The Life-Course Employment Profiles of Early Baby-Boom Women: A Group-Based Trajectory Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Most of the literature on female employment has focused on the intersection between women's labor supply and specific family events such as marriage, divorce or childbearing. Even when using longitudinal data and methods, most studies estimate average net effects over a relatively short period of time. The abundance of research on women's response to specific work and family transitions contrasts with our limited knowledge of the cumulative effects of women's work and family experiences over the long run. This paper uses group-based trajectory analysis to model the lifetime work trajectories of early baby boomers in the United States, from ages 20 to 54. I find that this cohort's long-term employment profiles can be summarized in four groups: those who worked consistently (37.8 percent), those who remained largely out of the labor force (22.8 percent), those who gradually increased their work attachment (26.7 percent), and a group of women who worked intensely during young adulthood, but later dropped out of the workforce in dramatic numbers (12.7 percent). I then explore the factors associated with membership in each of these employment trajectories, and relate women's employment patterns with their wage and occupational long-term profiles. This paper highlights the importance of understanding female labor force participation not just as a "work status", but as a process resulting from the intersection between individual socialization (preferences, attitudes towards childbearing, job satisfaction, etc.) and structural constraints (discrimination, lack of husband's support, etc.).

INTRODUCTION

The study of women's labor force participation is a mature field: forty years into the gender revolution we know a great deal about the correlates of women's employment behavior, particularly at the intersection between work and family. Starting in the 1970s, women – particularly mothers of young children– greatly increased their participation in paid work, with fewer and shorter interruptions (Joesch 1994; Rindfuss, Brewster, and Kavee 1996). However, most of this literature has focused on the relatively short-term effects of work or family transitions. Far less attention has been devoted to the consequences of work and family events on women's long-term careers.

Female labor supply is characterized by its fluidity, adjusting over the life course as women navigate the challenges of combining work with other aspect of their lives. For a significant number of women (and an increasing number of men) work is not a continuous and uninterrupted status, but rather an activity that may at times be put temporarily on hold in order to prioritize other life pursuits, such as raising a family. In this paper, I investigate whether early baby-boom women's work lives can be characterized by a few ideal-type patterns; then I model these trajectories, seeking to answer the following questions: Were most women's employment patterns continuous or irregular? Who were the women most likely to experience reversals in their employment patterns? Did these women's early work expectations come to fruition later in life, and if not, why? What other factors influenced women's lifetime work profiles?

Accounting for the complexity of women's employment histories requires both longitudinal data and a method that incorporates the timing of events, their duration, the possibility of reversals, and the long term consequences of specific work and family decisions. It also requires a long window of observation, ideally spanning women's entire working life. In the

last couple of years, the older members of the baby boom cohort have been reaching retirement age, completing their working careers. Women in this cohort pioneered some of the most important processes underpinning the gender revolution, such as the rise in female employment and wage rates, the decline and postponement of fertility, and growing family instability. They became more attached to the labor force, with employment profiles increasingly similar to those of men (Spain and Bianchi 1996). They are also the first generation for which rich longitudinal data are available on their education, working and family histories.

Using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women cohort (NLS-YW, born between 1944 and 1954, interviewed between 1968 and 2003), this paper uses group-based trajectory analysis, GBTA (Nagin 1999, 2009) to explore the employment trajectories of early baby boomers between ages 20 and 54. I find that lifetime patterns of labor force participation of this cohort can be best summarized in four groups (group size in parenthesis): consistently low (22.8 percent), steady increase (26.7 percent), increase and decline (12.7 percent), and consistently high (37.8 percent). I then explore the bivariate association between membership in these four groups and a set of characteristics, such as women's early work plans, human capital accumulation, work-related experiences (having experienced discrimination at work, job satisfaction), family events (marriage, fertility, divorce, satisfaction with mothering), external constraints (own health, health of family members, husband's support for his wife's paid work) and socio-demographic traits (income and race). Finally, I fit finite mixture growth models that simultaneously estimate the likelihood of group membership and the risk factors associated with it (Nagin 2009). This paper provides an empirical assessment of prior –mostly qualitative– studies that have explored women's expectations, experiences and narratives of the work-family

interface (cfr. Damaske 2011; Gerson 1986), and sheds new light on the influence of socialization and structural inequality in shaping women's employment careers.

BACKGROUND

Theoretical approaches to women's employment behavior

Over the last forty years, a number of theories have been put forth to explain women's employment behavior. These attempts can be broadly grouped in three strains of thought. First, *gender socialization* theories –also known as theories of "gendered selves"– emphasize the role of internalized attitudes and preferences in the everyday process of doing gender (Butler 1988; Chodorow 1999; West and Zimmerman 1987). According to these theories, women "learn" gender during childhood and adolescence, acquiring the feminine traits prevalent in their social milieu –i.e. gender-typed attitudes and behavioral predispositions, such as nurturing and relational skills, communal thinking, or empathy.

Second, *structural theories* of gender inequality highlight the role of institutional factors that impinge on women's ability to choose and act. According to these theories, women's behavior is influenced not so much by their individual attitudes or preferences, but rather by their location within the gender system and other social structures. Most of the outcomes that we attribute to behavioral or attitudinal differences between men and women are, according to these theories, a reflection of the different structural positions they occupy, and a result of the ways in which society allocates market rewards across the sexes (Reskin 1988). These theories highlight the fact that, when subjected to comparable social conditions (e.g. equal expectations about childcare roles, or about what constitutes good or bad parenting) and when given equal access to opportunities (e.g. professional mentorship, chances of promotion, availability of social and

professional networks) most men and women behave in largely similar ways (Kanter 1977; Risman 1998).

Finally, the *developmental approach* constitutes a sort of middle-way between childhood socialization and structural theories. In this view, agency and structure, constraint and choice, are necessarily interwoven in women's behavior: social action always takes place in a context of constrained choice and of chosen constraint. Subjective attitudes, preferences, expectations, and gender roles provide a normative framework that lends meaning to the available alternatives of action; whereas institutions and practices define the (often unequal) ways in which options emerge in the first place for the individual –depending on his or her location within the economic, social, political and gender systems. This hybrid approach has become the standard in the qualitative literature that has sought to understand the normative frameworks that shape women's work-family narratives (Blair-Loy 2006; Damaske 2011; Gerson 1986). Because it combines elements from socialization and structural theories, I consider this to be the perspective that is best suited to account for the complexity and fluidity of women's market behavior across the life-course. In this paper, I build upon this theoretical tradition and explore quantitatively some of the claims emanating from the qualitative literature.

Pulls and pushes, structure and agency

Women's work and family experiences are fluid. In her landmark qualitative study of women's employment trajectories, Gerson (1986) found that most of her interviewees (a sample of sixty early baby-boom women, interviewed in the late 1970s, when they were in their early to mid-thirties) grew up with some sort of teenage preference for their adult lives: about 45% of them wanted to work for pay, while the others planned an adult life centered on motherhood and

homemaking. However, as these women recounted their work and family experiences, four distinct groups emerged, depending on whether or not they had fulfilled their teenage work-family plans: of the women who grew up expecting to work for pay, only forty percent managed to be employed consistently, with the rest of women veering towards domesticity; among the women expecting to stay at home, only about one third did just that –while the other two thirds ended up working for pay.

From these women's narratives, Gerson was able to identify a series of forces *pulling* women towards the market or *pushing* them towards domesticity. The following experiences were common among the women who ended up working for pay, regardless of whether or not they had intended to do so earlier in life: they were more likely to report high levels of overall job satisfaction, episodes of financial strain, and marital instability. Conversely, the women who ended up focusing on motherhood were more likely to think of childcare as a highly rewarding activity, to report high levels of financial security and partnership stability, and to say that they had felt at times ill-treated or discriminated against at work (Gerson 1986).

