Salvation of the Second Shift: Are Wives Immune to Monday Blues?

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ABSTRACT

In an internet survey, 702 Australians reported momentary and typical moods for each day of the week (DOW). Both mood measures indicated a gender x marital status x DOW interaction, wherein wives were relatively immune to Monday blues compared to husbands and single adults. Due to traditional gender stereotypes and roles within the household, wives may not associate Mondays with the loss of discretionary leisure and the onset of paid work. Consistent with this explanation, wives reported doing housework on the weekend more frequently than single women and men. They also experienced weekend leisure less frequently and performed substantially fewer hours of paid labor during the week compared to men, although there was no difference between single and married women on either variable. However, none of these variables mediated the gender x marital status x DOW effect on reported moods, suggesting that additional factors underlie wives' immunity to Monday blues.

INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes found in aphorisms (e.g., Monday blues, Wednesday hump day, and T.G.I.F.–Thank God It’s Friday), song titles (e.g., I Don’t Like Mondays—the Boomtown Rats, Friday on My Mind—the Easybeats, Saturday Morning in the City—Brian Wilson, Gloomy Sunday—Billie Holiday), and literary works (e.g., “something unromantic as Monday morning”—Charlotte Bronte (Shirley), “as lonesome as a Sunday”—Mark Twain (A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court), “He that laughs on Friday may cry on Sunday”—Proverbs (The Bible)) suggest that some days of the week are consistently better than others. These aspects of popular culture imply that moods vary over the course of a typical week according to a sinusoidal pattern, with a positive gradient between the nadir on Monday and the peak on Friday or Saturday, a transition from the negative to the positive portion of the week on Wednesday (i.e., the hump day), and a steep decline in mood late on Sunday. Day of the week (DOW) stereotypes stem from an assumption that people are generally happier when they are free to choose their activities compared to when they are engaged in paid work (Beatty & Torbert, 2003; Dupre & Gagnier, 1996). The sinusoidal pattern emerges because weekdays (weekends) are associated with paid work (free time) (Zerubavel, 1985), and because people anticipate the number of days before the transition from one to the other (Larsen & Kasimatis, 1990). Hence, Monday morning is the worst part of the week because it is the first work day after two days of free time, and because four work days follow before the next period of free time. Likewise, Friday evening is the best part of the week because it marks the beginning of an extended period of free time (i.e., T.G.I.F.) (Areni, 2008).

Given this explanation for DOW stereotypes, factors affecting the amount of free time experienced on the weekend, and the amount of paid work experienced during the week, should also affect the extent to which Mondays are associated with negative moods. Along these lines, previous studies have shown that men are more prone to the stereotypical weekly mood pattern than women (Rossi & Rossi, 1977; Almagor & Ehrlich, 1990). In short, men have distinct, compartmentalized portions of the week for paid work (i.e., Mon-Fri, 9 to 5) and leisure (i.e., evenings and weekends), whereas these boundaries are blurred for women (Almagor & Ehrlich, 1990; Deem, 1996), who often fulfill multiple social and professional roles simultaneously (Thompson, 1996). Additional research suggests that role conflict is magnified for wives compared to single women (Stevens, Kiger & Riley, 2001; Roxburgh, 2006). The research reported below uses survey data obtained from a cross-section of the Australian population to test the hypotheses that wives will report less negative moods on Mondays compared to husbands and single adults. The following section expands on this prediction, explaining why wives may be immune to Monday blues compared to single women and men.

WORK TIME, LEISURE TIME AND GENDER INEQUALITY

Perhaps the most fundamental defining aspect of leisure is the freedom or discretion to pursue pleasurable activities (Unger & Kerman, 1983). By this simple definition, contemporary gender roles rob wives of this most basic of human pursuits because of their greater involvement in household production (Hunt & Kiker, 1981), their adoption of multiple, often conflicting, social and professional roles (Thompson, 1996), a perceived lack of freedom to act on their personal wishes (Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1990), and a tendency to put the needs of others ahead of their own (Meyers-Levy, 1988; Thompson et al., 1990). All of this suggests that wives experience less leisure compared to husbands and single adults (Bittman & Wajcman, 2000; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003).

