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The Psychological Consequences of Work-Family Trade-Offs for Three Cohorts of Men and Women*

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This research investigates (1) the extent to which work-family trade-offs affect men's and women's self-acceptance and their evaluations of their work opportunities, and (2) whether and how these effects differ by birth cohort. Three cohorts are considered: the "Baby Bust" cohort (born 1960–1970), Baby Boomers (born 1944–1959), and the pre-World War II cohort (born 1931–1943). Data are from the Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS), a survey of 3,000 adults age 25 and older in 1995. Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men who adjusted their employment schedules to accommodate family demands offer significantly worse evaluations of their own work opportunities. Older women and Baby Bust men who adjusted their work schedules have higher self-esteem than their peers who worked continuously. Older men and Baby Boom and Baby Bust women evidenced poorer self-esteem when they cut back on paid employment. Adherence to gender- and cohort-specific role expectations appears to enhance self-evaluations.

One of the most widely documented findings in the social sciences is that women's socioeconomic disadvantage relative to men is due in part to gender-based allocation of social roles. Because women typically take time out of the paid labor force to care for their families, they accrue less labor market experience than men, and thus receive lower earnings and poorer prospects for career advancement over the life course (Budig and England 2001; Goldin 1990; Noonan 2001). Women who continue to work for pay while raising children often opt for part-time or "family-friendly" jobs, which also may lead to low earnings and poor prospects for career mobility (Crittenden 2001; Goldin 1990; Mason and Kuhlthau 1992). As a result of their strategies for balancing work and family, women may be prevented from realizing their potential in the labor market.

Although the economic consequences of women's labor market adjustments are widely documented (Budig and England 2001; Joshi 1990; Noonan 2001; Waldfogel 1997), few studies have explored the psychological consequences of these adjustments. This neglect may reflect the pervasive influence of socialization and human capital theories; both literatures imply that women's trade-offs are rational and desirable acts, and thus should not be a source of discontent. Socialization theories assume that women are socialized to give priority to family over work responsibilities, and thus choose freely to cut back on paid employment when faced with competing demands (Doob 1995:166). Human capital theories further suggest that women may be content to accept lower wages and limited career prospects in exchange for a job which is compatible with child-rearing duties (Becker 1985; Filer 1985). Neither perspective recognizes that work-family trade-offs are made within constrained opportunity structures, and that the career obstacles imposed by such structures may take a significant toll on workers' satisfaction and self-esteem.

Research on work-family strategies also is limited in that it has focused almost exclusively on women. Although women shoulder most of the family responsibilities, recent

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cohorts of men are participating increasingly in childcare and housework, and are slowly beginning to adjust their own work lives in response to family obligations (Gerson 1993; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Noonan 2000). It is not known whether these trade-offs affect men's socioeconomic attainments and, in turn, their psychological well-being. If men's and women's work life adjustments have psychological consequences, these consequences are likely to vary across birth cohorts. Cohorts who enter adulthood during periods of rapid social change, such as the gender-role revolution of the 1960s and 1970s (Gerson 1985), may find that social norms encourage juggling the dual roles of work and family; yet old institutionalized structures, including the organization of paid employment, may persist thus preventing the successful management of these dual roles. As a result, the psychological consequences of managing work and family roles may vary drastically across recent cohorts of men and women.

This study uses data from the Midlife Development in the United States study, a random-sample survey of 3,000 men and women age 25 to 74 in 1995, to answer two questions: (1) To what extent do work-family trade-offs affect two dimensions of men's and women's psychological well-being: subjective evaluations of one's occupational opportunities and self-esteem? and (2) Do these effects differ by birth cohort and life stage? I consider three groups: Baby Bust/young adults (born 1960–1970); Baby Boom/midlife adults (born 1944–1959), and pre-World War II cohort/older adults (born 1931–1943). These research questions have important implications for understanding men's and women's psychological well-being during a period of rapid social change, when social norms encourage the simultaneous fulfillment of work and family roles, yet inflexible social structures may prevent the attainment of this ideal.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Personal Consequences of Work-Family Strategies

The family and the workplace are "greedy institutions" that demand the com-

mitment of time and energy, especially during the early stages of family formation and career pursuit (Cosser 1974). When the demands of the two institutions compete, cultural prescriptions traditionally have dictated that women channel their time and energies toward family responsibilities, while men focus on paid employment (Cosser and Rokoff 1971:538).

This traditional allocation of social roles has potentially harmful consequences for both genders. Women's specialization in family tasks contributes indirectly to their socioeconomic disadvantage relative to men (Budig and England 2001; England and Farkas 1986), while men's specialization in market work may account for their more tenuous relationships with their children (Eggebeen and Knoester 2001; Marsiglio et al. 2000; Snarey 1993). Women with young children generally adopt one of three strategies when juggling the demands of work and family: exiting the paid labor force, reducing their work hours, or moving into occupations believed to be more compatible with child-rearing responsibilities (Crittenden 2001; Desai and Waite 1991; Gwartney-Gibbs 1987; Jacobsen and Levin 1995; Presser 1994; Salvo 1984). Women who make these adjustments, however, typically go on to receive less on-the-job training, less work experience, fewer career promotions, and lower earnings. The consequences are most severe for those who exit the labor market (even if the exit is only temporary); yet moderate adjustments such as reducing hours or finding flexible work also impede women's career prospects (Budig and England 2001; Corcoran, Duncan, and Ponza 1984; England and Farkas 1986; Mason and Kuhlthau 1992). The personal consequences of men's specialization in market work are more difficult to quantify, although some studies have found that men's work involvement is related inversely to their daily involvement in fathering (Coltrane 1996; Radin and Russell 1983).

Men's and women's strategies for enacting their work and family roles, as well as the sacrifices made in one domain to foster successful role performance in the other, may have important consequences for two aspects of psychological well-being: perceptions of occupational opportunity and self-accept-

tance. Perceptions of occupational opportunity reflect individuals' beliefs that they have received fair and rewarding opportunities throughout their work lives. Identifying sources of variation in worklife satisfaction may be an important precursor for implementing corporate and government-sponsored initiatives that enable men and women to manage more successfully the dual roles of parent and employee. Self-acceptance is a more general indicator of well-being; it refers to holding positive attitudes toward one's self and one's accomplishments (Ryff 1989).

Social psychological research and theory suggest at least two explanations for the proposed relationship between work-family trade-offs and psychological well-being. First, cutting back on paid employment in order to fulfill family obligations has direct negative consequences for socioeconomic status and work conditions, which in turn are widely documented predictors of psychological well-being (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983; Gecas and Seff 1990; Rosenberg and Pearlin 1978; Tausig 1999). Second, men's and women's strategies for enacting work and family roles may put them either in step or out of step with gender- and cohort-specific norms and expectations; the extent to which one's behaviors comply with prevailing norms may confer (or reduce) psychological benefits (Heiss 1992; Jackson 1966; Menaghan 1989). Strategies for blending work and family roles, however, may cause psychological duress in historical periods marked by structural lag (Riley and Riley 1994): if men and women engage in behaviors which receive normative support and encouragement, but which are not facilitated by existing social structures, negative psychological consequences may result.

Socioeconomic Status, Work Conditions, and Well-Being

Social psychological perspectives on the self would suggest that work-family trade-offs exert a negative indirect effect on psychological well-being, particularly self-esteem. Trade-offs impede occupational standing and earnings, although this pattern has been documented for women only (Loh 1996:580; Lundberg and Rose 2000). This sit-

uation in turn affects self-esteem. According to widely documented self-esteem research, socioeconomic status (whether defined as earnings, occupational status, or education) is associated positively with self-esteem among adults (Gecas and Seff 1990; Rosenberg and Pearlin 1978). This relationship is generally explained via the main processes of self-concept formation: occupational achievements enable more favorable reflected appraisals from others, more positive social comparisons with others, and more positive self-attributions (Gecas and Schwalbe 1983; Gecas and Seff 1990; Rosenberg and Pearlin 1978).

