outside the home but they are also contributing to their families in a way that comes naturally to many of us ladies. It is also important to note that men sharing the household responsibilities is just as important a result of the research, if not more important, as men and boys need to learn the value of contributing to family and to view it as more important than the position of income earner though finances are an essential part of our well-being. I guess what I'm trying to say is money, family, women, men, children are equally important - the balance is personal but must be established. My opinion only and thanks for the research.

PAMELA BAILEY POWERS WRITER/ARTIST

Your paragraph follows: "It didn't matter to us if she worked for a few months one year, or worked 60 hours per week during your whole childhood," McGinn says. "We weren't interested in whether your mom was an intense professional, but rather whether you had a role model who showed you that women work both inside and outside the home. We wanted to see how that played out."

The range of hours from minimal to maximal work outside the home appears to have a similar effect with regard to the work habits and attitudes of a woman's offspring.

That said, new questions arise.

*What proportion of women, and eventually their daughters, opt for a balance of work both inside and outside the home, that is, giving generally equal and balanced hours to child time and domestica work alongside (paid or volunteer) work outside the home?

*What is the difference between the long term life benefits from this model of balanced commitments and the models of extremes of either full time child time and domestica work or full time intense work outside the home?

Thanks for giving lots to consider!

MURIEL MORISEY LAW PROFESSOR, TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

This is useful research but flawed if race wasn't taken into account, at least the US. Historically, Black women of every income and educational status almost always work outside the home. I wonder how the analysis would look if there were a significant number of Blacks among the U

S. In the study. Perhaps the researchers took race into account but I found nothing in this summary indicating that Blacks are at the bottom of most measures of employment and income even though it's likely the mother works outside the home. Racial bias is such a huge factor that I believe race be part of any analysis of outcomes and the presence of a role model.

SHIRLEY SMITH | AGREE

I have a mom who was a preschool teacher. There were three of us (my sister was a Stanford University graduate and marketing analysis, my brother had a 25 year career with a local international corporation, and I had a career during market development for a fortune 500 corporation). As girls we were encouraged to go to college and have careers. I became a single parent when my children (3 sons) were very young, so the advice to go to school and have a career worked out for me.

MATT BEECHER | CONTRIBUTING-TO-THE-HOUSEHOLD HUSBAND & FATHER, ENTREPRENEUR

This research certainly gives us some alternatives to consider--and isn't it great that there are a variety of such alternatives and considerations to match the values and preferences of each individual woman, man, and family?

One element I find concerning as I read this--and the pieces in other outlets that refer to this research--is that "benefit to kids" and "gender equality" and other indicators of success are measured in terms of income equality, holding supervisory responsibilities, and contribution to household chores. As a father of three, I am looking at a constellation of success metrics that includes those indicators--but many many more.

I'm skeptical that having a working mom is going to impact all the metrics that matter most...and for me, though I care substantially about income equality and household-chore contribution, those are not in my top 10 measures that matter. I've yet to see the full study and digest all its findings--I look forward to doing so; however, I worry about the impact of outsourcing the care of my children at young ages to non-parent/non-family caregivers who are less consistent in ensuring what I care about most: a long list ranging from a grounded sense of morality and positive social-behavior norms/virtues to balancing the use of media with physical play.

I'm not advocating that moms or dads feel guilt about circumstances not in control, but for me who gratefully has control over such circumstances--my greatest investment and highest priority (across "work" and "life") is the raising of children who are strong across a multitude of measures, which are often not addressed in this terrain of research. I'm grateful for the contribution to the ongoing dialog that, again, provides great alternatives for consideration and for individual choices. But, I think we're a very long way from saying it's a silver bullet in terms of helping reduce gender inequalities at work and at home (Professor McGinn is thus quoted in the 15 May 2015 NY Times article about this research).

AL WHITE | ATTY, PARTNERSHIP

Sounds like this research is to make the writer feel good about working outside the home. It rubbish. First error is that it speaks to women who "have a job you love" most women who work have to financially. We are not talking about HBS grads but most people. I have done both and my kids are perfect but much more well adjusted when I have been home with them. Do more research because this is faulty. Ask if the majority would rather work or stay home if money was not an issue

NIC

A good article and helpful when you carry guilt as a working mother.