This high degree of variability between women's stated preferences and their employment trajectories illustrates the tension between gender socialization and structural location. Risman and colleagues (1998) sought to shed new light on this question using longitudinal data from the Washington State Career Development Study (CDS) to predict married women's work hours between their high school graduation to their early thirties. They found evidence in favor of both socialization and structural mechanisms influencing women's employment hours. On the one hand, women's early preferences for work or family, as well as their personal definition of work as a *job* or part of a *career*, were significant predictors of future work intensity. On the other hand, adult experiences such as childbearing, their husband's

income, women's own earning potential and professional success were also associated with midlife employment. Cross-country comparative research has similarly lent support to both socialization and structural forces, by showing how women's ability to fulfill their work-family preferences differs by country –i.e. by policy context and the level of public support for working women (Gash 2008; Yerkes 2013).

More recently, England (2010) used similar arguments to re-assess progress in gender equality in the United States. She combined structural and socialization explanations to define the gender revolution as "uneven and stalled", particularly from the mid-1990s onwards. On the one hand, the revolution has produced uneven outcomes because the persistent devaluation of female-typed occupations has made it far less likely for men to enter female-dominated occupations than for women to enter traditionally male jobs. On the other hand, women's entry into male-dominated occupations has stalled due to lingering social notions of gender essentialism, which make women less likely to challenge traditional gender boundaries unless they see no other path for upward occupational mobility –i.e. many women of working-class backgrounds reject the idea of entering male-dominated careers, seeking instead upward mobility through female-typed occupations such as secretary or teacher (England 2010). This thesis stirred some controversy among feminist scholars, some of whom reject the claim that lack of progress in gender equality is related to women's own choices, and think that structural constraints are given too little importance in England's account (cfr. Bergmann 2010; McCall 2011; Reskin and Maroto 2010). England's response to this criticism captures well the position I take in this paper, and for that reason is quoted here at length (England 2011:116–117):

> *Among sociologists of gender, […] aversion exists to explanations that assert a causal role for socialized preferences on the supply side of labor markets.*

I respectfully disagree; I believe that continuous gendered socialization affects taken-for-granted assumptions (e.g., which jobs we even consider), identities, and preferences. Outside social forces change our insides. Rather than eschewing socialization explanations in fear that they will be used to blame the victim, I believe we should point out that people did not choose the constraining social forces that formed their preferences, identities, and assumptions […] and that even if they chose their jobs, they were not always aware of and certainly do not prefer the low pay in those jobs.

Predictors of long-term female employment

This paper takes a long view on employment, spanning the majority of women's working lives. A number of factors influence women's labor force participation over time. With no intention of being exhaustive, I review here some key domains shaping women's work profiles:

Childbearing. Even though mothers have been at the forefront of the gender revolution since the 1970s (Juhn and Potter 2006), bearing children is still the strongest factor depressing women's labor force participation (Spain and Bianchi 1996) and lifetime earnings (Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel 2007). This effect is mediated by women's market behaviors around childbirth: longer work interruptions increase the chances of downward occupational mobility (Aisenbrey, Evertsson, and Grunow 2009) and reduce earnings (Baum 2002; Phipps, Burton, and Lethbridge 2001). The effects of fertility are lasting, particularly for high parity mothers (Kahn, Garcia-Manglano, and Bianchi 2010). Moreover, mothers' behavior around the first birth predicts differences in market outcomes almost two decades later (Shapiro and Mott 1994). Women's behaviors around childbirth are also highly fluid: they follow at least six different

employment patterns, with only about half of them falling within the binary *employed-unemployed* categorization –i.e. with close to 50% of women following more complex work trajectories (Hynes and Clarkberg 2005).

Experiences at work. An increasing number of studies have linked women's experiences at work with their job continuity and the likelihood that they will return to the labor force after bearing a child (Böckerman and Ilmakunnas 2009; McRae 1993). Job satisfaction and availability of affordable childcare also are strongly associated with women's return to work after giving birth (Stone 2007). Additionally, the number of legal cases involving workplace discrimination due to family responsibilities has increased in recent decades (Still 2006; Williams and Bornstein 2006). Despite the difficulty of measuring it empirically, subjective reports of discrimination might approximate women's experiences in this domain.

Family context. Although the direction of the causal link between marital instability and female employment is unclear (Greenstein 1990; Sayer and Bianchi 2000; Schoen et al. 2002), married women tend to exhibit lower employment rates than their single and divorced peers (Drobnic, Blossfeld, and Rohwer 1999; Jeon 2008; Smock, Manning, and Gupta 1999). Women's long-term employment behavior is also influenced by the gender division of labor at home. Theories of housework specialization predict that men and women will concentrate their efforts in those areas in which they hold comparative advantage, with most women focusing on household production, and most men specializing in market work (Becker 1991). These differences are exacerbated when couples become parents (Baxter, Hewitt, and Haynes 2008; Bianchi et al. 2000; Sanchez and Thomson 1997), and are mediated by partners' gender attitudes, particularly by husbands' support for their wives' employment (Smith 1985). Family income has also been shown to influence women's labor supply, with those married to men at the bottom and

top of the income distribution being less likely to be employed than the women married to men with incomes in the middle quartiles (Cotter, England, and Hermsen 2007). Finally, the health of the household members (women's own health or that of their relatives) may condition female labor force participation and long-term attachment.

Attitudes and expectations. Even though most of the effect of women's work preferences might be mediated by familial and institutional factors, work plans have been shown to influence human capital accumulation and occupational decisions in young adulthood (*Chapter 2* of this dissertation; Shaw and Shapiro 1987), and more generally to inform women's employment behaviors over the long run (Hakim 2002). However, women's preferences are not static but variable across the life course: women reduce their commitment to work during the first years after giving birth (Evertsson and Breen 2008), and adjust their work hours in response to family events such as marriage and childbearing (Drago, Wooden, and Black 2006).

Remaining questions

Despite our abundant knowledge of the factors influencing women's employment outcomes, most research has focused on the short-term impacts of specific work-family events or transitions. Little research has explored the cumulative effects of these factors on women's employment trajectories over their entire adult life-course. A long-term view would provide a richer description of the compounding effect of work-family experiences on female employment, as women move in and out of the labor force (or adjust their employment hours) throughout their adult lives.

This paper provides a descriptive exploration of the factors associated with women's employment trajectories over the life course. It tests, quantitatively, some of the mechanisms

identified in qualitative studies that *pull* women towards the market or *push* them towards home (Gerson 1986). By incorporating subjective measures of expectations and preferences, I document the tension between women's work-family narratives, experiences, and outcomes. These narratives have been a matter of interest both in the media (Belkin 2003) and in qualitative research (Blair-Loy 2006; Damaske 2011). I describe the ideal-type employment trajectories followed by early baby boomers in the United States, with the advantage of using actual data, instead of model-based projections (Joshi 2002; Sigle-Rushton and Waldfogel 2007). Finally, I shed new light onto the forces shaping women's long term work patterns by asking the following three questions:

1. Which women exhibit high employment rates in young adulthood?
2. Among women who exhibit *low* employment rates in young adulthood: What factors are associated with increasing market participation over time?
3. Among women with *high* employment rates in young adulthood: What predicts declining employment at midlife?

The answers to these questions illustrate the influence of both socialization and structural forces in shaping women's employment careers: I find that both sorts of mechanisms appear to be relevant, but in different ways for women with different work patterns.

Methodological challenges: life-course trajectories

The life-course approach: a summary of key concepts

The life-course is a "sequence of socially-defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Giele and Elder 1998:22). Life-course research is interdisciplinary, relies on mixed-methods, and aims at exploring the micro and macro processes that make up the whole of

the human experience –work, family, time, space, context, process, etc. In this section I focus on the concepts that are most relevant when examining life-time employment trajectories.

Transitions. Individuals' life-course can be summarized as a combination of transitions and trajectories (Elder 1985). Transitions are changes that occur at a given point in the individual's life, such as the move from singlehood to marriage, from childlessness to motherhood, from education to employment, or from employment to retirement. Some transitions are reversible, but most of them carry consequences even after they are "undone" – which explains why we consider divorce a separate status, not a mere reversal to singlehood. Transitions thus modify people's status, identity or roles (Quadagno 2007). Transitions might be determined by social conventions (about, for instance, the appropriate moment to marry, or to have a child) and usually carry with them social implications (expectations for the behaviors that are proper to each status or role).