An implication of this perspective is that persons who adjust their work lives in response to family demands may consequently offer poorer evaluations of both their work accomplishments and their overall self-worth. Work-family trade-offs typically lead to the erosion of earnings, prestige, and prospects for mobility in the labor market. These effects persist even when standard indicators of human capital (including education, work experience, and hours worked) are controlled (Budig and England 2001; Corcoran and Duncan 1979; Goldin 1990; Sorensen 1991); this point suggests that trade-offs directly impede occupational standing, perhaps because of employers' discrimination against working parents (Acker 1990). Thus, in this analysis I will examine whether work-family trade-offs affect evaluations of one's self and one's work opportunities, net of socioeconomic status (measured here as earnings), human capital investments, and demographic characteristics.

Research on the social psychology of work further suggests that the effects of work-family trade-offs on psychological well-being may operate indirectly via work conditions. As noted earlier, women who adjust their work lives in response to family responsibilities often end up in poorer quality jobs (Crittenden 2001; Goldin 1990). The characteristics of these less desirable jobs in turn may affect both global self-evaluations and evaluations of one's work experiences (for a review, see Tausig 1999). Therefore, in this research I will examine whether the link between work-family trade-offs and psychological well-being persists when objective work conditions are controlled.

Role Performance in Periods of Rapid Social Change

Work-family trade-offs may not only be associated with psychological well-being indirectly, via their link to socioeconomic attainments and objective work conditions. In addition, strategies used for fulfilling work and family roles may either comply with or deviate from gendered role expectations, and thus may carry direct psychological consequences. Heiss (1992:95) defined a social role, such as employee or parent, as "a set of expectations in the sense that it is what one *should do*" (author's emphasis).

Conforming to role expectations may provide psychic rewards to the individual via two pathways (Jackson 1966). First, conforming to widely accepted role expectations may bring social approval or other subtle rewards from significant others. Social approval, in turn, may foster positive views of the self. Second, the individual actor may internalize norms and role expectations; "the individual thus becomes his own judge, approving or disapproving of his behavior in terms of internal standards" (Jackson 1966:125).¹ This perspective suggests that if work-family strategies comply with society's (or one's own) expectations as to how these roles should be enacted, positive psychological consequences may be the result. Alternatively, if work-family strategies (and their consequences for one's career) depart from expectations, negative psychological consequences may be the outcome.

Role expectations are not static, however. Expectations for work and family behaviors have changed drastically throughout the past half-century; thus men's and women's strategies for fulfilling work and family roles, as well as the psychological consequences of these strategies, may be contingent on the larger social and normative context.

¹ A more recent variant of Jackson's (1966) argument is self-discrepancy theory, which suggests that self-evaluations reflect compliance both with others' expectations and with one's own (Higgins 1987). When individual traits and behaviors (i.e., the actual self) do not conform to the expectations imposed by others (i.e., the "ought" self) or to one's own aspirations and hopes (i.e., the ideal self), negative psychological consequences may result.

Therefore, a central objective of this research is to explore whether and how the psychological consequences of work-family trade-offs differ by gender and cohort. The three birth cohorts considered here are the pre-World War II cohort (born 1931–1943), the Baby Boom cohort (born 1944–1959), and the Baby Bust cohort (born 1960–1970). Members of these three cohorts were exposed to different structural opportunities and normative expectations as they came of age and entered adult work and family roles.

The norms and expectations guiding appropriate gender-role behavior in the home and the workplace have undergone a "subtle revolution" over the past half-century (Gerson 1985, 1993). Members of the pre-World War II birth cohort came of age in the 1940s and 1950s and could look forward to holding clearly demarcated gender roles in adulthood. Married men expected to serve as the primary breadwinners and to leave child-rearing responsibilities to their wives; the latter typically exited the labor force altogether when their children were young (Baruch, Barnett, and Rivers 1983; Bernard 1981; Coontz 1992; Williams 2000).

In contrast, women and men who came of age in the late 1960s and beyond faced an entirely new (and sometimes ambiguous) set of guidelines for appropriate work and family behaviors. Although men of the Baby Bust and Baby Boom cohorts are still expected to fulfill the traditional role of "breadwinner," they are also expected to be involved fathers who play a larger role in child-rearing and housekeeping tasks than did their own fathers (Bernard 1981; Gerson 1993; Hochschild 1989; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Wilkie 1993). Baby Boom and Baby Bust women invested more heavily in their careers than did past generations of women, as evidenced by their loftier career aspirations (Shu and Marini 1998), higher levels of educational attainment (Meyer et al. 1977), and higher rates of labor force participation during their childbearing years (Spain and Bianchi 1996).² Men and women who

² Women's increased labor force participation also might reflect married couples' economic needs. Because of the erosion of men's earnings relative to women's in the 1970s and beyond, couples may require two salaries to support their families.

entered adulthood in the late 1960s and beyond also anticipated more egalitarian division of household labor and greater gender equity in the labor force than in past generations (Firebaugh 1992; Gershuny and Robinson 1988; Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998; Wilkie 1993). Rather than envisioning work and family roles as “either/or” activities, recent cohorts of young women and men expect to simultaneously fulfill the roles of “ideal employee” and “ideal parent” (Williams 2000).

Yet structural inertia may prevent some men and women from attaining these ideals. The concept of structural lag suggests that during periods of rapid social change (such as the gender revolution of the 1960s and 1970s), old institutionalized customs and practices, including the organization of paid employment, may persist despite changes in the normative context. In the case of work, contemporary institutions still function according to the breadwinner/homemaker model (Moen and Wethington 1992; Moen and Yu 2000; Riley and Riley 1994). Inflexibility in workplaces guarantees that many women (and men, to a lesser degree) will be forced to reduce, if not quit, their employment once they have children (Dubeck 1998; Gerson 1998; Malin 1994; Williams 2000). As a result, recent cohorts may aspire to successfully fulfill the roles of both parent and worker; yet they are not provided the structural support that enables the simultaneous fulfillment of these two roles. Failure to comply with the edict of being both “ideal employee” and “ideal parent” may have negative psychological consequences, especially for cohorts who entered adulthood in the late 1960s and beyond (Williams 2000).

Recent birth cohorts are not only grappling with a social context where normative expectations and structural opportunities are at odds. They also may face normative ambiguity when enacting their work and family roles. In periods of rapid social change, expectations for appropriate role behavior may be ambiguous (Menaghan 1989). Scholars recently have observed that the cultural consensus for appropriate gender-role behavior has “deteriorated” (Gergen 1991:5) and that current cohorts of young adults are “redefining cultural rules about being spous-

es and parents.” Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men are particularly likely to be redefining the roles of “worker” and “parent.” Each group can be conceptualized as the first cohort of women and of men, respectively, whose behaviors differ sharply from their parents’. Baby Boom women are characterized as the first generation of women (in the post-agricultural economy) to work for pay while raising young children (Gerson 1985; Spain and Bianchi 1986). Similarly, Baby Bust men are the first generation of men to participate actively in childcare and housework while also working for pay (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Wilkie 1993).³ Because behavioral prescriptions typically are learned from others, those whose behavior departs greatly from that of their parents, or whose nontraditional roles lack institutional support, may find it particularly difficult to perform their adult roles (Heiss 1992:95; Menaghan 1989).

In sum, in this research I will explore whether and how work-family strategies affect psychological well-being for three cohorts of American women and men. Compliance with gender- and cohort-specific role expectations is expected to bring psychological benefits. Men of the oldest cohort who have worked continuously (i.e., they comply with the “good provider” ideal) and women of the oldest birth cohort who have exited the labor market in order to rear children will report higher self-acceptance and more positive evaluations of their work lives than their peers who engage in alternative work-family strategies.