Hochschild (1989) coined the phrase “second shift” to describe the fate of working wives who, after a full day of work at the office, come home to a disproportionate amount of household work due to husbands who do not pull their own weight. Despite the social impetus for husbands to increase their share of domestic labor to accommodate the careers of their wives (Thornton, 1989; Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003), husbands often define themselves in terms of their abilities as “breadwinners” for the household (MacMillan & Gartner, 1999; Rogers & DeBoer, 2001; Commuri & Gentry, 2005). Perhaps because of this narrow criterion, husbands do less household work than wives (Hochschild, 1989; Bittman & Pixley, 1997; Roxburgh, 2006), even after correcting for hours of paid labor per week. Some studies have found that wives do more than twice as much household work as their husbands (Bittman et al., 2003), so as wives increase the amount of time spent in paid work, their available leisure time evaporates (Cantwell & Sanik, 1993).

Although wives experience a relative loss of leisure and a higher proportion of housework throughout the week, these gender inequities are more pronounced on weekends, where husbands and children enjoy pure leisure experiences that are often produced by wives’ household labor activities (Graham, 1984; Deem, 1996). A husband’s experience of drinking a cold beer while watching football on television is produced by a wife who shops for the household (i.e., provides the clean clothes the husband is presumably wearing), and keeps the children entertained (i.e., stops them from interrupting the viewing experience), among other things. Wives experience free time during different parts of the week compared to husbands and single adults; since they have less free time during the weekend, they squeeze it into weekday evenings, after the kitchen has been cleaned and the children have been put to bed (Hewitt, 1993; Le Feuvre, 1994). Hence, for wives, weekends are less likely to be experienced as two days of free time for leisure activities (Larson & Richards, 1994; Deem, 1996).

Moreover, despite changing gender roles and attitudes toward women pursuing careers, women still work fewer hours per week than men (Coleman & Pencavel, 1993; Roxburgh, 2006), and wives
work fewer hours per week than unmarried women, although the gap is narrowing (Coleman & Pencavel, 1993; Pencavel, 1998). Wives are also less likely to work in traditional “9 to 5, Monday through Friday” positions, instead occupying part-time jobs that better accommodate their childcare activities (Presser & Cox, 1997). Wives often choose to participate in paid labor because of financial or marital distress. Indeed, research suggests that wives who increase their participation in paid labor often do so because of unhappiness in their marriage, which is why increases in wives’ paid labor hours is correlated with subsequent divorces initiated by wives but not those initiated by husbands (Schoen, Rogers & Amato, 2006). So wives are less likely to experience Mondays as the beginning of a period of paid work. Many will not begin a full week of work on Monday, and for others, paid work may be a welcome respite from more stressful domestic labor (Larson & Richards, 1994; Deem, 1996).

These gender differences in work and leisure time have been explained in terms of rational allocations of economic resources (Becker, 1981). That is, men spend more hours in paid work because they have greater opportunities to earn money. But this argument seems rather tautological, and even when wives work as many hours and earn as much money as their husbands, they still do more household work, suggesting that gender stereotypes have more to do with this uneven division of domestic labor (Hochschild, 1989; Bittman et al., 2003; Commuri & Gentry, 2005). Wives earning more than 50% of household income may actually do more housework as a consequence (Bittman et al., 2003), because their husbands contribute even less to domestic labor (Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000). In other words, a wife who earns more than her husband is “compensated” by having to do even more housework, suggesting a possible ego defense explanation for husbands’ failure to contribute equally to household work. Having children magnifies these differences between husbands and wives (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003). Research has even shown that married mothers do more household work than single mothers, suggesting that “husbands create more household work than they perform” (Mauldin & Meeks, 1990, p. 67).

In a more general sense, compared to men, and to a lesser extent, single women, wives are less likely to experience the transition from the weekend to the week as a loss of free time to paid work. Instead, household responsibilities permeate every day regardless of how many hours of paid work they perform (Larson & Richards, 1994; Deem, 1996). Since the perceived loss of free time is a critical aspect of Monday blues (Areni, 2008), this suggests that wives should be relatively immune to actual and perceived downward swings in mood from Sunday to Monday compared to husbands and single adults. The research reported below tests this basic hypothesis, and also predicts that wives will report (a) fewer hours of paid labor during the workweek, (b) lower frequencies of leisure experiences during the weekend, and (c) higher frequencies of household production activities during the weekend compared to husbands and single adults. These variables are also tested as mediators of the gender x marital status interaction effect on perceived and actual Monday blues.