Timing and duration. The timing of work and family transitions has far-reaching effects across the life-course –both for the individual and his or her family. For instance, teenage childbearing is associated, among others, with interruptions in formal education (Hoffman, Foster, and Furstenberg 1993) and increased risks for the health of the child (Corcoran 1998). Duration between transitions is similarly important: e.g. a longer period outside the labor force following childbirth is associated with a decline in wages and with occupational downgrading (Aisenbrey et al. 2009; Hofferth and Curtin 2006).

Sequencing. Given the growing diversity in possible pathways to adulthood (Shanahan 2000; Smock and Greenland 2010), the ordering of transitions has become yet another important determinant of work and family outcomes across the life-course. The traditional script dictating a normative sequencing of education, employment, marriage, and parenthood (in that order) has

been replaced by an increasingly complex chain of transitions and reversals between employment, partnership and parenthood statuses (Aassve, Billari, and Piccarreta 2007).

Trajectories. Most transitions have cumulative effects, influencing outcomes over the long run; they are the building blocks of trajectories. Trajectories are pathways or careers that emerge over the life course with some typicality (Hynes and Clarkberg 2005). As such, trajectories not only summarize the cumulative experiences of a group of individuals with respect to some observable outcome; when correctly identified, trajectories can help unveil the mechanisms by which particular life events come together to characterize ideal-type pathways. Trajectories may also reveal underlying processes of cumulative disadvantage, by graphically illustrating the long-term consequences of events for people in different structural locations.

Method: group-based trajectory analysis

A full exploration of the life-course requires rich longitudinal data, and a method that captures experiences and cumulative events over time, incorporates transitions in and out of a particular state, and allows for trajectory reversals. Group-based trajectory analysis (GBTA) is well suited for the exploration of developmental outcomes over time (Nagin 1999, 2009). GBTA has been frequently used in the field of criminology to characterize long-term patterns of crime, reintegration and recidivism; in recent years, it has also been increasingly used in the employment and fertility literature (cfr. Hayford 2009; Hynes and Clarkberg 2005).

This method (a type of latent class growth curve analysis) explicitly models trajectories over time, using a finite mixture model approach to jointly determine –for each individual– the probability of group membership and the risk factors associated with different trajectories. Most importantly, GBTA uses maximum likelihood for the estimation of the model parameters, allowing the researcher to test different scenarios regarding the number, and functional form, of

trajectories –resulting in different group sizes. Bayesian (BIC) and Akaike (AIC) information criteria are available to assess goodness of fit. In this paper I used the "*traj"* plugin for Stata, recently developed by Jones and Nagin (2012).

Analysis plan

First, I used GBTA (with the logistic transformation) to select the number of trajectories and functional forms that best summarize women's employment over the life-course. A variety of trajectories were explored, starting with a relatively high number of groups and complex (cubic) functional forms; I used the BIC to test the goodness of fit of these saturated models against more parsimonious specifications (fewer groups; quadratic and linear functions). I started with six cubic trajectories, and ended up choosing four trajectories, two of which follow a linear progression, with the other two following a quadratic pattern.

Once the employment data were summarized into trajectories, I descriptively explored each one of the four groups, providing means and proportions for each one of the covariates. Next, I refined these models (still within the GBTA framework, and using a multinomial modeling strategy) by incorporating individual characteristics and assessing the risks associated with membership in each one of the employment groups. By switching the reference group, I individually compared trajectories that share a common initial pattern but differ subsequently – e.g. the two groups of women who worked at high rates during the twenties and early thirties, but who parted ways afterwards –as one group's labor supply declined steadily. Finally, I show how employment profiles relate to lifetime hourly wages and occupational achievement.

DATA AND MEASURES

Data

I use all 22 waves from the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Women (NLS-YW), conducted between 1968 and 2003. The NLS-YW includes information about 5,159 women born between 1944 and 1954 and first interviewed between the ages of 14 and 24. The survey was discontinued after 2003, when respondents were 49 to 59 years old. Eighty-five women are dropped from my analysis because they never provided information about their work status, or about one or more employment covariates. This leaves a sample of 5,074 early boomers –over 98% of the original sample. GBTA allows each woman to contribute to the analysis during the years in which she provides valid data, even if she is lost to attrition in later waves. In the NLS-YW, retention rates are relatively high, with 88.4% of women contributing to at least five (and 79.8% to at least ten, and over 50% to at least twenty) waves of data.

NLS-YW data are particularly well suited for a longitudinal exploration of women's employment trajectories, since they provide information on women's complete educational, partnership, fertility and employment histories. In addition, information is available on women's work-family expectations between the baseline survey and age 35, making it particularly suited for the study of women's preferences for work or home. Another interesting feature of these data is that they include information on subjective feelings of discrimination, job satisfaction, and attitudes towards childcare.

Main variables

GBTA requires the definition of two key variables, measured longitudinally, which constitute the main building blocks of the trajectories: an outcome variable and a variable that

measures time. The dependent variable in my analysis is an *employment* dummy (1=employed), available for each survey year. Women are employed if they are working part-time, full-time, for pay or self-employed. The variable that tracks time is *age*, measured in years –which involved rearranging the observations to be anchored on women's age rather than the survey year. In order to minimize outliers at both ends of the life-course, and to focus on women's prime working years, I dropped observations before age 20 and above age 54. This reduced the impact of teenage employment (which in most cases may represent part-time or summer work while studying) and of early retirement (which might respond to a different set of motivations) on women's employment trajectories. Note that dropping person-age observations does not imply dropping respondents: all women are allowed to contribute to the analysis between the ages of 20 and 54.

Independent variables

GBTA can accommodate both time-varying and time-invariant covariates. However, these are treated quite differently: longitudinal variables modify the shape of the trajectories, whereas static traits determine the risks of membership in a particular group-based trajectory. My interest here is to explore the characteristics that influence group membership: for this reason, I summarize women's traits, attitudes, and behaviors into static variables –most of which capture experiences that in reality spanned their entire life-course. For this reason, all covariates are time-invariant[1].

[1] *Appendix Table AT4* defines all variables used in this analysis, and includes information on the years in which each of these was available.

Work expectations summarize plans[2] for employment between the ages of 14 and 34 (years in which the information is available), using women's responses to the question *"What would you like to be doing when you are 35 years old?"* I aggregate women's answers into a distribution of work plans, with those always saying that they wanted to "work for pay" at the upper end, and those who always expressed a different preference (i.e. "looking after home/family" or "doing something else") at the lower end of the distribution. Then I break the work-preference distribution in terciles: high, mixed, and low work expectations. Hence, this variable can be interpreted as a woman's relative position within the cohort with respect to the intensity of her midlife work plans.

Human capital is measured at age 25; four dummies summarize women's educational achievement as follows: less than high school, high school graduate, some college, and college graduate or more. Two dummy variables capture negative employment experiences: job dissatisfaction activates for women who expressed deep dissatisfaction with work at some point in their adult lives; and workplace discrimination flags women who ever felt discriminated against for a variety of reasons (including sex, race, age, and nativity).

Women's *fertility history* is summarized in four variables: the first is a categorical variable comprising the timing of the first birth: childless, teen mother, early twenties, or late twenties or later –note that this cohort had their first birth relatively early in life, with median age at first birth in the early twenties, compared with the delayed fertility of cohorts who came after them. Three dummy variables further characterize women's fertility experiences: one flags

[2] Following prior literature which found that these concept to be roughly similar in their empirical consequences, I use the terms "expectations", "plans", "intentions", and "preferences" interchangeably (Hayford 2009; Ryder and Westoff 1971).

women who had high levels of fertility, defined as three or more children; another one represents single motherhood, and activates for women whose first birth happened before they were married (an experience that was far less common for this cohort than is today); finally, an additional dummy characterizes women who were most dissatisfied with the childcare role –defined as being below the median in the lifetime distribution of satisfaction with the task of caring for children.

Family experiences include five dummies: whether a woman was married by age 25, to identify those who delayed marriage well beyond the normative age for this cohort; whether a woman ever divorced; and whether her husband ever expressed opposition to her employment. Additionally, two dummy variables capture health limitations to the amount or type of work the respondent can do: the first one refers to her own health limitations, the second one to the limitations of other relatives in the household. I also control for total family income –measured across the whole study and coded in quartiles– and race –with a dummy for non-Hispanic whites.