In contrast, work-family strategies that violate age- and cohort-specific expectations are expected to impair psychological well-being. Baby Boom and Baby Bust women who cut back their paid employment in response to child-rearing responsibilities will

³ Their predecessors, the Baby Boom men, are characterized as the generation who “stalled” the gender-role revolution (Gerson 1985; Hochschild 1989). Despite shifts in ideology which promoted gender equality in the home, actual gender role changes of the 1960s and 1970s were “asymmetric” in that Baby Boom women were “doing all the changing” by adjusting their work lives to accommodate family responsibilities (and vice versa) (England and Swoboda 1988).

report poorer psychological well-being because these labor market reductions may violate their expectations for achieving occupational success.

Finally, Baby Bust and Baby Boom men who adjust their work schedules in response to child-rearing demands are expected to report greater psychological well-being because they are complying with the "new" fatherhood ideal, which emphasizes both the breadwinner role and the "involved parent" ideal.⁴

DATA AND METHODS

Sample

The National Survey of Midlife Development in the United States (MIDUS) is a national multistage probability sample of noninstitutionalized, English-speaking adults age 25 to 74, selected from working telephone banks in the coterminous United States. Telephone interview and self-administered questionnaire data were collected in 1995–1996. In the first stage, households were selected via random-digit dialing. Disproportionate stratified sampling was used at the second stage to select respondents. The sample was stratified by age and gender; males and persons age 65 to 74 were oversampled.⁵ The response rate for the self-administered questionnaire is 87 percent; the response rate for the telephone interview is 70 percent. Because of the moderate rate of nonresponse, caution is needed in extrapolating the results to the total population in the same age range. The total MIDUS sample includes 3,032 adults (1,471 men and 1,561 women).

⁴ Past studies have documented that work-family trade-offs take a toll on women's earnings and mobility prospects, but not men's. Thus I expect that the trade-offs will take a negative toll only on women's emotional well-being.

⁵ The analyses presented here are based on the unweighted sample. I also conducted analyses using the weighted data; the results were virtually identical. The sample weight adjusts for unequal probabilities of household selection and unequal probabilities of respondent selection within households. It also post-stratifies the sample to match October 1995 Current Population Survey proportions of adults living in metropolitan areas and regions (northeast, midwest, south, and west) of the United States.

The analytic sample used in this paper is limited to the 2,446 (1,309 men and 1,137 women) employed persons under age 65 who completed both the telephone interview and the self-administered questionnaire. The analytic sample is limited to the currently employed because the perceptions of work opportunity questions were administered only to persons currently working for pay.

Despite the limitation of being a cross-sectional survey, the MIDUS data are uniquely suited for examining cohort differences in strategies for balancing work and family demands. The MIDUS evaluates whether one has *ever* made selected work-family trade-offs; if only current strategies were measured, we would have no data on the strategies enacted by older adults who have completed their child-rearing years. A further strength is that the MIDUS obtained data on a broad age range: men and women age 25 to 74 in 1995 (i.e., born 1921–1975). Few other data sets capture rich work-family information on the Baby Bust cohort, the Baby Boom cohort, and persons born during or before World War II; thus the MIDUS allows the exploration of work-family strategies in three cohorts exposed to very different opportunities, obstacles, and normative contexts.

Dependent Variables

The *perceptions of work opportunities* scale ($\alpha = .74$) assesses people's beliefs about the opportunities and rewards they have received throughout their work lives. Respondents are asked: "To what extent do the following statements describe the way you feel about your work life? A lot, some, a little, and not at all." Items are (1) I feel cheated about the chances I have had to work at good jobs; (2) Most people have more rewarding jobs than I do; (3) When it comes to my work life, I've had opportunities that are as good as most people's (reverse coded); and (4) It makes me discouraged that other people have much better jobs than I do. Scores equal the average of the four items, and range from 1 to 4. Higher scores represent more positive evaluations of one's work opportunities.

Self-acceptance ($\alpha = .62$) is assessed with three items from the multidimensional Ryff (1989) psychological well-being scale: (1) I like most parts of my personality; (2) When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out so far; and (3) In many ways I feel disappointed about my achievements in life (reverse coded). Respondents indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Scores are based on the average response across the three items. Higher scores indicate higher levels of self-acceptance.

Independent Variables

Work-family trade-offs. The extent to which an individual adjusted his/her work life in response to family responsibilities is the central independent variable of this analysis. *Work-family trade-offs* are captured with the following question: "We are interested in how having children may have changed your work situation. Which of the following changes have you made because of your children? Did you: (1) Stop working at a job to stay home and care for the children; (2) Cut back on the number of hours worked at a job to care for the children; (3) Switch to a different job that was less demanding or more flexible to be available to the children?"

Two different measures of work-family trade-offs are evaluated in the multivariate analysis. First, a dummy variable is set equal to 1 if a respondent reports *any* of the three behaviors.⁶ Second, two separate dummy variables indicate whether a person has made more or less intrusive trade-offs. A dummy variable is set equal to 1 if a person has ever stopped work altogether; a second dummy variable is set equal to 1 if a person has either reduced his or her hours or changed to a different job but has never exited the labor force entirely. The reference group comprises

those persons who did not make any adjustments to their work life.

Birth cohort/life stage. The second objective of this research is to explore whether the psychological consequences of work-family trade-offs vary by birth cohort and life stage. Thus I consider three cohorts or age groups: *older adults*, born between 1931 and 1944 (age 52 to 64 in 1995); *Baby Boom cohort/midlife adults*, born between 1944 and 1959 (age 36 to 52 in 1995); and *Baby Bust cohort/young adults*, born between 1960 and 1970 (age 35 and younger in 1995). Although these categories differ slightly from those typically used in demographic research (persons born between 1960 and 1964 are often called "late Baby Boomers" rather than members of the Baby Bust cohort), each of these three cohorts faced unique opportunities in terms of work, education, and gender-role expectations as they matured (Baruch et al. 1983; Coontz 1992).⁷ Each category also represents a distinct stage in one's work and family life course (Hagestad 1990; Levinson et al. 1978; Levinson and Levinson 1996; Moen and Yu 2000).

Income. Earnings generally are believed to be the single most important indicator of "an individual's competitive success in the labor market" (Jencks, Perman, and Rainwater 1988). *Income* is measured as one's earnings from wages, salary, and self-employment income in the year prior to the interview. Because earnings distributions typically are skewed, I use the natural log of income in the multivariate analysis.

Human capital characteristics. Occupational opportunities and rewards are determined largely by one's human capital investments, typically consisting of education and work experience (Becker 1985; Becker and Tomes 1986). *Educational attainment* is coded into four categories: less than 12 years

⁶ I also considered a continuous variable ranging from zero to three trade-offs. The dichotomous and the continuous variables behaved in generally similar ways in the multivariate analyses.

⁷ Although analyses presented here define the Baby Bust cohort as those born between 1960 and 1970, in preliminary analyses this group was subdivided into "Late Baby Boom cohort" (born 1960–1964) and "Baby Bust cohort" (born 1965–1970). The coefficients for the two groups were nearly identical (differing by less than .05 standard deviation), and the regression models with two separate cohort indicators did not fit the data significantly better than models with only one indicator.

of education, 12 years (reference group), 13–15 years, and 16+ years. *Total years of work experience* is the number of years a respondent has worked for pay. *Full-time employment status* is a dummy variable set equal to 1 if an individual works at least 35 hours per week, in the average week, on his or her main job. (The reference group consists of those working fewer than 35 hours per week.)