NS | BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE MANAGER & WORKING MOM, LARGER GLOBAL CONSUMER PRODUCTS COMPANY

As a working mom, I appreciate the sentiment that I can lighten some guilt because my kid was in daycare after 12 weeks and is always the latest at aftercare. But as a child of a working poor mom I agree that most women need to work and the "race" bias comment from the reader above, I would agree if we can convert that to a class bias statement in the case of this article. When a working Mom is a contributing to a middle class to upper class experience for the child, why wouldn't the kid be able to be gainfully employed? The question of class bias makes one wonder if the stats hold consistent if one were to study the outcomes of poor working moms only, as opposed to poor moms that were able to stay home and keep their kids off the streets.

Seems there is agreement that this is non conclusive. In a spirit supporting Ms. McGinn, can we change the observation statement? My recommendation would be "Research supports that working moms do not cause detriment to child's ability to compete?:"

SUZANNE | RETIRE FORMER CIO, SAS

I was a successful working Mother and both our kids are now successful working adults. In general I felt good about working but one day when they were around 7 and 10 and sitting in the back sit riding home from school and work with me. I asked "do you wish i would stay at home?" The look of horror on both their faces was priceless as they answered in unison "No we like are life the way it is!".

LISA-MARIA DOMRES | STUDENT

Am I the only one who misses a clear definition of "conservative gender roles"? Are conservative People defined as people who are generally preferring mothers to stay at home? Or is it about (in)equality between women and men in an even wider range?

Despite of that fact the article is well-written and has chosen a quite interesting topic. Thank you.

KAPIL KUMAR SOPORY | COMPANY SECRETARY, SMEC(INDIA) PRIVATE LIMITED

We cannot say with certainty that the children only of working mothers will be better - in all respects - than those of the non-working house-keepers. The results vary from case to case depending upon the situational factors. There are many examples of households where not only were the mothers not working, they were even barely educated. Nonetheless, they had high qualities of head and heart thereby being able to impart good values in their children. They sowed traits such as honesty, hard work, helping (the needy), self-less service, care for own and others' health, environment, high standard of general behavior, etc., which one needs so as to develop properly as a complete man or woman. Ultimately, one cannot be really happy only with material possessions such as a big position, status, wealth and the like. These are necessary if devoid of true human values, the result can never be complete happiness something which must not to be due only to exterior considerations.

That said, if a working woman can educate her children to evolve them as worthy human beings, it would be fine. Usually however, and we do not blame her for that, she is so much engrossed in her own career issues that she does not get time to attend to her children optimally.

Yes, the children of working women develop independence which can lead them to grow without fear but, if not watched, has an in-built risk of their getting astray.

Finally, my view is that growth of the children be kept under close watch particularly when they are young so that they move forward in life without any inhibitions due to unbecoming habits acquired by them.

BUKS PROUD HUSBAND AND DAD, PRIVATE

The title should read "Kids benefit ECONOMICALLY from having a working mom" since the research does not factor in the social effects of raising kids with a mom working. Ask me, I grew up that way. I'm a hard working go-getter, but I seriously lack(ed) emotional skills (unselfishness, affection, showing emotion, being vulnerable). But it seems as if these things are not the things counting now-a-days. Depends where you stand: my kids would also say "no way, we like life the way it is" with my wife being at home.

BARRY BRAUN PROFESSOR AND DEPARTMENT HEAD, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

This is an excellent summary of an important study. But it is a summary and can't be expected to provide all the rich detail necessary to make an informed decision regarding the quality of the methods or the interpretation of the results. To make those judgements, it would be necessary to read the actual study and not rely on the summary to comment on whether the study was flawed or incomplete. You would not say you hated the jambalaya at a new restaurant after reading a review; you would need to actually taste the food, yes?

JOHN OXLEY ACCOUNTANT, SELF

My wife thinks that unsupervised children at home (after school) leads to drug abuse and anti-social behaviour. I tend to agree. How about some research to look into this aspect of stay-at-home moms?

W WEBB INDEPENDENT BOARD DIRECTOR & ADVISOR

Delighted with the findings of these studies, and the conclusions re: the outcome on both male and female children. Even if we unquestionably adore our children, not all of us would be fulfilled and most productive (or even patient enough and good at!) making lunches and driving carpool everyday (but bravo to those who find that meaningful - honestly.) It is powerful to "model" engagement with and contribution to the outside world, and at the same time one still can demonstrate being a loving and inspirational parent, too.

