

Working more and feeling better – journal article summary

[Business](#), [Work](#)



Citation Schnittker, Jason. 2007. " Working More and Feeling Better: Women's Health, Employment, and Family Life, 1974-2004. *American Sociological Review* 72(2): 221-238. This study investigates the relationship between women's employment and health unlike other studies, which have used mental health as the outcome. The research questions addressed in this study were: Has the health of women improved or declined? Has the gender gap in health altered and, if so, why?

Does integrating long work hours with caring for a child diminish the relationship between employment and health and, if so, have current work-family patterns restrained any gains in health? Schnittker included changes in composition (e. g. , are more women suffering since more women are combining their jobs with raising a child) and changes in association (e. g. , do the marked improvements in health related to employment lesson with the birth of a child). The changes in composition and changes in association were examined with cumulative trends in health.

The independent variables in this study were women's work hours, education and family income. The dependent variable was self-rated health. Reported work hours were separated into four categories and the reference category was " not working" for this study. Several control variables were, as well, that are related to understanding trends. Education was divided into four categories with " less than high school" as the reference category. Family income used a constant of \$1, 986 dollars.

Schnittker analyzed whether or not children were in the home instead of focusing how many children because of the various work-family adjustments

and different levels of responsibility that come with children's different ages. For this study, separate dummy variables were used having a child under the age of 6 and having a child between 6 and 17 years old with having no children under the age of 18 years old presently in the home. The study used data from the cumulative General Social Survey (GSS) taken between 1974-2004. The GSS is represented nationally and uses an area-probability sample.

The survey asked responders to self-rate their health as poor, fair, good, or excellent. Self-rated health predicts gender differences, is an indicator of morbidity and predictor of mortality. Findings from the GSS were checked using the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) taken between 1997-2004. The NHIS also provided data concerning the current health trends. Data from the NHIS was produced by personal in-home interviews. The trends in the gender health gap in this study used controls for year, gender, interactions between gender and year, and age and age-squared.

Age and age-squared were used to account for the aging population, which is vital for this study since there are sex differences in life expectancy. Findings suggest that the gender gap closed significantly during the 30-year period. Women's self-health has significantly improved and men's self-rated health slightly increased until 1990. Men's self-rated health has been on a steady decline ever since then. These results suggest a relation between the trends in women's improving self-rated health and the gender gap closing.

Once Schnittker used controls for education in his analysis it showed that the improvements in women's health can be attributable to education. When

education was replaced with employment status and family income it showed that some of the improvements in women's health can be attributed to the rise in women's employment, but not near as much as education. The relationship between work-family patterns and health were examined when Schnittker introduced whether the responder had a child. His findings also show that work hours and having a young child are very related.

He found that having a child under 6 causes a decline in employments positive impacts on health. Controls for income slightly reduced the negative relationship. Findings concerning the relationship between work hours and having a child in the home show that fathers report improved self-rated health when working full-time and mothers' self-rated health drastically decreased. More notably, the findings show that both men and women report worse self-rated health when the combine work with raising children.

Out of all independent variables, the one that impacted the diminishing of the gender gap was employment. Education, work hours, and having a child all affected the closing of the gender gap, but not as significantly as employment. Schnittker's findings also suggest that self-rated health for women would improve even more if their average work hours were the very same as men's average work hours. Another notable finding comes out of the inclusion of family income. His findings suggest that if the wages of women were the same as the wagers of men their self-rated health would improve significantly.

He also found that the emergence of the time bind has suppressed women's self-rated health, especially in recent years. (Schnittker 2007; 233). He also

found that the time bind only slightly suppressed women's self-rated health and that in the long term, more women working and achieving higher levels of education have had much more of an impact on their self-rated health. Schnittker's results show that education and employment are largely impacting the gender gap. Schnittker's study shows that women's health on average was reported to be worse than men's.

The factors which he attributes the difference self-rated health are the trends related to women's increased presence in the work force and the increase in the number of women a higher levels on education. Schnittker's study is remarkable. His findings are strong reasons for change to take place with the employment terms of women today. Self-rated health is questionable since it is "self-rated". Also, the term "health" in the study could be physical health or mental health. Schnittker attributes the His work proves that more research is needed in this area of study.