Work characteristics. Objective work conditions may mediate the effect of work-family strategies on psychological well-being. Workers striving to balance their work and family responsibilities may choose (or be channeled into) occupations providing few opportunities for leadership roles (Reskin and Padavic 1994), or female-dominated occupations that are believed to be compatible with family responsibilities (Glass and Camarigg 1992). Others may opt for self-employment, a flexible work option that may accommodate parental duties (Carr 1996). Each of these work characteristics, in turn, may affect perceptions of opportunity and self-esteem. *Supervisory role* is a dichotomous variable set equal to 1, signifying persons who supervise other workers on the job. *Percent female in occupation* is the percentage of workers in one's occupation (three-digit 1990 Census occupational code) who are female. I obtained percentages from the 1990 U.S. Decennial Census. *Self-employment* is a dummy variable indicating those who work for themselves.⁸

Family characteristics. Family statuses, including marital and parental status, are widely documented correlates of contemporaneous psychological well-being (for a review, see McLanahan and Adams 1987). Moreover, the intrusiveness of the work-family strategies adopted may have been affected by the number of children. *Marital status* is captured with two dummy variables: *current-*

ly married and *formerly married* (widowed, divorced, or separated). Never married is the reference group.⁹ Parenting status is measured with two dummy variables: the respondent has *no children*, and the respondent has *three or more children*. The reference group includes persons with one or two children.

Race. Racial identity is a dummy variable indicating persons who are African American, Asian, or Native American.¹⁰ Non-Hispanic whites are the reference group. Race is a widely documented correlate of occupational opportunities (Hacker 1992; Kessler and Neighbors 1986), family structure (Taylor et al. 1997), gender-based allocation of roles within the family (Shelton 1992; Shelton and John 1996), and psychological well-being (Brown et al. 1999). I include race as a control variable only; an examination of racial differences in the link between work-family trade-offs and psychological outcomes is beyond the scope of this analysis.

RESULTS

Gender and Cohort Differences in Work-Family Trade-Offs

Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. I conducted two-tailed *t*-tests to evaluate significant gender differences in means for the total sample. I also conducted two-tailed *t*-tests to evaluate significant within-gender differences between persons who made a work-family trade-off and those who did not. The asterisks in the "Made Trade-Off" column denote significant differences between those who did and those who did not make a trade-off.

⁹ In preliminary analyses, I used two indicators for the currently married: married to employed spouse and married to nonworking spouse. The coefficients did not differ significantly from one another, nor did model fit improve when the two indicators were included. Thus analyses presented here do not consider the employment status of one's spouse.

¹⁰ Ethnic/racial minorities are coded simply as white or nonwhite because the sample size prevents finer-grained distinctions. In the MIDUS sample of currently employed persons, 2,404 (87.5%) are white, 176 (6.4%) are black, 19 (< 1%) are Native American, 42 (1.5%) are Asian/Pacific Islander, 83 (3.0%) report their race as "other," and 24 (< 1%) self-identify as "multiracial."

⁸ In preliminary analyses, I considered several additional job characteristics, including occupational status (Stevens and Featherman 1981), control on the job, demands on the job, how interesting one's work is, and indicators of one's major occupational group according to the 1990 Census (e.g., professional, clerical, crafts). I omitted these characteristics from the final analysis, because they are not significantly correlated with making a work-family trade-off.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics: Midlife in the United States Study, 1995

	Men			Women		
	Total	Made No Trade-Off	Made Trade-Off	Total	Made No Trade-Off	Made Trade-Off
Dependent Variables						
Perceived opportunities in own work life	3.23 (.64)	3.23 (.64)	3.22 (.64)	3.13 *** (.66)	3.13 (.69)	3.13 (.64)
Self-acceptance	5.61 (1.20)	5.62 (1.19)	5.53 (1.27)	5.59 (1.19)	5.63 (1.20)	5.56 (1.18)
Independent Variables						
Has made at least one work-family trade-off	.14 (.35)			.53 *** (.49)		
Stopped working to care for children	.03 (.17)			.38 *** (.49)		
Cut back but never quit work	.11 (.31)			.15 ** (.36)		
Age						
52-64 (b. 1931-43)	.21 (.41)	.22 (.42)	.13 ** (.34)	.24 (.43)	.19 (.39)	.29 *** (.45)
37-52 (b. 1944-59)	.48 (.50)	.47 (.50)	.56 * (.50)	.46 (.50)	.42 (.49)	.49 * (.50)
25-36 (b. 1960-70)	.31 (.46)	.31 (.46)	.31 (.46)	.30 (.46)	.40 (.49)	.22 *** (.42)
Income	44,764 (38,673)	44,281 (36,012)	47,755 (52,252)	24,556 *** (20,339)	27,524 (19,972)	21,936 *** (20,317)
Income (natural log)	10.42 (.85)	10.42 (.85)	10.42 (.88)	9.72 *** (1.15)	9.91 (1.04)	9.56 *** (1.22)
Education						
Less than 12 years	.06 (.23)	.06 (.24)	.03 * (.16)	.05 (.22)	.06 (.23)	.05 (.22)
12 years	.25 (.43)	.25 (.43)	.29 (.46)	.28 † (.45)	.25 (.43)	.32 ** (.47)
13-15 years	.29 (.45)	.28 (.45)	.29 (.46)	.33 * (.47)	.31 (.46)	.34 (.48)
16 years or higher	.41 (.49)	.41 (.49)	.39 (.49)	.33 *** (.47)	.39 (.45)	.29 *** (.45)
Total years work experience	24.59 (11.09)	24.71 (11.3)	23.85 (9.59)	20.27 *** (9.79)	19.94 (10.27)	20.57 (9.36)
Full-time worker, current/last job	.90 (.30)	.90 (.30)	.91 (.29)	.73 *** (.45)	.82 (.39)	.64 *** (.48)
Work Characteristics						
Has supervisory duties	.54 (.50)	.53 (.50)	.56 (.50)	.38 *** (.49)	.42 (.49)	.34 *** (.47)
Self-employed worker	.20 (.40)	.19 (.40)	.25 † (.44)	.13 *** (.33)	.10 (.30)	.15 *** (.36)
Percentage female workers in occupation	.25 (.21)	.25 (.21)	.23 (.21)	.60 *** (.29)	.58 (.29)	.62 * (.29)
Current Family Roles						
Currently married	.71 (.45)	.71 (.46)	.74 (.44)	.55 *** (.50)	.47 (.50)	.63 *** (.48)
Formerly married	.15 (.36)	.14 (.35)	.24 *** (.43)	.31 *** (.46)	.26 (.44)	.35 *** (.48)
Never married	.14 (.35)	.16 (.36)	.02 *** (.15)	.14 (.35)	.27 (.45)	.03 *** (.16)
Has no children	.23 (.42)	.27 (.44)	.02 *** (.15)	.20 † (.40)	.43 (.49)	.00 *** (.00)
Has 1-2 children	.42 (.49)	.40 (.49)	.54 *** (.50)	.45 (.50)	.32 (.47)	.56 *** (.49)
Has 3+ children	.35 (.48)	.33 (.47)	.44 *** (.50)	.35 (.48)	.25 (.43)	.44 *** (.50)
Nonwhite	.13 (.34)	.13 (.34)	.13 (.33)	.14 (.35)	.18 (.39)	.10 *** (.30)
N	1,309	1,127	182	1,137	533	604

Note: Two-tailed *t*-tests were conducted to evaluate significant gender differences for total sample and within-gender differences between trade-off groups.