**METHOD**

**Design and Procedure**

An internet survey was conducted in order to collect data on momentary moods over the course of a week and the typical moods people experience on each DOW. The data were collected from the 5th to the 12th of October in 2005 to avoid public holidays and major sporting events. Husbands, wives, and single men and women reported their momentary moods once per day at their discretion over one week. On the eighth day, they reported how they typically feel on each DOW. Hence, mood measure (momentary, typical) and DOW were within-subjects factors, and gender and marital status were between-subjects factors.

**Sample**

Seven hundred and two subjects were selected from the panel of an Australian market research company, which included 369 males (52.6%) and ages ranging from 16 to 65. The distribution of ages was approximately normal, with a mean of 38.0 years and a standard deviation of 10.2. There was no significant difference in the mean ages of males and females, and distribution by metropolitan area was uniform when weighted by population. Sixty-nine percent of the subjects were employed in some capacity, 42.5% in full-time work. The remaining 31% who did not report being employed were split between those having home duties (17.5%), retirees (4.3%), and those who were unemployed (9.7%).

**Independent Variables**

**Momentary versus Typical Moods:** For the momentary mood measures, subjects were asked “What is your mood like right now?” on seven successive days. On the eighth and final day of the survey, subjects were asked “On a typical (DOW), what is your mood like over the course of the whole day?” This question was repeated seven times for each DOW. The momentary and typical mood measures used the same response format, which is described below.

**Marital Status and Gender:** Subjects were asked “Which of the following best describes you?” using the response categories “single”, “in a relationship, separate residences”, “in a relationship, living together”, and “married couple”. Given research suggesting that married couples differ from cohabitating couples, who are more comparable to other singles (Stack & Eshleman, 1998), only subjects selecting the last option were classified as married. All other responses were coded as single. Subjects were then prompted with “Are you...” using the response categories “male” and “female”.

**Mediating Variables**

**Hours of Paid Work:** Subjects were asked “How many hours per week do you normally work?” using an open-ended response format.

**Frequency of Weekend Housework and Leisure:** After each of the 7 momentary mood reports, subjects were asked “In what activity are you presently involved?” using an open-ended response format. The responses were coded into 49 categories by two experienced researchers using the Daily Life Experiences (DLE) taxonomy (Stone & Neale, 1982; Stone, 1987). The DLE classifies daily activities into five broad categories (paid work, leisure, family and friends, financial matters, and other), with 14 sub-categories and 49 final classifications. For purposes of this analysis, family and friends was separated into two sub-categories: household work and social leisure. Social leisure, involving discretionary time spent with friends or family members, was grouped with other leisure activities, whereas childcare and other activities involving the care of family members were classified as household work. This resulted in four main categories: paid work, leisure, household work, and other, which was an aggregation of the financial matters and other categories in the original taxonomy.

Two judges independently coded the open-ended responses into the 49 classifications. Inter-coder reliability was assessed for each DOW. Cohen’s K values ranged from .80 on Thursday to .88 on Sunday and Monday. When the data were aggregated up into the
four main activity categories, Cohen’s K values increased, ranging from .87 on Wednesday and Saturday to .92 on Monday. These results reflect “substantial” to “almost perfect” inter-coder reliability (Landis & Koch 1977, p. 165); differences were resolved via discussions between the author and the two coders. So, subjects reporting momentary moods on a given day also indicated whether they were experiencing leisure or household work at that time. Hence, it was possible to count the number of experiences in each category on the weekend. Since Fridays are experienced as part of the weekend rather than the workweek (Rossi & Rossi, 1977), this research adopted a 3-day definition of the weekend. Subjects could report between 0 and 3 leisure activities and household work activities on the weekend.

### RESULTS

In order to test the hypothesis that wives would be relatively immune to Monday blues, a 4-way mixed-factor ANOVA was run with gender and marital status as between-subjects factors and DOW and mood measure as within-subjects factors. Results indicated that the main effects of gender (F(1, 698)=4.5, p<.05), marital status (F(1, 698)=7.0, p<.01), DOW (F(1, 698)=110.5, p<.0001), and mood measure (F(1, 698)=8.3, p<.01) were all significant. Women (M=1.60) reported more positive moods than men (M=1.37); married subjects (M=1.63) reported more positive moods than single subjects (M=1.36); and overall, subjects reported more positive typical moods (M=1.54) than momentary moods (M=1.42). The DOV effect was more or less consistent with the stereotypical sinusoidal pattern, with moods on Monday (M=1.10) significantly lower than moods on Tuesday (M=1.31), Wednesday (M=1.26), Thursday (M=1.40), Friday (M=1.53), Saturday (M=1.60) and Sunday (M=1.61); and moods on Tuesday–Thursday lower than moods on Friday–Sunday, all at α=.05.