RESULTS

Employment trajectories

Figure 4.1 presents overall employment rates for all women in the NLS-YW cohort between the ages of 20 and 54. Labor force participation rates increased from 41 to 52% in the early twenties, remained relatively flat in the late twenties, and grew again consistently during the thirties and early forties, reaching a lifetime high at age 43, with 71% of women working for pay. Overall participation rates decreased after age 43, with just 61% of the cohort employed at age 54. This profile is in keeping with previous reports of female employment rates across cohorts, which found that the employment trajectory of more recent cohorts of American women

had lost the M-shaped form that was typical of older cohorts (with a trough around the late twenties), becoming similar to men's –an inverted U– but at a lower level, peaking between 70 and 75% in the mid-forties (Spain and Bianchi 1996).

[Figure 4.1 around here]

Using GBTA, I tested different numbers of employment groups (from two to six) and functional forms (linear, quadratic, cubic). I settled for four groups, two of which follow a linear trajectory, with the other two following a quadratic pattern. Adding more groups only duplicated existing groups into parallel groups (with a substantially similar trajectory, but at different levels). Reducing the number to fewer than four groups resulted in the merger of two of the existing groups, implying a substantial loss of information (given that the four existing groups have distinct shapes). BIC and AIC statistics confirmed the choice of four groups with linear and quadratic functional forms.

Figure 4.2 presents the four model-predicted employment trajectories. Interestingly, each of these trajectories presents some characteristic features that distinguish it from the rest. The first group consists of the 18.9 percent of women who exhibit consistently low employment rates –only about one in five are employed at any given age. The second group includes 30.9 percent of women, who steadily increase their participation rates over time, from around 20% in the early twenties to over 80% in the early fifties. The third group is the smallest, with 14.6 percent of early boomers who worked at high rates (over 80%) in the late twenties, but who dramatically retreated from the labor force after age 35, with less than 20% of them working after age 50. Finally, the fourth and largest group includes 35.6 percent of women, who reached high participation rates (over 80%) in the mid-twenties, and remained employed at high rates throughout their entire life-course.

[Figure 4.2 around here]

Interestingly, these results show that women differed in their employment patterns in important ways: on the one hand, some of them exhibited an early focus on work while others remained mostly out of the labor force in early adulthood; on the other hand, early trajectories did not necessarily imply continuity after midlife –either by choice or in response to constraining factors, a significant proportion of women changed course dramatically over time, losing their focus on employment, or substantially strengthening it. These patterns, with two baseline groups, and four possible trajectories (defined by continuity vs. divergence) are strikingly similar to the four groups identified by Gerson (1986) –with a difference: her baselines did not measure actual employment, but intentions or preferences.

Characteristics of the four employment groups

Table 4.1 presents means and proportions for women in each of the four employment trajectories described above. In order to make this description more informative, I do not proceed variable by variable, but highlight the characteristics of each employment group, with an emphasis on the most salient traits that distinguish it from the other groups.

[Table 4.1 around here]

Group 1: Consistently Low Employment (size=22.8 percent) - Only about one in five women in this group was employed at any given age. Less than one quarter of them had high work expectations, with almost half of them often saying that they wanted to be looking after their home or family at age 35. Almost 40% of them dropped-out of high school, and only 24% of them continued in education after high school. When they worked, they were more likely than other women to express strong dissatisfaction. However –probably because they did not spend a

lot of time employed in the first place– they rarely reported workplace discrimination. Almost 40% of them were teen mothers, and a similarly high proportion had three or more children. They were significantly more likely than other women to have been unmarried mothers (34%), and they seemed to enjoy caring for children –with only 25% of them ever expressing dissatisfaction with mothering. About seven in ten women in this group were married by age 25, and they seemed to enjoy relatively high levels of marital stability –with only 30% of them ever divorcing. Almost half of them had husbands who opposed the idea of them working for pay. Almost four in ten had health issues that limited the amount of work they could perform at some point in their adult lives, and 17% of them (a relatively high proportion, compared to women in other groups) had relatives whose health impeded their work. Their family incomes were strikingly lower than those of women in all other groups, with over half of them in the bottom quartile and over 70% with incomes below the median. Two thirds of them were non-Hispanic whites.

Group 2: Steady Increase (size=26.7 percent) - Women in this group had employment profiles that grew steadily over time, from about 20% in the twenties to over 80% in the early fifties. Their life-course experiences were relatively average for their cohort. Only 25% of them expected to work consistently throughout their adult lives, with 37% of them often expressing preferences for a life centered on their children and families. They were moderately educated, with 43% of them graduating from high school and another 46% studying beyond high school. Only 22% of them held jobs they considered very dissatisfying, and 39% had ever felt discriminated at work. Most of them became mothers in their early twenties (the median age for this cohort), and they expressed average levels of satisfaction with mothering. The only aspect in which the women in this group stand out is their marital experience: they married earlier than

their peers (80% of them were married at age 25), and over half of them saw their marriages end. Maybe unsurprisingly, their husbands were very unsupportive of them working for pay. Women in this group belonged to high-middle-income families, with almost two-thirds of them above the median family income. They were disproportionately non-Hispanic white (82%), compared to other groups.

Group 3: Increase and Decline (size=12.7 percent) – The smallest of all groups, Group 3 includes women who exhibited high employment rates in early adulthood, peaking at about 80% in the early thirties; but who later dropped out of the labor force in dramatic numbers, with less than 20% of them employed by their early fifties. They had the highest work expectations, with 44% of them consistently expressing a desire to work for pay at age 35, and only 19% expressing domestic preferences. They were highly educated, with almost half of them (44%) graduating from college. Perhaps unsurprisingly, they were among the most likely to express dissatisfaction with work (26%), and to have experienced workforce discrimination (41%). Their marital experiences were relatively unremarkable, with 54% of them married by age 25, 39% of them ever divorced, and relatively supportive husbands –only 23% of whom opposed the idea of them working for pay. Interestingly, they had a relatively high level of personal health limitations (43%), and had relatives whose health hindered their employment (16%). They were evenly represented across the income distribution. This group included more minority women (39%) than the others.

Group 4: Increase and Stay High (size=37.8 percent) – This most-numerous group is made up of women who were very strongly attached to the labor force, with employment rates over 80% for most of their adult lives. They had strong (albeit not universal) work expectations, and they were not particularly educated, with most among them (43%) having just a high school

degree. Not particularly dissatisfied with work, a relatively high proportion of them ever experienced work discrimination (36%) –which didn't seem to deter them from working for pay. Many of these women remained childless –at rates much higher than other women (42%); if they ever had children, they rarely had more than two, and they didn't seem to enjoy caring for children. Their marital experiences were not very special, except for the fact that their husbands were remarkably supportive of them working for pay –only 12% of husbands were against it. They were less likely than other women to encounter health situations –either personal health limitations or those of relatives– that limited the amount or type of work they could perform. Their family incomes and racial composition were average for this cohort.

In summary, these descriptive results point towards the following factors encouraging employment in early adulthood: having high work expectations, getting more than a high school education, remaining childless or postponing childbearing, having fewer than three children, and marrying late –to a husband who was not opposed to women's work. Opposite experiences seemed associated with low employment rates in early adulthood. Marital instability, particularly disliking childcare, and having health issues (personal or those of a relative) all seemed to depress women's employment over time; the reverse experiences facilitated high or increasing workforce attachment throughout the life course. Below, I fit multivariate models that include these risk factors (and are roughly equivalent to multinomial logistic regressions) to test the robustness of these results.

Multivariate results

Descriptive results show that the employment experiences of early baby boomers can be summarized using three components: first, the level of labor force attachment in early adulthood

(high vs. low); second, increasing employment over one's life (among those with low early participation rates); third, declining attachment to the labor force with the passing of time (among those who were employed at high rates before midlife). This section explores the factors associated with these three possible employment patterns.

Which women reached high employment rates in young adulthood?