† $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

In the total sample, men and women differ along the expected dimensions. Women are significantly more likely than men to have made any trade-off (53% versus 14%; $p \leq .001$). Given that women have worked fewer years on average than men (21 versus 25 years; $p \leq .001$), it is not surprising that women also report significantly lower earnings than men (\$24,556 versus \$44,764; $p \leq .001$) and significantly poorer work opportunities (3.13 versus 3.23; $p \leq .001$). Women are significantly less likely to hold supervisory roles (38% versus 54%, $p \leq .001$) and to be self-employed (13% versus 20%; $p \leq .001$). Women also work in jobs with a significantly higher proportion of female incumbents (60% versus 25%; $p \leq .001$). The earnings penalty associated with work-family trade-offs pertains to women only; this finding is consistent with past research (Loh 1996:580; Lundberg and Rose 2000). Men's average income does not differ significantly on the basis of their trade-off status; yet women who have ever made a trade-off report earnings that are roughly \$6,000 less than those who did not do so (\$21,936 versus 27,524, $p \leq .001$). Women who have made trade-offs also are significantly less likely to be currently working in a supervisory role (34 versus 42%, $p \leq .001$) and tend to work in more female-concentrated occupations.

A more fully detailed summary of men's and women's work-family strategies is presented in Table 2. This table displays the proportion of men and women in each of the three birth cohorts who have ever adopted each of the work-family strategies. These categories are not mutually exclusive; respondents may have made any or all such adjustments. Analyses here are limited to persons with children.

Two important patterns are revealed. First, the proportion of men who have made such a trade-off increases monotonically across the three cohorts. Just 10 percent of the oldest men ever made such a trade-off, compared with 20 percent of Baby Boom men and one-quarter of Baby Bust men. When men do make trade-offs, they adopt strategies that are least intrusive to their work lives. Fewer than 5 percent of men from any cohort report that they stopped working to meet family demands. In contrast, the pro-

portion of men who reduced their work hours climbed from 2 percent to 10 percent to 16 percent across the three cohorts. Similarly, the proportion who switched to a more flexible job jumped from 5 percent among the oldest cohort to 11 percent among the two younger cohorts.

Second, more recent cohorts of women are adopting less intrusive work-family strategies than earlier cohorts. Although the proportion of mothers who have made any trade-off is constant across the three cohorts of women (roughly two-thirds), the proportion making the most extreme trade-off—exiting the work force altogether—has declined steadily from 58 percent among the oldest women to 47 percent in the Baby Boom cohort and to 38 percent in the Baby Bust cohort. In contrast, the proportion choosing more moderate strategies—reducing hours or switching to a more flexible job—has increased monotonically across the three cohorts. Thus the gender gap in making work-family trade-offs is gradually narrowing over time.

Work-Family Trade-Offs and Perceived Occupational Opportunity

To what extent do work-family trade-offs affect evaluations of one's occupational opportunities? Table 3 displays results from OLS regression analyses predicting such evaluations. I first estimated regression models for the pooled sample of men and women, and tested gender interaction terms to determine significantly different effects. For ease of presentation, only sex-specific regression models are presented; significant gender differences in effects are noted. (A gender interaction term is significant at $\leq .05$.)

Model 1 displays only the effects of human capital, income, age/cohort, and family characteristics. Model 2 incorporates the *general* work-family trade-off indicator and age-group/cohort-by-trade-off interaction terms. Model 3 incorporates the *specific* work-family trade-off indicators and the age-group/cohort-by-trade-off interaction terms. The trade-off variables were not significant predictors of perceived occupational opportunity (nor of self-acceptance) when entered into the model as a main effect only (i.e., not

Table 2. Work-Family Trade-Offs by Gender and Cohort, MIDUS 1995

	Men			Women		
	Age 52-64 b. 1931-43	Age 37-52 b. 1944-59	Age 25-36 b. 1960-70	Age 52-64 b. 1931-43	Age 37-52 b. 1944-59	Age 25-36 b. 1960-70
Made Any Work-Family Tradeoff	.09 (.29)	.19 (.39)	.24 ^{bc} (.43)	.68 (.47)	.65 (.48)	.68 (.47)
Stopped Working to Care for Children	.03 (.18)	.04 (.19)	.05 (.22)	.58 (.49)	.47 (.50)	.38 ^{a,b,c} (.49)
Cut Back on Hours of Work to Care for Children	.02 (.15)	.10 (.30)	.16 ^{a,b,c} (.37)	.35 (.48)	.40 (.49)	.47 (.50)
Took Less Demanding or More Flexible Job to Care for Children	.05 (.22)	.11 (.31)	.12 ^{bc} (.32)	.27 (.44)	.31 (.46)	.35 ^b (.48)
Valid N	255	536	213	256	453	199

Notes: Analyses are limited to persons with children. All within-cohort gender differences are statistically significant at $\leq .001$.

^a The 1960-70 and 1944-59 birth cohorts are significantly different at $\leq .05$.

^b The 1960-70 and 1931-1943 birth cohorts are significantly different at $\leq .05$.

^c The 1944-59 and 1931-1943 birth cohorts are significantly different at $\leq .05$.

Table 3. OLS Regression Model Predicting Perceptions of Occupational Opportunity: Men and Women, MIDUS 1995

	Men (N = 1,308)			Women (N = 1,137)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Independent Variables						
Own income, last 12 months (natural log)	.16*** (.02)	.16*** (.02)	.16*** (.02)	.09*** (.02)	.09*** (.02)	.09*** (.02)
Total years work experience	.01** (.003)	.01** (.003)	.01** (.003)	.01* (.003)	.01* (.003)	.01* (.003)
Full-time worker, current/last job	-.11* (.06)	-.12* (.06)	-.12* (.06)	-.08† (.05)	-.09* (.05)	-.09* (.05)
Less than 12 years education	-.14† (.08)	-.14† (.08)	-.14† (.08)	-.01 (.09)	-.01 (.09)	-.01 (.09)
13-15 years education	-.05 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	-.05 (.05)	.04 (.05)	.04 (.05)	.04 (.05)
16 or more years education	.10** (.05)	.10** (.05)	.10** (.05)	.27*** (.05)	.27*** (.05)	.27*** (.05)

(Continued on next page)

Table 3. Continued.

	Men (N = 1,308)			Women (N = 1,137)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Nonwhite	-.001 (.05)	-.005 (.05)	-.005 (.05)	-.15** (.06)	-.15** (.06)	-.15** (.06)
Currently married	.16* (.07)	.16* (.07)	.16* (.07)	.03 (.07)	.02 (.07)	.02 (.07)
Formerly married	.08 (.07)	.08 (.07)	.08 (.07)	-.05 (.08)	-.06 (.08)	-.06 (.08)
Has 3 or more children	.10** (.04)	.10* (.04)	.10* (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.04)
No children	.08 (.06)	.07 (.06)	.07 (.06)	-.11† (.07)	-.15* (.08)	-.15* (.08)
Age 37-52 (b. 1944-59)	-.04 (.06)	-.03 (.06)	-.03 (.06)	-.09† (.08)	.04 (.08)	.04 (.08)
Age 25-35 (b. 1960-70)	-.11 (.08)	-.07 (.09)	-.07 (.09)	-.13† (.07)	-.06 (.10)	-.05 (.10)
Trade-Offs						
Made a work-family trade-off		.19 (.13)			.09 (.08)	
Made trade-off x baby boom		-.17 (.15)			-.23* (.10)	
Made trade-off x baby bust		-.32* (.16)			-.11 (.11)	
Stopped work to raise children			.20 (.22)			.10 (.09)
Stopped work x baby boom			-.19 (.26)			-.24* (.10)
Stopped work x baby bust			-.30 (.29)			-.18 (.13)
Cut back hours or switched job			.18 (.16)			.04 (.14)
Cut back/switched x baby boom			-.16 (.17)			-.18 (.16)
Cut back/switched x baby bust			-.32† (.19)			.02 (.17)
Constant	1.39 (.24)	1.35 (.24)	1.35 (.24)	2.17 (.19)	2.14 (.20)	2.17 (.20)
Adjusted R ²	.12	.12	.12	.09	.09	.09

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors are presented.
† $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$
A dummy variable denoting that the person was missing income data is included in all models.
Three percent did not report income; this proportion does not differ by gender.
Models were estimated for the full sample, with all independent variables interacted with gender.
a Gender difference significant at $\leq .10$.

as interaction term). This suggests that the trade-off variable operates differently across the three cohorts, and that these competing effects may have canceled one another out when only the single indicator was considered.