However, these main effects must be qualified by significant measure x DOW (F(6, 4188)=71.8, p<.0001), gender x DOW (F(6, 4188)=2.7, p<.01), and gender x DOV x marital status (F(6, 4188)=3.6, p<.001) interaction effects. The mood measure x DOW interaction effect revealed that the stereotypical pattern was more obvious for typical moods compared to momentary moods. Specific mean contrasts on each day revealed that typical moods were less positive than momentary moods on Monday (0.57 vs. 1.24) and Tuesday (0.89 vs. 1.47), but more positive than momentary moods on Wednesday (1.29 vs. 1.16), Thursday (1.46 vs. 1.33), Friday (2.05 vs. 1.54), Saturday (2.36 vs. 1.53), and Sunday (2.19 vs. 1.65), all at the α=.05 level of significance, except for Thursday, which was significant at α=10. So while there was some evidence for Monday blues in momentary moods, it was more pronounced in typical moods.

Perhaps more importantly, given the focus of the research, the gender x DOV interaction revealed that most of the gender main effect reported above occurred on Monday (F(1, 698)=6.4, p<.01), where women (M=1.30) reported more positive moods than men (M=0.92). No other gender differences for the remainder of the week were significant at α=.10. This suggests that men are more prone to Monday blues than women, but the gender x DOV x marital status interaction revealed that this conclusion depends on marital status. Paired comparisons revealed that moods declined from Sunday to Monday for single men (1.34 vs. 0.79, t(1, 224)=4.7, p<.0001), married men (1.81 vs. 1.13, t(1, 143)=5.9, p<.0001), and single women (1.74 vs. 1.00, t(1, 166)=5.6, p<.0001), but not for married women (1.66 vs. 1.57, t(1, 171)<1). As hypothesized, wives were immune to Monday blues.

The underlying explanation for wives’ relative immunity to Monday blues stems from differences in gender roles within the household. Because they do more housework on weekends, experience less leisure on weekends, and work fewer hours of paid labor during the week, wives are less likely to experience Mondays as a loss of free time and the onset of paid work. If this explanation is correct, then hours of paid labor during the week and the frequency of leisure and housework during the weekend may mediate the effects of gender and marital status on Monday moods. In order to explore the first possibility, hours worked per week was included as the dependent variable in a 2-way, between-subjects ANOVA with gender and marital status as the independent variables. Results indicated only a main effect of gender (F(1, 698)=52.7, p<.0001). Men (M=33.13) worked more hours per week than women (M=16.52), regardless of marital status. Moreover, when hours worked was included as the covariate in an ANCOVA with DOW and mood measure as within-subjects factors and gender and marital status as between-subjects factors, it was not predictive of moods on Monday (F(1, 697)<1) or any other day of the week. So the relative immunity to Monday blues does not apparently stem from wives working fewer hours of paid labor during the week.

To examine whether the amount of weekend housework is related the gender x DOV x marital status interaction effect on reported moods, frequency of housework was included as the dependent variable in a 2-way, between-subjects ANOVA with gender and marital status as independent variables. Results indicated main effects of gender (F(1, 697)=36.7, p<.0001) and marital status (F(1, 697)=23.5, p<.0001). Women (M=0.87) were more frequently engaged in weekend housework than were men (M=0.48), and married subjects (M=0.85) reported housework activities more frequently than single subjects (M=0.52). The gender x marital status interaction was marginally significant (F(1, 697)=3.6, p<.06). Consistent with traditional gender stereotypes, wives (M=1.06) reported doing housework on the weekends more frequently than single women (M=0.66), husbands (M=0.59), or single men (M=0.41) at the α=.10 level of significance. Frequency of weekend housework was then included as a covariate in a 4-way, mixed-factor ANCOVA with gender and marital status as between-subjects factors and DOW and mood measure as within-subjects factors. However, results indicated that the frequency of weekend housework was not predictive of moods reported on Monday (F(1, 696)<1) or any other day. So wives immunity to Monday blues is not explained by the amount of housework done on the weekend.