JM PARTNER, LAW FIRM

Interesting to read this article and everyone's comments. Suzanne's comment brought a smile to my face, as that was exactly the reaction of my kids too - they want me to work, as well as their dad, because it gives them a lifestyle they enjoy. I grew up in the 60s and 70s, both my parents were working professionals. My mother never worked full time, though much of the time she worked 4-5 1/2 days per week. Work in the home was divided on gender lines, however (even for my sister and me versus our brother), which I always thought was unfair. My parents made sure my sister, brother and I had good educations, and in particular raised my sister and me to be professionals - have a good job so "you don't need to rely on a man". A good education and a good job - pretty solid advice. I struggled with how to raise a family and do my work (which was not work that was easily done on anything but a full time basis). And I faced a pretty thick glass ceiling, especially as far as earnings were concerned, when my children were young. One of the biggest factors to me was the example I was setting to my children - to my daughter, that she would most likely need to work too, and to my sons, that they would most likely have working partners. So I stuck with full-time work. My husband, also a professional, is a tremendous contributor around the house, and our children have seen his example, how we both assume responsibilities around the house and how we manage conflicting schedules and demands, around the house, from work, from the kids' schools, and as parents generally. I do think that each person/family has to decide for him/her/itself what works and constitutes "balance" (which, ala Sheryl Sandberg, is measured over the long term, not necessarily on a day to day basis). I am lucky that my parents were able, and my husband and I have been able, to achieve a level of financial stability that gave them, and gives us, a good lifestyle and a somewhat balanced homelife. At the end of the day, a good education is extremely important to gender equality at home and in the workplace, and the example at home certainly helps.

ELISE CEO, AT HOME

So there is an economic benefit to children. But the conclusion here shows the bias of the author - mothers have to work out and in the home to show that both are equally valued?! If we could value both equally then wouldn't those at home contributions of stay at home parents be as good as going to a job for a few months one year. I teach my children that they need to respect, and contribute themselves, at home and that outside work is not more or less important than my spouse who earns a paycheck (I think a lot of that comes from what respect the working spouse models toward the at home spouse), I'm all for people working of it makes you happy and is fulfilling, but we don't need to try to transfer guilt from one set of moms to another for damaging their daughters either. I bet happy parents in either situation are the best for well-adjusted children. And I think it is possible for moms to have intellectual and emotional balance at home without a paycheck too, and even model active community participation and volunteerism at the same time.

LATRICE METEOROLOGIST, NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

As a working mother, I carry plenty of guilt about being away from my son. However, as someone else pointed out, Black women have always worked outside the home, so I never considered being a full time mom. I think we should also note that countries like Denmark and Switzerland also have policies that allow mothers to take a year or more of maternity leave or something similar. Where you have fewer choices in the US, with most places only allowing 6 to 8 weeks of maternity leave. That early time with your children benefits everyone. While women make up at least 50% of the workforce in the US, they are often treated as inferior and still expected to maintain the traditional role. It would have been great to see the results from the US only. I think they would have seen more conservative results. After reading several comments, I think some are missing the point of the study. I think the idea was to show that women raised by working mothers still had the confidence and drive to pursue a career and move up the ladder, regardless of the professional path. I always knew I would go to college and have a career, if I had a daughter I would encourage her to do the same. My mother worked outside the home, but we were often qualified as poor. It was also great to see that men were more likely to participate in home life when raised by a working mother, which is awesome. I am not married, but I believe having a partner to share the responsibility at home would make a huge difference. I don't think this study was designed to put any less value on full time or part-time mothers. This study supports the idea that children model what they see, so whether we choose to work in or out of the home, we should be the best at it. Either way, being our best helps our children.

ELLEN SOCIAL MEDIA

How in the world can someone be a "full time mom" or even a "part time mom"? I have a c-section that pretty much says I'm a mom 24/7. I may work outside the home, but that doesn't mean I'm ever not a mom.

DEBORAH NIXON FOUNDER, TRUST LEARNING SOLUTIONS

At what price? So they benefit economically. But what about emotionally? A benefit that comes at a price is a net loss. I would like the research to measure the emotional benefits (or not) and then determine if they really benefit.

PROUD DAD DAD

The most important role we will ever have as individuals on this earth is that of mother and father. Sorry Harvard, but that job is entirely too important to outsource.

Any study produced that says otherwise can be easily countered with psychological impact studies that quantify the value of parents raising their own kids.

JENNIFER SANFACON, TEACHER FROM CA

Yay! Confirmation of what we working mom's have always believed.

DENISE RETIRED

Children resemble their mothers behaviorally for genetic reasons. With all the factors controlled for in the study, the most important one was omitted. It makes all conclusions invalid.

LYNN HR SUPERVISOR

I think a lot of the comments here are not taking in the whole picture.

Parenting to valuable to be outsourced? Working parents are not outsourcing their roles as a mom and dad. Quality childcare can be a wonderful tool in your parent toolbox. The saying, "it takes a village to raise a child" is true and I think a lot parents in this time are selfish with raising their children. There has been multiple studies that show children benefit from quality childcare and having strong adults in their life besides their parents.