For both men and women, perceived occupational opportunity is significantly higher among persons with greater income, a college degree, and more years of work experience. In preliminary analyses (models not shown), other indicators of occupational standing (e.g., occupational status and major occupational group, such as whether one is a professional or a clerical worker) were substituted for income, and similar patterns emerged: those with more prestigious jobs or jobs affording greater decision-making latitude offer more positive evaluations of their work lives. Thus evaluations of occupational opportunity largely reflect traditional indicators of labor market success.

Model 2 reveals that having made a work-family trade-off affects work evaluations for only two subgroups: Baby Boom/midlife women and Baby Bust/young adult men. Baby Boom women who cut back on paid employment to accommodate their family responsibilities report significantly poorer occupational opportunities than older and younger women who made a similar trade-off, and their same-age peers who worked continuously. In the two older cohorts of men, work-family trade-offs are unrelated to perceptions of opportunity. In contrast, Baby Bust men who adjusted their work lives in response to child-rearing responsibilities report significantly worse occupational opportunities than their peers who did not make such a trade-off.

When specific trade-offs are considered, generally similar findings emerge. Model 3 reveals that Baby Boom/midlife women's evaluations of their occupational opportunity are affected only by the most drastic trade-off: quitting work altogether to raise children. Baby Boom women who have either reduced their hours or switched to a more family-friendly job do not evaluate their work opportunities differently from those who worked continuously. Among the Baby Bust men, making a moderate trade-off (reducing one's hours or choosing a flexible

job) is associated with negative evaluations of occupational opportunities. Because of the small number of men in each of the cohort by trade-off categories (especially "stopped work"), the results presented in Model 3 for men should be interpreted cautiously.

The negative worklife appraisals reported by the Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men who made work-life adjustments cannot be attributed to objective work characteristics. I estimated Models 2 and 3 again to include selected work characteristics, including supervisory duties, percentage female in one's occupation, and self-employment status (models not shown). Although each work characteristic exerted significant direct effects on perceived opportunities, their inclusion in the model did not alter the size, direction, or significance of the trade-off-by-cohort effects.

Work-Family Trade-Offs and Self-Acceptance

Do work-family trade-offs affect overall self-evaluations? The analyses presented in Table 4 reveal that such trade-offs have very different ramifications for men's and women's overall self-evaluations, based on their birth cohort. Model 1 confirms the widely documented finding that self-esteem is related positively and significantly to socioeconomic status among adults (Gecas and Seff 1990; Rosenberg and Pearlin 1978). Income is a positive and significant predictor of men's, but not women's, self-acceptance. A college degree increases self-acceptance, although this effect is significantly larger for women than for men. Also in line with past research, being married is associated with significantly higher levels of self-esteem among both men and women, although number of children is unrelated to self-evaluations (McLanahan and Adams 1987).

Models 2 and 3 reveal that work-family trade-offs exert significant effects on both men's and women's self-esteem. For ease of interpretation, adjusted interaction terms are plotted in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 displays women's self-acceptance, based on their birth cohort and the specific trade-off made. Figure 2 displays men's self-acceptance, based on their birth cohort and whether any

Table 4. OLS Regression Model Predicting Self-Acceptance: Men and Women, MIDUS 1995

	Men (N = 1,308)			Women (N = 1,137)		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Independent Variables						
Own income, last 12 months (natural log)	.17*** (.04)	.16*** (.04)	.16*** (.04)	.02 ^a (.04)	.02 ^a (.04)	.03 ^a (.04)
Total years work experience	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01* (.005)	.01* (.005)	.01* (.050)
Full-time worker, current/last job	-.09 (.11)	-.07 (.11)	-.07 (.11)	.05 (.09)	.01* (.09)	.01 (.09)
Less than 12 years education	-.46* (.15)	-.47** (.15)	-.47** (.15)	-.39* (.16)	-.36* (.16)	-.36* (.16)
13–15 years education	.03 (.09)	.04 (.09)	.04 (.00)	.19* (.09)	.19* (.09)	.18* (.09)
16 or more years education	.35*** (.09)	.036*** (.09)	.036*** (.09)	.59*** (.09)	.059*** (.09)	.058*** (.09)
Nonwhite	.24** (.10)	.25*** (.10)	.26** (.10)	-.09 ^a (.10)	-.08 ^a (.10)	-.07 ^a (.10)
Currently married	.30* (.12)	.30* (.12)	.30* (.12)	.031* (.13)	.029* (.13)	.029* (.13)
Formerly married	-.05 (.14)	-.04 (.14)	-.04 (.14)	.01 (.14)	-.02 (.14)	-.01 (.14)
Has 3 or more children	-.06 (.08)	-.05 (.08)	-.05 (.08)	-.05 (.08)	-.06 (.08)	-.06 (.08)
No children	.05 (.11)	.06 (.11)	.06 (.11)	.05 (.12)	-.01 (.14)	-.01 (.14)
Age 37–52 (b. 1944–59)	.20† (.11)	.18 ^a † (.11)	.18 ^a † (.11)	.12 (.09)	.49*** (.15)	.50*** (.15)
Age 25–35 (b. 1960–70)	.40** (.16)	.29 ^a † (.16)	.29 ^a † (.16)	.30* (.13)	.63*** (.18)	.65*** (.18)
Trade-Offs						
Made a work-family trade-off		-.58** (.25)			.42*** (.15)	
Made trade-off x baby boom		.37 ^a (.28)			-.60*** (.18)	
Made trade-off x baby bust		.86*** (.30)			-.51** (.21)	
Stopped work to raise children			-1.17*** (.41)			.49*** (.15)
Stopped work x baby boom			.83 ^a † (.49)			-.64*** (.19)
Stopped work x baby bust			1.55*** (.54)			-.55** (.23)
Cut back hours or switched job			-.28 (.30)			.08 (.25)
Cut back/switched x baby boom			.11 (.33)			-.30 (.29)
Cut back/switched x baby bust			.55 (.35)			-.21 (.31)
Constant	3.20 (.47)	3.34 (.47)	3.32 (.47)	4.59 (.35)	4.38 (.36)	4.30 (.37)
Adjusted R ²	.07	.08	.08	.08	.08	.08

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients and standard errors are presented.

† $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$

A dummy variable denoting that the person was missing income data is included in all models.

Three percent did not report income; this proportion does not differ by gender.

Models were estimated for the full sample, with all independent variables interacted with gender.

^a Gender difference significant at $\leq .10$.