Women in groups 1 and 2 (*consistently low*, and *steady increase*) were loosely attached to the workforce in early adulthood. Women in groups 3 and 4 (*high and decreasing*, and *high and stay high*) have in common a strong early attachment to the labor force –as high as 80% by the late twenties. *Table 4.2* presents results from models predicting membership to the two groups (3, 4) exhibiting strong early workforce attachment –as opposed to the other two groups (1, 2).

[Table 4.2 around here]

Holding non-domestic work expectations, being more educated, and not being dissatisfied with work, were significantly associated with high employment rates in early adulthood. Similarly, having fewer children, having them later, marrying late, and marrying men who do not oppose their wives' employment, made it significantly more likely to work at high rates in early adulthood. On the other hand, these women were more likely to have experienced workplace discrimination (which implies being employed in the first place), to have gone through at least one divorce, and to not have health issues that limit work (or a relative with bad health). Finally, higher incomes, and being of a minority race also encouraged high attachment to the workforce in early adulthood. However, neither the experience of single motherhood nor dissatisfaction with the role of caring for children were associated with membership to the two groups that exhibit high employment rates in early adulthood.

Among women who exhibited low employment rates in young adulthood, what factors were associated with increasing market participation over time?

Women in groups 1 and 2 had low employment rates in early adulthood –always below 40% during their twenties. However, women in group 2 (*steady increase*) entered the labor force gradually throughout adulthood, whereas their peers in group 1 (*consistently low*) remained employed at very low rates (about 20%) for their entire adult lives. *Table 4.3* presents results from models predicting membership in the group that increases attachment to the labor force, as opposed to the one that remains largely unattached.

[Table 4.3 around here]

Having non-domestic work expectations in early adulthood was associated with about 50% greater odds of increasing employment over time. Getting more education was also related to a pattern of increasing participation across the life course, but the effect seemed to be non-linear, weaker for college graduates than for either high school graduates or women who attended but did not complete a four-year college degree. Experiences of work discrimination were associated with increasing work rates –with the association probably going both ways, given that employment increases exposure to potential discrimination. Job satisfaction was not significantly related to the likelihood of increasing employment over the life course. Having large families decreased the likelihood of growing workforce attachment, while having a supportive husband or divorcing increased it. Single motherhood, one's attitude towards childcare, and age at first marriage did not significantly distinguish women who remained largely out of the labor force from those who entered it over time. Health worked in the expected direction: one's bad health, or that of one's relatives, hindered women's ability to increase their

labor supply over time. Family income and being white were positively associated with growing employment rates.

Among women with high employment rates in young adulthood, what led some of them to exhibit declining employment at midlife?

Women in groups 3 and 4 shared a strong attachment to the workforce in their twenties and early thirties –with employment rates reaching above 80%; however, women in group 3 dramatically reduced their employment rates after about age 35, dropping to very low levels (below 20%) by the early fifties. *Table 4.4* predicts membership to this group that reverses its course and becomes increasingly detached from the workforce over time.

[Table 4.4 around here]

The following risk factors increased the likelihood of a post-midlife withdrawal from the labor force: holding a college degree (which might signal being married to men with higher education and earning potential), having children (and having them at later ages), having a husband who does not support her employment, and suffering from bad health conditions –either personally, or through a relative. On the other hand, reporting discrimination, divorcing, and having higher family incomes all reduced the likelihood of women leaving the labor force. Finally, work expectations –measured up to age 34–, satisfaction with work and childcare, having more than three children, ever being a single mother, having married early, and race, were all unrelated to the likelihood of belonging to the group with weakening attachment to the labor force (as opposed to the group with strong attachment).

Employment trajectories, wages and occupations

This paper has unveiled a high degree of heterogeneity in women's lifetime employment trajectories, with significant proportions of women following diverging patterns of participation in paid work across the life-course. Still, market success (narrowly defined here as earning higher hourly wages and reaching more prestigious occupations) might not be easily inferred from women's employment trajectories, particularly for the women who reversed course and increased or decreased their attachment to the workforce over time. Were these employment profiles systematically associated with early baby boomers' wages and occupations?

[Figure 4.3 around here]

Figure 4.3 plots hourly wages for employed women in each one of the four employment groups explored in this paper, from ages 20 to 54 –these are actual, not model-predicted, inflation-adjusted dollars. There were no wage-crossovers, but wages increasingly diverged across the life course, particularly between the women in group 1 (*consistently low* employment) and the women in other groups. High employment rates in early adulthood led to higher wages across the life course for groups 3 and 4; and the women who stayed strongly attached to the workforce had higher hourly wages than those who gradually dropped out of the labor force.

[Figure 4.4 around here]

Figure 4.4 shows HWSEI scores[3] for employed women in each of the four employment groups explored in this paper. Occupational differences between women with different work

[3] Houser-Warren Socio-Economic Index (HWSEI): a composite measure created by regressing occupational prestige ratings on occupational earnings and education, and then using the results to generate socioeconomic scores for all of the 1990 detailed occupation categories. Values range roughly

patterns were quite set by the late twenties, even though all women managed to reach more prestigious jobs later in life. The two groups containing women who were strongly attached to the workforce in early adulthood (3, 4) reached more prestigious occupations than the other two groups (1, 2). But surprisingly (and unlike what we just observed with respect to hourly wages) the women who remained employed at high rates did so in occupations with *lower* average occupational prestige than those who gradually became detached from the labor force after midlife. In the early fifties there seemed to be a reversal of that trend, but our data do not reach far enough to explore with enough detail that end of the life-course.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have used group-based trajectory analysis to summarize the life-course employment behaviors of American baby-boom women in four trajectories (group sizes in parenthesis): *continuously low* (22.8 percent), *steadily increasing* (26.7 percent), *increasing and declining* (12.7 percent), *continuously high* (37.8 percent). Women in the latter two groups exhibited a strong early attachment to the labor force; while women in the first two groups stood out for their low employment rates in early adulthood. However, work attachment in early adulthood was, for many of them, unrelated to labor force participation after midlife: a significant proportion of women veered away from their early employment behavior, some increasing attachment to the labor force after years out of it, some dropping out of paid work after more than a decade working at high rates. In this sense, for roughly 40 percent of the women in my sample, employment was not a static state (*in* vs. *out* of the labor force), but an

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from 0 to 80. It uses 1990 Census occupational codes, and occupational prestige ratings as reported in the 1989 General Social Survey (Hauser and Warren 1997).

endeavor to which they devoted more or less attention at different ages –depending on family life-course: timing and circumstances.

In keeping with previous research, strong early attachment to the labor force was found to be significantly associated with holding strong work expectations, completing more years of education, postponing fertility and having small families, not marrying early (and if marrying, not having a husband who opposes his wife's employment), and not suffering (personally, or in a relative) from limiting health conditions. Women from families with more financial resources and from minority groups were also more likely to work at high rates in early adulthood. Some factors were common among women who ended up out of the labor force in high proportions – regardless of whether or not they had been strongly attached to the labor force earlier in life. These women were more likely to have had the following life-course experiences: not remaining childless (and having children late), divorcing or having a husband who was unsupportive of their paid work, and having health limitations or having a relative with ill health. The opposite experiences were common among the women who –regardless of their early employment rates– ended up employed at high rates after midlife.

Employment trajectories were also found to be associated with lifetime wage rates and occupational achievement in interesting ways. First, early strong attachment to the labor force was conducive to overall higher hourly wages across time, and more prestigious occupations, regardless of whether or not women remained employed after midlife. However, among those with early attachment to the labor force, the women in the group that reduced employment rates across midlife worked in more prestigious occupations (but earned lower wages) than the women in the group that stayed employed across the life-course. To the extent (we can only tentatively affirm this) that this might reflect earning wages that were below-par given their occupations,

this could explain why these women dropped out of the labor force. However, alternative explanations for this finding should be explored in future research, such as selectivity due to family circumstances or socioeconomic status –with those who became more detached from the labor force possibly coming from more advantageous backgrounds.

DISCUSSION

A number of studies have explored the factors influencing women's work-family behavior since the gender revolution of the 1970s. Many of these studies have focused on the short-term effects of specific transitions, such as marriage, parenthood, work status, retirement, etc. At the same time, scholars have debated the importance of socialization and structural mechanisms driving women's employment behavior over the long run.