I am not saying that every child should have a stay at home parent or both parents should work. But as a mom who has done both (stay at home and work) I find stay at home parent families are incredibly short sighted and don't understand something they have never participated in.

K. KULBERG DESIGNER, URBAN TRIBAL GEMS

Yes there are benefits If the working mother has a job she likes and receives positive benefits from that job. Please do not allow this study to be a n argument against maternity benefits.

A-ARON THEORIST

I would say that the article tends to share a little too much opinion though the video of the lady who did the research sort of opened up some interesting ideas. My son is lazy as all get out and his stay at home mom (my wife) does everything for him. I've been wanting her to go back to work for years. This will force my son to help out more. Make sure to watch the video.

CLMORRIS PRINCIPAL GPM, MICROSOFT

why are we creating another us vs them with moms who work and those that don't -- or chose not to. Happy Mom's = happy kids... stop the conversation right there.

JANE FOUGHT REALTOR, WINDERMERE REAL ESTATE

I totally agree. I am still working and loving it at age 84. I have two children; one is a teacher and one a doctor

DEIRDRE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH BIAS INHERENT IN QUESTION, SELF-EMPLOYED

I think the premise is inherently gender-biased and that concerns me. What if girls with working moms don't do better? What if they do the same as girls whose moms don't work outside the home? What if the girls do worse? The implication is that it's only really ok for mothers to work if it means their daughters do the same or better. And implicit is also that it is ok to question whether moms should work. There's the underlying idea that if it doesn't benefit their kids, the mothers should feel guilty. Does that mean it is their prime directive to raise children? What if girls (or boys) with working dads don't do better? You don't hear that parallel being drawn. This working paper seems quite unfortunate in the 21st century. Those moms were once girls. Maybe it doesn't matter if the girls don't do better if their most important role as adults is to make sure they're there at home so their kids "do better," resulting in a vicious cycle. I don't think women should have to look for data to support the concept of working mothers in the 21st century. Like men, we are not *just* parents; we are people with our own needs to balance. Thanks

MA

As some comments have raised, I'm intrigued by the measure of 'benefits'. Going on to earn a good income like your mom is probably a good thing, but what of the social costs? My mom worked when I was a kid and I have distinct memories of wishing she would spend more time with me. Sure I went on to get my HBS degree but I wouldn't say I have the closest relationship with my mother. I worked full time while my daughter was in preschool. It was ok but the expectations of my role meant I was increasingly asked to stay back at work till 6 pm. When you couple that with getting home by 7 pm and having kids who need to be in bed by 8.30--well, we know the trade offs right? So much for family dinners. We ended up getting takeaway food most nights (there goes healthy eating). When we had a live in nanny/housekeeper we wondered why we bothered to have kids if we were going to outsource all child rearing. The last straw was losing my temper all the time because I was so stressed trying to juggle it all. How do you constantly explain to your kid it's not their fault but Mom just had a hard day at the office? At my last HBS reunion the amount of people who spoke of kids with mental health/anxiety issues was eye-opening. I quit my full time job two years ago and am happier and healthier for it. So is my child. Now I'm on a quest to find meaningful part time work that isn't going to bankrupt me or damage my self-esteem but I suspect that will take a while. I'd love to get back to work sometime and would love to see more of a dialogue on how to restore balance back in the workplace. For starters, a better quality of part time job roles.

L WOMAN

Research like this creates the unfortunate impression that the school's female professors are incapable of thought leadership that's objective, intellectually rigorous, and consistent with a business school's academic mission (i.e., finance, strategy, marketing).

For the past several years HBS is determined to weigh in on alumnae's marriages and parenting, waving dubious research like this as proof of what constitutes correct choices. I for one am tired of this overreach in to our private lives. We've already graduated, so please stop grading women according to the school's forced curve.

RACHEL ADVISOR, GREENCAP

Thanks, very interesting. What is missing now, is the angle on the father. What impact has a father on a child's life who has been present at home, who has shared household chores and child education responsibilities with his (part-time) working wife?

JAN STAY AT HOME MOM, LOVING CARING MOM

I respect all Mothers who have to work outside the home! I don't really believe that statistic is true. Being home with my two girls was my life's biggest blessing. It was and still is my life goal. The destruction of the family is what has caused all the dysfunction in our world today. I have come from a long line of stay at home mothers who have actively been the most hard working women that I know. By example they have lived their lives of volunteering and home life that takes it far above those who have chose to work.