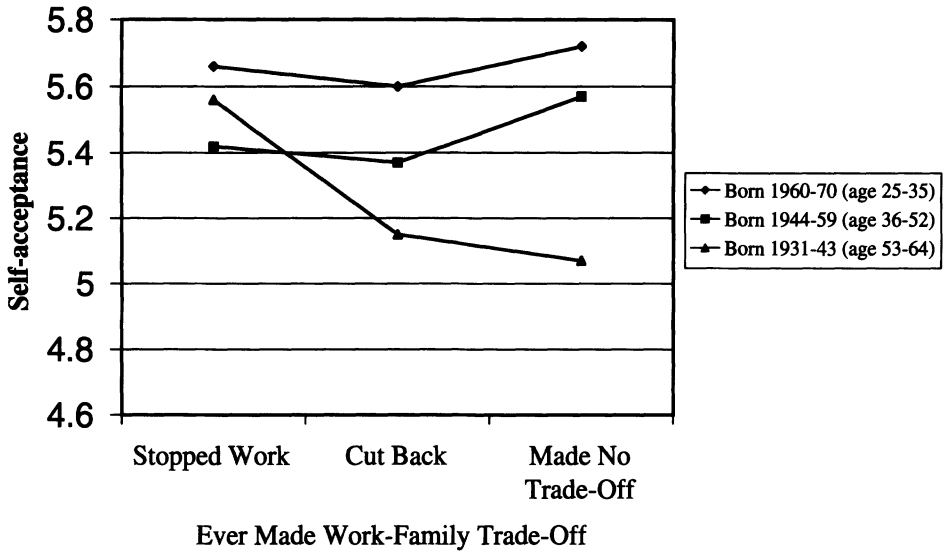


Figure 1. Self-Acceptance: Women of MIDUS, 1995

work-family trade-off was made. Women who reduced their work hours or changed jobs in order to accommodate family responsibilities do not differ from those who worked continuously. Stopping work to raise children, however, has distinct psychological consequences for all three cohorts of women. For the oldest group, stopping work to raise children is a large *positive* predictor of self-acceptance ($b = .49, p \leq .01$). In contrast, Baby Boom and

Baby Bust women who stopped working report significantly *lower* self-esteem than their same-age peers who made no trade-offs. Having made a trade-off reduces self-esteem among the oldest men ($b = -.58$); yet this behavior increases self-esteem among the youngest men. Work-family strategies do not exert a significant effect on the Baby Boom/midlife men's self-acceptance levels. Taken together, these findings suggest that

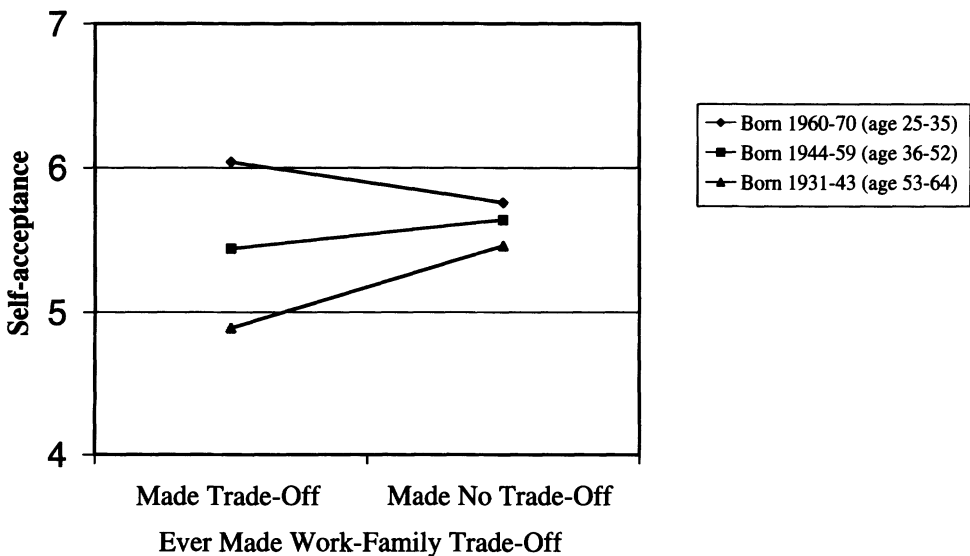


Figure 2. Self-Acceptance: Men of MIDUS, 1995

adherence to cohort-specific norms for appropriate gender-role behavior may enhance one's self-appraisals.

The relationship between trade-offs and self-acceptance is not mediated by objective work characteristics (models not shown). Self-employment had significant, positive effects on both men's and women's self-esteem. Neither supervisory duties nor percent female in one's occupation exerted direct effects on self-acceptance. Thus work-family strategies have significant effects on self-esteem, even when diverse work rewards, investments, and conditions are adjusted.

Endogeneity

One final analytic issue deserves mention: because the MIDUS data are cross-sectional, it is impossible to fully address the issue of endogeneity or reverse causation. The findings presented thus far imply a causal relationship whereby adjusting one's work behaviors in response to child-rearing demands leads to poorer (perceived) occupational opportunities. The reverse relationship may be true, however: workers with the bleakest occupational opportunities may be most likely to exit the workforce or to cut back on work when they have children. Opportunity-cost models predict that persons with low earnings and poor chances for upward mobility are most likely to reduce their labor supply when faced with an alternative activity, because the relative costs of doing so are relatively low (Burggraf 1997).

To explore whether making a trade-off is a consequence rather than a cause of occupational opportunity, I estimated logistic and multinomial logistic regression models to evaluate the predictors of having made any trade-off (for men) and of having made a specific trade-off (for women). I considered as predictors only the characteristics presumed to be temporally prior to one's work-family adjustments. These variables included educational attainment, spouse's educational attainment, race, age/birth cohort, and whether the respondent's mother worked when the respondent was growing up.

The analyses revealed that trade-offs are *most* likely to be made by persons with the

best occupational prospects (models not shown). Female college graduates are significantly less likely to work continuously, and are more likely to exit the labor force or reduce their hours. In contrast, female high school dropouts are significantly more likely to work continuously. Similarly, male high school dropouts are significantly less likely to make a trade-off. Thus it appears that those with greater human capital investments (and presumably the financial means or spousal resources that enable them to cut back on their paid employment) are more likely to adjust their work lives in response to family responsibilities (also see Leibowitz 1974). These effects are similar for each of the three birth cohorts: that is, cohort-by-education interaction terms were not statistically significant. These analyses provide suggestive evidence that work-family trade-offs are not a response to poor occupational prospects. These results should be interpreted cautiously, however, given that the analysis did not capture the full array of influences on one's work-family strategy.

DISCUSSION

In this study, I examined the strategies used to accommodate work and family responsibilities in three cohorts of men and women, and the psychological consequences of these strategies. I will highlight four main findings. First, men's and women's work-family strategies have begun to converge in recent cohorts. Second, work-family trade-offs lower the evaluations of occupational opportunity among Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men only. Third, the effect of work-family strategies on self-acceptance varies according to whether one abides by the role script deemed appropriate for one's gender and birth cohort. Fourth, the psychological consequences of work-family trade-offs may reflect life-stage (rather than cohort) differences in adults' perspectives on the past, present, and future.

Unstalling the Stalled Revolution

The "stalled revolution" in gender-role change has begun to un stall (Gerson 1985; Hochschild 1989; Noonan 2000). Each cohort of men is more likely than their predecessors

to adjust their work schedule in response to family responsibilities, while each successive cohort of women is less likely to engage in the most costly adjustment, namely exiting the labor market. The data suggest that men's and women's strategies for accommodating the demands of the "greedy institutions" (Coser 1974) of work and family are starting to converge, thus supporting Gergen's (1991:143-45) observation that the traditionally defined categories of male- and female-typed behaviors have begun to "deteriorate" over the past four decades. These changes may speak well for increased gender equality in the home and the workplace. Nonetheless, optimism about a full convergence in gender-typed behaviors is not entirely warranted: although younger cohorts of men are adjusting their work lives, they are doing so far less frequently than their female peers, and they are not making the more extreme adjustments that women continue to make.

The Challenges of Transitional Birth Cohorts

Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men who adjusted their paid employment in response to family demands evaluate their work lives as less desirable than do their peers who did not make such sacrifices. The negative consequences of work-family trade-offs for these two subgroups may reflect their peculiar position as transitional birth cohorts, caught in the "lag" between normative change and structural inertia (Riley and Riley 1994). The Baby Boom women and the Baby Bust men may be the first cohorts to have entered adulthood in a cultural context that encouraged them to simultaneously achieve a rewarding professional life and an involved and satisfying family life (Williams 2000). Occupational structures, however, still reward continuous full-time employment (Goldin 1990; Hochschild 1989; Moen and Yu 2000) and may subtly penalize employees who adjust their work schedules to accommodate family demands (Malin 1994).