In this exploratory paper, I have looked at the long-term effects of work and family experiences in shaping early baby-boom women's employment patterns. I have documented a high degree of heterogeneity in their work profiles, with trajectory reversals for a significant amount of women. Importantly, both socialization factors (such as preferences, attitudes, and subjective measures of satisfaction) and structural constraints (such as race, lack of support from husbands and discrimination) were found to be relevant at different points in the life-course. This implies that one could potentially find support for any of these mechanisms when looking at a narrowly defined period of women's lives, but that a more complex and multidimensional picture emerges when outcomes are explored over longer time spans.

This is an older cohort, whose work and family experiences may or may not resemble those of more recent cohorts of American women. On the one hand, early baby boomers are particularly interesting because they spearheaded the gender revolution: they were the first

generation to be employed in large numbers, they featured declining fertility rates, and they sought to combine work and family in high proportions –with mothers of young children employed at rates that were much higher than those of previous cohorts.

On the other hand, other features of contemporary family life, such as the erosion of normative scripts for the transition to adulthood (Aassve et al. 2007; Shanahan 2000), the increasing variability in the timing of marriage and parenthood by education (Cohen and Bianchi 1999; Martin 2000), and the rise in divorce and cohabitation (Brown, Van Hook, and Glick 2008; Bumpass and Lu 2000; Cherlin 1992) might have made the experiences of more recent cohorts of women more heterogeneous and complex than those of their older peers (Aassve et al. 2007). Additionally, changes in the family have been accompanied by increasing job instability and greater economic vulnerability, particularly among young adults from working and lower-middle class backgrounds (Levy 1998), potentially adding to the forces destabilizing women's long-term careers.

This study has two additional limitations. First, the methods used do not allow us to make claims about the causal mechanisms linking women's employment profiles with risk factors and work-family experiences. There is a degree of endogeneity and temporal overlap between the employment outcomes and risk factors explored here. For this reason, all the relationships documented above are merely associational. Second, some of the information used here relies on women's subjective assessments: work expectations, perceived experiences of discrimination, assessments of husbands' attitudes, and satisfaction with work and childcare, came all from subjective reports which might be affected by social desirability bias, post-hoc rationalizations of past events, etc. Still, this information has allowed us to get an approximation or estimate of factors that are otherwise difficult to measure objectively.

This study highlights the importance of looking at female market outcomes over the long run, attending at women's attitudes, expectations, and subjective narratives, as well as the structural factors that define and shape their options and opportunities. Moreover, the high degree of complexity in women's employment behaviors explored in this paper highlights the need to move beyond static, short-term characterizations of women's work and family outcomes, and into a more fluid understanding of their long term strategies, and those of their husbands and families –or, as Moen and Sweet (2004) put it, from a dichotomous "work-family" paradigm to one of "flexible careers" which are dynamic, relational, and shaped by attitudes and values, but also embedded within existing gender, occupational, and labor systems

Table 4.1. DESCRIBING TRAJECTORY GROUPS.
Means and proportions by group trajectory. NLS-YW 1968-2003.

	G1: Always Low	G2: Steady Increase	G3: Increase & Decline	G4: Increase & Stay High
Group size	1,158	1,353	646	1,917
Percentage of all women	22.8%	26.7%	12.7%	37.8%
Young Adult Work Expectations [(1)]				
Low Work Expectations	46.9	37.0	18.7	26.9
Mixed Work Expectations	29.4	37.3	37.6	33.3
High Work Expectations	23.8	25.8	43.7	39.8
Human Capital by age 25				
Not yet completed HS	37.3	10.7	9.4	8.8
HS graduate	38.6	43.7	25.7	43.5
Some college	12.0	25.2	21.4	25.4
College grad or more	12.1	20.4	43.5	22.4
Employment Experiences				
Very dissatisfied with work	25.9	21.6	25.5	21.7
Ever discriminated against at work	20.7	39.2	41.3	35.9
Fertility Experiences				
Timing of first birth				
Childless	16.6	2.3	27.6	42.1
Teen mother	38.8	29.9	20.7	19.7
Early twenties	33.0	50.1	22.8	23.9
Late twenties	11.7	17.7	29.0	14.3
Had 3 or more children	42.3	43.8	18.7	13.5
Ever was a single mom	34.2	17.6	19.7	17.9
Dislike childcare	25.1	35.0	44.3	38.1
Family Experiences				
Married by age 25	68.8	80.4	54.1	53.1
Ever divorced	30.1	52.1	39.0	38.1
Husband opposed to her working for pay	48.8	54.6	23.2	12.3
Health limitations				
Own Health ever limited work	39.1	40.7	42.9	22.8
A relative's health ever limited work	17.4	13.1	15.6	6.7
Sociodemographic Controls				
Total Family Income				
Bottom quartile	53.5	11.3	19.0	18.3
Second quartile	18.2	25.9	29.1	27.2
Third quartile	13.1	32.4	22.6	28.3
Top quartile	15.2	30.4	29.3	26.2
Race (non-Hispanic White)	66.8	82.3	60.8	68.3

[(1)] Women are classified using their responses to the question: What would you like to be doing at age 35? Possible answers are "Working for pay", "Looking after home or family", or "Other". For each survey year, I calculated the percentage of previous interviews in which a woman said she wanted to work for pay at age 35, getting a distribution of preferences for "work". Accordingly, I classified women in three groups:

- "Low Work Expectations": bottom tercile of the distribution (those saying that they wanted to work for pay less often)
- "High Work Expectations": women it the tercile of the distribution (more frequenlty saying they wanted to work for pay)
- "Mixed Work Expectations": middle tercile of the distribution (they alternated the different responses over time)

Table 4.2. WHAT DETERMINES HIGH EMPLOYMENT RATES IN THE EARLY 20s? Coefficients from logistic models predicting membership to groups with high employment rates in early adulthood. NLS-YW, 1968-2003.

	Belongs to G3/G4 (vs. G1/G2)	
	Coefficient	(Odds Ratio)
Sample size	5,074	
Young adult work expectations [(1)] (ref. *Low*)		
Mixed work expectations	0.551 ***	(1.74)
High work expectations	0.821 ***	(2.27)
Human capital by age 25 (ref. *Less HS*)		
HS graduate	0.807 ***	(2.24)
Some college	0.783 ***	(2.19)
College grad or more	0.511 **	(1.67)
Employment experiences		
Very dissatisfied with work	-0.218 *	(0.80)
Ever discriminated against at work	0.293 ***	(1.34)
Family experiences		
First birth (ref. *Childless*)		
Teen mother	-0.855 ***	(0.43)
Early twenties	-1.339 ***	(0.26)
Late twenties	-1.461 ***	(0.23)
Had 3 or more children	-1.003 ***	(0.37)
Ever was a single mom	0.055	(1.06)
Dislike childcare	0.021	(1.02)
Married by age 25	-0.255 *	(0.77)
Ever divorced	0.418 ***	(1.52)
Husband opposed to her working for pay	-1.285 ***	(0.28)
Health limitations		
Own health ever limited work	-0.535 ***	(0.59)
A relative's health ever limited work	-0.592 ***	(0.55)
Sociodemographic controls		
Total Family Income (ref. *Bottom quartile*)		
Second quartile	1.532 ***	(4.63)
Third quartile	2.170 ***	(8.76)
Top quartile	2.226 ***	(9.26)
Race (non-Hispanic White)	-0.435 ***	(0.65)

^p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

[(1)] Women are classified using their responses to the question: What would you like to be doing at age 35? Possible answers are "Working for pay", "Looking after home or family", or "Other". For each survey year, I calculated the percentage of previous interviews in which a woman said she wanted to work for pay at age 35, getting a distribution of preferences for "work". Accordingly, I classified women in three groups:

- "Low Work Expectations": the bottom tercile of the distribution (i.e. those saying that they wanted to work for pay less often)
- "High Work Expectations": women it the tercile of the distribution (i.e. more frequenlty saying they wanted to work for pay)
- "Mixed Work Expectations": women in the middle tercile of the distribution (i.e. they alternated the different responses over time)

Table 4.3. GROWING EMPLOYMENT AFTER A SLOW START IN THE 20s. Coefficients from logistic models predicting membership to the "steady increase" group (G1) vs. "always low" group (G2). Women not in school. NLS-YW 1968-2003.