Frequency of weekend leisure was also included as a dependent variable in a 2-way, between-subjects ANOVA with gender and marital status as independent variables. Results indicated main effects for gender (F(1, 697)=3.3, p<.10) and marital status (F(1, 697)=4.7, p<.05). Men (M=2.02) experienced weekend leisure more frequently than did women (M=1.87) and single subjects (M=2.02).
reported weekend leisure more frequently than married subjects (M=1.86). However, when frequency of weekend leisure was included as a covariate in a 4-way ANCOVA with gender and marital status as between-subjects factors and DOW and mood measure as within-subjects factors, it was not predictive of the moods reported on Monday (F(1,1696)<1) or any other day of the week. So, the frequency of weekend leisure activities also fails to account for the gender x day x marital status effect on reported moods.

**DISCUSSION**

The results reported above support the hypothesis that wives are immune to Monday blues compared to single women and men, who experienced a marked decline in mood from Sunday to Monday. The explanation given for this immunity stemmed from wives not experiencing Monday as the onset of negatively valued paid work following a weekend of positively valued leisure. Instead, wives were thought to experience all days as complex mixes of leisure and domestic and paid labor, with Mondays even experienced as a relief from the domestic labor of the weekend. However, subsequent analyses did not support this explanation. Hours of paid work during the week, frequency of weekend leisure, and frequency of weekend housework did not mediate the effect of gender and marital status on moods by DOW, suggesting that other factors may mitigate Monday blues.

Despite research indicating changes in attitudes toward more egalitarian gender roles, these results suggest that actual behavior within the household seems to have changed substantially less (Cantwell & Sanik, 1993). Women continue to do more household work than men, and this difference is magnified among married couples. As a result, wives experience less leisure time during the weekend than their husbands do. There is some indication in the literature that the failure of husbands to bring their behavior in line with their supposed attitudes is ego defensive. Contributing more household labor may unconsciously be interpreted as an indication that husbands are inadequate in the traditional role of “bringing home the bacon” (Stevens, Kiger & Riley, 2001). Career-oriented women may feel guilty about being inadequate in their traditional roles as wives and mothers, and domestically-oriented men may feel ashamed about being inadequate in their traditional role as breadwinners.

Along these lines, attitudes toward traditional and progressive gender roles may play a more important role in determining whether Monday mornings are experienced as a loss of freedom or an escape from domestic labor. For a woman adopting a more traditional gender role, domestic labor on the weekend might not be viewed as onerous and paid work during the week may be minimal. On the other hand, a woman with more progressive values may well resent weekend housework, and look forward to resuming her career-oriented work on Monday (Hochschild, 1997). In addition to looking at the allocation of time to household and work-related activities, future research might examine attitudes toward gender roles and related issues as potential mediators of Monday blues.

The DOW x mood measure interaction effect reported above indicates that Monday blues and other DOW stereotypes may be more in the mind rather than in the reality of moment by moment affective states. There is some evidence of a weekly mood cycle in the momentary mood reports, but it is at odds with the stereotypical pattern in some respects. Although subjects reported relatively low momentary moods on Monday, which increased substantially on Tuesday, momentary moods were lowest on Wednesday; and though they rose steadily from Thursday to Saturday, momentary moods continued to improve on Sunday, which runs counter to the stereotypical pattern. By contrast, the typical mood reports followed the stereotypical pattern perfectly, with more pronounced differences between the “good” and “bad” parts of the week. Asking people how they typically feel, on a “Monday” for example, explicitly mentions the DOW, which may activate schemas and stereotypes related to that day. It also encourages people to consider a wide span of previous experiences, and to consider common rather than unique aspects of those experiences. One of the most accessible common aspects of Mondays is the return to paid work after a period of weekend leisure, which should trigger the stereotype, and lead to an exaggeration of how bad Mondays are. By contrast, the momentary mood measure makes no mention of the specific DOW. When asked how they feel at the moment, people are more likely to be influenced by their local surroundings and recently passed and immediately anticipated events, rather than DOW stereotypes. Hence, the stereotypical pattern is relatively muted.

It is also intriguing that reported typical moods were more favorable than the actual momentary moods people experienced. Based on momentary mood reports from a number of cultures, Biswas-Diener, Vitterso & Diener (2005) have concluded that “most people are pretty happy” (p. 2005). The caveat suggested here is that people may not be quite as happy as they think. Perhaps this also reflects an ego defensive mechanism. Is may be acceptable to admit that things are not going well at the moment, but to admit that things typically do not go well may be threatening to the self. People are motivated to feel good about themselves and others, and typical moods may be more diagnostic than momentary moods as indications of how things are going, so they are biased in a positive direction.

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