Baby Boom women's formative years were punctuated by the women's rights movement, by the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which promised to remove official barriers to hiring and promotion of minorities and women, and by the pas-

sage of the Equal Pay Act of 1963, which prohibited employers from paying women less than men for equivalent work (Reskin and Padavic 1994). These policies may have fostered idealistic expectations in the Baby Boom women. Baby Bust men growing up in the 1970s and 1980s are characterized as the first cohort of men for whom the "ideal" script for fatherhood comprises the dual expectation of being both a "good economic provider" and an "involved parent" (Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Williams 2000). The normative contexts in which the Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men came of age may have encouraged idealized expectations about how their work and family lives would mesh. Institutionalized customs in the workplace, however, perpetuate a structure that precludes the simultaneous attainment of work and family ideals.

The Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men are similar in another way as well: neither cohort had a road map to follow when negotiating the dual roles of worker and parent. The mothers of Baby Boom women were the stay-at-home mothers of the 1950s, who typically worked for pay before they had children and after their children had left the home (Easterlin 1980). Similarly, the fathers of the Baby Bust men belonged to a generation who still left most family responsibilities to their wives (Gerson 1985; Hochschild 1989). Consequently the negative evaluations of Baby Boom women's and Baby Bust men's work lives may reflect the unanticipated discrepancy between their optimistic career ideals and the actual opportunities available in the workplace.

Compliance With Norms and Enhancement of Self-Esteem

Adjusting one's work behavior to accommodate family responsibilities affects self-esteem very differently for the three cohorts of men and women. Cutting back on paid employment enhanced self-esteem for the oldest women and the Baby Bust men. This behavior, however, is associated with lower self-esteem among the oldest men and among both Baby Bust and Baby Boom women. These patterns suggest that engaging in a behavior which is consistent with prevail-

ing social norms and expectations may enhance self-evaluations (Jackson 1966). Older women who exited the labor force to raise their children abided by the dominant ideology of the 1950s and 1960s: that mothers should give higher priority to their family responsibilities than to their occupational pursuits (Baruch et al. 1983; Coser and Rokoff 1971). Similarly, for young men who entered adulthood in the late 1970s and later, fulfilling the role of "good father" means raising children and sharing in household responsibilities, as well as supporting the family financially (Gerson 1993; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000; Wilkie 1993).

In contrast, for older men and for the Baby Bust and Baby Boom women, making a work-family sacrifice may indirectly undermine self-evaluations. For the oldest men, altering one's work behavior (and presumably forsaking earnings and mobility opportunities in the process) may violate mid-twentieth-century norms dictating that men should be the "family breadwinners" (Bernard 1981; Kaufman and Uhlenberg 2000). Similarly, the Baby Bust and Baby Boom women may be less willing than their mothers to accept the career hindrances that often result from work-family trade-offs. Women who came of age during (or after) the women's rights movement of the late 1960s and 1970s are characterized as a generation who placed great emphasis on educational and occupational attainment (Fodor and Franks 1990; Hesse-Biber and Carter 2000). Women who expect to achieve equity in the workplace may be particularly self-critical upon finding their career trajectories curtailed. These findings suggest that behaving so as to violate either one's personal goals and preferences (Carr 1997; Higgins 1987) or society's expectations for appropriate behavior may take a toll on self-evaluations (Higgins 1987; Jackson 1966).

Life-Stage Implications of Work-Family Trade-Offs

The relationships documented thus far may reflect one's life stage as well as cohort-related forces. One's age or stage in the life course may influence both the relative importance of work and family roles and

one's perspective on those roles. While members of the older cohorts are evaluating their work and family lives retrospectively and may have come to terms with the realities of their accomplishments (Campbell 1981), younger persons currently may be struggling with the competing demands of work and family, and may not have the perspective of their elders. For instance, the analyses revealed that exiting the labor force harmed midlife (Baby Boom) women's evaluations of their work opportunities, but did not affect the worklife evaluations made by the youngest women (born after 1960).

At first inspection this finding is surprising, given that the Baby Bust women are more likely than previous cohorts of women to have invested heavily in their education (Spain and Bianchi 1996), and expect work lives that are as financially and psychologically rewarding as men's (Hesse-Biber and Carter 2000). It is possible that the Baby Bust women (ages 25 to 35) have not yet felt the ramifications of their work-family trade-offs; the economic consequences of labor market exits are relatively small in the short run but are exacerbated over time (Joshi 1990; Joshi, Paci, and Waldfogel 1999; Noonan 2001; Zuckerman 1991). Moreover, these young women are still in the early stages of their careers and may anticipate promotions in the future, and thus may offer more optimistic appraisals of their occupational opportunities. The career consequences of the Baby Bust women's work-family strategies will become apparent only in the longer term.

The relative importance of social roles also may vary over the life course. For example, the psychological consequences of work-family trade-offs for midlife women may reflect their life stage rather than their historical position. At midlife a role "crossover" may occur, whereby women become more interested in activities earlier associated with typically "male" domains, such as the pursuit of personal accomplishment (Giele 1993; Jung 1933). At midlife, women are at the stage when their child-rearing responsibilities diminish, and they are free to pursue their own goals and interests. Consequently, work accomplishments may be a particularly meaningful source of self-esteem for midlife women (Carr 1997).

Conclusions

This study has several limitations and omissions. First, because the MIDUS data are cross-sectional, one cannot ascertain definitively whether age or cohort effects are evidenced in the data. Also, as observed earlier, strong conclusions about causal inference should not be drawn.

Second, this study has focused solely on individual-level strategies and their psychological consequences. A married parent's strategies for juggling work and family roles are likely to be adopted in conjunction with the spouse (Moen and Yu 2000). Future research should explore individual- and couple-level work-family strategies, and their short- and long-term consequences for occupational careers, marital relationships, and parent-child relationships.

Third, the study did not directly assess the salience or importance of work and family roles. Role performance has stronger effects on psychological well-being when that role is a particularly important aspect of one's self-concept (Gecas and Seff 1990; Stryker and Serpe 1982).

Finally, future studies should explore whether the psychological ramifications of work-family trade-offs vary with one's occupation. Professional workers are more likely than blue-collar or service workers to have access to work-family policies and to take advantage of them (Glass and Estes 1997; Glass and Riley 1998).

Despite these limitations and omissions, this study has important implications for understanding links among work, family, and psychological well-being. Most research on the work-family interface is based on the assumption that combinations of work and family roles either outstrip individuals' ability and resources to juggle the resulting demands, or that overlapping roles enhance psychological well-being because they provide multiple sources of self-esteem and identity (Sieber 1974; Thoits 1983; Verbrugge 1986). An alternative perspective is also plausible: men and women who make workplace sacrifices in order to accommodate their family demands may perceive that they are failing to meet their potential in the labor

market, or may feel unfairly penalized for the decisions they have made.

This pattern warrants recognition. The widely cited economic theory of compensating differentials suggests that working parents may be content to accept lower earnings and poor mobility prospects if they receive other, compensating work benefits such as time out of the workforce or a family-friendly work schedule (Becker 1985; Filer 1985). The results presented here, however, suggest that when Baby Boom women and Baby Bust men adjust their work lives to accommodate family needs, they are indeed less content with their work opportunities. Recognizing discontent among workers may be an important precursor for corporate- and government-sponsored initiatives that better enable men and women to simultaneously fulfill the roles of "ideal employee" and "ideal parent."

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