	Belongs to G2 (vs. G1)	
	Coefficient	(Odds Ratio)
Sample Size	5,074	
Young Adult Work Expectations [(1)] (ref. *Low*)		
Mixed work expectations	0.395 **	(1.48)
High work expectations	0.473 **	(1.60)
Human Capital by age 25 (ref. *Less HS*)		
HS graduate	0.707 ***	(2.03)
Some college	0.960 ***	(2.61)
College grad or more	0.481 *	(1.62)
Employment Experiences		
Very dissatisfied with work	-0.114	(0.89)
Ever discriminated against at work	0.531 ***	(1.70)
Family Experiences		
First birth (ref. *Childless*)		
Teen mother	1.084 ***	(2.96)
Early twenties	1.040 ***	(2.83)
Late twenties	0.660 *	(1.93)
Had 3 or more children	-0.386 **	(0.68)
Ever was a single mom	-0.025	(0.98)
Dislike childcare	0.028	(1.03)
Married by age 25	0.196	(1.22)
Ever divorced	0.426 ***	(1.53)
Husband opposed to her working for pay	-0.347 **	(0.71)
Health limitations		
Own Health ever limited work	-0.407 ***	(0.67)
A relative's health ever limited work	-0.651 ***	(0.52)
Sociodemographic Controls		
Total Family Income (ref. *Bottom quartile*)		
Second quartile	1.287 ***	(3.62)
Third quartile	1.671 ***	(5.32)
Top quartile	1.492 ***	(4.45)
Race (non-Hispanic White)	0.340 *	(1.40)

^p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

[(1)] Women are classified using their responses to the question: What would you like to be doing at age 35? Possible answers are "Working for pay", "Looking after home or family", or "Other". For each survey year, I calculated the percentage of previous interviews in which a woman said she wanted to work for pay at age 35, getting a distribution of preferences for "work". Accordingly, I classified women in three groups:

- "Low Work Expectations": the bottom tercile of the distribution (i.e. those saying that they wanted to work for pay less often)
- "High Work Expectations": women it the tercile of the distribution (i.e. more frequenlty saying they wanted to work for pay)
- "Mixed Work Expectations": women in the middle tercile of the distribution (i.e. they alternated the different responses over time)

Table 4.4. DECLINING EMPLOYMENT AFTER A STRONG START IN THE 20s. Coefficients from logistic models predicting membership to the "high and decrease" group (G3) v. "always high" (G4) group. Women not in school. NLS-YW 1968-2003.

	Belongs to G3 (vs. G4)	
	Coefficient	(Odds Ratio)
Sample Size	5,074	
Young Adult Work Expectations [(1)] (ref. *Low*)		
Mixed work expectations	0.213	(1.24)
High work expectations	-0.002	(1.00)
Human Capital by age 25 (ref. *Less HS*)		
HS graduate	-0.468 ^	(0.63)
Some college	-0.123	(0.88)
College grad or more	0.931 **	(2.54)
Employment Experiences		
Very dissatisfied with work	0.236	(1.27)
Ever discriminated against at work	-0.307 *	(0.74)
Family Experiences		
First birth (ref. *Childless*)		
Teen mother	0.453 ^	(1.57)
Early twenties	0.500 *	(1.65)
Late twenties	1.108 ***	(3.03)
Had 3 or more children	0.198	(1.22)
Ever was a single mom	-0.210	(0.81)
Dislike childcare	0.104	(1.11)
Married by age 25	0.101	(1.11)
Ever divorced	-0.284 *	(0.75)
Husband opposed to her working for pay	0.771 ***	(2.16)
Health limitations		
Own Health ever limited work	0.653 ***	(1.92)
A relative's health ever limited work	0.573 **	(1.77)
Sociodemographic Controls		
Total Family Income (ref. *Bottom quartile*)		
Second quartile	-0.673 **	(0.51)
Third quartile	-1.577 ***	(0.21)
Top quartile	-1.666 ***	(0.19)
Race (non-Hispanic White)	-0.148	(0.86)

^p<0.1; *p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

[(1)] Women are classified using their responses to the question: What would you like to be doing at age 35? Possible answers are "Working for pay", "Looking after home or family", or "Other". For each survey year, I calculated the percentage of previous interviews in which a woman said she wanted to work for pay at age 35, getting a distribution of preferences for "work". Accordingly, I classified women in three groups:

- "Low Work Expectations": the bottom tercile of the distribution (i.e. those saying that they wanted to work for pay less often)
- "High Work Expectations": women it the tercile of the distribution (i.e. more frequenlty saying they wanted to work for pay)
- "Mixed Work Expectations": women in the middle tercile of the distribution (i.e. they alternated the different responses over time)

Appendix Table AT4. Variable definition and availability. NLS-YW, 1968-2003.

Variable	Type	Defined as	Values	Years Available*
Work expectations	categorical	Distribution of the proportion of times they expressed a work preference for the future. Divided in three terciles.	Low: most home oriented Mixed: middle third High: most work oriented	1968, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87
Education	categorical	Years of completed schooling.	<12: less than high school 12: high school graduate 13-15: some college >16: college grad plus	all years
Dissatisfaction with work	dummy	Distribution of the proportion of times they expressed dissatisfaction with their work.	0: below the median (relatively satisfied) 1: above the median (relatively dissatisfied)	1968, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 78, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 88, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Discrimination	dummy	Ever reported feeling discriminated against at work for various reasons, including sex, age, race, ethnicity.	0: never reported discrimination 1: reported discrimiantion	1972, 78, 80, 82, 83, 88, 95, 2001
Age at first birth	categorical	Age at which they had their first child.	0: Childless 1: As a teenager 2: In the early twenties 3: In the late twenties	all years
Number of children	dummy	Whether a respondent had three or more biological and adopted children.	0: Two or fewer kids 1: Three or more kids	all years
Single motherhood	dummy	Whether a woman had a child before the date of her first marriage.	0: no single mom 1: single mom	all years
Dissatisfaction with childcare	dummy	Distribution of the proportion of times they expressed dissatisfaction with caring for children.	0: below the median (relatively satisfied) 1: above the median (relatively dissatisfied)	1978, 83, 88
Age at marriage	dummy	Whether a woman was married by age 25 (if never married, this variable takes the value 0).	0: never married by age 25 1: married at least once by age 25	all years
Divorce	dummy	Whether a woman ever got divorced (if never married, value is 0).	0: never divorced 1: divorced	all years
Husband's opposition to her employment	dummy	Proportion of times a woman reports that her husband opposes the idea of her working for pay.	0: below the median (husband supportive) 1: above the median (husband opposed)	1968, 72, 78, 83
Respondent's health limitations	dummy	Whether they ever reported that their own health limited the amount or type of work they could peform.	0: no health limitations 1: reports health limitations	1971, 78, 83, 88, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Relatives' health limits Rs ability to work	dummy	Whether they ever reported that the health of a relative limited amount or type of work they could peform.	0: no health limitations 1: reports health limitations	1973, 78, 83, 88, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03
Total family income	categorical	Average family income across the study, broken down in quartiles.	Quartiles: 1 (bottom) to 4 (top)	all years
Race	dummy	Whether a woman is a non-Hispanic white.	0: minority race 1: non-Hispanic white	all years

* All years: 1968, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 75, 77, 78, 80, 82, 83, 85, 87, 88, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 2001, 03.

Figure 4.1. Employment rates between the ages of 20 and 54. All women. NLS-YW 1968-2003.

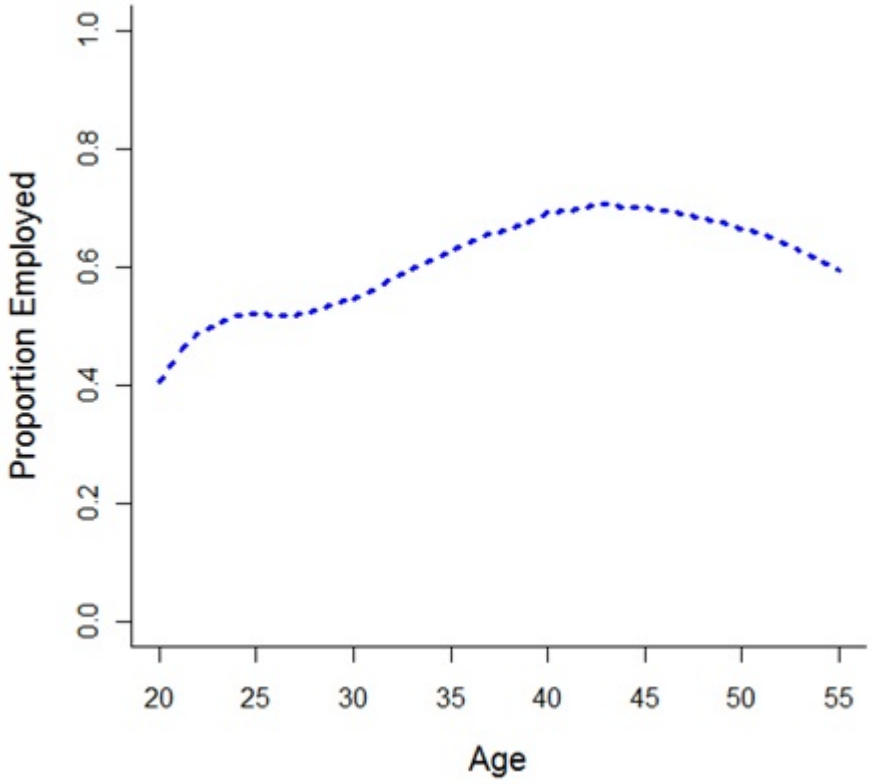


Figure 4.2. Model-predicted employment trajectories, and actual employment rates (dotted lines) between the ages of 20 and 54. NLS-YW 1968-2003.

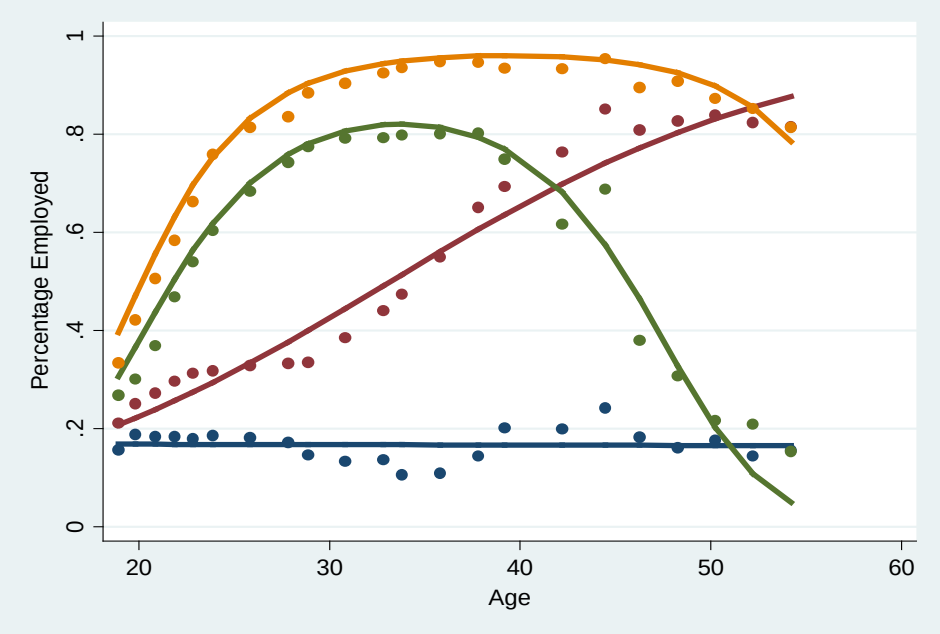


Figure 4.3. Hourly wages between the ages of 20 and 54, by model-predicted employment group. NLS-YW 1968-2003.

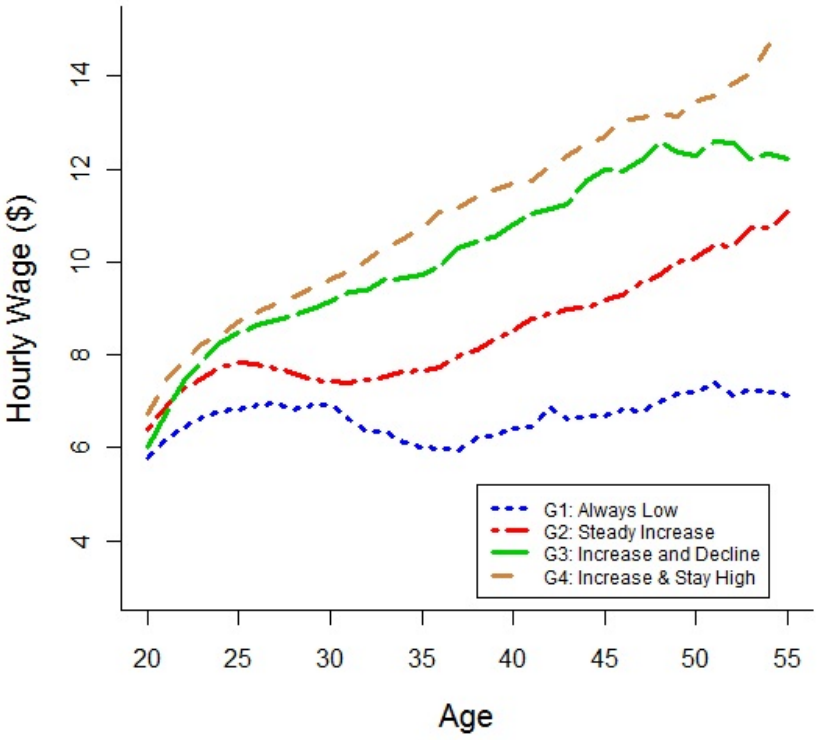
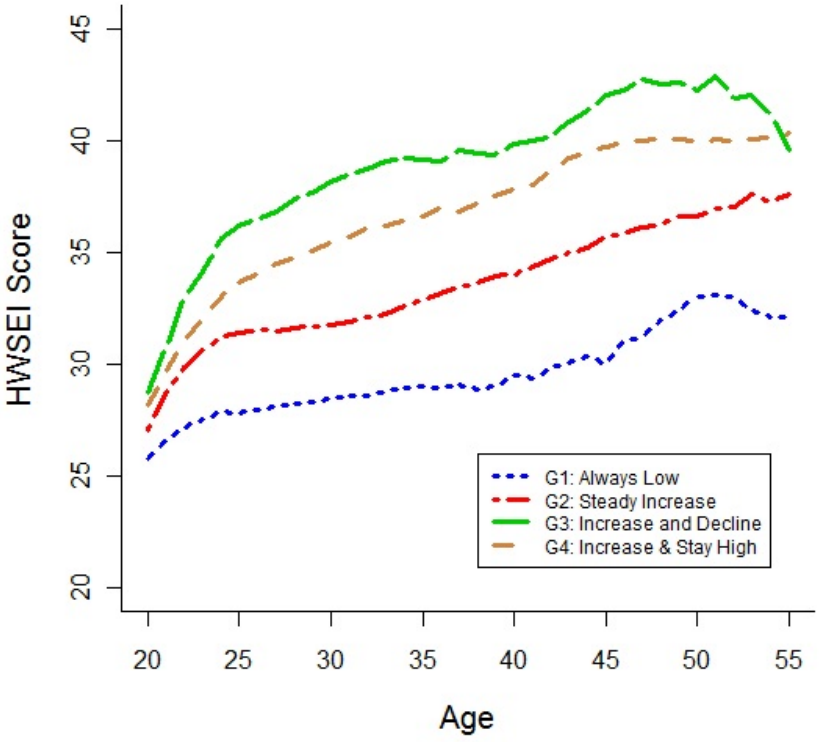


Figure 4.4. Hauser-Warren (HWSEI) occupational prestige scores from ages 20 to 54, by model-predicted employment group. NLS-YW 1968-2003.



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